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Narendra Modi completes two years as Prime Minister

Two years in office for a Prime Minister chosen for five years is, of course, not a period enough for evaluation. It is not even the half way mark. That too in a large democracy full of puzzling problems and glaring contradictions, assessments and evaluations of leaders' performance are hard to make. Only the small screen claims and demonstrates its capability to put any person in the dock and pass judgments, except perhaps death penalty. It's all instant analysis that is immediately forgotten or ignored.

It is exactly two years ago that Narendra Modi was catapulted to the highest office in the government in the historic 2014 election in which the worlds largest electorate participated. The ten year lack-lustre Congress- led UPA rule, tainted by charges of corruption at the top, provided the BJP with an unprecedented opportunity to convert people's mood into vote and vote into power. In a democracy where elections are to a large extent decided by waves and charismatic leadership, Narendra Modi's emergence as a leader who could mobilize people's support through oratory and whirlwind tours helped the Bharatiya Janata Party to form the NDA government.

Narendra Modi began with a bang. He caused eyebrows to be raised by inviting Pakistan's Prime Minister and other important leaders of the region for his colourful swearing-in-ceremony. He embarked upon an elaborately designed programme of tours to countries, big and small, distant and neighbouring to promote India's image and economic interests through foreign investments. Abroad his popularity soared, especially among NRIs. Twenty four months of frequent foreign tours by the Prime Minister of the world's largest democracy have neither raised India's stature as a role player in global politics nor contributed substantially to India's economic development, according to expert analysts.

The roots of successful foreign policy, of any country, lie in domestic politics and stability. The charge that the Prime Minister has not visited different parts of the country to better understand the problems of the people, especially those living in agency areas and

remote villages is not without substance. The Prime Minister has hardly spent time for promoting the relations between the Union and State governments. The first Prime Minister thoughtfully built up a regular channel of communication with state government through 'letters to the Chief Ministers.' The unitary bias of the Constitution was sought to be neutralized through some healthy conventions during the first fifteen years of our democracy.

Narendra Modi's strength lies in his energetic tours and inspiring speeches. He is hard working and fond of innovative programmes. TINA principle(there is no alternative) is his biggest advantage. At the same time the Prime Minister, called *primus inter pares*(first among equals) gives the impression that he doesn't treat his colleagues as at least near equals. The prestige of the three major branches of government has plummeted to the rock bottom. Parliamentary sessions bear testimony to it. The Chief Justice of the Apex Court publicly shedding tears shatters the little confidence people have in our judiciary. The executive meekly surrenders to the political masters for its survival.

Democratic decentralization is a still a distant dream. What is happening in most of the states is no different from what has been taking place in national politics during the last fifty years. Dynasty and sycophancy, once the monopoly of the Congress durbar, have come to dominate governance at the state level and many chief ministers are authoritarian in their style of functioning. Our elected representatives are seen crawling, if not prostrating, in public before their leaders.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi cannot alone change overnight the plight of the beleaguered Indian democracy. Politics is too serious a matter to be left entirely to politicians. Narendra Modi can and should take the lead in harnessing the untapped India's youth power to stem the rot and give the nation a new direction. After two years of 'successful foreign tours' he must now begin to focus on national development and the process of rebuilding India. The next three years of Modi's Prime Ministership will be keenly watched.

- The Editor

We are leaving to the politicians, to the state and to the government the main task of building up this country and of changing it. It is there that we go wrong. - Jayaprakash Narayan

WILL 'SAGAR PARIKRAMA' HERALD AN INDIAN MARITIME REVIVAL?

Admiral (Retd) Arun Prakash

Former Chief of Naval Staff
Ex-Chairman, National Maritime Foundation

Twenty-five years ago, in the Indonesian city of Surabaya, as I finished walking around the Indonesian Navy's submarine museum, I asked the young naval officer escorting me, what it was named while in service. She answered, "Pasopati." I must have looked puzzled because she explained patiently, "It is another name for the Hindu god Shiva." Then, with a smile, she added, "This badge on my uniform is a depiction of the 'Brahma Astra' and my navy's motto is 'Jalaseva Jayamahe' which is Sanskrit for: 'On the Sea We Are Victorious'."

All this came as a surprise to me because, like most Indians, I had forgotten about the deep cultural linkages that bind us to SE Asia, known, in ancient times, as 'Suvarnabhumi'. I had never paused to reflect that these linkages could have only been sustained through intense sea-borne interaction. Some of us have also heard of the world's oldest dockyard, dating back to 2400 BCE, discovered in the ancient city of Lothal in Gujarat; but again, this fact does not excite many Indians.

Our failure to acknowledge India's intimate linkage and dependence on the oceans has been termed as 'sea-blindness', and its roots are said to lie in the indifference of Indians to the reading as well as writing of our own history.

Accounts by Western historians insist that the world's earliest seafaring activity was undertaken in the Mediterranean basin by ancient Greeks, Phoenicians and Romans; none of them ever mentions the seafaring skills of ancient Indians. It was Sardar KM Panikkar, Indian diplomat, historian and strategist, who wrote a monograph in 1945, asserting that, because of the steady monsoon winds, the earliest oceanic activity took place in the Arabian Sea, not in the Mediterranean or Aegean Seas. He provided

tangible evidence that ancient Indians could not only build sturdy ships but also possessed seafaring and navigation skills to undertake long ocean voyages.

According to Panikkar, archaeological finds in Mohenjo-Daro provided proof of seaborne trading links between the west coast of India and Mediterranean ports, going back three thousand years. Similarly, the evidence of ancient Hindu kingdoms across SE Asia, still manifest in their art, culture and religious beliefs, shows that bold Indian sailors sustained a rich seafaring tradition by sailing the Bay of Bengal for thousands of years.

However, in 1498, when the Portuguese adventurer Vasco da Gama dropped anchor in Indian waters, no Indian ruler could muster any sea power to fend off the foreign intruders. This was the beginning of an era of 'sea-blindness' which lasted for 500 years. It eclipsed India's maritime heritage and laid us open to European domination and exploitation.

In our forgotten past, there are a few actors who shone briefly on the maritime stage. Amongst these are the resolute Zamorins, of Calicut and their brave sea captains of the Kunjali Marakkar clan, who waged a 90-year long naval campaign against the Portuguese. A century later, the Maratha Sarkhel (Admiral) Kanhoji Angre established control of the Konkan coast and of whom an English historian said: "Victorious alike over the English, the Dutch and the Portuguese, Angre sailed the Arabian Sea in triumph."

The 'sea blindness' syndrome lasted till well after independence and the fledgling Indian Navy had to struggle for decades, on scanty budgets. Today, even as India is creating a world-class navy, there continues to be a disheartening lack of maritime consciousness amongst our ruling elite, bureaucracy, common people and the youth. I am a frequent visitor to Goa's beaches, but one sees mostly foreigners enjoying water sports like sailing, wind-surfing and scuba diving, or even venturing into the water. Young Indians come mostly to eat, drink and litter the beaches.

It was this serious disconnect with the seas that drove a latter day Maratha Admiral – Manohar Awati

Power resides in the people and it is entrusted for the time being to those whom they may choose as their representatives. Parliaments have no power or even existence independently of the people.

– to mount a campaign for revival of India’s the lost maritime tradition. He had, long cherished a dream to see an Indian, bringing glory to his ancestors by undertaking a solo circumnavigation voyage of the globe – a feat accomplished, so far, only by European sailors. In 2006, I happened to be in Naval HQ, and Vice Admiral Awati’s fervent appeal struck a strong chord – not only because I thought it was a dream worth pursuing but also because he happened to be a former Captain of the training ship INS Tir on which I was a Cadet in 1964.

As luck would have it, I was able to convince a pragmatic and sympathetic Raksha Mantri - Shri Pranab Mukherjee – who instantly saw merit in the venture and approved a substantive financial commitment for the project, dubbed; ‘Sagar Parikrama’.

Having obtained the funds, we needed a man who would be brave (or crazy) enough to venture forth alone, and possessed the sailing skills to navigate a small boat across thousands of miles of turbulent seas. As we searched the ranks of the navy, we were faced with a dilemma; those who were suitable, did not want to volunteer and those who volunteered were often not suitable. However, as the old saying goes, ‘Cometh the hour, cometh the man’; our man turned out another Maratha warrior; Commander Dilip Donde, a naval diver who happened to have some sailing experience. An unassuming and reserved 41-year old, Dilip had the courage of his convictions and over the next three years, was to surprise us by his guts, tenacity and fortitude.

Now that we had our man, we needed a boat. Having rejected the option, at VAdm Awati’s urging, of buying a boat from abroad, we decided to ‘make in India.’ The navy was fortunate to find another ‘man of the hour’ – a Goan boat-builder named Ratnakar Dandekar – who had never built such a boat, but was bold enough to take up this huge professional challenge. Early 2009 saw the boat being delivered to the navy and given the name ‘Mhadei’ (the original name of river Mandovi). By now Dilip, having been put through rigorous training in ocean-sailing under

the watchful eye of VAdm Awati and tutelage of, his friend, the world-famous sailor Sir Robin Knox-Johnston, was ready to take the helm of Mhadei and face the ocean challenge ahead.

Deliberately shunning the shorter and easier route that lay via the Suez and Panama canals, Dilip decided to go around the world’s three Great Capes – Cape Leeuwin in Australia, Cape Horn in Chile and Cape of Good Hope in South Africa. Located at the confluence of oceans, all three capes are notorious for extreme weather and mountainous waves.

Dilip Donde was flagged off from Mumbai on 19th August 2009. He returned home, to a hero’s welcome, on 22nd May 2010, after 276 days at sea, having touched just three ports and traversed 21,600 miles. It is impossible to even try to describe the epic adventure of this courageous man in a short piece like this. Dilip has written the story of this voyage in a book titled: ‘The First Indian; Story of the First Indian Solo Circumnavigation under Sail’, which should make every Indian proud. It is also a minor coup for an ‘unlettered’ sailor like Dilip to have produced a piece of literature like this – a gripping, first-hand account of one man’s struggle against the elements; written with humour and modest understatement.

Having become the 176th person to conquer, what is termed as, ‘Everest of the Seas’, Dilip Donde did not rest on his laurels. He helped train his successor, Lieutenant-Commander Abhilash Tomy, who skippered the Mhadei for ‘Sagar Parikrama II’ in 2012 and became the 79th person to circumnavigate the world – this time non-stop. Dilip is now in the process of training an all-female crew of naval officers to sail Mhadei around the world.

Project ‘Sagar Parikrama’ has demonstrated that young Indians are equal to the best worldwide. Dilip Donde and Abhilash Tomy have received plenty of accolades – perhaps much more abroad than at home. But apart from personal glory, ‘Sagar Parikrama’ is a manifestation of the navy’s deep desire to re-awaken maritime consciousness amongst India’s masses – especially our youth – and to remind the nation of its

Parents themselves should bring up their children. It is not proper to leave them under the care of someone else at their young age. - Sri Sathya Sai Baba

glorious maritime heritage that we are in danger of losing. The Indian Navy is showing the way; will India follow?



India in a changing Asia : Towards a Forward Policy

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(Lecture delivered on April 13, 2016 organized by Society for Policy Studies in collaboration with India Habitat Centre)

Introduction

Mr. Kacker, Cmde Bhaskar, and friends, I am delighted to be a part of this prestigious Changing Asia Lecture Series at the India Habitat Center, New Delhi.

We face today an extraordinary period of change at home and abroad. The changes in Asia and its waters have never been as consequential as they are today, and are likely to shape India's own evolution in the coming decades and the 21st century. Although the rise of Asia has been upon us for nearly a quarter of a century, our own debate on it has not generated enough clarity of thought.

Our strategic and economic policy communities continue to be buffeted by competing ideas. Self doubt and fear of entering uncharted waters compel us to cling to familiar but long outdated ideas. As a result, our policy direction seems to oscillate considerably between engagement and isolation. Before I examine some of these problems, let me say a few words about the title, especially the reference to Forward Policy.

The idea of Forward Policy is often associated with Jawaharlal Nehru's foreign policy towards China and has drawn much criticism for its lack of realism: of ambition unmatched by resources. But, the notion of Forward Policy was not invented by Nehru. It is very much part of our strategic legacy from the (British) Raj. It is very much rooted in the modern origins of India's territorial structure. It was about defining the nature of the relationship between the sovereign India

and the adjoining territories; it was about addressing threats before they materialized on India's borders; it was about sanitizing the space around 'fortress India'. Sustaining this policy was never easy or cheap, even at the peak of the British Raj. But the inability to sustain it had severe consequences for the territorial integrity and security of India.

Having dealt with the notion of Forward Policy, let me explain the structure of this presentation. I will begin with a brief discussion of India's ideas of Asia and examine the centripetal and centrifugal forces shaping Asia. In the second part, I will briefly review the cycles of engagement and isolation in India's history and suggest that we are in the phase of expansive engagement. In the third part, I will look at India's potential role in a changing Asia and conclude with reviewing the case for a Forward Policy that will contribute to peace and prosperity in Asia.

India and the Ideas of Asia

As one of the world's oldest continuing civilisations, India has always been enriched by its interaction with other cultures and civilisations around it. As India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru told the delegates at the 1947 Asian Relations Conference in Delhi, India is "so situated to be the meeting point of western and northern and eastern and southeast Asia. Streams of culture have come to India from the west and the east and been absorbed in India, producing the rich and variegated culture which is India today."

"At the same time," Nehru added, "streams of culture have flowed from India to distant parts of Asia... If you would like to know about India, you have to go to Afghanistan and Western Asia; to Central Asia, to China and Japan, and to the countries of Southeast Asia. There you will find magnificent evidence of the vitality of India's culture which spread out and influenced vast numbers of people".

The idea of Asia's unique identity endures and takes many forms. There is the notion of a 'cultural Asia' that has been propounded by the Japanese art historian Okakura Kakuzo way back at the turn of the

A civilization able to produce a Mahavira, a Mirabai, a Malik Ambar, a Periyar, a Muhammad Iqbal and a Mohandas Gandhi is a place open to radical experiments with self definition.

20th century, as the region began to discover shared civilisational roots. "Asia is one" was the simple but profound first sentence of Kakuzo's highly influential work, 'The ideals of the East', published in 1903. As they gained national consciousness and became more aware of the world around them and intensified the effort to free themselves from colonial yoke, many in the region defined Asia as the 'spiritual other' in the East to the 'materialistic West'.

Some in Asia were deeply wary of the idea of an Asia that defines itself in anti-Western terms. Instead, they sought to imagine the Asian identity in more universal terms. Contemporary Asia's first great power, Japan, instrumentalised the idea of pan-Asianism to promote its own imperial interests in the first half of the 20th century. As it occupied vast swathes of Asia, Japan talked of an 'Asia for the Asians' and presented its own conquest of the region as a 'liberation' from European colonialism. In contrast to the notions of Asia's imperial unity, the anti-colonial struggles generated a very different version of Asian unity. This sense of solidarity expressed itself at the Asian Relations Conference in Delhi and the Afro-Asian Conference at Bandung (1955). It eventually morphed into the Non-Aligned Movement. Asia's sense of unity, however, was shattered quickly as inter-state and intrastate conflicts, exacerbated by narrow nationalism and Cold War geopolitics, enveloped the region.

As the West prepared for a triage of new nations, the so-called 'Asian Tigers' surprised the world by demonstrating the prospects for rapid economic growth through globalisation in the 1960s. Their example was emulated by others, including China and India, in the subsequent decades. Their separate efforts turned Asia into the world's economic powerhouse and laid the foundation for the great reverse in the balance of power between the East and the West. Complementing the rise of an 'economic Asia' was the new 'institutional Asia.'

If Asian regionalism and internationalism in Asia rapidly dissipated in the 1950s, the end of the Cold War saw the dramatic expansion of trans-regional

institution building in Asia under the leadership of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). What seemed an impossible dream in the middle of the 20th century turned into a reality by the beginning of the 21st century amidst the proliferation of regional institutions, including those focusing on political cooperation such as the ASEAN Regional Forum, the East Asia Summit and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building in Asia.

Asian nations are now more economically connected than ever before. They are striving to deepen regional integration through trade liberalisation agreements at the sub-regional, trans-regional and international levels. In the middle of the 20th century, regionalism ran into opposition in Asia from those emphasising 'economic sovereignty.' Today, Asian nations have the luxury of dealing with competing trade pacts. As it seeks to build an economic community among its ten members, the ASEAN is also promoting the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership with six other partners— China, Japan, Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand. The United States has led the effort to draft a more ambitious trade pact among 12 nations, including some members of the ASEAN, called the Trans-Pacific Partnership. China has proposed a much wider arrangement called the Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific. Meanwhile, market forces are pushing different parts of Asia and its immediate neighbourhood together. The rise of China and India has made them the largest and preferred customers for the oil resources of the Gulf and mineral resources of Africa. Trade, investment and aid volumes from China and India with the Middle East and Africa have surged. Beijing has also led the creation of new Asian and international financial institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank under the non-geographic forum BRICS involving Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Its ambitious One Belt and One Road initiative to build physical connectivity across borders promises to recast Asia's economic geography. Its project for overland industrial belts extends all across Eurasia. Beijing's Maritime Silk Road project connects the

Democracy has many virtues, but one of its concomitants is wastage of time and energy.

- Jawaharlal Nehru

Indian and Pacific Oceans, long viewed as separate maritime domains. Japan, which had led the efforts in the second half of the 20th century to build Asian infrastructure, is now taking fresh initiatives. As a result of these initiatives, Asia is going to be more intricately tied to itself through new roads, high-speed railway systems, energy pipelines and optical fibre networks.

The moment to celebrate the extraordinary triumph of the idea of Asian unity, however, seems to be marred by the re-emergence of conflict and power rivalry in the region. Regaining control of national destinies was one of the main objectives of the post-colonial states in Asia. The region today is no longer a mere theatre for European colonial powers. It is the motor of global growth and an agency in shaping the world's financial and political order. If the reviled Vasco da Gama moment has ended in Asia, the region is also facing sharp internal divisions. While the focus of the last two decades has been on the shifting balance between Asia and the West in favour of the former, the region is now coming to terms with structural changes in the evolution of Asia's 'internal' balance of power. The rapid rise of China relative to the other powers in Asia has raised big questions about the future strategic order in Asia. China has overtaken Japan to become the second largest economy in the world and is poised to surpass the US in the near future. The widespread hopes for Beijing's peaceful rise have evaporated amidst the sharpening maritime territorial conflicts between China and its neighbours.

To make matters worse, the great power harmony in Asia that has existed since the normalisation of Sino-American relations in the 1970s and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 has been replaced by mounting tension between China and Japan on the one hand, and between Beijing and Washington on the other. There is renewed emphasis on alliances, defence partnerships and military modernisation across the continent. At the same time, the project to build a 'comprehensive cooperative security architecture' for the region is in disarray. There are deep disagreements on the nature, scope and

terms of any such arrangement, some of which have turned the idea of Asia into a contested one.

One view articulated with great vigour in Beijing reaffirms the slogan of 'Asia for Asians' and demands that outside powers quit the region. Others wary of Chinese power eagerly seek American military presence in the region. As they develop strategic partnerships with America, they also strengthen military cooperation among themselves as an insurance against a potential US-China duopoly in the region. A century after the ideas of unity and shared identity gained regional traction, Asia enjoys levels of integration and cooperation that few could have imagined. Yet, the political fault lines in the region have never been so deep.

India's Engagement and Isolation

As Asia enters a period of great churning, the question of India's role in the region has become an important one. The great potential and persistent challenges to India's role in Asia can be seen in terms of a paradox: Through the ages, India was both a self-contained (sub) continent in itself as well as the geographic pivot between different parts of Asia. India's history has seen periods of expansive engagement with the neighboring regions interrupted by extended periods of self-imposed isolation. This pattern has repeatedly played out over the centuries. The dynamic interaction with the Aryans from inner Asia, its maritime linkages with Greece and Rome, the spread of Buddhism from India by land and sea and its links to the Silk Road all marked a significant interaction with the world in the pre-Christian and immediate post-Christian era.

This engagement took place despite the physical barriers—the seas to the south, the deserts to the west and the great Himalayas to the north and east. When the Indian society turned inward around the 10th century, its engagement with the world was confined to the margins of the subcontinent. In this era too, the impact of Muslim rulers from Arabia, Turkey and Central Asia saw the enrichment of Indian society. But it was the rise of capitalism in Europe and

English for unity, say I, over and over again. I shall plead for it as long as my breath lasts,
for the love I bear for my country. - Rajaji

the colonial era that dramatically reconnected India to the world. While it subjected India to alien rule, colonial rule began the process of globalising Indian economy. The region was no longer producing for itself and trading with the limited agrarian surpluses.

The new era saw local production for global markets and the emergence of India itself as a market for goods produced elsewhere in the world. The colonial era also saw the movement of Indian capital and labour across the world and formed the foundation for India's global footprint and human connectivity. Through the colonial era, India became the economic connector of different regions in Asia and in the Indian Ocean littoral. The colonial era saw the construction of three major ports—Bombay, Madras and Calcutta—that became critical nodes in the new global maritime trading network. The British Raj continuously opened new markets and new trading routes between India and its abutting regions in inner Asia, from Xinjiang to Yunnan. It built road and rail networks, much in the manner that China is doing with its Silk Road initiative today. At the political level, the colonial Raj saw the territorial consolidation of India. Although the Raj never fully approximated to the coherence of modern European states, it did become the largest empire that the subcontinent had ever seen.

The need to concentrate the means of violence under colonial rule saw the creation of a massive armed force that built on the many indigenous formations before. This force inevitably emerged as the centre of British imperial defence system. India's armed forces became the main security provider in the Indian Ocean and its abutting regions—from the South China Sea to the Mediterranean and from Southern Africa to Siam. Independent India, wittingly or unwittingly, abandoned this legacy of a massive external economic and military engagement with Asia and the Indian Ocean.

By making a conscious choice in favour of economic self-reliance and import substitution, India disconnected itself from the regional markets. The

great Partition of 1947 made matters worse by breaking up the political and economic unity of the subcontinent. The creation of new borders and the tensions between India and Pakistan meant that the region's military energies, directed outward during the Raj, were now turned inwards. The unification of China, its control of Tibet, and the boundary dispute between Delhi and Beijing resulted in shutting down the long frontier between India and China. If an insular approach to development diminished India's relative economic weight in Asia and the Indian Ocean, Delhi's foreign policy rooted in non-alignment reduced India's weight in the security politics of Asia. That India became increasingly isolated in a region that was its natural space for leadership underlined the tragic paradox of India's foreign policy in the early decades after independence. It took the end of the Cold War and an internal economic reorientation to put Asia back at the Centre of India's foreign and economic policies.

Changing Asian Order

India's dilemmas in coping with the strategic consequences of China's rise and America's response to it are similar to those confronted its fellow Asian states. Until recently, East Asia believed that the rise of China is most likely to be peaceful and bet that Beijing can be 'socialized' through a network of regional arrangements. That confidence, however, has been shaken during the last few years amidst mounting tensions between China and the U.S. and between Beijing and some of its neighbours. Meanwhile, the United States which encouraged its Asian allies to accept Communist China as a legitimate power after the rapprochement with Beijing in the early 1970s and facilitated its economic growth, now confronts a challenger to its longstanding primacy in Asia.

India, which was deeply uncomfortable with the Western and Asian embrace of China in the past, now finds itself in a very different quandary as relations between China and America begin to enter a complex and uncertain phase. India, on the one hand, stares

I want the consent of all minorities to change the course of history.

- Sardar Patel.

at a rare opportunity to shape the Asian balance of power and confronts on the other the real danger of being drawn into the conflict between the world's foremost power and the rising challenger. There are nine potential ways in which the regional order could evolve.

- The first is the prospect of a Sino-centric Asian Order. Many scholars including some in the United States have argued that if there is something natural about Asia being reorganized around Chinese primacy. After a couple of bad centuries, it is argued, China is reclaiming its place at the heart of Asia. China's new role as Asia's largest economy and the engine of its economic growth would provide the foundation for this Sino-centric order in Asia. While this logic has much merit, it is not clear if many of the large countries of Asia, like India, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Japan are politically prepared to accept such an order.
- A second possibility is the reinforcement of American primacy, which has been the source of order and stability in the region for decades. A slowdown in Chinese economic growth, renewed economic vigour in America, restoration of American political will and the strengthening of its traditional alliances and new partnerships would certainly make that outcome possible. While India might be happy to live with the restoration of the old order, Delhi can't afford to devise its policies on that possibility. For the scale and scope of power shift in China's favour is undeniable. While the pace of that change might be uncertain, there is no escaping its essentially irreversible direction.
- The third and fourth and fifth possibilities are about different forms of accommodation between the United States and China. Before announcing the pivot, the Obama Administration signaled its willingness to accommodate the rising China if it was willing to play by (American) rules in the first year of its tenure. Many in Asia characterized the American attempt to offer strategic reassurance to China as the construction of a G-2. Beijing, however, appeared to utterly unenthusiastic about the concept of G-2. Many leading lights in the U.S. strategic community like Henry Kissinger have warned that a confrontation with China will be disastrous for America and insisted that there is no alternative to their 'cooperation and co-evolution'. Faced with the U.S. pivot to Asia announced during 2011-12, the Chinese leaders have called for a "new type of great power relationship" between Beijing and Washington that is different from the past pattern of conflict between rising and declining powers. Contrary to the widespread perception, Chinese opposition to an accommodation, in the form of a G-2 or Sino-American condominium is not about the principle, but the terms. Besides condominium there are other forms of accommodation between China and the United States.
- The fourth scenario in our list is the prospect of an arrangement for separate spheres of influence. Much like Spain and Portugal who agreed not to compete with each other, it is possible to imagine America and China demarcating their primary areas of interest and agreeing on the principle of no-contest in agreed spheres of influence. India is deeply concerned about the prospects for any form of joint management of the regional order in Asia by America and China. In the past, India reacted strongly against statements on U.S.-China cooperation for example in promoting non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the Subcontinent. U.S.-China accommodation aimed at defining the rules for others in the region is bound to be resisted by India.
- Fifth, another variant of this is the prospect for 'offshore balancing' by America. Much like British policy towards continental Europe, America could step back from its current role as a hands-on manager of the regional order,

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

promote 'in-situ' balance of power in Asia and intervene only to restore when the shift in the balance threatens its interest. Many American scholars dismiss the possibility of the U.S. ever adopting such a role by arguing that off-shore balancing does not come naturally to Washington.

- The sixth possibility involves the construction of a regional balance of power from a multipolar perspective. The idea of a concert of Asian powers, including America, China and India, has gained some traction in recent years but faces many practical obstacles. On its part, India has welcomed the proposal by the Obama Administration for a sustained triangular dialogue with China on Asian security issues. Beijing, however, has shown little interest in such a dialogue with Washington and Delhi. Besides China a number of other middle powers are not likely to respond positively to a self-selected Asian concert. In post-Napoleonic era, the Concert of Europe was formed by a set of roughly equal sized powers all of them located within the old continent. In Asia, the varying sizes of the powers, the problems of limiting geographic scope and the pitfalls of excluding key players could complicate the challenge of constructing a concert of powers.
- A seventh possible scenario is the idea of middle power coalition in Asia that can cope with the challenges from a bilateral strategic dynamic between Washington and Beijing. Asia has a large number of middle powers with an inherited tradition of non-alignment. Even treaty allies of the United States might see such a middle power coalition as a small insurance against the twists and turns in U.S.-China relations. The last few years have seen an expanding network of bilateral defence cooperation agreements and trilateral security consultations between different middle powers in Asia. The U.S. treaty allies such as Japan, Korea and Australia have been part of this process. As one of the founding members of the movements

for Asian solidarity and the non-aligned movement, India might the option of constructing such a coalition attractive. But it will require the devotion of considerable institutional resources, the lack of which is evident in India's current security engagement with the East Asian countries. The U.S. on its part might see the emergence of a web of regional security cooperation among the middle powers as a useful complement to its own traditional alliances and special relationships. China, however, is likely to prevent the emergence of such a coalition.

- The eighth possibility is that the regional security institutions, led by the ASEAN, will emerge strong and help mitigate the great power tensions in Asia and set the stage for a cooperative regional security. The reality, however, is that the very construction of these regional institutions, defining their membership and mandate has been subject to contradictions among the great powers. The evolution of the East Asia Summit initiated by the Association of South East Asian Nations underlines this. ASEAN has sought to draw in most other powers, including India, Russia and America, into the EAS fold to broaden the playing field. But Beijing's emphasis has been on limiting the scope of the EAS and refusing to let it interfere with China's pursuit of its own national interests. If the EAS has not done too well, neither the older institutions like the ASEAN Regional Forum or the newer ones like ADMM Plus (which brings together the defence ministers of the EAS member states) are likely to be effective in coping with the historic redistribution of power in Asia. Their current focus on soft security issues in EAS only underlines its inability to address the larger challenges coming to the fore. Beijing has also shown the ability to break ASEAN unity on issues relating to China. Meanwhile the attempts at regional economic integration are being pulled in different directions with the ASEAN calling for a new Asia-wide free trade

It is impossible for any nation to stand still and stiff within its closed gates,
while humanity is marching on. - Dr. S.Radhakrishnan

agreement that excludes the U.S. and the American initiative on the Trans-Pacific Partnership. India, as the weakest of the major powers and strongest of the middle powers, has been happy with supporting the “centrality of ASEAN” in shaping the Asian security architecture. That is good diplomacy, but not necessarily a solid basis for structuring the future Asian security order.

- Finally, the most likely scenario for the near future is the slow but certain buildup of the Sino-U.S. rivalry in the region. China’s assertiveness in the region and the U.S. response to it, in the form of military and diplomatic rebalancing to Asia, might have set the stage for a prolonged geopolitical contest in the region. It is a rivalry few in the region have wished for or can manage. The tension between Chinese search for greater freedom of action in its Asian periphery on the one hand and the American forward military presence and its long standing alliances on the other is real and will have great bearing on Asia’s international relations for a long time to come.

Towards a Forward Policy

The search for regional balance of power will be different from the Cold War experience in Asia. Unlike the Soviet Union, which was isolated from the economic flows in the region, China is at the very heart of Asia’s economic dynamism and is by no means amenable to a strategy of containment by other powers. On the other hand, China’s power naturally complicates the credibility of traditional U.S. alliances in the region. In Japan and the Philippines there is a fear that the United States might not stand by them when their territorial conflicts with Beijing turn into shooting matches. In Australia there is a debate on the importance of adapting to China’s new role in Asian security. Meanwhile the ASEAN, which has seen itself as the driver of regional institution building is finding it hard to stay united amidst the assertion of Chinese power. The new divisions across the region are further reinforced by the deepening schisms in within the political elites of all major countries on how

best to deal with China’s assertiveness and how far their nations must go in working with Washington to limit Beijing’s power.

These new dilemmas are clearly visible in India’s own policy response to the changing balance between China and the United States. In Delhi they acquire greater complexity given India’s own aspirations to play a larger role in Asia and its celebrated tradition of non-alignment. India’s strategy in the near term is likely to evolve along four axes. One is to strengthen its own comprehensive national power, especially in the military domain, in order to slowly reduce the emerging strategic gap with China. The second is to deepen economic and security cooperation with the United States without becoming a formal ally of Washington. The third is to reassure Beijing that it will not become a party to any U.S. plans to contain China. Managing the relationship with China and avoiding a confrontation with Beijing on its borders will remain a major priority for India. Finally, India will try and step up its bilateral and trilateral security cooperation with key Asian states like Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia and Australia to retain a measure of autonomy from the unfolding U.S.-China strategic dynamic.

This approach is not free of contradictions and is likely to face many tests in the coming years. Let me conclude then by briefly mentioning how others view us in Asia. That India’s ‘Look East’ policy came in the wake of its economic reforms initiated at the turn of the 1990s was not surprising. Reconnecting to Asia, Delhi recognised, was critical for the modernisation of the Indian economy that had fallen behind the rest of the region and to rejuvenate its foreign policy in the new era. Since then, India has made considerable advances in connecting with Asia. It is now part of the major regional institutions, has growing economic and trade links and has stepped up its security cooperation with most Asian nations. Yet, there is a widespread sense of disappointment in Asia with India’s recent record in the East. Asia’s regional dynamic— in economic, political and strategic domains—has moved much faster than Delhi’s readiness to adapt. Asia today

If knowledge is power, practical education is the source of both power and wealth.

- Sir M. Visvesvaraya

hopes that the 'Act East' policy unveiled by the government of Narendra Modi will bridge the gap between India's promise and performance.

To meet the regional expectations for leadership, India will need to accelerate its internal economic reforms, deepen its integration with its South Asian neighbours, seize the opportunities for strengthening physical connectivity with different parts of Asia, play a more active role in the regional institutions and intensify its defence diplomacy. Delhi cannot afford to miss the unprecedented opportunity to accelerate Asia's march towards prosperity or disavow the historic responsibility to shape its future political order.

(CPS offers its grateful thanks to Shri C. Raja Mohan and Cmde. C. Uday Bhaskar)



For Bangladesh, Denying Islamic State's Presence Will not Help

Cmde. (Retd) C. Uday Bhaskar
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The Singapore home ministry announced on May 3 that it had arrested eight Bangladeshi construction and marine industry workers on suspicion of being part of an Islamic State (IS) affiliate in their home country. According to the evidence collected from the suspects, it is reported that they had plans to "overthrow the democratically elected government through the use of force, establish an Islamic state in Bangladesh and bring it under IS' self-declared caliphate."

This is the second such arrest in Singapore and it may be recalled that in late 2015 a group of 26 Bangladeshi workers were arrested and deported for engaging in jihad-related activities. This was the first such arrest of foreign workers in the island-state and investigations revealed that the men were part of a secret religious Islamic group that supported the ideology of the al Qaeda and the IS.

It is understood that the group had been

meeting secretly since 2013 in Singapore and planning attacks back home. It is instructive that it took almost two years plus for the security agencies to identify and apprehend the IS sympathisers and deport them back to Bangladesh. Construction workers are housed in spartan camps and far removed from their families and any other social contact. Consequently, they have been seen as fertile sites for silent radicalisation and the Bangladeshi worker has emerged as someone more susceptible to such indoctrination.

Bangladesh's Vulnerabilities

Is the IS a serious threat to Bangladesh and by extension to the South Asian region? While the Islamic State and its current leadership is on the defensive in Iraq and Syria since its dramatic rise over the last two years – the ideology it is identified with has attracted many adherents in many parts of the world. The Paris-Brussels attacks claimed by the IS constituency in Europe are illustrative.

Bangladesh is a distinctive socio-political ecosystem in South Asia and the nation was born in 1971 from the womb of a bloody, genocidal conflict that pitted religion (Islam) against ethno-linguistic (Bangla) nationalism. The latter prevailed.

However, Bangladesh's politics has acquired a binary contour that pits the two main political parties against each other over their respective interpretation of the practice of Islam. The current leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has determinedly sought to bring the perpetrators of the 1971 genocide and their right-wing support base to justice while the opposition BNP (Bangladesh Nationalist Party) has left no stone unturned in resorting to political opportunism by stoking religious sentiments.

Bangladesh's Radicalisation

· **Arrest of eight Bangladeshi ISIS members in Singapore is second such arrest after a similar incident involving 26 Bangladeshi workers was reported in 2015.**

· **ISIS' presence in Bangladesh comes at a time when the country witnesses those accused of 1971**

war crime being hanged and the opposition trying to stoke religious sentiment.

· Recruitment drive in Bangladesh acknowledged by the IS magazine, that boasts of hiring Jamaat-e-Islami members.

· Presence of jihadi sleeper cells in Bangladesh poses a challenge for India and its counter-terrorism operations.

Islamic State Makes Inroads

The relatively moderate and tolerant practice of Islam that liberal Bangladeshis support is under attack and the last two years have seen a series of killings and pre-meditated violence that targeted bloggers, free-thinkers, gays, minorities — some foreigners and those who opposed or questioned the extreme Wahabi/Salafi version of Sunni Islam.

While many of these attacks have been claimed by the IS, or its affiliates in Bangladesh, the government denies their presence and blames its political opponents. This assertion of the Hasina government is in contrast to the claim made by Abu Ibrahim al-Hanif the self-styled leader of the IS in Bangladesh.

The IS has a fairly well-oiled propaganda and recruitment machinery that uses modern communication outlets deftly.

In the April issue of *Dabiq*, a propaganda magazine, Abu Ibrahim claimed that many members of the Jamaat-e-Islami who opposed the creation of an independent Bangladesh are now joining the ranks of the IS.

Their opposition to the politics and policies of the Hasina government has been made public and the fact that the opposition BNP empathises with this orientation gives the Bangladeshi socio-political side its distinctive character that enables the nurturing of IS cells in distant locales like Singapore.

Challenge for India

The self-styled IS constituency in Bangladesh has threatened to use that country as a launching pad to

target India and other neighbouring countries. The presence of jihadi sleeper cells in the neighbourhood is an abiding challenge for the Indian agencies, and counter-terrorism operations that can quietly and successfully prevent and preempt any attack are based on patiently linking disparate dots.

Singapore is one such flickering dot and the need for reviewing and improving regional counter-terror information and intelligence sharing is imperative. If Singapore with its much smaller demography and more technologically capable security agencies took two years to zero in on one such group of IS sympathisers — albeit foreign nationals — the challenge for Bangladesh will be that much greater.

Courtesy : The Quint



Foreign women in Mahatma Gandhi`s life

Dr. Uday Balakrishnan

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Mahatma Gandhi and foreign women shared a complex relationship. His innate sensitivity drew several women from the West to the icon of non-violence who felt at home with them, says Melbourne-based Gandhian scholar Thomas Weber.

"Western women were first mentioned in his life as part of his vow to his mother - before he was given permission to read law abroad - along with alcohol and meat which were not to be touched. But during his South Africa sojourn, Western women became important supporters," Weber says in a new book 'Going Native' (Roli Books) that probes Gandhi`s relationship with white women and his outlook to the role of women in society.

The list of Gandhi`s women disciples and friends from the West is long and formidable. The book chronicles his interactions with at least 12 of them. The reasons for Western women`s fascination for Gandhi stems from the fact that many Western women at that time had strong religious faith and

False, utterly false, are the stories of divine birth.
The higher type of man is the man who knows himself. - Basava

socialist principles that drove them to work for peace and with the poor, Weber analyses.

"They became interested in Gandhi's philosophy and campaigns, paid visits to India, and added his cause for Independence to theirs. Many women travelled to India to meet the saintly Gandhi they were starting to hear about, stayed for a lengthy period and went native," Weber says.

Gandhi's respect for women, whom he regarded as founts of courage, strength and sexless beings equal to men in social status, struck a chord among Western feminists and drew several women to him. Gandhi's closest friend in his early political and legal career in South Africa was Millie Graham Polak.

In late October and November 1906, when Gandhi was in London as part of an Indian delegation to discuss discrimination in South Africa, he also came into close contact with Millie's sisters-in-law, Maud and Sally. Gandhi was received with such warmth by the family that he jokingly wrote to Millie's husband, Henry Polak, that if he were unmarried, or young or believed in mixed marriage, "you know what I would have done", Weber says in his book.

Noted South African liberal and feminist Olive Schreiner was another of Gandhi's high-profile woman supporters. Born to a large South African missionary family, Schreiner married a farmer in 1894 and made inroads into South African politics.

Schreiner was inspired by the Satyagraha movement which brought her close to Gandhi. A moved Gandhi noted that Schreiner's "love for all mankind was unbounded; love was written in her eyes and she knew no difference between her Negro servants and herself", Weber says. Mischievous and impetuous Sonja Schlesin of South African origin met Gandhi in 1906 when she was 16, Weber says.

Sonja was introduced to Gandhi by his close friend Harman Kallenbach, a German, who said, "Sonja was very clever and honest, but she is very mischievous and impetuous; perhaps she is even insolent; I do not place her with you for mere pay".

A fiery critic of Gandhi and his literary works, Sonja corresponded with Gandhi through letters all his life. Mahatma Gandhi knew noted Indian theosophist and home rule votary of British origin, Annie Besant, as a student in London. In 1889, he heard Besant deliver a lecture on 'Why I Became a Theosophist' and was so captivated that he followed her career for the next 30 years.

However, he differed with her ideology. While Besant worked with the "Indian elite for the uplift of India", Gandhi preferred to work with the downtrodden, Weber says in his book. Gandhi's legal office in Johannesburg contained three framed photographs - of Tolstoy, Christ and Annie Besant. Of all Gandhi's Western disciples, Madeleine Slade, a Briton whom he later named Mirabehn, was the foremost among contenders for his trust and affection. Her love for Gandhi shone in her private letters to him.

"I could not, even if I tried, be anything else but what I am before you and that is why, however ashamed I am of my weakness, I have to lay my heart before my 'bapu' (father) - you are indeed my father and mother and what is more than all, you are bapu, my bapu in whom I live and in whom I have utter confidence that only boundless love can inspire," she wrote to Gandhi.



FROM 'BRIDGES OF FRIENDSHIP' TO 'UNITED THROUGH OCEANS' – INDIAN NAVY'S IFR JOURNEY - II

- Cmde Srikant B Kesnur

Director of Maritime Warfare Centre,
Visakhapatnam

and was among the group of personnel actively
involved in the conduct of the International Fleet
Review.

United Through Oceans

With the oceans serving as the highways of a globalised world, they are witness to both the convergence and divergence of national interests.

As bees store up honey, you gathered wealth. But after you are dead, this is what's said,
"Take away the corpse. It stinks." - Kabir

Acting as a conduit for international commerce, they are vital lifelines of global economy. This has led to a vigorous and sometimes exploitative exploration for hydrocarbons, rare earths, precious metals etc. In addition, multiple challenges obtain in the vast oceans in the form of piracy, radioactive dumping, oil spills, overfishing, climate change etc. Issues of political instability, economic crisis, sectarian strife, civil wars and refugee crisis and global pandemics have also pervaded contemporary times. On the other hand, it has also been observed that when territories are fraught with peril, the oceans come to rescue. As the new level playing field, presenting opportunities and posing challenges alike, the vast and valuable oceans are emerging as a theatre of competitive coexistence.

A collective and cooperative outlook is at the core of the current maritime narrative which can help the world to harness and utilize the true potential of oceans. With oceans being the theatre of global trade, climate and marine research, the discourse on international relations today is incomplete without the mention of navies. Navies have become indispensable for a 'world on tenterhooks'. The navies of today have witnessed substantial changes in their nature, scope and stature. Maritime transport today is the backbone of international trade and the global economy. Around 80 percent of global trade by volume and over 70 percent of global trade by value are carried by sea and are handled by ports worldwide. Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) and International Shipping Lanes (ISLs) that drive such a rapid economic integration have themselves become sensitive targets for non-state actors. The navies have an added responsibility of safeguarding SLOCs and ISLs while countering threats like piracy, encroachment and maritime disputes. The support of navies in rescuing refugees, providing medicines and supplies during epidemics and disaster management further fortifies their crucial role in global affairs.

As brought out hitherto, the Indian Navy has transformed from a small entity to a strong multi-dimensional, multi-spectrum and networked maritime force. With many successful regional and global

operations under its belt, the Indian Navy in a very short span of time has created a formidable reputation for itself. The Indian Navy has pursued maritime engagements in multiple ways such as port visits, personnel exchanges, staff talks and interactions, exercises with foreign navies, maritime assistance, operational interactions and high level maritime strategic interactions. These serve to enhance mutual understanding, cooperation and interoperability between the maritime forces. Indian Navy is deeply committed to strengthen ties with maritime states and promote geopolitical and strategic cooperation with nations. Thus, the mandate of Indian Navy has gradually come to include a gamut of roles in addition to building and sustaining long lasting economic, commercial and security ties across the oceans. The broad spectrum of functions carried out by the Indian Navy ranging from constabulary, benign, humanitarian and military make it a constant presence in the high seas where several other navies operate.

India's maritime neighbours are not only those sharing common boundaries of our maritime zones – but also nations with whom we share the common maritime space of high seas. Maritime relations are an important facet of India's broader politico-economic relations, in which the Indian Navy plays a pivotal role. Indian Navy is a key instrument in India's 'Act East' policy to expand engagement and relations to its East, across the Indo-Pacific, with emphasis on economic and security cooperation. Project 'Mausam' in 2014 and SAGAR – 'Security And Growth for All in the Region' in 2015 are part of India's endeavours to strengthen cultural links and economic relations and development in a mutually supportive and cooperative manner. Moreover, with blue economy as the current geo-economic buzzword, security on the seas is a sine qua non for sustainable development of the world by harnessing the oceans. The national interests of India viz. enhancing relations and engagement with friendly countries and strengthening the international legal regime for all-round benefit act as the prime drivers for the Indian Navy's role and efforts.

There is no energy as expensive as no energy.

- Dr Homi J. Bhabha

In such a scenario, events like the IFR act as confidence building platforms where the navies of different nations 'unite' and cooperate to celebrate each other's maritime traditions and work towards mutual benefit. Today, it is in our common interest to regard the oceans as a zone of peace and goodwill than as a theatre of war and conflict.

The IFR and Visakhapatnam

Visakhapatnam, at the midpoint of the East Coast and blessed with a great natural harbour adequately protected from the sea by the hill features around it, is an ideal location for the headquarters of the Eastern Naval Command (ENC). Vizag hosted the Presidential Fleet Review (PFR) in 2006, the first time it was ever conducted outside Mumbai. The hosting of the second edition of the IFR at Vizag is recognition of both the ENC and the city. The IFR, in some ways, is the jewel in the crown of the Eastern Naval Command. As our sentinel to the East, the Command has rendered yeoman service for close to 50 years. It has come to be associated with Vizag in multiple ways, from the ships one sees frequently at anchorage off RK beach to the Kursura museum - a marker of the city's connection with the Indian Navy's submarine branch. This symbolic association got further enhanced with the IFR where both the Navy and City played hosts just 15 months after being battered by the cyclone Hudhud. The IFR is a tribute to the resolve and the resilience of both the Navyman and the Vizagite.

Vizag is known by many appellations - one of the fastest growing ports, an educational hub, city of destiny, the city of the submarine, a future smart city, and so forth. In future, she could well be known as the IFR city. Large-scale preparations, both by the ENC and the local civil administration have transformed Visakhapatnam in recent months. The greenery, the neat and clean beaches, the buzz in restaurants, hotels and malls, the picturesque tourist spots and above all the warm heartedness of the Vizagites have contributed in no small measure to the accolades that the event earned and the memories that the visitors have taken back.

Conclusion

Fleet Reviews are age old traditions that help harness our maritime heritage and history into more practical ways to cater to the complexities of a new era. Shaping a benign and conducive maritime environment, to counter global and regional threats and challenges, requires inclusive and cooperative efforts, between the nations concerned and their maritime forces. These efforts are facilitated by maritime events like IFR as a means of conducting maritime diplomacy. IFR was an endeavour by the Indian government and the Indian Navy towards promoting peaceful engagement, information exchange and maritime domain awareness. Exhibiting a benign and harmonious character, the IFR was a social, fraternal and inclusive form of naval diplomacy. In addition, the general public was also given the chance to get acquainted with our maritime history and heritage. The navies of the world shared and bonded at the IFR 2016 and displayed great esprit-de-corps in what was truly 'the mother of all events'. It is hoped the friendly and sociable ambience of the IFR would lead, at some stage in future, towards cooperative maritime frameworks that would secure our seas and safeguard our oceans.

(Concluded)



A THOUSAND HIDDEN ISLES

Prof. Manoj Das

*(A seer among scholars, the venerable Prof. Manoj Das who lives in Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, has graciously permitted the publication of this essay from his book **My Little India**)*

It was noon and under a tree along the rocky lonely road stood a young man, sweating but smiling. Our chauffeur had recognized him. He was an officer in the department of agriculture stranded because of some problem. We brought him in and resumed driving.

'My God! How come the Nutty Chief is here?' exclaimed the officer. His look was fixed on an elderly

The most effective development of education can take place only when the teacher, the student, his parents and the outside environment can interact with one another, in a series of feedback loops, free from the regimentation and irrelevant theories and principles preached from the top. - Vikram A. Sarabhai

gentleman with trousers folded up to his knees, unshaven cheeks twitching with emotion, as he talked to some farmers. One of his listeners held a perforated umbrella on his head.

He was looking into our car. The officer requested the driver to stop and got down and greeted the gentleman. I could feel that he would like me to be introduced to him. The gentleman was our chance companion's boss, in fact the second senior-most executive in the directorate of agriculture. He had cycled down to the nearby village - he avoided using cars or jeeps as much as possible - to inspect a project financed by his department, and despite his happiness at meeting us, was keen to save us the pain of standing under a hot sun and bade us goodbye impatiently.

But we had just begun to move when he shouted and stopped us and dragged out his junior and whispered something to him. 'What can I tell the Nutty Chief?' mumbled the officer when we were on the move again. 'Because he could not entertain you, he gave me money and asked me to buy you ice cream at the next bazaar.'

'Amusing!' I commented.

'Why otherwise should we call him Nutty Chief? He should by this time occupy the highest post in our department but for his idiosyncrasies!' observed the officer.

I grew curious and the officer went on enlightening me with his candid observations : 'Well, we can appreciate his stand against the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. But how not to call him crazy once you know his arguments behind his stand?'

'What are they?'

'The destructive germs can never be eliminated through any external means because they are born out of the vibrations of greed, lust and violence which man nurtures and they thrive on such elements.'

'We just met a sage!' I exclaimed absentmindedly.

'Beg your pardon?' The officer looked at me with

suspicion. I smiled and he felt assured that the population of nuts was not on the increase in his immediate vicinity after all!

We were in the bazaar that was the officer's destination. The zeal with which he looked for ice cream before bidding us goodbye, literally running from shop to shop, could be termed mad. I realized the respect the officers had for their Nutty Chief. It took me some effort to persuade him to settle for cool drinks - a double dose each to do full justice to the amount of money the Nutty Chief had given him. And I relished each drop of it as the Nutty Chief, in my vision, had truly assumed the stature of a sage.

No wonder that with the chance discovery of a character like that fresh in mind, the next discovery would be more thrilling than it would otherwise have been - for I could not have imagined a world of a thousand tranquil isles overshadowed by dense mangrove trees to have remained practically hidden, tucked in a nook of Tamil Nadu, spread over an area of some 3,000 acres. Like Browning in 'Pippa Passes,' I should have exclaimed, 'Some unsuspected isle in the far seas! Some unsuspected isle in the far-off seas!' But these were so close by! This was Pecehavaram.

The number thousand is a mere guess. It could be more. Another guess is the number of channels and lakes formed by the backwater of the sea, surrounding these isles - which could be 4,000.

Fisher-folk inhabited several of those isles. They lived in lightly built thatched houses. Occasionally, cyclones flattened their huts like those of cards. 'What do you do during such catastrophes?' I asked the boatmen who were taking us around. 'We wait and rebuild our houses,' was the quiet answer. That is what they had done for generations, without any complaint. Any idea of complaint against Nature and Destiny was foreign to them until recently. They reminded me of characters in Synge's 'Riders to the Sea'.

The mangrove forests, to be seen only in India and Australia, have their largest display here, now that the Sundarbans, once identified with them ('Sundar' means the mangrove), is fast being denuded of them.

The point of modernity is to live a life without illusions while not becoming disillusioned.

- Gramsci

The other ancient home of the mangrove under rapid usurpation by human locality is Rameswaram.

We rowed on aimlessly. I was keen to have a feel of that private world of water and woods. Their silence under a mellow sun was vibrantly alive, as alive as the meditative trees and the throbbing water.

A tiny boat manned by a girl aged ten or eleven and two little boys was floating in the opposite direction, keeping close to the other bank of the channel. I raised my camera but hesitated because of the distance.

'Hellow, little girl, our Sir would like to have a picture of yours and of your boat. Cannot you come closer?'

It was difficult to understand whether the girl heard him or not - and if she heard, whether she was ready to oblige us or not. Her boat plied along with the current while we were pushing ours against the current. We forgot her. I sat absorbed in observing the intimacy between the trees and the water, the trees and the birds nestling in them, and the sunlight and the silence. All the others on the boat were probably in a similar mood when we heard a splashing sound behind us. The girl had struggled to bring her boat closer to us.

She was in petticoat and blouse when I saw her first. Meanwhile she had wrapped herself up in a sari. She rearranged her hair as I aimed my camera at her. I captured one of the sweetest objects I had ever come across in life. Unforgettable was that combination of kindness and courtesy on her blushing face.

She turned her boat away as soon as I had clicked. She had no expectation of anything from us. She neither spoke nor smiled. Over the years I have felt confident that all the cynicism of our world cannot obliterate the imprint the girl's gesture left on my mind. Goodness is a fact of life.

Chidambaram, the seat of Nataraja, Lord Siva in the act of His Cosmic dance, was not far. 'All my thoughts on the structure of the world and its movements finds a clear exposition in the image of Lord Nataraja,' said Einstein. To concentrate on the

image was to be exported into a different dimension of time and space - where calm and movement, I eternity and hour, creation and destruction were a single experience of consciousness.

And says Ananda Coomaraswamy, 'Every part of such an image as this is directly expressive, not of any mere superstition or dogma, but of evident facts. No artist of today, however great, could more exactly or more wisely create an image of that Energy which science must postulate behind all phenomena. If we would reconcile Time with Eternity, we can scarcely do so otherwise than by the conception of alterations of phase extending over vast regions of space and great tracts of time. Especially significant, then, is the phase alteration implied by the drum and the fire which changes, not destroys. These are but visual symbols of the day and night of Brahma.

'In the night of Brahma, Nature is inert, and cannot dance till Siva wills it: He rises through His rapture and dancing, sends through inert matter pulsing waves of awakening sound, and lo! Matter also dances appearing as a glory round about Him. Dancing, He sustains its manifold phenomena. In the fullness of time still dancing, He destroys all forms and names by fire and gives new rest. This is poetry; but nonetheless, science.

A couple of Europeans were asking the priest, 'Is there any prohibition against our entering the shrine?' 'How on earth there can be?' This is a Vedic temple! answered the young priest.

He had more than answered the query. A truly Vedic temple was above all taboos, just as the Vedas were.



THE CALL AND BLESSING

Late Shri N. K. Venkateswaran

WHEN Gautama Buddha passed, Ananda, the perfect disciple, grieving and disconsolate, said to the people, "The Light is gone out of the world!" Then they cried out from the depth of their grief, "Too soon! Too soon!"

It is not power that corrupts, but fear.

- Aung San Suu Kyi

On the fateful Friday, January 30, 1948, Jawaharlal the beloved, said almost in the same voice and to the same people, though 2,500 years had stolen by, almost the same words, "The Light is gone out of the world!" and there arose a sigh that echoed mournfully over the globe.

For Gandhiji, taken all in all, was the successor to the throne, on which only one prince among men had sat, Gandhiji the Companion of Truth, the Builder of Non-violence, the most excellent good.

We can no longer stand in his company, but he still walks the earth. The voice speaks in the spiritual parliament of man. The touch still lays its sweetness on the troubled bosom and we in this country see a glorious summons beckon.

Humble and gentle, meek and fail, he was yet more powerful than any that wielded power before him, but his power was not the power of the powerful but the power of the powerless, the power of pureness and truth, the power of the loveliness of the soul, the power of simple grandness of a personality wherein millions saw themselves, the well and the ill, the poor and the famished, the power of a philosophy and fellowship of spirit that awoke the underlying riches in life. He lived in the life around him, trying to mix it with his own substance, so that worth and merit, intellect and talent, charity and nobility, daring and courage, the best of all goodness and greatness in the country, came to him, almost unbidden, in continual pilgrimage.

His life was wind and storm, but he lived unruffled. He was perhaps not a saint in the traditional succession, but saintliness found in him her native shelter. He lived a lamp unto himself, a lamp in dark that gleamed far off and nearby.

This was the man that never showed a way that he had not trodden himself, nor spoke a word that he had not tested in his own life: this was he whom, though he was perennially thrown into one sorrow after another, the spotless gladness of a life founded in moral beauty never forsook. This was the most formidable rebel that lived but a rebel without a prototype, for his enemies were his friends and companions in a common cause. This was the warrior

that shrank from striking his foe and yet was victorious: this the general that lost almost every battle he fought and yet showed before an incredulous world that his defeats were victories and that he was victorious in both life and death.

The Father of the Nation was a pilgrim and all his life a pilgrim's progress. He was a pilgrim in search of the unselfish, diligent, self-refining life. He had to pull down many barriers that stood in his path; not only political subjection but sectarian narrowness and jealousy, economic indolence and degeneration, religious blindness and bigotry, a whole host of false beliefs and rituals. He was the weakest of men that yet did the mightiest works, the meekest in the most ominous setting the commonest of men who in some degree altered the common man nearer to his own pattern by the power of his own example and the flame of his faith.

His life was a ceaseless worship and vigil to truth; his actions truth's promises and witnesses; his speech truth's open doorway.

It is this lamp of truth that made Gandhiji the Great Reconciler. He was not the founder of a faith but a fellow-traveller of the prophets, who never strayed from the 'Eternal Fount': from the Universal Will that frolics in the trembling leaf and in the toiling ant, in the mysterious atom, in the mighty sweep of suns and planets. None ever lived who did so much to bring men and men together in a common brotherhood for common ends of the deepest import. His life was one long battle to stop the recurring battles between religions and display, their sameness and oneness at the bottom and, the foremost and most steadfast Hindu of the age, none ever left behind such attestation that, whatever the complexion of the faith, all were fellow-pilgrims on the same highroad to the same fulfillment and blessing.

He lived the life of uplift abounding and became the absolute Harijan, so that the upper castes might open their eyes to the molested wealth in the lower castes and raise themselves by kinship and equality. None ever lived that so confidently and convincingly disclosed the glory of simplicity or so strove to churn and purify the life around and away.

Pathwalker, there is no path. You must make the path as you walk.

- Antonio Machado

If we ever saw him, stood in his company or listened to his voice, if he ever trod on the ground we tread, if all this had not been a dream or a vision that sped through a slumber of the country, if his spiritual valour is not to vanish from the earth, we shall set out shoulders to the Wheels of his Mission. It is a call and blessing without parallel, that we shall become a missionary nation to preach and establish the oneness of mankind—to unify ourselves on the basis of brotherhood succoured from narrow notions of caste and creed, community and race: on the basis of fundamental humanity succoured from manifold species of insidious pride.

We are thus summoned to erect a memorial to his life by rendering each his life a memorial unto him, so that we might become a pioneering nation pledged not to pause but to succeed in bringing all men together in mutual kinship.

A noble act or a good thought, a gesture of kindness or a small sacrifice, a little suffering gladly gone through for another, or a timely use of tolerant imagination, a lovely nod of the spirit or a gentle touch of the hand, accruing from each every day, will bring Gandhiji nearer and nearer and prepare this nation to set forth on the Great Enterprise.

(Courtesy : TRIVENI February, 1927)

(late Shri NK Venkateswaran, was a well-known teacher of English in several schools, briefly in North Paravur and much longer in Trivandrum. His books were published by Oxford University Press and Longmans in the UK.)



1st D.V. Subba Rao Memorial Lecture

‘STATE MUST FOLLOW CONSTITUTIONAL MORALITY’

Constitutional amendments reflect the changing aspirations of the people: Gopal Subramaniam

(Newspaper report)

The State has to be the first practitioner of Constitutional morality and protect the freedom of citizens to be different and curb the tendencies of

majoritarianism, according to Gopal Subramaniam, Senior Advocate of the Supreme Court and former Solicitor General of India.

“There is asymmetry in society and the State should ignore it, every effort to achieve homogenisation or standardisation across all sections must be curbed as it violates the principle of Constitutional morality,” he said delivering the first D.V. Subba Rao Memorial Lecture organised jointly by Gayatri Vidya Parishad, Centre for Policy Studies and Visakhapatnam Public Library here on Sunday.

No institution, Executive, Judiciary or Society, can claim infallibility and have to give due respect to Constitutional morality as all of them derive their existence from the Constitution, the former chairman of Bar Council of India said, explaining how disastrous it would be if all powers were concentrated on any one organ of our democracy.

Speaking on the importance of the Constitution and how it is a definitive guide to all organs of our democracy, he noted that April 24 was the anniversary of the most important judgment delivered by the Supreme Court – in the Keshavananda Bharati case apart from being the birth anniversary of one of the India’s finest legal luminaries D.V. Subba Rao.

Constitution represents the will of the people and the amendments brought in by the legislature reflect the changing aspirations of the people. Constitution is an enabler of all the principles of democracy and the Republic, he said. Freedom is the essence of Constitutional morality, he added.

“The Judiciary should realise that the view of the Chief Justice of India is not the view of an individual but of the institution. It is rooted in the value of the judicial system. When you embark on the journey of judiciary you leave behind all baggage. It is a demanding exercise,” the leading advocate of the Supreme Court said.

The Constitution should have directly or indirectly ensured freedom of the media, he said adding that it was unfortunate that education was

We ought to feel a sense of exhilaration that we are the people alive at a moment in history when we can make all the difference. - Al Gore

made a right after such a long time. Without education the Fundamental Right of Speech and Expression does not make sense.

Earlier, recalling the immense contribution of D.V. Subba Rao to the city, president of Visakhapatnam Public Library S. Vijay Kumar said that the city was grateful to the former Mayor for establishing many institutions in the city.

A. Prasanna Kumar, Director of Centre for Policy Studies and former Rector of Andhra University, recalled different facets of D.V. Subba Rao.

R. Venkata Rao, Vice-Chancellor of National Law School of India University, recalled his association with D.V. Subba Rao.

'Name AU convention centre after DV'

Naming Andhra University convention centre, coming up on Beach Road, after D.V. Subba Rao would honour the memory of one of the university's most illustrious alumni, Vice-Chancellor of National Law School of India University R Venkata Rao said.

Prof. Venkat Rao recalled the contribution of former Mayor of the City to the beautification of Beach Road and establishment of other institutions in the city. Subba Rao was largely responsible for creating and nurturing the institutions in the city and naming the convention centre after him would be an appropriate move, he said urging the university authorities and the government to take steps to do the needful for it.

The Hindu April 25, 2016



Booklet on Gopal Subramaniam's 1st DV Subba Rao memorial lecture, published jointly by Centre for Policy Studies and Visakhapatnam Public Library was released on May 5, 2016 by Prof. K.C. Reddy former Chairman, AP State Council of Higher Education and the 1st copy was presented to Shri A.S.N. Prasad, President of Gayatri Vidya Parishad and Chairman Centre for Policy Studies.

Book Review:

P. VAMAN RAO : RECOLLECTIONS OF A MEMORABLE JOURNEY

Edited by N.N.Dharmarajan (USA) Published by K.Ananda Krishna Printed at Print Lines Hyderabad pp 160 Rs.250-00

This is a welcome and timely publication and one cannot adequately thank young Vijay Dharmarajan and Rahul Siddhartha for persuading their reluctant grandfather to recollect his thoughts for publication for the benefit of the world of letters, journalists in particular. No praise is too high for Shri P. Vaman Rao who will be completing eighty eight years on June 12, 2016 for the perseverance and tenacity with which he still edits and publishes *New Swatantra Times*, the monthly journal, read with interest and admiration by a large number of eminent and earnest readers. In the 'Prelude' Shri Vaman Rao narrates how for so many years he desisted from writing his memoirs or autobiography because he felt 'inadequate to the task which required a particular aptitude'. That he could no longer resist the pressure of his grandsons, Vijay and Rahul, confirms the fact that nothing is impossible for the tech-savvy bright young generation of today. I am tempted to recall those famous words, though they may not apply to Shri Vaman Rao and his grandchildren, that 'grandparents and grandchildren jell well because the enemy is common'.

Shri Vaman Rao is a doyen among journalists, an enduring bridge between the hoary past and the exciting present. Son-in-law of the famous and fearless journalist-editor Khasa Subba Rao, he has upheld the high ideals and principles of his illustrious father-in-law by reviving Khasa's journal under the name *New Swatantra Times* and running it almost single-handedly for decades without the advantage of resources or adequate staff. It is a quality journal that blends tradition with modernity. Articles by and on great journalists of yesteryears and essays by young poets and writers are carried in the journal.

Peace in the whole world, still divided by greed looking for easy gain, wounded by the selfishness which threatens human life and the family, selfishness that continues in human trafficking, the most extensive form of slavery in this 21st century! - Malala Yousafzai

This is an elegantly brought out book of just 160 pages dedicated to Shri Vaman Rao's father Shri Pendyal Narasimha Rao whose picture is carried on the inside cover along with another picture of his brother P. Kishan Rao and his wife Smt. Shanta Bai who looked after him after his father's death. Fifty four pages of this book are allotted to pictures and letters of eminent persons while one hundred and six pages carry details about the family, Vaman Rao's early life (he was born in Karimnagar on June 12, 1928) and rise to prominence in public life as a correspondent of *The Hindu* and later as Director for Information and Public Relations, Tourism and Joint Secretary, Government of Andhra Pradesh.

Vaman Rao gratefully acknowledges the encouragement and guidance of veteran journalist K. Iswara Dutt. In his own words: 'Iswara Dutt gave me inspiration to join journalism. For political articles, I used to read *Swatantra*, edited by Khasa Subba Rau. I have been brought up in the tradition of being objective in journalism. I was fortunate to serve The Hindu for long'. His recollections narrate the struggles of the people of Hyderabad state during the Razakar Movement and also the famous police action that led to the merger of Hyderabad state in the Indian Union. As it is rightly said a good biography or autobiography is that which depicts objectively the conditions and struggles of the times in which the person lived.

Vaman Rao was one of the popular journalists of those times meeting and interviewing national leaders, eminent scientists and scholars. He interviewed Homi Bhabha and his report was considered a 'scoop'. A.P. Chief Ministers Sanjiva Reddy, Sanjeevaiah and Brahmananda Reddy were among the state leaders who respected his integrity and objective presentation of news and reports. In 1969 he joined the government on the very day Mrs. Indira Gandhi made her first visit to Hyderabad without giving the government prior information. Vaman Rao states that as a government official he 'survived three Chief Ministers K.B.R., P.V. Narasimha Rao, President's rule and Vengal Rao'. He was pleased

that not only the officials and nonofficials but also the Telangana leaders 'were happy at the appointment'.

The last twenty pages titled ADDENDUM-1 MY REPLIES TO QUESTIONS PUT BY MY GRANDSON VIJAY DHARMARAJAN, AN AMERICAN CITIZEN AS RECORDED BY HIM. THE QUESTIONS AND THE MANNER RAISED WERE TYPICALLY AMERICAN' make the little volume particularly interesting. Despite so many years of achievements and laurels he received from all sections P. Vaman Rao remains a humble and modest person. After the demise of his noble wife Smt. Susheela he had to fight a huge void in his personal life. But then with characteristic determination and detachment he has been pursuing his work with zeal and fortitude. The venerable veteran journalist deserves the grateful admiration of the public for what he has done and what he continues to do.

- A. Prasanna Kumar



Special forces need of the hour to tackle extremist groups, says former DGP

USA and Russia are responsible for breeding terror groups across the world, he says

(Newspaper report on a lecture delivered by Shri H.J. Dora I.P.S. (Retd.), Former Director General Police, A.P. at CPS on February 18, 2016)

Well-equipped and well-trained special forces, who would work as small cohesive units, is the need of the hour to tackle non-state actors, such as the extremist groups like the Maoists, said former DGP of Andhra Pradesh, H.J. Dora.

He was delivering a lecture on 'Combating violence- Role of civil society', organised by the Centre for Policy Studies, here on Thursday.

According to him, the internal security agencies should be empowered with special laws to tackle specific tasks suiting the particular environment. "They

The future of Asia will be shaped to a significant degree by how China and America envision it, and by the extent to which each nation is able to achieve some congruence with the other's historic regional role.

- Henry Kissinger 21

may be removed once the task is accomplished, to avoid misuse," he said.

The former DGP was of the opinion that the Maoist movement was more ideologically motivated than it is today.

Showing concern over the growth of non-state actors such as the Maoists or the Islamic State, he said, "Such actors will be the cause of worry for the next 25 to 30 years. Fundamentalism has to be rooted out to stop these forces. Fundamentalism, is not only the problem of the world but also for India," he said. Touching upon the role of civil society in combating violence, he said that there is thin line between 'Lawlessness and lawful state'.

"The mentality for violence has to be addressed at home. The seed of violence is sown at home and nurtured by society. If the problem is addressed at home and society, the de-escalation of violence is inevitable," he said. He also pointed out that the rich and powerful countries such as the USA and Russia were responsible for breeding terror groups across the world, for their own vested interest.

"Post Iraq war, most of the elite Republican Guards of Saddam Hussein had found their way into Al-Qaeda or the Islamic state," he said.

Director of the Centre A. Prasanna Kumar also spoke. On the occasion a book written by Dr. Prema Nandakumar on "Matter's logic and spirit's dream" was released.

The HINDU 19-2-2016



PRO-ACTIVE CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT WILL CONTINUE:

PRAVIN KUMAR I.A.S.,
Commissioner, GVMC

(Newspaper report on a lecture delivered by Shri Pravin Kumar at CPS on April 12, 2016)

Direct engagement of citizens in articulating their needs, taking up proposals for projects, scrutiny,

questioning about implementation and performance will give credibility to the municipal corporation and help it achieve bridge gaps and get the best benchmarks, Municipal Commissioner Pravin Kumar has said.

Speaking on "Civic governance and public participation" at a meeting organised by Centre for Policy Studies of Gayatri Vidya Parishad on Monday, he gave credit to the 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendments for bringing micro management of civic issues within the ambit of local bodies, be it urban or local.

Citizen engagement

Asserting that the GVMC would be proactive in citizen engagement, he said the grievances on Monday brought to the notice of officials hundreds of issues. Solving them would build confidence and bring them back with more issues.

That's why more importance was given to interaction with resident welfare associations, women groups and slum-level federations.

However, sections of society should relate themselves to the importance of engagement. "Europe and South East Asian countries where smart cities came up are decades ahead whereas in most of the Indian cities few sections give feedback and others remain neutral," Mr. Pravin Kumar said.

This would sometimes make city managers reluctant to seek feedback and as a result there was disconnect, he pointed out.

Mass participation

Citizen engagement played a key role in the selection of smart cities and programmes like Swachh Bharat catalysed mass participation, the Commissioner said.

Stray dogs: civic body to take up six-month mass sterilisation

True to Municipal Commissioner Pravin Kumar's emphasis on public participation, the interaction that followed his speech at Centre for Policy Studies

Almost all men who are secure from want and care, now that at last they have thrown off all other burdens, become a burden to themselves. - Schopenhauer

meeting on Monday threw light on the chronic issues that dog civic governance.

Answering T. Gopal, the Commissioner said a six-month mass sterilisation programme would be taken up to reduce the stray dog population.

There are Supreme Court guidelines to be followed while implementing the animal birth control (ABC) programme, he said.

Water storage

Retired Superintendent Engineer of Irrigation Narayana Raju said that industrial establishments had to increase their storage capacity. The Yeleru canal needed better maintenance after it came under the VIWSCO. It was silted up to three meters and unless it was closed for 60 days every year during summer it would further deteriorate, he added. To utilise the Polavaram Left Main Canal water, storage facilities had to be created, he pointed out.

Mr. Pravin Kumar said he was aware of the need to close Yeleru Canal for maintenance, but it could not be done owing to scarce water situation.

Traffic management

GVP Director (Research Projects) P.S. Rao wanted students of the 15 to 20 engineering colleges in and around the city to be involved in various issues particularly traffic management.

B.S. Sastry complained about the functioning of the STPs and non-de-silting of open drains regularly. Mr. Pravin Kumar said the 25 mgd STP at Appu Ghar had been renovated.

Visiting professor of GVP College of Engineering C. Chandran complained about overflowing sewage water and the need to train drains on both sides.

The Hindu, April 13, 2016



VAJPAYEE'S TRIBUTE TO NEHRU

India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru passed away on May 27, 1964.

One of the greatest tributes to him came from Atal Bihari Vajpayee in Parliament. Vajpayee was then a brilliant opposition leader.

"A dream has remained half-fulfilled, a song has become silent, and a flame has vanished into the unknown. The dream was of a world free of fear and hunger; the song a great epic resonant with the spirit of the Gita and as fragrant as a rose; the flame a candle which burnt all night long, showing us the way;" adding that that Nehru was 'the orchestrator of the impossible and inconceivable.'

That was fifty two years ago!

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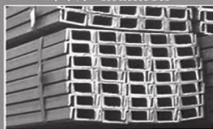
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