

BULLETIN

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MAKING DEMOCRACY SAFE FOR THE WORLD

Almost a hundred years ago, on April 2, 1917 to be precise American President Woodrow Wilson sought the approval of the American Congress for declaration of war against Germany so that the world "be made safe for democracy." Wilson's appeal was acclaimed and approved because Germany's cruel submarine warfare killed 'many peaceful and innocent lives in one of the darkest periods of modern history'. Since then 'making the world safe for democracy' has remained one of the famous quotes in public discourse. Ironically enough the happenings, during the last three decades and more, in the name of freedom and democracy seem to have necessitated an alteration of the Wilsonian maxim into that 'democracy be made safe for the world.' Not only because of the fact that during the past three decades 24% of the world's democracies have broken down and the world is experiencing 'a slow degradation of political rights and legal procedures through electoral fraud and the rise of authoritarian leaders' but also due to the fact that democracy is providing space for demagogues and corrupt elements to exploit the vulnerable and disadvantaged sections of the society. Authoritarianism, crony capitalism, dynastic rule and primordial loyalties have emaciated democracy to such an extent that rule of law and respect for basic human rights have been marginalized.

'Freedom itself is not free' - is no longer a cliché but a threat looming ominously on the political horizon. According to Freedom House that conducts research and advocacy on democracy, political freedom and human rights 'the state of freedom is worsening significantly in every part of the world'. Only 89 countries out of 195 are designated Free and they represent 40 percent of global population, 51 countries are deemed 'Not Free' and 55 Partly Free. 125 countries are described as electoral democracies. Freedom of expression and civil society rights continue to decline. Added to this is the growing restriction on freedom of movement – all in violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948.

Public concern over the future of democracy is growing as evidenced by the works of scholars and analysts expressing doubts and anxiety about the future of democracy. *Democracy in Decline?* edited by Larry

Diamond and Marc Plattner states that 'liberal democracy is in trouble' and the democratic world is in 'recession.' In his review of the book in Foreign Affairs issue of May-June 2016 John Ikenberry writes about 'the undertow of dashed expectations that seems to define the fate of modern democracy: political gridlock, economic stagnation, growing inequality fraying social contracts , reactionary nationalism and rising authoritarianism. They make 'the stunning observation' that the world is experiencing 'a slow degradation of political rights and legal procedures through electoral fraud and the rise of authoritarian leaders.' Marc Plattner in his article in the June issue of *Democracy & Society* identifies three reasons for doubts about democracy 1) the growing sense that advanced democracies are in trouble in terms of their economic and political performance at home 2) the new self-confidence and seeming vitality of some authoritarian countries and 3) the shifting geopolitical balance between democracies and their rivals. In the May 2-15 issue of *New York* Andrew Sullivan writing under the title "Our democracy has never been so ripe for tyranny" refers to the 'dystopian election' campaign that has unfolded in the United States. He begins with a quote from Plato's *Republic* that "tyranny is probably established out of no other regime than democracy." The vicious campaign in the run up to the US Presidential election has unleashed forces that threaten to deepen the fissures in American society.

Democracy has been hijacked in both advanced and developing countries by demagogues who thrive on evocation of hatred and spread of intolerance. India's decline as a democracy has been alarmingly steep. Institutions have decayed and professional autonomy has collapsed. The state is now perceived as the main source of all chronic afflictions such as violence, corruption and poverty. Still India's stability as a democracy is vital not only for Asia but for the entire world. It is a testing time for the nation as threats continue to emanate from across the border to India's security while anti-national forces pose a serious challenge to the unity and integrity of India. Can India come out of the present morass? Why not? Civil society should help politics in making the impossible possible.

- The Editor

India is growing in importance and seeking greater integration into organizations
that govern international affairs.

- The New York Times, Editorial, June 4, 2016

INDEPENDENCE DAY THOUGHTS

On August 15, 2016 India enters her 70s

A few nuggets of wisdom from the speeches of stalwart leaders delivered on that historic occasion of August 14-15, 1947 are presented hereunder

Babu Rajendra Prasad in the Constituent Assembly:

In this solemn hour, of our history when after many years of struggle we are taking over the governance of this country, let us offer humble thanks to the Almighty Power that shapes the destinies of men and nations and let us recall in grateful remembrance the services and sacrifices of all those men and women, known and unknown, who with smiles on their face walked to the gallows or faced bullets on their chests, who experience living death in the cells of the Andamans, or spent long years in the prisons of India, who not only lost wealth and property but cut themselves off from near and dear ones to devote themselves to the achievement of the great objective which we are witnessing, today. Let us also pay our tribute of love and reverence to Mahatma Gandhi who has been our beacon light, our guide and philosopher during the last thirty years or more. He represents that undying spirit in our culture and make-up which has kept India alive through vicissitudes of our history.

From Dr.B.R.Ambedkar's closing speech in the Constituent Assembly:

It is quite possible for this new born democracy to retain its form but give place to dictatorship in fact. If there is a landslide, the danger of the second possibility becoming actuality is much greater. If we wish to maintain democracy not merely in form, but also in fact, what must we do? The first thing in my judgment we must do is to hold fast to constitutional methods of achieving our social and economic objectives. It means we must abandon the bloody methods of revolution.

Rajaji (*Hindustan Times*, August 15, 1947):

The independence of India is a settled fact! I have seen it with my own eyes! I wish I were young again.

Jawaharlal Nehru in an address at the Aligarh Muslim University, 24 January 1948:

For my part I wish to say that, in spite of everything, I have a firm faith in India's future. I am proud of India, not only because of her ancient, magnificent heritage, but also because of her remarkable capacity to add to it by keeping the doors and windows of her mind and spirit open to fresh and invigorating winds from distant lands. India's strength has been twofold; her own innate culture which flowered through the ages, and her capacity to draw from other sources and thus add to her own. She was far too strong to be submerged by outside streams, and she was too wise to isolate herself from them, and so there is a continuing synthesis in India's real history and the many political changes which have taken place have had little effect on the growth of this variegated and yet essentially unified culture. It is the future that counts, more especially to the young, and it is that future that beckons to you. How will you answer that call?

S. Radhakrishnan's midnight speech in the Constituent Assembly on the dawn of freedom:

A free India will be judged by the way in which it will serve the interests of the common man in the matter of food, clothing, shelter and the social services. Unless we destroy corruption in high places, root out every trace of nepotism, love of power, profiteering and blackmarketing which have spoiled the good name of this great country in recent times, we will not be able to raise the standards of efficiency in administration as well as in the production and distribution of the necessary goods of life. If India gains freedom, that freedom will be used not merely for the well-being of India but for *Vishva Kalyana*, i.e., world peace, the welfare of mankind.

Jayaprakash Narayan:

The modern structure of society is very unjust. In the name of law and order, so much injustice is being perpetuated. Gandhiji said that he wanted that every individual should have all his primary needs fulfilled – enough clothing, a decent house to live in, education for his children, medical care for the sick and disabled in the family, and equal opportunity for employment. These five primary needs of every man should be met in whichever community he lives. He wanted everyone to have a full life. He also wanted that as a moral virtue, as a social duty, everyone should voluntarily place a limit on his own wants. Otherwise, if unlimited wants are to be pursued, human society will be destroyed; we will land ourselves in disaster.

In this structure composed of innumerable villages there will be ever-widening, never-ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom.

- Mahatma Gandhi

Cultural Diplomacy: Leveraging India's Soft Power Eighth Pupul Jayakar Memorial Lecture

Shri Shyam Saran

Former Chairman,

RIS & former Foreign Secretary

I wish to thank the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, INTACH, for inviting me to deliver the 8th Pupul Jayakar Memorial Lecture. INTACH is one of the most important centres of excellence in our country, dedicated to the preservation and promotion of Indian cultural and historical legacy. And, it is no surprise that like several other sister institutions, it owes its existence to Pupul Jayakar's initiative. She was passionate about India's art and culture, its craft traditions, its intangible cultural assets such as folk songs and story-telling. She was, in every sense, an embodiment of the finest sensibilities bequeathed to us by India's rich cultural and spiritual heritage. She was as much at home with the country's vivid and colourful tribal culture as she was with the complex aesthetics and layered symbolism of its most classical and elevated art forms. In fact, it would be fair to say that the entire spectrum of art, from the tribal to the formal, from crafts to classical forms, was to her, a seamless continuity.

Pupul Jayakar was influenced deeply by theosophy and became a follower of one of its best known spiritual masters, J. Krishnamurti.

One of my treasured possessions is an autographed copy of her celebrated biography of the spiritual guide and teacher. This was her gift to me in the midst of the Festival of India in Japan in 1987/88, which I regard as one of our most successful forays in cultural diplomacy, showcasing the breathtaking range of cultural experiences that India has to offer. The Festival in Japan, just like the earlier Festivals in the US and France, was meticulously choreographed by Pupul Jayakar. As coordinator of the Festival in the Indian Embassy in Japan, I had the rare privilege of working closely with her, putting in place nearly 30 events – performing arts, theatre, exhibitions, fashion

shows and film festivals, which eventually covered as many locations throughout Japan. Japanese TV channels carried Festival related programming of over 100 hours, all without cost, bringing Indian culture as a living phenomenon into the homes of millions of Japanese. And over this veritable cultural feast presided Pupul Jayakar, not inappropriately known as the Czarina of Indian culture. I am honoured to have been invited to deliver this address in her memory.

The Festivals of India, which have now been institutionalized, were conceived by her, and embody in practical form, what cultural diplomacy is all about, demonstrating its capacity to deliver impacts that often elude traditional diplomacy, to which it still plays second or even third fiddle. I believe that the role of culture in international affairs is consistently underestimated and therefore, under invested in.

What is cultural diplomacy? In a study carried out in the U.K. a couple of years ago, the following definition was offered:

"Cultural diplomacy may be best described as a course of actions, which are based on and utilize the exchange of ideas, values, traditions and other aspects of culture or identity, whether to strengthen relationships, enhance socio-cultural cooperation, promote national interests and beyond. Cultural diplomacy can be practiced by either public sector, private sector or civil society."

This is an operational definition of cultural diplomacy and useful as a frame of reference. But in fact cultural diplomacy has a much deeper significance than is captured in the associated semantics. We may not always be aware of this but culture provides the operating context for politics. It is the prism through which people perceive each other, nations interpret each other and mediate their differences and celebrate their affinities. The state has a key role to play but not an exclusive role because culture relates to people, their deep seated attitudes and ways of living. Cultural diplomacy pursued by the state is most effective when it plays an enabling role, providing opportunities, platforms and resources for people

Your blood, your food, and your money are all the gifts of your parents.
If you satisfy your parents, then God will also be satisfied with you. - Sri Sathya Sai Baba

themselves to get into the business of engaging, debating and sharing their cultural lives with counterparts in other countries. This may be in the form of art, language, literature, history, performing arts, theatre, or just workshops and seminars. The range of cultural exchanges really has few limits. The mutual familiarity, awareness and understanding created through such encounters generates cultural literacy. And cultural literacy is indispensable to acquiring a capacity to interpret actions by other states and navigate the inherent diversity that characterizes inter-state relations. What may positively influence one state may mar relations with another. There is no standard formula or generic template. Each country and its people are unique and their cultural particularities need to be understood even while making the effort to help them understand our own. In some cases, as with the Chinese or the Japanese, knowledge of their languages and the complex nuances that underlie the use of words is indispensable. In other cases, language may not be a barrier such as with Pakistan, but there may be cultural or psychological chasms of a different kind.

Most misunderstandings and even conflicts between states, as between people, arise from misperceptions and faulty interpretations of behavior. And cultural illiteracy is usually the culprit. But much of this is intangible, difficult to measure and even to articulate but it is critical to diplomacy, not a mere supplement to it.

Diplomacy is anchored in cross-cultural engagement which engenders a cultivated sensitivity to the cultural idiom of a country one is dealing with. It is this sensitivity which confers the ability in a diplomat to sense the shifts in moods and expressions of his interlocutor and read the clues to a reality that often lies hidden behind formal articulations. I would go further and add that it is not only familiarity with other cultures that is necessary for a diplomat to discharge his duties effectively. There is need for cultural empathy . One needs to have a compelling curiosity about the culture of a country one is exposed

to, its history, customs and traditions and, yes, the dreams and aspirations of its people. This applies to friend and adversary alike. The ability to locate current interaction in a broader cultural context, may help enhance the positive and limit the negative impact on inter-state relations. This enables genuine dialogue and not merely conversations.

Thus I see cross cultural engagement as an essential and enabling component of successful diplomacy and this goes beyond promoting cultural exchanges.

While serving as a diplomat in several countries, I had the opportunity to explore and appreciate the cultures that I came in touch with. But in doing so I also felt the urge to know about my own culture in all its bewildering variety. This in itself was an exciting journey but it was a journey that ran parallel to the mission of exposing others to our own cultural heritage, delighting in discovering both unexpected affinities and often novel perspectives on the human experience. The diplomat becomes both an interlocutor and an interpreter, the medium through which cultures speak to each other and hopefully break down the persistent national stereotypes and prejudices which undermine mutual understanding and peace.

Let me take you back to the Festival of India in Japan to demonstrate the power of culture to project in a most powerful manner, the inclusive, accommodative and secular fabric of India. At the inauguration of the Festival, the Dagar brothers, Nasir Moinuddin and Nasir Aminuddin, sang an exquisite Shiva Stuti, which held the large Japanese audience spell bound. After the Inaugural ceremony there was a reception in the foyer where Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and his Japanese counterpart, Takeshita were mingling informally with guests. Takeshita wanted to meet the Dagar brothers whose singing had deeply impressed him. When he was introduced to the brothers, Takeshita asked Aminuddin about the composition that he had been singing . Aminuddin replied that it was an ancient invocation to Lord Shiva,

Gandhi made it impossible for the British to go on ruling India, but at the same time he made it possible for the British to abdicate without rancour and without dishonour. Arnold Toynbee

seeking his mercy and benediction. Takeshita expressed surprise, exclaiming, "But are you not a Muslim ?"

And Aminuddin replied, Yes I am a Muslim but also a devotee of Shiva. I pay homage to Allah through my song in praise of Shiva. Another instance of the power of culture in diplomacy is my own experience with a Festival of India I organized in Indonesia in 2002 . There were several music and dance performances, exhibitions and jointly choreographed programmes with Indonesian artistes. The island of Bali was one of the most important venues for us given its cultural connections with India. The then governor of Bali was a most enthusiastic sponsor and several events were slated to be held there in the last phase of the Festival. In a meeting I had with him on October 10, we had fixed the inauguration for October 18 with a flute recital by Hari Prasad Chaurasia. A day after I returned to Jakarta came the horrifying news about a terrorist bomb attack in the tourist district of Kuta in Bali with over two hundred people dead. I called the Governor and offered my condolences but also conveyed that I was cancelling the Festival in Bali in the wake of the tragedy. I was surprised when the Governor literally begged me not to cancel the Festival saying that Bali needed the Festival more precisely because the tragedy had taken place. I demurred pointing to inevitable concerns about security of the artistes and the possible negative reaction amongst Indonesian people that we were celebrating a cultural festival- a happy occasion- just a few days after the unprecedented and tragic loss of life in the terrorist attack on the island. The Governor's response was to again reiterate that his people needed the balm of culture to cope with this tragedy and India could provide the solace they needed. He said that many foreigners were leaving Bali in fear; would India, too, abandon Bali?

That settled the argument as far as I was concerned. We went ahead with the Festival. At the inauguration, in a hall designed to accommodate 750 people, there were hundreds more, several outside in the courtyard watching the event on giant screens.

The Governor and his entire Cabinet were in attendance. Pandit Hari Prasad ji dedicated his outstanding recital to the people who had lost their lives in the bombing incident . It was truly an emotional moment.

Next morning while I was walking in the main street of the capital, ordinary Balinese came up to me, grasped my hand and said Thank you. The Festival in Bali coming as it did just after the trauma of the terrorist outrage, got far greater response and coverage than it would have in normal circumstances. It created a wave of goodwill for India and sense of cultural and spiritual affinity which still pervades the island.

We have several programmes of cultural and academic exchanges with South East Asian countries but we often lack modesty in speaking about our cultural affinities. Some Indian scholars alienate their South East Asian counterparts by suggesting that South East Asia got its culture and art from India.

True that throughout South East and East Asia as well, one encounters the colours and sounds of India every where. But whatever cultural assets they may have borrowed from India, our neighbours to the East transformed these into exquisite examples of local genius and creativity. What has been at work here is not cultural imposition but a creative exchange that enriched both. To watch a performance of the Javanese Ramayana at the ancient Prambanan Temple at Jogjakarta is exciting precisely because its Indian origins have been lovingly reworked with local flavours to create an uniquely Indonesian product. We see what is Indian in it but mostly neglect the beauty of the layers of colour and meaning that Indonesians have added to it through the ages. We need to be humble in claiming cultural parentage. Pride if any should be in rejoicing that our ancestors provided a cultural spark which led to such a powerful surge of creativity and artistic expression in our extended neighbourhood.

Cultural diplomacy should enable a joint journey of exploration of this historical process because this

There was a time not long ago when an Indian had to hang his head in shame;
today it is a proud privilege to be an Indian. Jawaharlal Nehru

was a cultural encounter unparalleled elsewhere in the world.

Even in the Indian sub-continent which is a shared cultural space, there is need for sensitivity towards the inherent anxiety which our neighbours have about their own cultural identity being overwhelmed by the power of Indian culture. Cultural affinity needs to be pursued with humility and a readiness to acknowledge the many contributions made by neighbouring countries in enriching our shared culture of the sub-continent.

The success of Bollywood as a facet of Indian popular culture is legendary though treated with some disdain by votaries of high culture. The final event of the Festival in Indonesia was a Bollywood extravaganza of song and dance with Shah Rukh Khan as the main performer. Though the show was held in a large stadium, there was almost a stampede. Shah Rukh is probably better known in Indonesia than some of its own leaders and all his films are instant hits in the country. Amitabh Bacchan is an instantly recognisable face from the shores of Africa, across the Gulf and on to South East Asia.

Raj Kapoor's Awaara Hoon and Nargis's Mother India are still remembered in Russia and China. And no matter what barriers are erected by the Pakistani state, Bollywood and its stars still rule the Pakistani imagination.

The Indian state has had little to do with this most powerful instrument of cultural impact, but it could certainly leverage it to the country's advantage. I attach value to cultural diplomacy for another reason, which has to do with the excitement of discovering the many treasures of India's own cultural heritage, lost to us because of loot and plunder or the ravages of time and weather, which lie embedded in the cultures of the many countries which constituted India's extended neighbourhood through the centuries. This extended neighbourhood was defined by the monsoon winds which linked peninsular India with the countries of South East Asia and the Far East on its eastern flank and the Gulf, Arabian peninsula

and the east coast of Africa on its western flank. But there was also the many centuries of interaction with Central Asia along the caravan routes threading across the high mountains and deserts to the north. The Mughal empire created a unique Indo-Persian cultural space whose fascinating story has been detailed in Audrey Truschke's recent book, "Culture of Encounters- Sanskrit at the Mughal Court." India is a cross-roads culture, its cosmopolitan temper, its embrace of plurality, being the precious legacy of its lying astride both the maritime and caravan routes of the past. It had much to give to its neighbourhood and the colours and echoes of India are to be found throughout this extended neighbourhood. Equally, one must acknowledge, our own culture carries the imprint of what we learnt from our neighbours, both far and near. The exploration of the history, philosophical traditions, language and scripts, sacred literature, architectural forms and art idioms of countries in this extended neighbourhood is one of the most important missions of cultural diplomacy. This exploration has to be a shared enterprise with our partner states. This will reveal as much of our own history and culture as it would theirs and through this will be born a stronger sense of affinity, a shared frame of reference which more traditional diplomacy can draw upon.

During my assignments in China, Japan, Indonesia, Nepal and Myanmar and visits to Tibet and Xinjiang, I was struck by how much of India's sacred literature, both Hindu and Buddhist, were preserved in temples and monasteries and even in modern libraries.

There were original texts in Sanskrit or Pali; there were also translations in local languages. Let me share with you an example from Japan. While serving in Japan, I had the opportunity to visit the ancient monastery town of Koyasan, not far from the ancient capital of Kyoto. Koyasan is associated with the name of Kobo Daishi, a Buddhist monk, who lived from 774-835 AD. Like many other Japanese Buddhist monks, Kobo Daishi also travelled to China to study under Chinese masters. Kobo Daishi spent several years in

With 500 motivated men it will take me 50 years to transform India.
with 50 women it may take me only one year. Swami Vivekananda

Xian, the then Chinese capital, where he learnt Sanskrit and studied Buddhist scriptures under an Indian scholar, Pandit Prajna, who had come all the way from Nalanda, which in those days was truly the knowledge capital of Asia. On his return to Japan, Kobo Daishi introduced the Sanskrit syllabary in the Siddham script, to the Japanese language and this forms the basis of katakana, the supplemental phonetic alphabet which is used together with Chinese characters or the Kanji. But Kobo Daishi also brought with him a very large stock of Buddhist scriptures, Sanskrit texts on secular subjects such as astronomy and medicine and scholarly commentaries, which are still stored in an ancient library at Koyasan and treated as a national treasure. Kobo Daishi's "Catalogue of Imported Items" gives us an idea of the wealth of invaluable Indian historical, sacred and secular texts which he had accumulated over his many years in Xian and which are not only the cultural legacy of Japan but also of our own country. A very old and distinguished Japanese monk at Koyasan, in whose company I visited the library, told me that several of the texts no longer existed anywhere else in the world, the originals and even translations having been destroyed in wars, revolutions, civic strife, fires and disasters over the centuries. Should not cultural diplomacy enable a joint Indo-Japanese project, which may have to be spread over several years, to research this invaluable source of our own forgotten history?

The period between the 8th to the 12th centuries was one of intense cultural, indeed knowledge exchange between India and the Arab world, with Central Asia playing the role of intermediary. This has been meticulously chronicled in Frederick Starr's "Lost Enlightenment". During this 500 year period, Central Asia was invaded by the Arabs and Arabic soon became the lingua franca of the entire Islamic world stretching from the margins of Europe to the edges of the Indian subcontinent. Classic Sanskrit texts on Indian medicine, mathematics and philosophy, travelled to Central Asia where they were translated into Arabic and transmitted to the Arab peninsula. The medical treatises of Charaka and

Susruta, the mathematical and astronmonical theories of Aryabhata and Brahmagupta were translated into Arabic by well-known Central Asian scholars like Khwarazmi, Ibn Sina and Al-beruni. Several of these treatises were already available in Persian from earlier exchanges between Iran and India. These include 6th century Persian translations of Pancatantra and the Hitopadesa. These, in turn, found their way to Europe, becoming part of the European renaissance from the 12th century onwards.

The Indian numeral system, the concept of shunya or zero and the decimal, the calculation of pi and the notion of negative numbers and integers, are part of India's intellectual legacy which spread far beyond its borders including to Europe and China.

The world today presents new challenges to the practice of cultural diplomacy. At one end of the spectrum, the communications and information revolutions, have brought humanity much closer than at any time in history. There are vastly expanded opportunities to directly experience other cultures through travel or to learn about them through virtual media. There is a continual exposure to different ways of life, cultural norms and traditions and cuisine. An international Yoga Day has made this quintessentially Indian heritage a global phenomenon and reinforced India's soft power. This increasing interaction among different countries, peoples and cultures is leading to cultural enrichment, a growing appreciation of what is best in every culture and, hopefully, a heightened cultural sensitivity to the particularities of individual cultures. The intensity of cultural interaction globally is leading to a burst of creativity and intellectual ferment across the world and this is welcome. The U.K. study on Cultural Diplomacy which I referred to before says:

"As opportunities for global contact and exchange are proliferating as never before, and because of these contacts, culture itself is changing. Cultures are meeting, mingling and morphing."

But there is also a dark side that has been unleashed by the same proximity, for example, the fear

In a world without functioning institutions, predatory behavior and the passions of domination and submission blot out the long term economic logic. The primary problem of politics is not creating growth. It's creating order. - David Brooks

of a loss of identity, a sense of being culturally adrift in a world being transformed with unprecedented rapidity.

Indian culture has been constantly evolving, changing and adding new layers of experience, but always retaining the eternal strands that define its identity. But there are times when we tend to reject the present and the promise of the future in favour of a remembered past and ancient glory. But as Nehru observed in a comment about culture:

"A nation cannot prosper if it merely imitates its ancestors. What builds a nation is creative, inventive and vital activity."

Mechanical imitation inhibits the process of engagement and dialogue not only between cultures but between generations born into the same culture. Instead of celebrating diversity and sharing cultural experiences, we begin to raise walls around us and seek to stifle the very impulses which keep our culture alive and vibrant. A culture that does not share will soon stagnate and die. Cultural diplomacy is all about sharing not showing.

I truly believe that open and liberal societies, in particular plural democracies like our own, are far better equipped to successfully navigate the increasingly congested world which is emerging. The hallmark of a great and successful power of the future will be the ability of its people to handle diversity and adapt to different cultures. In seeking our place in the world, India should be careful not to devalue the very strengths we possess as a confident and accommodative, indeed assimilative culture. We must not encourage a political culture which feeds on division, exploiting fears of the loss of imagined identities and creating a sense of siege. Our democracy is a citizen based democracy. Individual eccentricity has always found place in our culture and we must retain space for every individual to give full play to his genius, free from narrowly defined cultural categories or uninformed prejudices. If we are to engage other cultures in a productive dialogue we must reaffirm

confidence in our own and learn to accept and celebrate the diversity that lies at the heart of the idea of India.

Let me conclude by going back to Nehru, whom I consider as a rare example of a modern Indian, steeped in his country's innate cultural values and yet conscious of India's myriad connections and even indebtedness to other cultures of the world. Nehru considered nationalism as a limiting concept because from his point of view nationalism considered civilizations as unitary creations. But civilisations had emerged from interconnections with each other and India more so than the others. Therefore he said, the history of one society necessarily required knowing the history of other societies. It is this exciting adventure of mutual discovery that cultural diplomacy is all about. This is the message that Pupul Jayakar sought to convey through the Festivals of India and which is more than relevant today.

I thank you for your attention.

(CPS offers its grateful thanks to Shri Shyam Saran for according permission to publish it and Cmde. Uday Bhaskar for sending it.)



CHINA WANTS A BEIJING-LED ASIAN CENTURY: INDIA PERIPHERAL TO ITS STRATEGIC AMBITIONS

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(Former Director IDSA & NMF)

The plenary meeting of the 48-member NSG (nuclear suppliers group) held in Seoul concluded on June 24 with no specific reference to India's application as a participating government. China supported by a few other nations was able to block any meaningful discussion on the subject – much to India's disappointment.

This inconclusive result, for sure, is a tactical setback for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government but not quite the disaster or catastrophe

We believe that leaving would be a terrible error.
It would weaken Europe and it would impoverish and diminish Britain.

that some voices in the political spectrum have made it out to be. However the fallout of Seoul can have long term implications for the India-China bilateral relationship and the related realization of the ‘Asian century’.

Apropos Seoul the first question that needs to be addressed objectively is whether formal admission to the NSG as a participating government is a desirable objective for India to pursue. The context is that Delhi was accorded an exceptional waiver in late 2008 by the same group – the NSG which enabled it to engage in nuclear commerce.

The short answer is yes – the objective is desirable. The non-linear benefits of such status are not insignificant. The NSG represents one forum of global nuclear regulation-cum-governance and being part of this grouping for Delhi, which till recently was both an outsider and an outcaste - is both victory and vindication for its principled stand on the complex nuclear issue.

Concurrently, being a member of the NSG or a non-member has an embedded collateral benefit in the intricate nuclear material and technology supplier chain. If India is to realize its ambitious civilian nuclear programme, many commercial agreements with a large range of global suppliers would have to be concluded swiftly. And Indian entities would benefit by Delhi being listed as a participating government in the export control procedures with a non-linear linkage to risk-insurance-safety clauses; again, tangible benefits in the long run that are not to be scoffed at.

While noting that the outcome of Seoul is disappointing, there is a related political strand which merits notice. The China factor in the global nuclear conduct has become unambiguously visible. To the extent that nuclear restraint, fidelity to non-proliferation and rectitude in husbanding nuclear material and knowhow are the benchmarks of nuclear capable powers, Beijing has skilfully ensured that the deviant has become the norm.

China which became a nuclear weapon power in October 1964 is a recent entrant to the global

nuclear fold – it signed the NPT (nuclear non-proliferation treaty) only in 1992 and joined the NSG in 2004. However in the mid 1980s Beijing entered into a strategic relationship with the Pakistan military that included the transfer of nuclear weapons and missiles and when charged with a transgression of its NPT / NSG commitments. Beijing claims that all its actions were pre 1992.

The global nuclear domain punctuated by the Hiroshima-Fukushima trajectory is characterized by many contradictions, carefully embroidered narratives and a rhetorical commitment to high principle even while being mediated by cynical realpolitik compulsions.

The Chinese narrative in summary is that Beijing’s nuclear weapons enhance global stability and security, similar Indian capability is de-stabilizing and Pakistan needs both nuclear weapons and an investment in terror groups to balance India; and A Q Khan is a fictional character.

Thus Beijing, which reluctantly endorsed the 2008 NSG consensus to accord India an exceptional nuclear status, has cited procedures in 2016 and invoked the NPT to successfully filibuster the Seoul proceedings. It is understood that as many as 38 members of the 48-strong NSG were supportive of the Indian application – but Beijing and some ‘like-minded’ nations prevented any meaningful deliberations on the Indian application . The only anodyne reference was an outreach bullet that dwelt on “dedicated briefings for and meetings with interested non-NSG partners on the work of the Group.”

Post 9/11, security planners the world over are agreed that the worst case exigency that must be prevented is that of a non-state entity or group acquiring WMD (weapons of mass destruction) capability. The illustration is of the IS or its ideological variants (al-Qaida, Taliban et al) acquiring fissile material and holding out the threat of a radiological ‘dirty’ bomb. What would any government – be it Washington, Moscow, Paris, Beijing or Delhi do ?

Logically it would be to deliberate on this matter

The genius of democracies is seen not only in the great number of new words introduced but even more in the new ideas they express. - Alexis de Tocquville

objectively in a collective manner and review the existing state of affairs apropos nuclear material. Seoul was an appropriate forum but clearly Beijing was able to deflect the proceedings and the AQ Khan illicit network remains a mirage in the NSG narrative thanks to the US-led major power consensus in this regard.

China-India tension has now come out in the public domain – warts and all - and the statement by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) released from Tashkent about events in Seoul is case in point. Rarely has the MEA issued such a terse public statement that noted inter alia: “We understand that despite procedural hurdles persistently raised by one country, a three hour long discussion took place last night on the issue of future participation in the NSG”.

Could the Seoul experience have been handled better by Delhi? Yes, particularly in relation to gauging Beijing’s responses more astutely and not raising the NSG to the highest political level in a visibly public manner.

Furthermore, calibrated strategic communication that prioritized circumspection and being able to shape the narrative in a more empathetic and persuasive manner may have led to better dividends. The importance accorded to the NSG narrative is evident in the manner in which both Chinese and Pakistan officials worked in tandem to regularly brief the international media.

However, the contradictory compulsion is the flavor of the moment. So Beijing can welcome both India and Pakistan to the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) in the Tashkent summit and call this a ‘major step forward’ (June 25) and the Indian Finance Minister Arun Jaitley can exhort Chinese investors in Beijing (June 24) to invest in the Indian growth story.

Pakistan is now the ‘iron brother’ of China and the elder sibling is convinced that the ambitious One Belt-One Road miracle will usher in a Beijing-led Asian Century. India it appears is relatively peripheral to the go-it-alone certitude that Beijing now seeks to exude.

(Courtesy: *South Asia Monitor*, June 16, 2016)



In Quest Of The Lost Peacocks

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*)

Mid-sixties of the 20th century were a different time in village India. Still there were people to treat a visitor as a gift from Providence. No wonder that a cluster of them should brave the cold of a December night and keep standing amidst the meadow in front of their village, waiting for the vintage car that brought me from Kolhapur. They held a lantern and, through the fog, looked like a patch of the moon.

In the morning I realized how remote and distant the village was from any urban air. It was situated amidst the rums of a medieval fortress, its compound wall still standing guard over it, though broken at places for easy traffic to and fro of men and their animals.

And birds too - but not 'theirs'. They, the peacocks, conducted themselves in such a way one could conclude it was they who owned the village and the human residents were at their mercy.

Whose pets are these?' I asked my host Purushottam, the elder son of the poet, the late Madhurachenna.

My query appeared to intrigue him. I directed his attention to the village square where a proud peahen and a woman walked side by side in a carefree manner, so much so that they tumbled on each other, but none reacted. Three or four more peacocks were walking in the company of some village boys and their cattle. They cast suspicious looks at me, the solitary stranger. But the sight, so far as Purushottam was concerned, did not seem to be something more unusual than the creepers around us or the profusion of ruins.

Do you mean the peacocks? Well, their ancestors and ours probably lived together when the village itself was founded and the passage of time had not affected the coexistence!' said Purushottam.

One ineradicable habit all Indians have is to take a shortcut to their destination whatever the risk to themselves or others.

- Nirad Chaudhuri

While taking a stroll along the dusty road between the village and the cornfields, in the company of an elderly teacher, I saw dozens of bonny green pigeons gobbling up the scattered corn.

'They must be causing the villagers quite a loss!' I observed out of my worldly prudence which, in any case, was meager.

The teacher hemmed and hawed as if he had been asked to explain a fault of his own. 'But they have always depended on us!'

By and by a conviction was formed in me that the people of Halasangi - that was the name of the village - had no violence in their minds. That explained a lot of things.

Halasangi meant 'companions of the plough'. The fortress had disappeared and nobody even knew who had built it and when. On the banks of the river Bhima, not far from the village, are to be found scattered skeletons of a bygone era gradually pounded to chips by time. It is presumed there had been a war between the masters of the fortress and some invaders at the end of which none was in a position to claim the fortress.

If I had been the guest of a poet's son at Halasangi, at Bijapur the hospitality had been offered to me by Principal Desai, the son-in-law of another poet, Huilgal. My interpreter Jahagirdar and I had taken a public transport to the town and Desai had not been able to reach the bus stop on time to receive us.

'Please call a taxi,' I suggested to Jahagirdar. 'Taxi? Where on earth would I find a taxi for you at Bijapur?'

'Very well, a rickshaw should do, I suppose.'

'Where to find a rickshaw, either?'

But I was not required to stand puzzled for long. I heard, the sweet sound of trotting and soon half a dozen horse-drawn, carriages surrounded us. It appeared that the soul of the little town, tired of its history, wished to continue in its medieval snooze.

Once Bijapur vibrated to the sound of a thousand galloping horses maneuvered by their proud

riders. Today their descendants drew 'Ekkas'.

That Bijapur, till then, was in love with its medieval air became evident to me the moment I climbed the 66 metre-high Gul Gumbaz, its wonderful dome second only to the St. Peters in Rome. Upon the benches on the balconies of its upper tier, famous as the Whispering Gallery, sprawled or sat, their eyes closed, a number of young and middle-aged men. From time to time, for no provocation whatsoever, one of them would give out a shriek and then resign himself into the spell of its echoes - the weird vibrations appearing to come from some otherworldly sphere. I was told that the receding echoes of every sound numbered twenty-one.

I stood and observed those enchanted souls while my two companions went round the monument. Some of them blinked and smiled at me at intervals between their indulgences in their voices. They seemed to be under the command of some invisible spirits. Once released from their throats, it was as if their voices became the property of those spirits who changed them into a sort of uncanny laughter before licking them.

By the time I came out to the balcony, the sun was setting on a horizon studded with minarets and tall trees. All was silent but for the faint echoes oozing out from inside the Gumbaz. The sleepy town itself appeared to be an echo of the past - a past which was briefly and tersely narrated by Meadows Taylor:

'In the citadel the visitor will have many a scene of historical interest shown to him. The court which the devoted Dilshad Agha and her royal mistress Boobooji Khanu, queen of Yusuf Adil Shah, clad in armour and fighting among their soldiers, defended against the treacherous Kumal Khan ... the place where the son of Kumal Khan stood when the young king pushed over a stone from the parapet above which crushed him to death, the window where the dead body of Kumal Khan was set out as if alive to encourage the soldiery in their brutal assault ... all these will be pointed out with every accompanying evidence of probability and truth as well as the apartment from which the traitor Kishwar Khan dragged the noble-hearted queen Chand Beebee to her prison at

Things are clear when looked at from a distance.

-A.K.Ramanujan

Sattara.... And yet inspired by the effect of these beautiful ruins with the glory of an Indian sun lighting up palace and mosque, prison and zenana, embattled tower and rampart, with a splendour which can only be felt as a personal experience, it may be hoped that some eloquent and poetic pen may be found to gather up the fleeting memorials of traditions which are fast passing away and invest them with a classic interest which will be imperishable.'

Much had vanished since the time of Taylor and I am sure, much more had vanished since I visited it in the sixties of the twentieth century. However, Bijapur can still be the joy for a creative writer—not for any poet but for a novelist. He could begin from the very founding of the town by Yusuf Adil Shah:

That takes us back to the 15th century. The then Sultan of Turkey, Murad II, was an unusual character. He was determined to bring the feuding regions of the Ottoman Empire under his iron grip, but once in a while he was beset with almost an ascetic impulse. Should he sneak away from the affairs of his state and lead a life of detachment? He loved philosophy and was the first Ottoman monarch to patronize poets, artists and thinkers.

His favourite was his second son - the little Yusuf. He and his Begum looked on from their balcony when the sweet boy frolicked in their garden. But the boy failed to understand why sometime the Begum would hug him and shed tears.

One day in the year 1451 the news of Sultan Murad's breathing his last in a distant camp reached the capital. While the palace was immersed in sorrow, the Begum sought out Yusuf, took him into her embrace and swooned away. Only her confidants understood her anguish.

This was the terrible tradition ruling the dynasty: Within hours of the death of the ruling Sultan all his sons, barring the eldest, must be put to death, so that there was no rivalry for power and the Empire remained intact. Secret preparations by the inner circle of the palace began to give the younger prince, Yusuf, his due!

However, no sooner had the Begum recovered

from her fit than she sought out her most trusted eunuchs and hit upon a strategy. A poor boy, a member of a merchant's party camping in the town, was bought for a good price. He was clad in royal attire and ushered into the palace. It was whispered to him that he had been adopted by the Begum as some auspicious signs had been marked on his person.

The bewildered, if delighted, boy was served with a sumptuous dinner for the first and the last time in his life. At midnight, while preparations were afoot for the coronation of Yusuf's elder brother, Yusuf, dressed as a commoner, was entrusted to the travelling merchant on his way to Hindustan. The 'adopted' prince was found dead in the morning. His dinner, obviously, consisted of something more than mere delicacies!

He was billed out as Yusuf. The real Yusuf reached Hindustan, where for some inexplicable reason luck always seemed to have awaited the guests, and through vicissitudes of time and events, founded the Adil Shahi dynasty at Bijapur.

I had an occasion to visit Halasangi 28 years later, in 1993. On one's way from Chennai to Gulbarga or Solappur, one witnesses a number of castles in ruins on hillocks. At the foot of such hillocks golden flowers bloomed over thousands of acres of land. What a beauty! I wondered. But soon I got the explanation of the phenomenon from the conversation between two fellow passengers: Sunflower oil had become a lucrative trade.

I spent the night at Gulbarga and resumed my journey, no longer by a vintage car but by a familiar modern one. An unusually severe earthquake had jolted the region a few weeks ago and its impact was still visible. We drove through valleys and villages which were no longer as tranquil as they had been in the sixties of the past century and I did not expect them to be so. Billboards and microphones, posters of films and faces of politicians torn or given fresh touches - the charming smile of a great woman leader assuming a horrendous import because a moustache had been added to her - were the kind of treats villagers all over India had learnt to put up with, and so had the visitors from the urban world. The discordant note

The period of Indian history since 1947 might be seen as the adventure of a political idea: democracy.

-Sunil Khilnani

they struck in the sylvan air could not be wished away.

I was absorbed in my thoughts when the friend escorting me from Gulbarga said rather suddenly, 'So we have arrived!'

I woke up with a shock. Surely, I did not expect a chunk of light to emerge from fog, revealing faces of love and affection, but where is the wall isolating the habitation from the road and the fields? The wall had given way to a row of shops constituting a bazar.

Buildings had replaced the earthen houses and the village school had been promoted to a college. Lanterns and lamps had been replaced by electric light and the meeting ground was imaginatively illuminated.

But where was the grove - the hamlet of the peacocks? Can I see once again, at sundown, the spontaneous and simultaneous dance of three of them, one on the ruins of the fortress, another in the grove and a third one on a thatch?

'Where are the peacocks?' I asked a teenager in a whisper. He cast a blank look at me. I understood that he would have his chance to see the peacock when he visits the zoo in the city.

'Purushottam-ji, what happened to the peacocks?' I asked my host.

'They deserted us and found new homes in distant woods and bushes,' he said with some embarrassment. 'Once in a while some of them would come to have a look at us. That, too, they stopped gradually.'

The parrots too were gone. They had perished mostly because of the effect on them of the crop treated by chemicals.

All the faces caught in the patch of light amidst the fog in a winter night 28 years ago, barring one, had departed.

The lone survivor was the poet Madhurchenna's wife, bedridden at ninety. I sat down on the edge of her bed. She mustered light into her otherwise bleary eyes and recognized me. I saw in-them a million peacocks. My quest for the lost peacocks ended there.



THE TOUCH OF TEARS IN MULK RAJ ANAND

Dr. (Mrs.) Prema Nandakumar

Uncle Mulk passed away, just when he was racing towards the Vedic span. Yes, he was Uncle Mulk to me: "as a brother of Dr. Iyengar, I think of myself as uncle Mulk to you ..." Theirs was a friendship that spanned six decades. Father always considered him the first and foremost of Indian novelists in English, and Mulk Raj Anand had a child-like delight in referring to father's consistent support of his works, especially when he was given the pride of place among novelists in Indian Writing in English. Father was younger by three years but Anand always referred to him as his elder brother. It seemed right too. I remember their meeting in my brother's house in Chennai. Anand was speaking of father as an elder. Indeed Anand seemed younger, full of bubbling laughter and the never fading glint in his eyes, while father looked older like a sage, laughing with fond affection at Anand's prankish reminiscences, both of them discussing literature, politics, criticism, personalities.

To have reached adolescence in a house where the library already had a prominent place for The Untouchable was a remarkable introduction not only to Indian writing in English but to one's own society. As an undergraduate student of English Literature I was deeply interested in my Austen and Thackeray, Hardy and Virginia Woolf. But it was to Anand's fiction that I returned regularly, though his books were not "examination-stuff" as yet. This was my India, my country. And is it all so bad, really? Alas, all that Anand wrote were based on real-life experience, and reality was terrible for Bakha and Munoo, Gangu and Ananta, Lajwanti and Arati, Sukeshi and Savitri. Such was the power of Anand's voice, echoing the voice of the downtrodden. I could not have known about my country and my people so well even if I had attended innumerable lectures on the poverty and casteism and communal discord in India!

Born in Peshawar as the son of a coppersmith who had entered the army both for the sake of getting a regular income and for sliding out of at least some of the ignominies that were flung on the caste, Mulk

It is not the custom to use the appellation Doctor or its abbreviation Dr. when the doctorate is conferred honoris causa and not earned in the regular way. - Rajaji

Raj Anand studied philosophy as an undergraduate. He then went to Cambridge. He did his doctorate in the University of London in 1929. By now, Anand's eyes had shrewdly garnered a good deal of experience which included the domestic life-ways of India, the Jallianwallah massacre, the trade unionism in Britain and the cultures of the East and the West. He got involved with India's independence struggle and even the Spanish Civil War. During the Second World War he became a broadcaster for the BBC. After 1946, Anand settled down in India. He received several honours during his lifetime including the International Peace Prize, Vienna, the Sahitya Akademi Award and the Padma Bhushan.

There is a touch of whimsical romance in the manner in which Anand became a novelist. While in England, he had been reading plays about peasants, fishermen and slum-dwellers. His childhood and boyhood in India entangled by a number of castes called out to him for verbal recordation and he wrote a novel on an untouchable boy whom he had known in his childhood. After he had completed it, he came across Mahatma Gandhi's story of the sweeper-boy Uka in Young India. So he came to India to meet the Mahatma.

The meeting is retold by Anand with his characteristic verve. Gandhi replaced Anand's corduroy suit with a kurta-pyjama, and asked him to write "a straightforward pamphlet about Harijans" instead. Anand's reply was defensive, but firm:

"That is your job. I have written a novel about a day in the life of Bakha –about how he is slapped on the face by a caste Hindu ... I feel I want to tell the story – as you have done in your story about the sweeper Uka."

This was in 1927. Gandhi agreed to listen to the draft provided Anand did not look at women with desire, did not drink and was prepared to clean latrines. Done! Some of the major changes suggested by Gandhi were a drastic pruning of the pages and avoiding the stream-of consciousness passages given to Bakha.

"And the old man wanted me, as far as possible, to translate from the mother-tongue, and to emphasize the little touches of humanness which I had already brought to relieve the agony of my insulted hero."

Gandhi may have failed in a million fronts as far as politics was concerned, but he was an absolute success as an editor. The phenomenal popularity of Anand's Untouchable is a living proof of his sane advice; and the Anand style of "translated mother-tongue" remains unique in Indian English fiction. The only other novelist who has used this style with a measure of success is Raja Rao.

I have lost count of the times I may have read Untouchable in the last fifty years. Published first in 1935, it is a wonderful tale for reading aloud:

"'Vay, eater of your masters,' she shouted, 'may the vessel of your life never float in the sea of existence! May you perish and die! You have defiled my house! Go! Get up, get up! Eater of your masters! Why didn't you shout if you wanted food? Is this your father's house that you come and rest here?'"

To record one day in the life of the sweeper-boy Bakha in Untouchable, Anand has literally become a sweeper-boy of eighteen. Innocent, hard-working and good at heart, Bakha tries to desensitize himself to his own life. His drunkard father will not have him educated. Must he then live out all his life like this subsisting on food thrown at him as to a beggar? One can see here almost a black parallel to the rosy Brindavan of Dwapara Yuga. There are young boys and girls here too, but they are all poor wretches, wearing dirty, hand-me-down clothes. In the place of the healthy cows of Gokula we have skinny cows gifted to sweepers and Rama Charan's one-eyed ass and the bullock that mechanically goes round and round to revolve the wooden pestle in the oil-mill. Living in their one-room tenements in indescribable poverty, the boys yet know how their 'untouchable' world also has its range of castes. Their life is no care-free grazing of cows in luscious forests but the revolting job of cleaning human waste. Anand's

In India nobody will share patronage with another, whatever else he may share. I am informed by Vyasa that even the Pandavas who shared a wife refused to share patronage with each other.

- Dr. C.R.Reddy

tearless descriptions are deeply moving. Neither the author nor his characters try to elicit sympathy for the state of affairs. This is a man-made Hell, and every one of us is guilty! Why go to the Malbowges of Dante Alighieri, when we have Anand's Bulasha:

"The outcastes' colony was a group of mud-walled houses that clustered together in two rows, under the shadow both of the town and the cantonment, but outside their boundaries and separate from them. There lived the scavengers, the leather-workers, the washermen, the barbers, the water-carriers, the grass-cutters and other outcastes from the Hindu society. A brook ran near the lane, once with crystal-clear water, now soiled by the dirt and filth of the public latrines situated around it, the odour of the hides and skins of dead carcasses left to dry on its banks, the dung of donkeys, sheep, horses, cows and buffaloes heaped up to be made into fuel cakes. The absence of drainage had, through the rains of various seasons, made of the quarter a marsh which gave out the most offensive smells."

Here lives Bakha, the young man who cleans human refuse with enviable expertise. He does not love his job nor does he hate it. But, of course, he would love to get away from it all, perhaps by joining the Army. But his father would not allow him to go to school. What has an untouchable sweeper to do with studies? Is there then no way out for Bakha and his people to be freed from poverty and untouchability? Anand deftly seeks three possible ways out of the situation. One could escape the curse through religious conversion. But then, in India, one may change one's religion, but caste follows him in the environs of the new religion also! In any case one religion is as good or as bad as another. Maybe one should be inspired from the Mahatma's words that it is nothing to be ashamed of being a Harijan. Again, can centuries of self-abasement vanish by merely substituting 'Harijan' for 'Achoot'? The idea that one may feel proud of being Harijan and yet do this despicable job does not appeal to Bakha. There is also a third way out. If the modern sanitary system of using a flush becomes popular, there could be a definite erasure of the stigma. After all, the sweepers

are considered dirty and untouchable because they are engaged in the dirty work of clearing human refuse. Bakha had heard the Mahatma speak and so goes back to his dreary home at sunset, clutching the lightning streak of hope that a day may come when the mechanical latrines would be there, and Achoot would be a derogatory term no more.

Rejected by nineteen publishers before it saw the light of day, Untouchable remains Anand's classic. He was to become a prolific writer and some of his novels were sheerly brilliant by their closeness to the earth. The problem of untouchability surfaced again in his The Road (1963). Among other themes handled by Anand are the lot of the labouring class (Coolie, 1936; Two Leaves and a Bud, 1937), the impact of technology on traditional life (The Big Heart, 1945), communal frenzy (The Death of a Hero, 1964) feminism (The Old Woman and the Cow, 1960), failure in love (The Private Life of an Indian Prince, 1953) and the failure of India's educational system (Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts, 1939).

The autobiographical trilogy (The Village, 1939; Across the Black Waters, 1941; The Sword and the Sickle, 1942), is, of course, very important for the student of Anand's fiction as a whole. The childhood, boyhood and youth of Lalu Singh is the theme. The Village evokes perfectly the village of Nandpur through a variety of incidents. The most poignant of them is the hanging of Lalu's brother Sharm for killing the local landlord's son in a fit of jealousy. Fed up with his community given to superstition and empty pride, Lalu Singh joins the army. Across the Black Waters begins with the regiment's arrival in Marseilles.

Mulk Raj Anand has never failed his audience in gifting a tale that grips you with turbulent action, makes you shake with laughter and sends you into your own silence for cogitating on man, nature and Chance. The First World War is on and these sepoyys have not much understanding of the factors that have caused this widespread conflagration. But then, they have enough to attend to within their army consisting of Angrezi and the Indians. And are all the sepoyys of one kind? No!

Administrations in India, with hardly any exception, have taken little or no interest in the improvement of their cities and towns; the villages, of course, need hardly be mentioned.

-Sir Mirza M.Ismail

15

As if he were munching pepper all the time, Anand flings at us shrapnails of English: "Oh Lalu! Son of a sea-cow! Let us go and get ready!" It is as if we are listening to robust Punjabi all the time, though the instrument is the English language. Where is his equal in this transformational art spread through a score of novels? Listen to a sepoy on the environs of Orleans:

"Everything is small in these parts, Kirpu said. 'Look at their rivers – not bigger than our small nullahs. Their whole land can be crossed in a night's journey, when it takes two nights and days from the frontier to my village in the district of Kangra. Their rain is like the pissing of a child. And their storms are a mere breeze in the tall grass ..."

The other novelists of this cyberage thudding away on the keyboard of their wordprocessor might turn out sexy sizzlers to pander to an international audience, but almost all such novelists are sure to become dim memories and no more. But Anand is sure to endure because his passions are asli. The adventure from innocence to experience as young Lalu takes part in unsure engagements and comes close to death and survival is brought to us as a shared experience of tears and laughter. What can be more melancholic than these healthy farmers from Punjab digging trenches under an alien sky with scarce any idea of the forces that plaited the World War?

"And they began digging to facilitate easy passage for the dead, the souls of the dead, the wounded and the half-dead, through the trenches, the communication trenches, the traverses; they began digging at the projection of the ditches, digging furiously as if there was no time to lose, digging round the corners, shovelling and throwing frozen water with their hands across the open until their limbs were heavy and numb, and life seemed a more tolerable burden on their backs than the fear of death."

The pressure-valve that blows out the dangerous stifling within these unfortunates is a non-stop line of boisterous swear-words and proverbs: illegally begotten, rape-daughters, a dog is a lion in his own street, whoever has the staff has the buffalo.

As Anand makes Captain Owen say (and rightly too): "Civilization also means a sense of humour, you know. Don't let us fall victims to the mere solemnity of civilization."

There is a charming, poetic interlude at the French farm where Lalu makes friends with little Andre and undergoes the magic experience of tenderness while gazing at young Marie. The novel ends just when he is wounded and a German drags him to captivity. Of course, Lalu survives, and returns to India after five years in German captivity. He gets no reward except his paltry pension, his home is gone, and he starts a new life fighting the evils of landlordism. The trilogy ends with Lalu in jail, but still dreaming of a day of freedom and prosperity for the Indian peasant.

Some readers did think it tiresome of Anand to get back to autobiographical reminiscences once again in his series with the hold-all title, *And So He Plays His Part*. However, the utter realism never let him down and we have found ourselves quite often curled up in our easy chairs reading *Seven Summers* (1951), *Morning Face* (1968), *Confessions of a Lover* (1976) and *The Bubble* (1984). For these novels have a special fascination for the student of English literature and western philosophy. *The Bubble*, for instance. So many yards of conversation bringing in Wilde and Pater, Hugo and Rimbaud, Husserl and Heidegger, Yeats and A.E., E.M. Forster and W.B. Yeats. And one whole block of an encounter with Virginia Woolf.

Krishan Chander Azad goes to the Hogarth Press to meet Virginia Woolf and get her opinion on his manuscript, a 'confession'. It is a pleasant enough meeting, and we enjoy the hero's naivete and the dignified bearing of Mrs. Woolf and Leonard Woolf's helpful gestures "to connect". The likeable garrulity of Anand makes it all somehow interesting:

"Suddenly on the admission of her inner feelings, from the hollows in my soul, gushed up the enthusiasm of the naïve poet who had been able to remove his terror of this room and its polite talk and accept the words of the lady of delicate impulses as revelations. My mind was also autobiographical, but

We have a great demographic advantage in 600 million young people under 25, which means we should have a dynamic, youthful and productive workforce for the next forty years when the rest of the world is ageing. - Shashi Tharoor

also novelesque, as I wanted, like the old story teller Soma Deva, to pile up insights, thoughts and maxims. Wasn't I torn between remembering the lost paradise of childhood and philosophy?"

The Bubble also carries the mutual recriminations between father and son in the form of letters. Interestingly enough each is right from his point of view. In the course of this duel, Anand fixes his rapier firmly on the ground, the ideal by which he lived out his life for the six decades that followed:

"I will have to find a modest way to earn a living by writing books about my searches and not go in for service with the hope of a pension at the end. I will have to overcome the fear of poverty, so that the dampening anxiety about not having enough will not smother the glow inside me. But I do not believe in having too much, except the fruits which one can share."

Not mere words these. There were two strands in him that almost pulled him apart, but he reconciled them with admirable elan. One was his deep sympathy for the marginalised in our community. The other was the artist's soul in him, hungering for the glory and beauty of existence. This is the reason why many of his novels and short stories, though sporting themes that could bring depression to us on the sunniest days, have an artistic glow. Nor was he an arm-chair philosopher pontificating on the existence of poverty and untouchability in India. As he wrote to my father in 1961:

"I am ... doing some village social welfare work in order to integrate my love for the poor with actual work for them ... I never realized, as intensely as I do now, the reasons why both Tolstoy and Gandhi chose the peasantry for their devotion. After writing for many years about pains of these people, I now feel that, for their sake, it may not all have been in vain. The Old Woman and the Cow and The Road will confirm the poetic truth that the alleviation of pain and its expiation are the only values given to our intelligentsia in the present time."

The artist in Anand inspired him to found the magazine Marg in 1946 when he decided to make India

his permanent home. He was the editor of the magazine (its title is an acronym of Modern Architectural Research Group) which successfully attempted to relate India's ancient past with other civilizations and disseminate information that would help the future generations appreciate the glory and good in the past and apply their findings to create a beautiful tomorrow. Indeed, Anand contained multitudes. For did he not publish Curries and Other Indian Dishes quite early in his career?

Anand was also a master of the short story. 'The Man who was too Honest for his Job' alone is enough to give us the very rasa of corruption in independent India. The silences between the contractor and the young Captain Vatsayan and the denouement which is actually a continuing tragedy in India thanks to Colonel Varma! Tamasic fools wasting their time speaking of a past glory, idiots spreading around their pride in caste, innocents from rural countryside who come to towns in search of livelihood They all rush in droves to Anand and get transformed into unforgettable characters reserving a permanent place in our consciousness. Dr. M.K. Naik has rightly referred to the stories of Anand as "a museum of human nature". Well, 'The Lost Child' among his stories goes even further. It is a veritable grammar of love, "the love that moves the sun and the stars", the love that cannot be quantified, the love that is as pure as the gushing Ganges at Gangotri. Anand has produced a perfect image-record of a universal experience.

A couple take their child to a fair in the festival of spring. Their walking towards the fair itself is sheer poetry. The stern father, the anxious mother, the innocent boy repeatedly lagging behind attracted by the lovely movements of nature:

"A group of dragon-flies were bustling about on their gaudy purple wings, intercepting the flight of a lone black butterfly in search of sweetness from the flowers. The child followed them in the air with his gaze, till one of them would fold its wings and rest, and he would try to catch it. But it would go fluttering, flapping, up into the air, when he had almost caught it in his hands."

Professor Radhakrishnan will be remembered as the man who made possible by his own eagerness, a shared understanding between East and West.

Anand's eyes miss nothing. Rather, Anand's eyes through the lens of the child miss nothing. They have come to the fair and what a wonder world the child in Anand watches here! And how the child in Anand stretches his hands out for a piece of burfi, a garland, a balloon! No, the father will not buy anything. The child knows the negative reply echoing silently in his heart: "you are too greedy ... you are too old to play with balloons..."

The attraction towards the snake-charmer or the merry-go-round is neutralised by the self-repulsion induced by the fear of parental frown. From a distance the boy stands watching forlornly while the merry-go-round is moving very fast. Soon his consciousness gets involved in it as he watches:

"The ring seemed to go fiercely at first, then gradually it began to move less fast. Presently the child, rapt, finger in his mouth, beheld it stop. This time, before his overpowering love for the anticipated sensation of movement had been chilled by the thought of his parents' eternal denial, he made a bold request: 'I want to go on the roundabout, please, father, mother.'"

There is no reply and now the child realises that he is alone in that buzzing humanity. It is a heart rending sight to watch Anand's accurate pen visioning the child searching in vain for his parents. A kind-hearted man rescues the child from the crowd and tries to pacify him. Would he like to go on the roundabout? Or listen to the juggler's music? Would he like a balloon? A sweet? "The child turned his face from the sweet shop and only sobbed: 'I want my mother, I want my father.'"

A perfect story in every way, 'The Lost Child' is also Anand's message for humanity. It is the love that cares not for the baubles of the world but cries out for a soul-togetherness that can ultimately redeem mankind. At the moment of crisis, the child had opted for *sreyas* instead of the temptations of *preyas*. Be a child, be a child, and keep your heart tuned to the mantra of love!



Book Review:

HALF-LION

HOW P.V. NARASIMHA RAO TRANSFORMED INDIA

VINAY SITAPATI

PENGUIN-VIKING 2016 Rs699 pp 391

"The ambiguities and contradictions of Narasimha, half-lion, are precisely why he is able to slay the demon," a line from *Narasimha Avatar, Bhagavatha Purana* on the first page of this tome of 391 pages says it all. The biography of the late P.V. Narasimha Rao who transformed India is presented in fifteen chapters by a brilliant young political scientist, journalist and lawyer. As K.Natwar Singh wrote Sitapati 'resurrected' Narasimha Rao. And that is no ordinary achievement. In fact, Natwar Singh's piece on P.V.Narasimha Rao in his beautifully crafted book *Walking with Lions* is a masterpiece.

Vinay Sitapati's credentials are impeccable. He studied at National Law School of India University, Bengaluru and at Harvard University. He is completing his doctoral dissertation at Princeton. Passion for detail and perseverance of a good researcher in collecting material from several sources are allied to a racy style of writing. Natwar Singh describes the work as "an extraordinary portrait of an erudite and Delphic prime minister" while Ramachandra Guha calls it a 'fascinating study' that 'brings Rao vividly alive'. P.V.Narasimha Rao's Insider was tedious stuff and difficult to go through. Sitapati's biography is almost unputdownable. It is also timely because as the author says in the twelve years since his death P.V.Narasimha Rao continues to be ignored by his party. Even when the Congress was in power both at centre and in Andhra Pradesh the government did not celebrate his birthday. Much worse is the fact that no leader holding such high position ever suffered public insult and ridicule as P.V.Narasimha Rao in the history of modern India. The very first chapter titled Half-

As P.M, P.V. had shown uncommon political skill. Heading a minority government, he was able to complete five years by keeping his allies with him throughout. Our concerted efforts to remove P.V. did not succeed because he was far cleverer than all of us. - K.Natwar Singh *One Life is Not Enough* - an autobiography

Burnt Body is a moving narrative of what happened on December 23, 2004 when P.V.Narasimha Rao passed away. On December 24, when the procession carrying P.V.Narasimha Rao's body from his house 9 Motilal Marg slowed at 24 Akbar Road, the Congress party headquarters 'the gate to the compound wall was firmly shut'. The practice of taking the bodies of past Congress presidents inside the party headquarters to enable the party workers to pay their last respects was not done and despite the presence of several senior Congressmen no cadres were found and no slogans heard. It was 'deathly silence'. That the body of former prime minister was not permitted to be cremated in Delhi and sent to Hyderabad is too well known to need mention here. Sitapati quotes Natwar Singh in explaining the reason for Sonia Gandhi's dislike of P.V.Narasimha Rao. 'Rao realized that he didn't have to report to Sonia as prime minister. He didn't. She resented that'.

Andhra Socialist 1921-71 is the chapter that follows which traces the birth and early life of P.V. in his village Vangara and his adoption to the rich neighbouring couple. In 1937 Narasimha Rao stood first in higher-secondary examination in the entire state of Hyderabad. He went on to study at Pune and obtained a law degree in first class. His desire was to pursue higher studies at Oxford or Cambridge but was drawn into politics and even expelled from college for singing *Vandemataram*. He came under the influence of Swami Ramananda Tirtha a saint and political leader who impacted young Narasimha Rao's political career. Quite appropriately the third chapter is titled Puppet Chief Minister 1971-73. The young socialist patriot who had gifted away many acres of his land to the poor was committed to land reforms. In May 1972 he swore that he would implement land reforms 'whatever be the consequences'. He was prepared 'to stake and burn his own career' for achieving the goal. That rattled the landlords and elite classes and P.V.Narasimha Rao's inevitable exit and exile followed sooner than expected.

Essentially a scholar and a voracious reader of books who knew ten languages including three foreign, Narasimha Rao had very few close friends or loyal supporters in the party. But he was always consulted on important matters and entrusted with the responsibility of writing reports and statements. Indira Gandhi after returning to power in 1980 made him the foreign minister and P.V. effectively played the 'twin roles of a foreign minister and domestic trouble shooter'. Narasimha Rao was regarded as a highly successful foreign minister whose articulation impressed many in both advanced and developing countries. One is reminded of his lecture in 1983 as Minister for External Affairs at Andhra University in Visakhapatnam where his one hour speech on India's foreign policy was heard with rapt attention. "If the foreign minister" he began with a quip "is seen and heard too often at home and the home minister abroad it is not good for a democracy".

Following Indira Gandhi's tragic assassination Rajiv Gandhi took over as prime minister and in the election that followed sympathy wave secured for the Congress party the highest number of seats in Lok Sabha. Narasimha Rao did not agree with Rajiv's decisions like foundation-laying ceremony at Ayodhya for a Hindu temple and sending troops to Sri Lanka to help in quelling the revolt there. But Rao seldom ventured to offer unsolicited advice. Instead as the HRD minister he was busy initiating reforms in the field of education. Sitapati quotes Dani Rodrik and Arvind Subramanian in describing the economic reforms of Rajiv Gandhi as 'baby-steps not leaps and helped existing businesses rather than new ones'. After undergoing coronary bypass surgery at Houston Narasimha Rao returned home only to be advised by Rajiv Gandhi to take rest and keep out of the 1991 general elections. Interestingly enough when Rao was preparing to leave Delhi to lead a quiet life in the midst of books; he received an offer from Siddheswari Peetham in Courtallam to head it after snapping 'material and emotional bonds of worldly life'.

Most importantly, India's policies and approach to globalization should respond to its own requirements rather than to any internationally prescribed model of development.

Narasimha Rao replied with characteristic silence, saying neither yes nor no.

The unfortunate and premature exit of Rajiv Gandhi caused by the gruesome assassination led to a crisis in the Congress party. But sympathy for Rajiv and his family helped the Congress party to secure the highest number of seats, though short of majority in Lok Sabha. The Congress leaders went into a huddle with most of them pleading with Sonia Gandhi to lead the party. The most unlikely name emerged out of a series of meetings and discussions and with Sonia Gandhi giving her approval Narasimha Rao was elected President of the Congress Party on May 29, 1991. Once he became the prime minister Narasimha Rao began to consult loyal and experienced persons like Dr.P.C.Alexander. When I.G.Patel declined to be the finance minister P.C.Alexander wasted no time in persuading Dr.Manmohan Singh to join the cabinet as finance minister. That was the turning point. The soft spoken Manmohan Singh wanted the full support of the prime minister and the government. P.V.Narasimha Rao, though politically weak, remained a tower of strength to his able finance minister. In the words of Sitapati "in a single day, Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh had done more than anyone to dismantle the three pillars of the licence raj; monopolies for the public sector, limits on private business, and isolation from the world markets". The author lucidly explains how the economy was pulled out of crisis and put on the path of growth by the extraordinary political skill of prime minister Narasimha Rao by 'disguising change as continuity' in carrying out economic reforms. Tarun Das wrote that 'Rao was both strategic and shrewd. He knew the difference between what needed to be done and how it has to be done'. Rao depended on incorruptible and efficient officials like G.V.Ramakrishna, K.R.Venugopal, B.N.Yugandhar and P.V.R.K.Prasad for implementing his policies and programmes. For surviving political crises that confronted him almost every day during his five year tenure, he sought the

help of crafty politicians, intrepid and talented political warriors like the irrepressible Subramanian Swamy, astrologers and controversial Godmen like Chandraswami. The Fall of Babri Masjid is the title of a full chapter on the preventable national tragedy and the biggest failure of prime minister Narasimha Rao. Sitapati writes in detail how Narasimha Rao blundered in trusting the BJP led UP government and not imposing President's Rule, despite escalating tension and intelligence reports. The mosque 'a symbol of India's commitment to constitutional pluralism' was demolished by frenzied crowds, watched by people there and by thousands in front of the small screen. The prime minister was in a state of shock and his physician Dr.K.Srinath Reddy was convinced that the 'prime minister's reaction to the demolition' was one of 'honest agitation. The body does not lie,' said the doctor. The chapter ends with a line penned by Narasimha Rao in his book: "Those responsible for the vandalism had got not only the Babri Masjid demolished, but along with the Babri Masjid it was me whom they were trying to demolish".

Sitapati lavishes high praise on Narasimha Rao's quiet but effective steps in restoring political stability, firmly laying the path to economic progress and launching new plans and projects for industrial development. As Atal Bihari Vajpayee said Narasimha Rao was the 'true father' of India's nuclear programme. Scientist Dr. Arunachalam said that of the five prime ministers he worked with Rao was the best in understanding the importance of technology in building national policy. Dr.A.P.J.Abdul Kalam, lauding the professional excellence of Narasimha Rao, said that for Rao the 'nation is bigger than the political system'. In the words of prime minister Vajpayee: "Rao told me that the bomb was ready. I only exploded it". Sitapati writes that Rao was also the 'crafter of a fresh vision for India in the world'.

The author is at his best in portraying Rao as a queer combination of lion, fox and mouse. "This ability to assess the situation and play mouse, lion or fox –

India's prospects are holding steady and it continues with its long tradition of confounding both optimists and pessimists.

as need be – was Rao’s paramount skill”. Analyzing the qualities of Rao’ head and heart Sitapati writes that as a young man Rao’s personality contained both Hamlet and Don Quixote. In childhood Rao ‘loved the sixteenth century Telugu poem *Raghava Pandaveeyam* that could be read as both Ramayana and Mahabharata as the situation demanded’. He displayed ‘a skill in dealing with state politicians that Indira Gandhi and Rajiv lacked’. Sitapati writes that Rao faced the same question which Machiavelli had tried to answer four centuries earlier. ‘How does one use power to do good, if gaining and wielding power requires one to do evil?’

Narasimha Rao was neither charismatic nor inspiring as a leader, in fact, ‘a paradoxical personality’. Biographer Sitapati does not hesitate to reveal in detail Rao’s warts and weaknesses which were widely made use of by caricaturists and cartoonists in newspapers and magazines. The biographer also mentions the travails and tensions of Rao who became prime minister after fifty years of loyal service to the Congress party and its dynastic rulers. ‘No national leader’ writes Sitapati ‘who achieved his scale of transformation worked under such constraints. It makes Narasimha Rao the most skilled Indian prime minister since Jawaharlal Nehru, a twentieth century reformer as consequential as Deng Xiaoping. It also makes Rao’s personality central to the transformation of India, a shift caused not by historical forces, but by the leadership of one man’. Sitapati says that if ‘Chanakya captures Rao’s skill in politics Edmund Burke captures his vision’ Narasimha Rao, it seems, used to say that ‘India is destined to walk on razor’s edge’. The biographer gives credit to Rao for ‘setting India off a new direction’. His reforms transformed India as borne out by the fact that the middle class which numbered less than 30 million in 1991 soared to 300 million in 2013; 2.3 km of road in 1991 became double that number by 2012; ‘a mere 10 million air travelers in 1991 rose to 82 million in 2014’; there were 5 million telephone subscribers in 1991 compared to a billion phone subscriptions in 2015. The prime minister’s

initiatives led to stability and tranquility in some states like Punjab.

In November 2004 Narasimha Rao became ill. The usually imperturbable Rao lost his temper and stopped eating according to his daughter. “What’s the point in living like this? Why do you people insist that this life should be prolonged?” he asked his family members. When Ahmed Patel who along with Sonia Gandhi visited Rao in hospital and offered a glass of water Rao angrily said: “You people accused me of breaking the mosque. Now you give me water.” His condition began to deteriorate and on 23 December 2004 he passed away. Manmohan Singh, the then prime minister, accompanied by his wife travelled to Hyderabad to offer condolences to the family before Rao’s cremation. Rao’s name would be written in ‘letters of gold’ said Manmohan. Vinay Sitapati has come up with a meticulously researched work on P.V.Narasimha Rao. Sitapati rights a wrong and in the process demonstrates that facts and truth cannot be thrown into the limbo of oblivion permanently. This work is a lively narrative of the story of a turning point in the history of democratic India brought about by a least admired and most misunderstood leader. Biographer Vinay Sitapati has deservedly won wide acclaim for it.

A. Prasanna Kumar



THE RISE and FALL of NATIONS TEN RULES OF CHANGE IN THE POST-CRISIS WORLD

RUCHIR SHARMA

ALLEN LANE, PENGUIN BOOKS, Rs.799/- pp.464

“The Rise and Fall of Nations: Ten Rules of Change in the Post-Crisis World”, by Ruchir Sharma, unfolds the state of affairs across the globe as he understands in the course of his twenty-five years of travelling across the world. A book of 464 pages divided into 11 chapters, erases many a myth about

China is a one-party state with rampant corruption, a party-controlled judicial system, and tight controls on journalists, has been a wellspring of environmental disasters and labour abuses.

- Pietra Rivoli

21

the boom and bust of a nation's economy. The author gives a succinct depiction, using statistics (nothing complex, fortunately) and policy analysis of different nations.

The prologue begins with an account of the wildebeest of the African jungles and their struggle for survival. Every year over a million wildebeest, start on their 'circular migration' going across two different countries from the Serengeti National Park in Tanzania to the greener pastures Masai Mara National Reserve in Kenya. During the passage predators follow the herds, looking for a kill. Many of the wildebeest calves become easy preys to hyenas and lions. Even while crossing the Mara River wildebeest are victims to the crocodiles. Yet this circular migration of the wildebeest goes on unabated year long and year after year. Ruchir Sharma's narrative about the wildebeest migration draws parallel to the people working in global markets across the world. Like the wildebeest they get pulled into the vicious struggle to remain in constant motion to forecast about world economy every season. For example the first quarter of 2015 one could hear the ranting of surging Chinese stock markets, the second, the Greece crisis and the third quarter about the financial panic in China. The reports might be accurate or wide off the mark but still they continue with their predictions relentlessly every time we see a rise or a fall of a nation. Again taking a cue from the animal instinct of survival, Sharma cautions the financial experts. Like the wild predators who during heavy rains "stop where they are and stand stock still – predators within striking distance of their prey — until the deluge ends. They seem to understand instinctively that cloudbursts are regular and that panic will only lead to greater chaos." Likewise the political and economic specialists should not expend their energy on daily or quarterly blips in the numbers, but 'should be patient and attentive 'to hear that which does not make a sound.'

"The Rise and Fall of Nations", dissects the causes and reasons for the ups and downs of emerging countries. The introductory title 'Impermanence' says

it all. The aftermath of the financial crisis of 2007-2008, brought what Sharma calls 'de-globalisation' or reverse globalisation. Nations are now looking inward and dabbling in protectionist policies.

To understand which of the nations are doing well and which are not on their economic growth Ruchir Sharma poses ten questions. What makes the book appealing to readers from the cross-section of the society is that he derives the understanding of economic crisis from the social, cultural historical and political condition of nations. Sharma further breaks up the questions into sub-factors which make his analysis more attention-grabbing.

For instance, take the first question, 'Is the talent pool growing?' Ruchir Sharma explains the pivotal role people perform in the highs and lows of nations' economy. Be it babies, retirees, the work-force, migrants or women all matter to the nation's economy. Accordingly his first chapter is titled 'People Matter'. Take for instance, the issue of birth rate. In many traditional cultures like Germany and Italy are encountering droughts in 'birthrates'. The Chile Government in 2013 addressed the 'depopulation bomb' by announcing 'baby bonuses' like overtime payment of \$200 for a third child, \$300 for the fourth and \$400 for the fifth. And on the other end of the spectrum some governments were weighed down by the pension payments which were touching 'crippling levels'. The 'dependency ratio' where the per cent of people entering productive years, saving money and contributing to the pool of capital available to invest was a far cry to the per cent of the retirees. The number of women in the workforce is also on the decline- a serious reason for many countries slow economic growth. Accordingly, to revive the economy of Japan, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has co-opted 'womeneconomics'. He has initiated a slew of reforms from childcare services and parental leave to cutting the marriage penalty that taxes a family second earner at a higher rate and persuading Japanese corporations to put more women in executive positions. That, 8,00,000 women came on board is reassuring. When

The good rain, like a bad preacher, does not know when to leave off.

- R.W. Emerson

it comes to developing countries Booz and Company showed, closing the gender gap could have larger gains in GDP by 2020 ranging from 34 per cent in Egypt to 27 per cent in India and 9 per cent in Brazil.

More than migration Sharma warns of the decline in the working-age population. Take for example ‘the imbalance between old and young in Germany is unfolding even faster than the refugees were arriving in 2015’. As a matter of fact many of the developed countries have done well because of the influx of the migrants. World Bank economist Caglar Ozden examined the allegation that immigrants steal jobs from ‘locals and found that migrants often take jobs that locals don’t want or can’t fill’.

While trying to answer another question ‘How is the country portrayed by global opinion makers? Ruchir Sharma’s argument is that if a period of strong growth approaches the five-year mark, the default assumption should be that the growth spurt is nearing its end. Credit Suisse database reconfirms this “Hobbesian fact that most growth spurts are hard to sustain.” But this is not how the media sees it. (332) This is what he calls the ‘hype watch’. The media’s eulogizing the economy boom only ‘sows the ‘seeds of collapse’. In the same way, Sharma raises more questions through which he explains that every nation is vulnerable to the boom and bust of economic growth.

Sharma gives an overall rating of the countries as ‘the good’ ‘the average’ and ‘the ugly’ on the basis of his ten rules. However he does concede that he makes no claim of certainty and that his aim is to only get the forecast as far as possible - accurate. He believes, ‘looking further than five to ten years is futile.’ Short period of rapid growth contain the seeds of their own obliteration. He brings to light about China and India in a manner which makes it credible.

In a question and answer format this book is extremely well presented in a simple style even to make sense to those who do not understand the rudiments of economic development. The Rise and Fall of Nations is a brilliant and thought-provoking book, an insightful guide to the new economic landscape and a must read for all policy makers and analysts. A world view expressed by a qualified professional makes captivating reading even for a layman and I would say, without hesitation, that The Rise and Fall of Nations is an excellent work worth laying hands on. As Ruchi Sharma concludes his book: ‘In an impermanent world, the only constant is the turning of the economic and political cycles that govern the future’.

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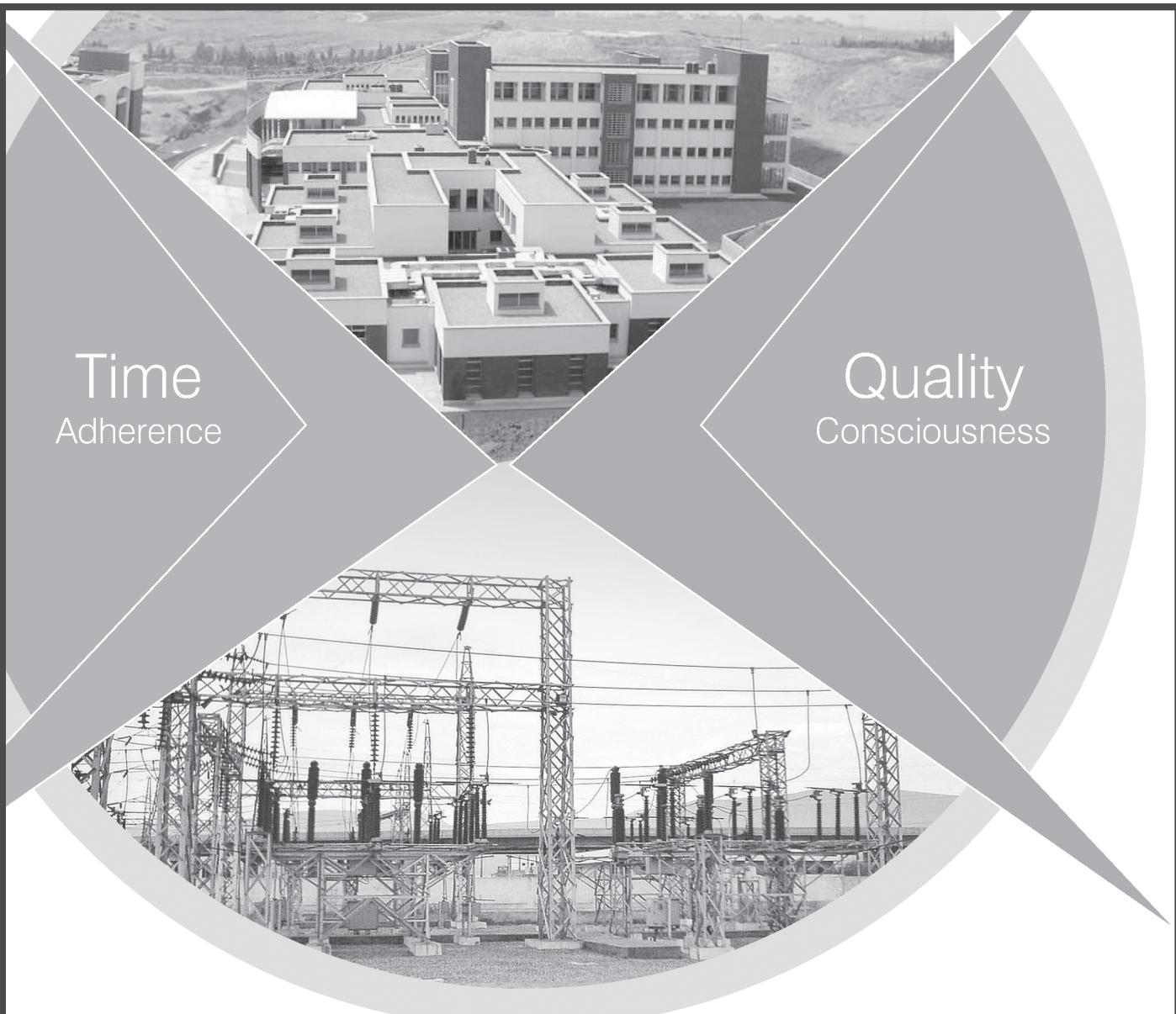
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