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# BULLETIN

## OF THE CENTRE FOR POLICY STUDIES

### Nonviolence is a 'living force'

"The world is terminally ill with violence", writes Arun Gandhi in his foreword to 'The Search for a Nonviolent Future' by Michael N. Nagler, adding that "when the disease assumes a virulent form we plead for a remedy; but when we are cured we go back to our old destructive ways." Nagler, initiated early in his life into the study of Mahatma Gandhi's life and work, began to realise that "Gandhi was at once much greater and yet more relevant - even to my own little life - than I had imagined." Convinced that Satyagraha does not suppress reason but frees it from inertia, Nagler writes that Satyagraha does not 'enslave, it compels reason to be free.' His mission is to make more accessible 'the vast unexplored possibilities of that force which establishes its sovereignty over prejudice, hatred, and other baser passions'. To a world divided by hatred and conflicting ideologies and devastated by World Wars and mindless violence, Mahatma Gandhi's panacea was Nonviolence. Satyagraha launched by him generated intellectual excitement and debate among philosophers, thinkers, scholars and scientists across the world.

Amazed by Gandhiji's 'invincible' calm and imperturbability', Edward Thompson declared that 'not since Socrates has the world seen his equal for absolute self-control and composure'. Probing the philosophical foundations of Nonviolence C.E.M.Joad raised and answered the question 'what consists the most characteristic quality of our species? Some would say, in moral virtue; some, in godliness; some, in courage; some, in the power of self-sacrifice. Aristotle found it in reason'. But Aristotle's answer gives, according to Joad, part of the truth, but not the whole. 'The essence of reason lies in objectivity and detachment', said Joad who found in the 'virtue of detachment from self the source of Gandhi's authority'. Hailing Gandhi as a 'moral genius' Joad wished that Gandhi's method should grow 'more powerful than the forces of destruction, if civilization is to survive.'

In the words of Nagler, it is a science if there ever was one but it cannot make predictions as nearly as mechanics or electricity, for Satyagraha is what Gandhi called "a living force," not a physical one. He is a social scientist, explained Richard Gregg, because 'he follows

social truth by the scientific method of observation, intuitional and intellectual hypothesis and experimental test. Unlike western social scientists he tested the hypothesis on himself. He is not a mere scientist; but a great social scientist because of his choice of problems, because of his methods of solution, because of his persistence and thoroughness of his search and because of the profundity of human heart.'

When asked about the experiences that influenced his life, the Mahatma replied "Such experiences are a multitude. I recalled particularly one experience that changed the course of my life that fell to my lot seven days after I had arrived in South Africa. At Maritzburg when the beds were issued, the guard came and turned me out and asked me to go into the van compartment. I would not go and the train steamed away leaving me shivering in cold. Now the creative experience comes there. I was afraid for my very life. I entered the dark waiting-room. There was a white man in the room. I was afraid of him. What was my duty, I asked myself. Should I go back to India, should I go forward, with God as my helper, and face whatever was in store for me? I decided to stay and suffer. My active Nonviolence began from that date." From that day in 1893 till that fateful Friday,30th January 1948, Gandhiji was confronted with violence in its virulent and subhuman manifestations---abuse, ridicule, insult, physical assault, and eventually assassination. The Mahatma remained unperturbed throughout these fifty five years. Instead he prayed and pleaded with the authorities concerned not to punish them, whether it was the sentry who kicked him off the footpath or the white racists who thrashed him mercilessly or his own countrymen who conspired to eliminate him physically. Nonviolence is ultimately a way of life that men and women live by said Martin Luther King, because 'of the sheer morality of its claim.' If the world is to have peace, declared Gandhiji, nonviolence is the means to that end and there is no other. That living force which has inspired millions of people including Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela continues to glow as a beacon of hope and peace for humanity.

- The Editor

Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, but it means the putting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant.

- Mahatma Gandhi

## Satyagraha

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan

When the strife of these days is forgotten, Gandhi will stand out as the great prophet of a moral and spiritual revolution without which this distracted world will not find peace. It is said that non-violence is the dream of the wise while violence is the history of man. It is true that wars are obvious and dramatic and their results in changing the course of history are evident and striking.

But there is a struggle which goes on in the minds of men. Its results are not recorded in the statistics of the killed and the injured. It is the struggle for human decency, for the avoidance of physical strife which restricts human life, for a world without wars. Among the fighters in this great struggle, Gandhi was in the front rank. His message is not a matter for academic debate intellectual circles. It is the answer to the cry of exasperated mankind which is at the cross-roads—which all prevail, the law of the Jungle or the law of love? All our world organizations will prove ineffective if the truth that love is stronger than hate does not inspire them. The world does not become one simply because we can go round it in less than three days. However far or fast we may travel, our minds do not get nearer to our neighbours.

The oneness of the world can only be the oneness of our purposes and aspirations. A united world can only be the material counterpart of a spiritual affinity. Mechanical makeshifts and external structures by themselves *cannot* achieve the spiritual results. Changes in the social architecture do not alter the minds of people. Wars have their origins in false values, in ignorance, in intolerance. Wrong leadership has brought the world to its present misery. Throughout the world there seems to be a black out of civilized values. Great nations bomb one another's cities in order to obtain the victory. The moral consequences of the use of the atom bomb may *prove* to be far more disastrous than the bomb itself. The fault is not in our stars but in ourselves. Institutions are of little avail unless we are trained to obey our conscience and develop brotherly love. Unless the

leaders of the world discover their highest human dignity in themselves, not in the offices they hold, in the depth of their own souls, in the freedom of their conscience, there is no hope for the ordered peace of a world-community- Gandhi had the faith that the world is one in its deepest roots and highest aspirations. He knew that the purpose of historical humanity was to develop a world-civilization, a world-culture, a world-community. We can get out of the misery of this world only by exposing the darkness which is strongly entrenched in men's hearts and replacing it by understanding and tolerance. Gandhi's tender and tormented heart heralds the world which the United Nations wish to create. This lonely symbol of a vanishing past is also the prophet of the new world which is struggling to be born. He represents the conscience of the future man.

(From *Mahatma Gandhi*, Edited by S. Radha Krishnan)



## GANDHI'S STATESMANSHIP

by Albert Einstein, D.Sc.

(The Institute of Advanced Studies, School of Mathematics, Princeton University, U.S.A.)

Gandhi is unique in political history. He has invented an entirely new and humane technique for the liberation struggle of an oppressed people and carried it out with the greatest energy and devotion. The moral influence which he has exercised upon thinking people through the civilized world may be far more durable than would appear likely in our present age, with its exaggeration of brute force. For the work of statesmen is permanent only in so far as they arouse and consolidate the moral forces of their peoples through their personal example and educating influence.

We are fortunate and should be grateful that fate has bestowed upon us so luminous a contemporary—a beacon to the generations to come.

(From *Mahatma Gandhi*, Edited by S. Radhakrishnan)



Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute.  
The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law- to the strength of the spirit.

- Mahatma Gandhi

## MAHATMA THE PILGRIM OF ETERNITY

Shri Nani Palkhivala

THE SECOND OF October has again come by, and our hearts and minds go back to the pilgrim of eternity. Smt Kamala, the director of this Gandhi Memorial Centre, gave us a beautiful thought when she said that a part of all the great spirits of the past might have found a place within the soul of Mahatma Gandhi.

Gandhiji's impact on those who came in contact with him was almost magical. Rabindranath Tagore said:

'At Gandhiji's call India blossomed forth to new greatness, just as once before in earlier times when Buddha proclaimed the truth of fellow-feeling and compassion among all living creatures.'

Even so hard-headed a man as George Bernard Shaw, to whom praise of others did not come very naturally, when asked for his impression upon meeting Mahatma Gandhi, said: 'You might as well ask for someone's impression of the Himalayas!' Romain Rolland, the great French writer and Nobel prize-winner, said that Mahatma Gandhi 'had introduced into human politics the strongest religious impetus of the last two hundred years'. If instead of two hundred years, he had said twelve hundred years, he would have been still right.

The Mahatma met Charlie Chaplin, confessed to him frankly that he had not seen his pictures, and expounded to him his theory about the disastrous effects of the machine on human life.

Their conversation led Charlie Chaplin to produce *Modern Times*.

In our own times, Anwar Sadat of Egypt has publicly spoken about the tremendous influence Mahatma Gandhi's writings had on him.

Gandhiji gave a decisive new direction to history. What was it about this man which held the human race in thrall? Who was this individual? And how did he come to wield such influence over the rest of mankind? He himself said that he was a very strange individual. He confessed that he was not intellectually

brilliant, but he added that while there are limitations to the development of the mind, there are no limitations to the development of the heart.

If one were to denote in a word what the Mahatma had, it is the Sanskrit word, *buddhi*—the capacity *inter alia* to perceive the Truth. This is a capacity which few individuals have, and you can develop it only by deep self-study, by profound devotion. He was able, as a result of his *buddhi*, to propound solutions which went far beyond the insights of any academic studies of politics or economics or science. Let me tell you what he said about himself:

'What I want to achieve—what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years—is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain *Moksha*. I live and move and have my being in pursuit of this goal. All that I do by way of speaking and writing, and all my ventures in the political field, are directed to this same end. I am but a weak aspirant, ever failing, ever trying. My failures make me more vigilant than before and intensify my faith. I can see with the eye of faith that the observance of the twin doctrine of Truth and Non-violence has possibilities of which we have but very inadequate conception.'

The pregnant phrase 'the eye of faith' reminds you of the lines of George Santayana:

'Columbus found a world, and had no chart,  
Save one that faith deciphered in the skies;  
To trust the soul's invincible surmise  
Was all his science and his only art.'

It was the only science and the only art of Mahatma Gandhi—to trust the soul's invincible surmise.

Before I go further into some of the ideas which the Mahatma propagated, I would like to mention one interesting point. There seems to be a mystic—*karmic*—bond between the United States and India, and you see this link in the case of Mahatma Gandhi.

When he was in South Africa (he went there in 1893), the two foreigners who befriended him were both Americans. They gave him succour and shelter. After he came back to India, the first foreigner to spot

When sathya (truth) and dharma(righteousness) go together, shanty(peace) will reign.  
Peace leads to love. Where there is peace, there hatred cannot be.

his incredible spiritual strength was an American.

On 10 April 1922, Reverend John Haynes Holmes delivered a speech in an American Church on 'Who is the Greatest Man in the World?' Reverend Holmes declared that he had no doubt that the greatest man alive was Mahatma Gandhi. He compared the Mahatma to Christ. In 1922 no other foreigner had the conception of the Mahatma as the prophet of the twentieth century.

Then came the great years of Mahatma Gandhi in India. There he started his civil disobedience movement, which he implemented with phenomenal success. The one person who influenced him the most in his thinking on civil disobedience was again an American—Henry David Thoreau. He had read Thoreau in the year 1907 when he was in South Africa. He had reproduced extracts from Thoreau's writings in *Young India* which he was editing at the time in South Africa.

The last man to be the disciple of the Mahatma was an American—Vincent Sheean. He met the Mahatma in Delhi on 27 January 1948, three days before the Mahatma was assassinated, and offered himself as a disciple. The Mahatma talked to him at some length on that day on a variety of subjects, and quoted to him the lines from the *Upanishads*-. 'The whole world is the garment of God; renounce it then and receive it back as the gift of God.' Sheean was most impressed and met him again on the 28th. They were to meet again in the evening of the 30th, but that was not to be.

The last interview which the Mahatma gave was in the early afternoon on 30 January, and it was to an American. She was Margaret Bourke-White who came to interview him for *Life* magazine. She asked him the question: would he persist in his theory of non-violence in the event of a nuclear attack on a city? The Mahatma's reply was that if the defenceless citizens died in a spirit of non-violence, their sacrifices would not be in vain; they might well pray for the soul of the pilot who thoughtlessly sprayed death on the city. This was his last message of compassion to mankind.

In our times his influence on America has been of the most significant character. It was his influence

which led Martin Luther King to start a civil disobedience campaign on non-violent lines. Vice-President Mondale has publicly stated how deeply influenced he was as a young man by Mahatma Gandhi's teachings. President Carter is another great admirer of the Mahatma.

When Hubert Humphrey died, there was one quotation in President Carter's tribute to the eminent Senator and that was what the President had read at the Gandhi Samadhi in New Delhi. The words quoted enumerate what Gandhiji regarded as the Seven Deadly Sins:

'Commerce without ethics;  
Pleasure without conscience;  
Politics without principle;  
Knowledge without character;  
Science without humanity;  
Wealth without work;  
Worship without sacrifice.'

Let me now say a few words about the Mahatma's ideas which have changed the course of human history. His main emphasis, as we all know, was on truth and non-violence. A thinker has said that truth is a scarce commodity, but its supply has always outstripped the demand. While truth does not seem to be triumphing all round us—somehow, somewhere, in some way, something is working which is bringing the human race closer to truth.

This is what the Mahatma has to say about truth and non-violence; 'I may be a despicable person; but when Truth speaks through me, I am invincible.'

'Truth alone will endure; all the rest will be swept away before the tide of Time.'

'Non-violence is the law of our species, as violence is the law of the brute.'

'Non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind.

It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man.'

'I do not believe in short cuts which involve violence. However much I may sympathize with and admire worthy motives, I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the

The influence which emanated from his personality was ineffable, like music, like beauty.  
Its claim upon others was great because of its revelation of a spontaneous self-giving.

- Rabindranath Tagore on Gandhiji



noblest of causes. There is, therefore, really no meeting ground between the school of violence and myself.'

It was not a personal God that the Mahatma believed in. He had the *very*, very deep and profound Hindu concept of *Brahma*—the all-prevading Reality, which is God in its various manifestations. It is that God that he believed in. To quote his own words:

'To me God is Truth and Love; God is Ethics and Morality; God is fearlessness; God is the source of Light and Life, and yet He is above and beyond all these. He is even the atheism of the atheist; he transcends speech and reason.' Ralph Waldo Emerson, who was well-versed in Indian culture, has written a poem called 'Brahma', where this very idea is memorably expressed:

'They reckon ill who leave me out;  
When me they fly, I am the wings;  
I am the doubter and the doubt,  
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.'

God is the doubter and the doubt, and God is the atheist and his atheism. In other words, there is just no escape from Him. The same thought was expressed by Francis Thompson in *The Hound of Heaven*. Ultimately the sceptic realizes that God has been by his side all the time.

Another sentence from Gandhiji: 'Scriptures cannot transcend reason and truth; they are intended to purify reason and illuminate the truth.' He tried to synthesize the essentials of all religions: 'Indeed religion should pervade every one of our actions. Here religion does not mean sectarianism. It means a belief in ordered moral government of the universe. It is not less real because it is unseen. *This religion transcends Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc.* It does not supersede them. It harmonizes them and gives them reality.'

He identified himself completely with the common man. He spoke and he worked not for the ruler

'but the ranker, the tramp of the road,  
The slave with the sack on his shoulders  
pricked on with the goad,  
The man with too weighty a burden,  
too weary a load.'

Gandhiji effected a vast psychological revolution not only among those who followed his lead but also among his opponents and those many neutrals who could not make up their minds what to think and what to do. - Jawaharlal Nehru

As regards the need of identifying oneself with the masses, he observed—

'We must first come in living touch with them by working for them and in their midst. We must share their sorrows, understand their difficulties and anticipate their wants. With the pariahs we must be pariahs and see how we feel to clean the closets of the upper classes and have the remains of their table thrown at us. We must see how we like being in the boxes, miscalled houses, of the labourers of Bombay. We must identify ourselves with the villagers who toil under the hot sun beating on their bent backs and see how we would like to drink water from the pool in which the villagers bathe, wash their clothes and pots, and in which their cattle drink and roll. Then and not till then shall we truly represent the masses and they will, as surely as I am writing this, respond to every call.'

The Indian masses responded to the Mahatma's call in a spirit of total surrender.

The Mahatma dealt with problems which are timeless and universal, because they spring from enduring weaknesses of human nature and human society. Since the solutions he found for them were based on eternal verities, his influence and his relevance are also timeless and universal.

On this second day of October, we can have no better wish for India than that the great spirit of the Mahatma may always abide with our people.

(From *NANI PALKHIVALA - Selected Writings* edited by L.M.Singhvi, M.R. Pai and S. Ramakrishnan)



## Judicial Activism : Boon or Bane

**Shri Soli J. Sorabjee**

Former Attorney General for India

(*Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Platinum Jubilee lecture*)

Justice Lahoti, former Chief Justice of Supreme Court, Shri Ashok Pradhan, Director, Chairperson & Vice Chairpersons of BVB on the dais, ladies & gentlemen.

Judicial activism and activist judges have become buzz words. In every sphere relating to judiciary this topic comes up. There is no definition of judicial

activism as such. I think it will be good if we refer to a dictionary to know what we mean by activism. Collins dictionary defines Activism as a policy of taking direct & often militant action to achieve an end, especially a political or social one. Webster defines Activism as a doctrine or policy of being active, of doing things with decision. So I think judicial activism within the judicial system is that which discharges its functions in vigorous and decisive manner to achieve an end. What is that end? Dispensing justice with a view to righting wrongs or providing remedies where none specifically exist.

The thinking in the past was that the role of judiciary was merely to decide cases by interpreting a statute behind the laws to a given set of facts reported. This was the traditional role according to which the judiciary merely declares a law. It does not make a law. As one jurist said no one now accepts this childish fixation. The common law is not made by judges but is miraculously something made from eternity and merely declared from time to time by judges. So the role of judiciary has undergone a change. Now let us see whether judicial activism is boon or bane. That we will come to later.

Let me give one example. Because of judicial activism a provision has been read in a statute which did not require a prior hearing when an adverse decision was taken against a person. Statutes didn't say the person should be heard. But judicial activism read the principles of 'audi alteram partem' which means prior hearing be given to a person against whom an adverse decision is taken. Thanks to that, the fairness in administration and also if I may say the omission of statute was made a law by good lawyers and judges. You don't condemn a man unheard. This thanks to judicial activism has been read to a statute and that to my mind is a boon.

Take another example, where a statute requires that reasons have to be given in support of a decision. Suppose a statute doesn't say about giving reasons. What happens? Again Activist judges took the view that giving reasons is necessary because it ensures application of mind by the decision making authority, minimizes arbitrariness and incorporation of extraneous factors and above all satisfies basic human

requirement of fairness and natural justice because a person must know on what basis his license of permit has been cancelled.

There was a rule in Mumbai Police for hotel licensing, which said a license may not be given to a person if he is not a suitable person. But not suitable for what? Is it on account of his not getting marks, going to church, having an occasional drink with friends or something else? It is beneficial and effective to give reasons. Thanks to this development and the activist judges in this case it has certainly been a boon.

Take another technique. Thanks to activist judges certain rights which are not specifically mentioned in the bill of rights has been enforced from other rights explicitly mentioned. The Supreme Court of United States of America where they deduced right to privacy, though not specifically mentioned in the Bill of Rights. Take our own case of the Supreme Court, we all talk of freedom of press. Where is it mentioned in a chapter of fundamental rights?

An activist Supreme Court deduced freedom of press from the guarantee of free speech and expression. You talk of freedom of press being absolutely important for democracy. It is, but it was given a constitutional status by the Activist judges by interpretation of Free Speech guarantee in Article 19(1). No one can say that's not a boon as far as the right is concerned. "The making of policies is the prerogative of executive and not courts." "Courts cannot make orders that affect the evaluation of policy and that require an executive to pursue a particular policy." This is all misconstrued. This is all gone into indepth in the judgement in a Supreme Court case (in the BALCO case). Supreme Court held that it is not within the domain of the courts nor the scope of judicial review to embark upon an enquiry as to whether a particular public policy is wise or a better public policy can be evolved or whether a different policy is available that is fairer or wiser or more scientific. But if a policy is in contravention of constitutional provisions, suppose a policy favours only a certain community or class of people or is in breach of some mandatory law or monopoly, judicial activism should be available. If that constitutes an intrusion into the domain of the executive then it is

Gandhiji has raised up three hundred millions of his fellow men, shaken the British Empire and inaugurated in human politics the most powerful movement that the world has seen for nearly two thousand years. - Romain Rolland

an intrusion mandated by the Constitution itself. Please remember friends the occasion for judicial intervention in majority of the cases is in violation of human rights which takes place on account of non-implementation of laws by the executive.

Now let us talk of the complaint that is running the country? I'll come to that in some cases. Normally what the law says to the executive is - you pass laws for protection of children working in factories or laws to prevent employing them from working in hazardous occupations. Implement the laws. Take a case of children working in hazardous occupation or work in factory, the parents consent to it because of economic necessity. The factory implementation is not strict. The factory owner will never complain about it. Whether these factories are brought to court is a different matter. Because of failure of implementation of laws there is violation of human rights of the children who are affected. Then the Court has to act. It cannot procrastinate or prevaricate. The Court must prevent continued violation of human rights. One significant achievement that Supreme Court has done is they have expanded the rule of locus standi. The Court realises that in some cases because of disability or because of economic reasons people cannot afford the court. So then any person, mind you acting bona fide, can approach Court and point out the violation of human rights of that section of society.

Therefore the field of PIL has been expanded. See what has happened on account of this. Under trial prisoners got to go to court. Children working in hazardous occupation, all of them were brought to the notice of court. Thanks to expansion of the doctrine of locus standi and there the court gave such directions as were necessary. Here I quote what a great judge from England, Stephen Sedley said, "Judiciaries have moved to fill lacunae of legitimacy in the functioning of democratic politics."

Let me take another example. Vishaka's case. Just a little while back there was persistent and malignant evil of sexual harassment at work place which was going on for a long time. In Vishaka judgment the Supreme Court judgment devised a complete mechanism to deal with and prevent sexual harassment. The court said these directions to withhold the field till Parliament enacts requisite

legislation. Since the 1996 judgment, only a bill has been introduced to prevent this problem. This is the Vishaka case and I think it has been highly beneficial.

Thanks to PIL and judicial activism the role of law has been upheld and constitutional values have been preserved. Numerous under trial prisoners languishing in jail were released, persons who were treated as bonded labourers or serfs got rehabilitated and have secured their freedom, young children working in hazardous occupation have undergone a humanising change and inmates of care homes and mental asylums have been restored to humanity. Thanks to judicial activism in the area of ecological issues accountability in use of hazardous technology has been made possible and that undoubtedly has been a boon.

The nagging question is, is it permissible for the judiciary to indulge in area of ad-hoc legislation and in this way promote judicial activism. Now frankly speaking there is no universal prototype of judicial activities. It all depends on a particular situation or the laws, absence of laws, positive administration, whether implementation is there or not. It is a quest for social justice to relieve any human suffering which is a paramount motivation to a judicial activist. Sometimes, especially in some PIL's judicial activism has gone haywire. You see, judicial activism must not be confused with judicial showmanship or judicial adventurism. Judicial activism does not warrant a volatile trigger-happy approach.

Judicial activism does not warrant issuing directions that are beyond the judicial sphere and do more credit to the heart than to the head. It is arbitrary. Judiciary cannot direct the administration to construct roads, erect buildings, secure lands in a particular locality, appoint managers, to give ad hoc direction of huge monetary payments or compensations. Such orders have serious system and budgetary implications and are more in the realm of the executive and in this case you may say judicial activism is a bane. Judges should not entertain the belief that judiciary can solve all the problems of our nation.

Every matter of public interest cannot be the basis of a PIL, eg. increase in the price of onions, trains not running on time, deteriorating conditions of

The Mahatma was the *sthitaprajna* of the Bhagavad Gita who by his self-control and renunciation has conquered himself and conquered the world.

- Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya 7

railway stations. It must be remembered that PIL is not a pill for every ill. Judges also have to act within the parameters of the Constitution- within certain constituent limits. If you ask me the three Peril's of PIL are Private Interest Litigation, Political Interest Litigation and Publicity Interest Litigation.

In Publicity Interest Litigation, I'm sorry to say judges are also humans and are affected by the publicity given to their order. I know a judge who made sure that the order passed by him was reported fully in the press. These are human institutions and these things happen. Let us not forget that because of this on the whole an advantage has been secured. The great benefit we have got is a result of this. So I end by saying judicial activism in some cases has been controversial. On a balance it has been a boon, that's my view and remember that Fundamental Rights in your constitution will remain ornamental decorations and teasing illusions if we do not have judges who translate them into living realities and make them meaningful in the hands of activists and sensitive and sensible judges.

Thank you.

(CPS offers its grateful thanks to Shri Soli Sorabjee for according permission to use the article published in *Bhavan Today & After, A Compilation of Platinum Jubilee Lectures.*)



## THE UNASSUMING STATESMAN

### S.R. NATHAN WAS ONE OF THE ARCHITECTS OF INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH THE ASEAN

**Cmde. (Retd) C. Uday Bhaskar**  
Director, Society for Policy Studies  
(Former Director IDSA & NMF)

Indian diplomats who dealt with the region, and Singapore in particular, acknowledge that SRN was the "real but silent mover behind the scenes" as far as India-Singapore relationship was concerned.

Singapore's former president S.R. Nathan (SRN), who passed away on August 22, was among the principal architects of the city-state along with the legendary Lee Kuan Yew. Among the less-known of his contributions (some of them bordering on the

extraordinary) was building India-Singapore ties — and by extension, the Indo-ASEAN relationship that was at the core of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's "look east policy".

During the Cold War decades, India's relations with the South East Asian nations were, to put it mildly, frosty. Delhi saw the states in the region as parts of the US-led anti-communist block. "Coca-Cola republic" was one of the more sticky and, in hindsight, avoidable phrases of the Nehru years; the view from the other side about India was not too flattering either.

Indian diplomats who dealt with the region, and Singapore in particular, acknowledge that SRN was the "real but silent mover behind the scenes" as far as India-Singapore relationship was concerned. Subsequently, Singapore facilitated India's gradual, and at times grudging, acceptance by the South East Asian nations. Former secretary in the ministry of external affairs, Amarnath Ram, who had extensive dealings with the ASEAN, recalls SRN as "an internationalist, an insightful thinker, respected intellectual, academic of high calibre and a humanist".

SRN's role as one of the "wise men" of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) will long be remembered. He helped give direction and content to the CSCAP, particularly in its early years. He actively supported India in the CSCAP at a time when the country was considered an outsider in the Asia Pacific region.

My association with SRN was brief but memorable. We first met in 1996 when he visited Delhi to study the IDSA where I had just been appointed the deputy director. SRN's formidable reputation preceded him and I knew of him as Singapore's former ambassador to the US and the former intelligence chief of his country. Here was a man who had faced severe personal setbacks during his formative years, saw the brutalities of World War II and participated in the birth of Singapore. There were anecdotal references to the resolute manner with which he dealt with the communists and insurgents and about his volunteering to be a hostage to resolve a Palestine terrorist-related crisis in 1974.

SRN was visiting think tanks across the world, then, to observe the best practices — as he put it —

Gandhi is the prophet of a liberated life wielding power over millions of human beings by virtue of his exceptional holiness and heroism.



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for he was entrusted with the founding of Singapore's Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies. SRN, in his characteristically affable and unassuming manner, asked me to give him, what he described as, a "tutorial" about how the IDSA was run. He wanted to know the degree to which the research output of the institute actually contributed to, and shaped, government policy. Clearly I was one among his many interlocutors and a relative greenhorn at that. But the earnest manner in which SRN engaged with you made one feel very special.

One of the more tricky moments that he managed to defuse occurred in an India/ASEAN-ISIS conference in the mid-1990s in Delhi, where heads of all security think tanks of the ASEAN were invited. It was a major track 1.5 effort and the exchanges were candid. Given the history of the animus between India and the South East Asian nations, some discussions became very tense and heated. At one point there was a near breakdown. SRN stepped in, assuaged the bruised sensitivities and brought the conference back on track.

Appointed president of Singapore in 1999, SRN was ever the gracious and generous host and one will cherish calling on him in Istana — the presidential palace. A role model for his citizens, SRN was a man of many parts and epitomised the diversity and dynamism of Singapore. It was a privilege to have met him — albeit very briefly.

(Courtesy : The Indian Express, September 5, 2016)



## The Forbidden Cave: The Nursery Of The Great Epic

**Prof. Manoj Das**

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

It was an October dawn at Badarikashram and quite cold. But I was already on my stroll - a resumption of my nocturnal stroll interrupted for a few hours of sleep when I continued to wander in my dreams.

At least for half an hour I was the solitary soul

to meander along the dusky streets experiencing the gradual occupation of the valley by a gentle sunlight, at first manifesting like supernatural hues coming from the eyes of some invisible gods, then growing into a tenderly warm caress.

The twin mountains, Nara and Narayana, dominated the backdrop of the shrine of Badri Vishnu. (According to another account the mountain Nara was one on the eastern bank of the river on which the greater part of the bazaar had come up.) The sky between the two mountains, viewed from a certain spot, resembled a map of India.

Mythology says that the two earliest known Rishis, Nara and Narayana, performed their askesis on these two mountains, imparting to the place a certain vibration of consciousness which can still be felt. Anyone who could silence his or her mind for a brief moment could feel or at least sense it - a vibrant tranquility.

The temple was to close down in a few days for the winter. Snow would take over the entire region. The sun, the moon, the stars and the twilight would brush the infinite white canvas with their personal tones and create wonders to amuse only themselves, not human beings.

I was already at the Taptakund, the hot-water spring. Unbearable at the first touch, it grows quite hospitable to one's body in a minute and as one emerges from it, one feels a thrilling rejuvenation - an unforgettable sensation that could continue for a quarter of an hour. What a marvellous coexistence of cold and heat devised by Nature! The Taptakund must have been a cocoon of comfort for the ancient sages who lived here in defiance of the freezing winter.

'Do you know that there is a cave on the outskirts of Badarikashram bearing the memory of Vyasa?' I asked the officer who had received us at Joshimuth.

'Of course I know. Vyas Gumpha.'

'Can you kindly arrange for me to pass a night inside the cave?'

The officer laughed and in a voice tinged with empathy, said, 'To be frank, it may be difficult for you even to pay a visit there. The region containing the

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Gandhi is a ruler obeyed by millions, not because they fear him, but because they love him; not as a master of wealth and secret police and machine guns, but as holding the spiritual authority which, when it once dares to assert itself, seems to reduce almost to impotence the values of the material world. - Gilbert Murray

cave is forbidden to all, barring the army, since the Chinese intrusion.'

My face probably mirrored my deep disappointment, though I did not murmur. I sat looking at a chunk of dazzling cloud inching near a silver peak as though to surprise it with a kiss. The officer was talking to someone over the phone. My attention went over to him only when I heard him utter my name. The person at the other end was a colleague of his or may be someone senior to him. 'This guest of ours is not just a curious tourist or a traditional pilgrim. He loves Vyasa. I've read some issues of *The Heritage* he edits. Well, I don't mind confessing that to some extent I'm influenced by him; I'll feel very awkward if we let him go back disappointed.' I was moved. His gesture was unexpected. As he listened to his colleague's response, his face grew brighter and I knew that he had got me my passport to Vyasa, I shook his hand gratefully.

He explained to me why passing a night in the cave was an unrealistic proposition. There were no human beings around. Well, the presence of a few hermits in unknown caves could not be ruled out - for once in a while the patrolling army men spoke of sighting a lone bearded stranger at ordinarily inaccessible spots - but that was no factor in my favour. 'Well, Sir, to let you pass the night there would amount to our leaving you at the mercy of the abominable snowman, if not surrendering you to the enemy as hostage. Oh no, agreeing to that part of your proposal is beyond us!' the officer said laughing. 'You propose to be there for some time. Right? You propose to meditate. Right? For how long? I will instruct your escorts to be patient with you - unless you pass into a trance and refuse to come out of it!' he said.

We drove to Vyasa Gumpna in the forenoon. Our jeep drove by the only village in the area, Mana. But the doors of all the houses were shut. The entire village had migrated to the plains, as was their practice for generations, at the approach of November. They would quietly return after the winter to their deserted village and resume their transactions, through the intricate snow-covered passes, with their associates in Tibet.

The people of Mana, in days gone by, were probably a great support for the Rishis - from the

mythical ones like Vyasa, Bhrigu, Sanaka and Sukra to Badarayana, Gaudapada, and Shankara who can be historically identified. It is also likely that the Badarikashram of ancient days was green, the woods abounding in highly beneficent medicinal plants.

We stopped at the gateway into the prohibited zone. Despite the sanction already obtained by my kind host at Joshimuth, we had to wait there for half an hour for further clearance. I had to leave my camera behind. 'Please don't take it amiss. We often feel guilty at applying any rule mechanically on all, but we have no option. My only hope is, such an uneasy situation will not prevail for long,' explained the suave officer in charge of the camp.

He provided us with four or five escorts. We walked a couple of kilometres and then stood before the cave - the birthplace of ancient India's most profound creative work.

Vyasa had lived a life linked with epoch-making events particularly during the great Kurukshetra War. Even after the war he had acted like a guardian of the victorious Pandavas. He made Yudhishtira the emperor and pacified Dhritarashtra, the humiliated and self-exiled king. He then retired to this cave and devoted himself to editing the Vedas with the help of his illustrious disciples like Vaisampayana and Jaimini.

And then began the most intense creative phase of the process.

Inspired to compose the great epic, the *Mahabharata*, Vyasa required a savant to take down his dictation, a divinely gifted scholar who would not make a single error while doing so. Probably he also wished that no human mind would intervene in the process of his inspiration's transformation into poetry. He invoked the loving god, Ganesha.

'O remover of every obstacle! Be kind to me. Once I am inspired, I will like to go on reciting the verses nonstop. If my attention goes over to writing, the flow may be interrupted. Hence may I pray you to act as my scribe! My words, thereby, would assume a great sanctity. The hearts and minds of those who would read them would be ennobled,' said Vyasa.

Responded the compassionate Ganesha, probably in a lighter vein, 'Well, my dear Rishi, I will be happy to do your bidding, but on condition that

Gandhiji is rightly recognized throughout the world as the greatest personage of India, as the irrepressible champion of her liberties and as the highest embodiment of her genius and spirit.

- Ernest Barker

you must not pause once I begin taking down your words. If you do, my flow would be checked!’

‘Very good, O kindness incarnate, but may I too put forth a humble condition : You must not take down a couplet without fully comprehending its significance,’ said Vyasa.

‘Let it be so, O poet sublime,’ said Ganesha - as generous and vast as the Himalayas. And thus began a unique experiment at the dawn of Indian literature - creation and appreciation proceeding simultaneously. *The Mahabharata* came into being, courtesy the world’s first stenographer, Lord Ganesha.

‘This is the slab of stone believed to have worked as the seat for both Vyasa and Ganesha as they sat cross-legged facing each other,’ informed the army guide who had accompanied us from the last camp.

I felt like bowing to the stone. But, ‘Can I, too, sit on it?’ asked another guest and she sat down on the slab without waiting for a reply.

The murmuring rivulet flowing by the cave is known as Saraswati - not to be confused with the other Saraswati sung in the Vedas which had disappeared. This is the way which the Pandava brothers as well as Draupadi had taken for their last journey, *Mahaprasthan*. A giant stone bridges the rivulet and it is believed that Bhima had thrown it there to facilitate Draupadi’s crossing the rivulet, while he and his brothers were able to jump across it.

But, for Draupadi, crossing the river was also crossing into a life beyond. She was the first to fall. The spot, at a higher altitude, is still identified. Too tired to climb, I sat looking at it - a milestone between the earth and the heavens.



## **SRI AUROBINDO’S VISION OF HUMANITY**

**Dr. (Mrs.) Prema Nandakumar**

“I saw the Omnipotent’s flaming pioneers  
Over the heavenly verge which turns towards life  
Come crowding down the amber stairs of birth;  
Forerunners of a divine multitude,  
Out of the paths of the morning star they came

Into the little room off mortal life.

I saw them cross the twilight of an age,  
The sun-eyed children of a marvellous dawn,  
The great creators with wide brows of calm,  
The massive barrier-breakers of the world  
And wrestlers with destiny in her lists of will,  
The labourers in the quarries of the gods,  
The messengers of the Incommunicable,  
The architects of immortality.”

This is the voice of the visionary. The voice of one who is in the mortal mould, but who dares to envision not just the future, but the Next Future. A visionary is not made; he is born. A visionary is not a mere dreamer. He is also an achiever as well. He is not impractical, his visions leap out of a deep knowledge of all our yesterdays and an undying hope for all our tomorrows. He has faith in the phenomenon of man and of man’s evolution into the divine person. Sri Aurobindo was born a visionary. Whatever he said, did and wrote are marked by this visionary character, as indeed his looks betrayed the Agni within even when he was quite young. Indeed, each sentence in his message echoed the voice of a vision of what comes to us from beyond the Mind and which we term as the Vijnanamaya plane or Truth-consciousness. Whatever he said, did and wrote are marked by this visionary character, as indeed his looks betrayed the Agni within even when he was quite young.

When Dr. C. Ramalinga Reddy succeeded Sri Aurobindo as the Vice-Principal of Baroda College, the then Principal, Arthur Clark remarked to him:

“So you met Aurobindo Ghosh. Did you notice his eyes? There is mystic light and fire in them. They penetrate into the beyond. .. If Joan of Arc heard heavenly voices, Aurobindo probably saw heavenly visions.”

Coming from a materialist like Clark, this remark is very significant. It shows that this was the reaction of almost everyone who happened to meet Sri Aurobindo. For instance, a special correspondent of the Tamil Nationalist magazine, India met Sri Aurobindo in the house of Krishna Kumar Mitter a couple of months after Sri Aurobindo had been released from the Alipore Jail and was at first non-

Too much mechanical efficiency is the enemy of liberty because it leads to regimentation and the loss of spontaneity. Too little efficiency is also the enemy of liberty, because it results in chronic poverty and anarchy. - Aldous Huxley

plussed to find the Master look like a very ordinary person, and wondered: "Is this the Yogi born to redeem us through an upheaval, showing a new way to India?" But his whole attitude changed once he looked at Sri Aurobindo's eyes:

"Oh! How knowing those eyes were! What grace in them! What peace! Mahashanti, mahashanti! The room exuded a great sattwic shanti."

When the correspondent plied Sri Aurobindo with questions regarding his Narayana Darshan, the Master assured him that these experiences did not belong to the dream-state at all. He had his visions when he was in the waking state and he was practising Bhakti Yoga then in the prison. He gave an idea of the methodology too:

"Leave all responsibility to the Divine. Try to realize that whatever you think, speak, or do is not yours, and that it is the Divine who thinks, speaks and acts through you. The realization will come in time. Realization is different from vision. Crush your ego, be without the 'I', practice self-renunciation."

The extraordinary quality of his eyes cast a spell on his disciples in a big way. Dilip Kumar Roy wrote that "it was the eyes that fascinated me most – shining like two beacons in life's grey waste of waters." As for Sri Aurobindo, he did not merely see; he observed. He also worked, suffered, hoped. For him all life was indeed yoga. Naturally, it becomes very difficult for us to convey his splendid vision in a capsule form. Wide as life itself, aged as all our yesterdays, fresh as the coming dawn, deep as the Ratri Sukta, brilliant as the mid-day sun, his visions were many, yet the same. The centre everywhere, the circumference beyond our net of comprehension. Fortunately for us, towards the end of his earthly life, on 15th August, 1947, he kindly agreed to give a message to the nation as India became free from British domination.

The message was broadcast over the Tiruchirapalli radio station. Delivered on a day which was also the sage's seventy-fifth birthday, it spoke of his life-long hopes and dreams, strivings and visions. It is indeed a masterly summary of the Mahayogi's splendid vision for a free India, a resurgent Asia, a

unified global community, a transformed man divine on earth.

After fourteen years in England where he was a brilliant student in Manchester and Cambridge, Sri Aurobindo returned to India in 1893 to work in the Baroda State. As a young professor in the Maharajah's College, he delved deep in India's ancient cultural texts and was surprised that a nation with such a past remained so weak and slavish. Was it not mainly due to the import of a western education and culture by the British who wanted a race of clerks, that India has forgotten its heroes? As he wrote later:

"British rule, Britain's civilizing mission in India has been the record success in history in the hypnosis of a nation. It persuaded us to live in a death of the will and its activities, taking a series of hallucinations for real things and creating in ourselves the condition of morbid weakness the hypnotist desired, until the Master of a mightier hypnosis laid His finger on India's eyes and cried, 'Awake!' Then only the spell was broken, the slumbering mind realised itself and the dead soul lived again."

It was then quite natural for the awakened India to reverberate to the Mantra of patriotism, "Vande Mataram", followed by the Gandhian Movement leading to an independent India.

In his 1947 message, Sri Aurobindo listed his own dream-visions for his nation and the world and his gratification that his visions and work were not in vain. The coincidence with his 75th birthday itself was a welcome indication: "I take this coincidence, not as a fortuitous accident, but as the sanction and the seal of the Divine Force that guides my steps on the work, with which I began life, the beginning of its full fruition." In every way this message is a classic of our times, a talisman for our future. For this message is not a mere thanksgiving or hallelujah for something achieved. Actually it is a firm warning to the citizens of independent India as well as a lesson to the global community. The choice is in our hands: Truth or the Abyss. Sri Aurobindo begins:

"The first of these dreams was a revolutionary movement which would create a free and united India.

The bane of India is the plethora of politicians and the paucity of statesmen.

- Nani Palkhivala



India today is free but she has not achieved unity. At one moment it almost seemed as if in the very act of liberation, she would fall back into the chaos of separate States which preceded the British conquest. But fortunately it now seems probable that this danger will be averted and a large and powerful, though not a complete union will be established.”

The hopes have not been belied, and the union has gained larger parameters with the coming in of Goa, Diu, Daman, Pondicherry, Karaikal, Mahe and Chandernagore. And Sikkim too. More than fifty years after India gained independence, we can offer our grateful thanks to Bharata Shakti for keeping this union in good form. Sri Aurobindo’s vision has become a reality.

While Sri Aurobindo was very proud of the ancient heritage of India, he was unhappy about the way the Indian population treated one-sixth of it as beyond the pale of civilized togetherness and so the unfortunates remained neglected down the centuries. He wrote in 1919 that he found “untouchability” an indefensible occurrence in Indian culture, an experience that has weakened our national life:

“A solution which condemns by segregation one-sixth of the nation to permanent ignominy, continued filth, uncleanness of the inner and outer life and a brutal animal existence instead of lifting them out of it is no solution but rather an acceptance of weakness and a constant wound to the social body and to its collective spiritual, intellectual, moral and material welfare.”

His illuminations have created a psychological climate where Aurobindonians gather and live in a way that has made this very idea unthinkable and dead for ever. That is why, of all the problems taken up by the Constituent Assembly, Sri Aurobindo made a special mention of what was being done for the scheduled castes in his message of 1947 and expressed his gratification that “the wisely drastic policy of the Constituent Assembly has made it probable that the problem of the depressed classes will be solved without schism or fissure.” Since the problem has been gigantic and an evil of several centuries cannot be wished away in a few years, the

government has continued to do its utmost to help the “one-sixth” join the mainstream of India’s social life.

However, there were other fissures with widening gaps. Sri Aurobindo rightly saw that there was a greater danger that was closing upon India on 15th August 1947:

“But the old communal division into Hindus and Muslims seems now to have hardened into a permanent political division of the country. It is to be hoped that this settled fact will not be accepted as settled for ever or as anything more than a temporary expedient. For, if it lasts, India may be seriously weakened, even crippled: civil strife may remain always possible, possible even a new invasion and foreign conquest.”

Here was the great patriot who had worked for a great and free India, a united India. He had come out of his political retirement even to send a message to Sir Stafford Cripps who was leading a Mission to India in 1942 to invite Indian leaders to participate in a responsible Central Government and help the Allies in the War:

“I have heard your broadcast, as one who has been a nationalist leader and worker for India’s independence, though now my activity is no longer in the political but in the spiritual field, I wish to express my appreciation of all you have done to bring about this offer. I welcome it as an opportunity given to India to determine for herself, and organise in all liberty of choice, her freedom and unity, and take an effective place among the world’s free nations. I hope it will be accepted, and right use made of it, putting aside all discords and divisions.”

This was a statesman speaking, a visionary who saw this as “a step towards a greater world union.” But unfortunately, those who were making the moves were only politicians who could not see beyond the light of day into the future of global unity. Sri Aurobindo’s personal message was taken by his emissary S. Doraiswamy Aiyar to the Congress Working Committee as also to C. Rajagopalachari and B.S. Moonje. Apart from other advantages, this plan would have been a wonderful opportunity for the Hindus and

Universities, as a colleague of mine recently put it, “have reinvented themselves as corporations”.

- Michael N. Nagler

the Muslims to work together and tell the world, "here we are and remain one and indivisible as a nation". History has recorded how the Cripps overture was rejected by Mahatma Gandhi as a "Post-dated cheque on a bank that was crashing"; and how Sri Aurobindo's advice was wasted on an avoidable mind-set. A golden opportunity to silence the propounders of the "two nations" theory was trashed. Within ten years, K.M. Munshi was to go on record how a Rishi's vision had been denied outright when the Congress rejected the Cripps Mission and Sri Aurobindo's advice: "...today we realise that if the first proposal had been accepted, there would have been no partition, no refugees, and no Kashmir problem."

Though his advice was rejected in 1942, Sri Aurobindo did not reject his motherland. Bharata Shakti was one and indivisible and he looked into the future and told his audience in 1947 that still there was a chance to redeem lost time. When Sri Aurobindo, Bala Gangadhar Tilak and others had entered the strife-ridden political fray of the independence movement, they had suffered, sacrificed all for a united India. They were not tired of hailing India as a union and when one sang, *Bande Mataram*, the Mother was the entire sub-continent. Subramania Bharati's Tamil poem "Pappa Pattu" which is sung as an integration song by little children even today, instills this image of the indivisible India:

Nearly half a century later, must this dream of a united, indivisible India remain shattered for ever? Sri Aurobindo's voice has a stern, hard ring about it, a command for every patriotic Indian to think seriously as the Partition was fraught with incalculable dangers.

"India's internal development and prosperity may be impeded, her position among the nations weakened, her destiny impaired or even frustrated. This must not be; the partition must go."

No ambiguity, no hemming and hawing regarding the majority and minority, the communal divide and the need of the times. The phrase comes like a whiplash: "The partition must go."

That this kind of an artificial Partition can never be permanent is obvious to the Rishi who sees into the future. Knowing a good deal about man's

impatience, Sri Aurobindo also perhaps reviewed all the possibilities for a reunion and hence he made a statement where much is left unsaid but the unsaid words are a warning, an advice and a blessing as well. Learn to live together! No bombs and swords between you! So he envisaged a union and how it might come about:

"Let us hope that that may come about naturally, by an increasing recognition of the necessity not only of peace and concord but of common action, by the practice of common action and the creation of means for that purpose. In this way unity may finally come about under whatever form -- the exact form may have a pragmatic but not a fundamental importance. But by whatever means, in whatever way, the division must go; unity must and will be achieved, for it is necessary for the greatness of India's future."

It is obvious that Sri Aurobindo was more concerned with what was going on right then to destroy innumerable happy homes, breakup life-long friendships, dismember a unity built through generations in countless villages. We must of course remember the solemn raising of the Indian flag above the Red Fort at midnight; but we must also remember that this was a fractured freedom which dismembered and maimed India's children, threw thousands of women into life-long despair, made millions of them refugees in their own motherland, call it India or Pakistan. Ah, we have had enough of political wranglings that are childish and meaningless. We need statesmen now to make Sri Aurobindo's dream of a united India a reality.

Sri Aurobindo's second dream-vision was the resurgence of the people of Asia. India's ancient message was always directed towards the entire humanity; the geographical unit of India should not imprison the universal man in India! The first step outside India to enlarge our cooperation and advancement would be Asia. India was not the lone country to be colonised, other countries in Asia also had suffered as much. But Sri Aurobindo felt gratified that "Asia has arisen". In this new dawn, Sri Aurobindo hoped that India would take a lead in helping Asia play "her great role in the progress of human civilisation." The East had given great religions to the world; also

Every nation is destined to go through periods of expansion and decline, and none is destined to rise, or fall, forever. In an impermanent world, the only constant is the turning of the economic and political cycles that govern the future. - Ruchir Sharma

science, astronomy, mathematics ... Asia had not lagged behind in any of these in the past. Unfortunately, there had been a few centuries of wilful submission to lethargy but now, according to Sri Aurobindo, Asia was poised to contribute immensely to achieve human progress and unity. One can feel the anxiety with which the sage encourages Indians on what they have achieved and what they can in the future: "Only a little has to be done and that will be done today or tomorrow. There India has her part to play and has begun to play it with an energy and ability which already indicate the measure of her possibilities and the place she can take in the council of the nations."

From India to Asia and then to the world. Global unity was an adhara sruti in Sri Aurobindo's writings. Speaking of unification as a necessity of Nature, he advised us that such unification was absolutely necessary for the future and a continuous balancing act like the United Nations, however significant, is not enough. Long, long before the destruction of the World Trade Centre and the present fear-psychosis that has gripped all the nations of the world, Sri Aurobindo made a statement imbedded with hope: "A catastrophe may intervene and interrupt or destroy what is being done, but even then the final result is sure. For unification is a necessity of Nature, an inevitable movement. Its necessity for the nations is also clear, for without it the freedom of the small nations may be at any moment in peril and the life even of the large and powerful nations insecure." September 11, 2001 has come and gone, but the situation is still not hopeless. Small nations are at peril and large and powerful nations are feeling insecure fifty years after Sri Aurobindo wrote as above; but his nectarean words, "the final result is sure" will be our talisman for the future.

Sri Aurobindo said that global unity can be achieved under the aegis of a Religion of Humanity, for which the basic mantras had already been propounded by 18th century Europe:

"Freedom, equality, brotherhood are the three godheads of the soul; they cannot be really achieved through the external machinery of society or by man so long as he lives only in the individual and communal

ego ... Yet brotherhood is the real key to the triple gospel of the idea of humanity ... freedom, equality, unity are the eternal attributes of the Spirit. It is the practical recognition of this truth, it is the awakening of the soul in man and the attempt to get him to live from his soul and not from his ego which is the inner meaning of religion, and it is that to which the religion of humanity also must arrive before it can fulfil itself in the life of the race."

Sri Aurobindo also envisaged a day when unity will be there in form and in spirit: "... there must grow up an international spirit and outlook, international forms and institutions must appear, perhaps such developments as dual or multilateral citizenships, willed interchange or voluntary fusion of cultures." The 21st century seems to be very close to realising Sri Aurobindo's dream thanks to the cyber revolution. However, sreyamsi bahuvidya! Evil forces do line up whenever great works are undertaken, but it was Sri Aurobindo's firm hope that Truth will prevail in the end. And let us add the ancient blessing: kavayah satya srutah, the poets have heard the Truth..

Long ago, hunched over his typewriter in Pondicherry during the First World War, Sri Aurobindo saw that Indian spirituality could yet offer the right signal for the west to come out of its materialist paradise. His typewriter turned out great works like Essays on the Gita, Foundations of Indian Culture, On the Veda, The Life Divine, The Psychology of Social Development and The Synthesis of Yoga which explained the name and nature of Sanatana Dharma and how this Ancient Way remained still valid for humanity. Since Swami Vivekananda's epoch-making address at the Parliament of Religions in 1893, the West has begun to realise this dream of Sri Aurobindo. Obsessed with the airconditioned nightmare produced by the technological advancements in the West, verily like Bhasmasura who is not able to control his boon, the West is veering towards self-destruction. Sri Aurobindo knew very well that this rakshasan gift of industrialism from the West boded no good for the Indian culture. He was not merely peering into the future but saw actually what was happening in the future, since he also knew that man by nature takes the line of least resistance:

This is the first and foremost thing to learn about India that there is not and never was an India.

- Sir John Strachey in 1884

“If we take over for instance that terrible, monstrous and compelling thing, that giant Asuric creation, European industrialism, - unfortunately we are being forced by circumstances to do it, -- whether we take it in its form or its principle, we may under more favourable conditions develop by it our wealth and economic resources, but assuredly we shall get too its social discords and moral plagues and cruel problems, and I do not see how we shall avoid becoming the slaves of the economic aim in life and losing the spiritual principle of our culture.”

Perhaps, this is the moment when India’s Sanatana Dharma can help the West to have the right view regarding the forces of Nature and Man. Sri Aurobindo is happy that not only is the West turning to the East for wisdom, but also for guidance to achieve a perfect physical-mental-psychic-spiritual life through Indian yoga: “amid the disasters of the time more and more eyes are turning towards her (India) with hope and there is even an increasing resort not only to her teachings, but to her psychic and spiritual practice.”

Sri Aurobindo also speaks of his final dream-vision which was “a step in evolution which would raise man to a higher and larger consciousness and begin the solution of the problems which have perplexed and vexed him since he first began to think and to dream of individual perfection and a perfect society.” He says, “this is still a personal hope and an idea”, but already people in India and in the West have accepted the idea and are working towards its becoming a reality. Not that it is going to be an easy task, programmed in space and time. Evolution takes its own time, though it is willing to be generous if man is prepared to cooperate. As Sri Aurobindo concludes his play, Perseus the Deliverer:

“...the ascent is slow and long is Time.  
Yet shall Truth grow and harmony increase:  
The day shall come when men feel close and one.  
Meanwhile one forward step is something gained,  
Since little by little earth must open to heaven  
Till her dim soul awakes into the Light.”

Hence Sri Aurobindo said in his 1947 message: “The difficulties in the way are more formidable than

in any other field of endeavour, but difficulties were made to be overcome and if the Supreme Will is there, they will be overcome.” In this step towards the Next Future, towards the transformation of man’s imperfect Mind into a Mind of Light, Indians have an important part to play as well, and be the guides of humanity. The Rishi places a high responsibility on Indians when he says: “Here too, if this evolution is to take place, since it must proceed through a growth of the spirit and the inner consciousness, the initiative can come from India and, although the scope must be universal, the central movement may be hers.”

Perhaps, once again, we have dropped into the somnolence of the spirit in post-Independence euphoria. At the dawn of the twentieth century the nation had been woken up by the young sannyasin’s peremptory call: *uttishtatatha, jagratha, praapya varannibhodhata*. Today, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, both in India and all over the world we need such a visionary voice to give the wake-up call again, bring out the best in us and chase away what is evil, and help us endure the present, defeat the forces of disunity, and achieve the ultimate victory. But what shall we do? To whom shall we turn for guidance? Who can be our leader?

In the Padma Purana, there is a significant discourse which refers to “Bhagavata Mahatmya”. When Lord Krishna prepared to return to his Realm, Uddhava was deeply sorrowful, though he had just then heard from the Lord, words of wisdom which is now known as “Uddhava Gita”. Now that the frightening Kaliyuga was imminent, what would human beings do in the absence of Krishna to show them the right path? Nor is another person of his likes to be seen to guard them. The earth in the form of a cow, whom shall she seek for help?

Spoken to thus by Uddhava on the holy banks of Prabhasa, Sri Krishna gave some thought to the submission: What shall I do to sustain my devotees? The Padma Purana says:

The Lord directed his power and glory into the Bhagavata and disappeared in the ocean of Srimad Bhagavata.

This image of Krishna still living and teaching

Democratic ideals include the need for transparency and accountability which are ultimately the principal methods of restraining and dislodging corrupt practices.

- Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen



through the Bhagavata, or Rama's life of Satya and Dharma continuing as a living message through the Ramayana is very important for us today. These great epics have remained contemporaneous through the millennia. Sri Aurobindo's message and vision also continue to be in the present tense thanks to his great epic, Savitri. It is an epic which gives a very clear account of the state of humanity today in all its varied manifestations. If you wish to have an idea of the technological nightmare in which we are caught, watching avidly the innumerable destructions going on everywhere, if we close for a moment our eyes and meditate on the scenario, we would know how contemporaneous Sri Aurobindo is even when he wrote describing Aswapati's descent into Night:

"In rejected heaps by a monotonous road  
The old simple delights were left to lie  
On the wasteland of life's descent to Night.  
All glory of life was dimmed, tarnished with doubt;  
All beauty ended in an aging face ...  
Impure, sadistic, with grimacing mouths,  
Grey foul inventions gruesome and macabre  
Came televised from the gulfs of Night.  
Her craft ingenious in monstrosity,  
Impatient of all natural shape and poise,  
A gape of nude exaggerated lines,  
Gave caricature a stark reality".

One should remember here that Sri Aurobindo was writing in the 'forties. Terrestrial television itself came to India only in September 1959 and it was 1965 before regular transmission was started. The television scenario today with hundreds of channels recklessly careering with violence, concupiscence and mis-reportage was unknown in the last century. And yet he is so very accurate!

Political oratory, for instance, whether in the Houses of elected representatives or during our elections: Sri Aurobindo has reported it all already in Savitri:

In street and house, in councils and in courts  
Beings he met who looked like living men  
And climbed in speech upon high wings of thought  
But harboured all that is subhuman, vile  
And lower than the lowest reptile's crawl...

A bull-throat bellowed with its brazen tongue;  
Its hard and shameless clamour filling Space  
And threatening all who dared to listen to truth  
Claimed the monopoly of the battered ear;  
A deafened acquiescence gave its vote,  
And braggart dogmas shouted in the night  
Kept for the fallen soul once deemed a god  
The pride of its abysmal absolute."

So we can assert that like Sri Krishna, Sri Aurobindo may have withdrawn from the physical, but he has withdrawn only into Savitri. The voice is very much here, speaking through Savitri, a unique epic running to more than 24,000 lines of brilliant blank verse. We go through all of life, here and in the beyond, and Sri Aurobindo's vision assures us that we are indeed moving towards the Next Future of spiritual unity. As I noted earlier, the kavi is a dhrishta, a seer and he sees the Truth and reports it: kavayah satya srutaah. If Sri Aurobindo could accurately record our times which was still in the future for him, why should I, or for that matter all of you, doubt his vision for future humanity? Sri Aurobindo's vision has been couched in English poetry, elevating this so-called foreign language into mantra, truly the gift of Goddess Saraswati to India, as Chakravarti Rajagopalachari assured us. It is a vision of future humanity we need to remember and hold on to in these trying times of universal turmoil. I would do well to conclude this offering to the haloed memory of Prof. K.R.Narayanan with this blessing of the Supreme to Savitri who has gained back her Satyavan and prepares to return to earth to build the life divine.

"O sun-Word, thou shalt raise the earth-soul to Light  
And bring down God into the lives of men;  
Earth shall be my work-chamber and my house,  
My garden of life to plant a seed divine.  
When all thy work in human time is done  
The mind of earth shall be a home of light,  
The life of earth a tree growing towards heaven,  
The body of earth a tabernacle of God."



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

- Edwin Arnold 'In Light of Asia, 1865'

## Late Gutala Krishnamurti

An Andhra C.P.Brown

In the death of Gutala Krishnamurti at Vizag on last Wednesday an extraordinary link between Telugu and English has been snapped. Gutala who had lived in London for decades before returning to Vizag, due to infirmities of old age, rendered yeoman service to both English and Telugu languages and literature. And in more ways than one he had repaid the debt of gratitude Andhras owed to C.P. Brown and in more recent years to J.P.L. Gwynn. C.P. Brown, an English civil servant who founded two schools each in Cuddapah and in Machilipatnam and later worked in Rajahmundry also, revived Telugu works on the verge of extinction. He authored and translated several works from Telugu to English and also worked as Professor of Telugu in London University. J.P.L. Gwynn another famous civil servant who worked as Collector of Visakhapatnam emulated Brown in authoring Telugu works including Telugu-English dictionary and Telugu grammar. The London based Gutala Krishnamurti, an embodiment of elegance and dignity, handsomely contributed to strengthen the richness of both Telugu and English. He hosted every Telugu celebrity visiting London from Sri Sri to Cinare, including poets, writers and artistes, more recently Mandali Buddha Prasad and Yarlagadda Lakshmi Prasad. It was a moment of pride to Gutala Krishnamurti and Telugu literary world when Sri Sri's magnum opus Mahaprasthanam was recorded in Sri Sri's own voice and the text beautifully brought out to the delight of connoisseurs of letters, especially those Andhras living abroad. Gutala also published a book on the famous singer-star of yesteryears Tanguturi Suryakumari. That peerless philanthropist and patron of arts and letters late P.V.Ramanaiah Raja who founded Rajalakshmi Foundation in Chennai and gave the first literary award to Sri Sri, also honoured Gutala Krishnamurti at a special function.

**Founder of Literary Societies:** After taking the M.A degree in English from Andhra University in 1956, Krishnamurti worked as lecturer in S.K.B.R.College, Amalapuram and later in C.M.D.College, Bilaspur. He took his Ph.D degree from Saugar University and for a few years worked as assistant professor in the United

States. Shifting to London in 1972 Krishnamurti founded the 1890s Society and the Francis Thompson Society. He edited and published works besides contributing articles to professional journals. He worked hard for his creative endeavour of unearthing rare works of writers between 1890 and 1900. Among his publications was the Women Writers of the 1890s which earned for him wide respect in literary circles. At a personal level Krishnamurti was modest and gentle in speech, wearing lightly on his shoulders with an endearing smile, the honours and respect showered on him.

A. Prasanna Kumar

Courtesy : *Deccan Chronicle*, July 17, 2016



## Resurrecting a lost Decade

Dr. P.S.N. MURTHY F.R.C.S,

Sir John Betjamen, the English Poet-Laureate, once remarked that "a 'rare-book' shop is a sign of civilisation." So too is a well-equipped library private or public. This suffix to the previous quote is the contribution of Dr Gutaala Krishna Murthy whose contribution to English is too significant to be overlooked. He has a unique collection of rare books in his own library - essentially of his own area of interest and research - the 1890s.

The 1890 decade was a great landmark in England and English literature - a great awakening and genesis of new ideas in life, literature, arts. morality and in fact all aspects of life what we may call now progressive ideas.

Many writers and artists were well received and their works published or exhibited. But quite a few were lost without any or due recognition. The main aim of the '1890s movement', is to bring to light as much as possible of those lost writers of that decade.

Much has been said about the richness of the English literary scene in the nineties: how the principal actors reached London, the centre of ail such activity, at the beginning of the decade. One by one -some from Oxford and other universities, with or without a degree, and some from the Northern and other counties started reaching the great metropolis.

While China's economic prowess impresses much of the world, its repressive political system and mercantilist business practices tarnish its reputation.

- David Shambaugh (*Foreign Affairs*, July-August 2015)

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Much has also been said about the new awakening in almost every branch of human activity: new organisations and new movements, and new journalism too. In the glare and noise made by these dashing young men who conquered and ruled London for a while, many writers of greater or lesser talent became casualties, some temporary and some permanent, and the world began to move so fast after the 1914 war that it was almost impossible for any one to look back. Dr Gutaala has himself covered all these aspects in his 1973 catalogue. The war gave the world its first major shock for centuries, and people were shaken and thrown out of their conventional ways of life. The war produced a new kind of poetry epitomised by Wilfred Owen who wrote about the sorrow and horror resulting out of his experiences in the trenches. This became a fashion and the non-spectacular writer of the nineties received yet another blow before he had a chance to recover from the first.

Moreover, literary fashions and tastes too had undergone a sudden change, more out of fear of becoming social outcasts than for any other reason. Writers, both young and old, retreated to the hills and valleys and clouds and cuckoos, away from realistic literature, only anxious to get away from the 'Yellow' stain of the mid nineties.

"By now, we have already moved a long way from the 'Nineties, a century; nevertheless it is not too late to look back and to see the whole picture dispassionately and impartially. Many of these writers are buried deep under the debris of bygone days and ways of life and under the wreckage of two global wars. Many cannot be accounted for, even if one takes the trouble to make a roll-call. Whether they were important or not, it is not for me to say. All I wish to say is that they gave great enjoyment to their contemporaries and received respect from them. They were writers. Let us look for them. Let us feel their pulse. If there is no more sign of life in them let us at least give them a decent burial".

These thoughts and ideals motivated Dr Gutaala Krishna Murthy to devote his life to achieve these goals. Born at Parlakhemidi, now in Orissa, into an orthodox family, he lost his father at a very early age. Right from his childhood he showed traces of his

unique and independent character and grit. He went to Vizianagaram for his schooling and later to Mrs A V N College at Visakhapatnam for his Intermediate. Then he joined Andhra University for B.A (Hons.) in English literature under Prof Srinivasa Iyengar, who guided this young rebel and gave him the first taste of Francis Thompson - the great English poet of the 1890s.

He then started his English teaching at Amalapuram, where he could captivate the hearts of all the students as well as the senior staff members and administrators as a magnetic lecturer in English, with a unique style of his own. He then moved to Bilaspur and Sagar University - where he got his Ph.D working on the poems of Thompson. He wanted to pursue his study and research on Francis Thompson and reached England in 1962. He thought to meet his expenses and pursued his work with great enthusiasm. He could trace out some of Thompson's relatives and friends and this enabled him to collect some of Thompson's unpublished works as well as some of his personal possessions like pipe and tobacco tin.

He organised a literary exhibition on Francis Thompson, under the banner of Francis Thompson Society, with himself as the founder secretary. The response was overwhelming and got excellent reviews in the press. Many local enthusiasts and admirers joined the society. They held periodic lecture meetings and literary discussions. It then dawned on him that there were so many other writers and artists of that period, who deserved equal or greater attention.

That was the beginning and transformation of the Francis Thompson Society into the Eighteen Nineties Society. Ultimately it has now become a movement of its own with several universities all over the world starting independent units that teach and offer research facilities in the 1980s. The Society has published a series of biographies of the neglected and nearly forgotten writers and authors of that period, under the general editorship of Dr. Gutaala Krishna Murthy. This is an age of specialisation in all walks of life. The grand finale was the exhibition of the women writers of the 1890s organised by Dr. Gutaala. It was held at one of the leading rare books' shop called Sotherans of Piccadilly located at the heart of Central

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India has maintained the world's largest democracy, successfully accommodated an amazingly diverse cultural and demographic mosaic, and kept its head and its values even under repeated terrorist attacks.

- Kishore Mahbubani and Lawrence H. Summers

(*Foreign Affairs*, May-June 2016)

London. The society got royal patronage. Princess Michel of Kent, who took keen interest in English literature, became the patron and Her Royal Highness opened the exhibition. No doubt, it was a grand success, eliciting excellent reviews in the press and coverage by the BBC.

Yet another unknown facet of Krishnamurthi is his gracious hospitality which attracted stalwarts like Sri Sri. Anidra. Puripanda Appalaswami to his abode at London, a regular haunt of the best of English litterateurs of the day. Videsandhra Prachuranalu which had brought out a unique edition of Sri'Sri's famous anthology *Mahaprasthanam* is a brain child of the indefatigable GK. The author had the good fortune to see the exhibition and see the glory of this great work and achievement of this illustrious Indian from Andhra Pradesh. It reminds one of the great contribution made by a great Englishman, C P Brown for Telugu literature. Now our man, Dr Gutaala is doing yeomen service for English literature on a much larger scale than what C P Brown has done for Telugu literature in the last century. Currently he is busy compiling a *Dictionary of the Eighteen Nineties*.

(The writer, a surgeon by profession, is a member of the 1890s Society, London. He is the author of 'Untouchable 'Nirbhayas' of India and One Billion Rising')



## Book Review:

### **WHO MOVED MY INTEREST RATE? LEADING THE RESERVE BANK OF INDIA THROUGH FIVE TURBULENT YEARS**

**by Duvvuri Subbarao**

**Penguin – Viking, 2016 pp.323 Rs.699**

This book of 323 pages by Dr.Duvvuri Subbarao, the 22nd Governor of Reserve Bank of India, gives 'an insiders', 'a ringside' and 'a tell-all' account of his five year tenure at the RBI during 2008-2013.

Subbarao, as a career bureaucrat, wanted to become Cabinet Secretary to Govt. of India, which he thought was well within his reach by virtue of his age,

seniority and service record. The job of Governor of RBI was not on his "career calculus", as he thought his experience at the State and Central Government levels was mostly on "the fiscal side", including his Doctoral Work at Andhra University ('Fiscal Reforms at the State Level'). But, as destiny would have it, he was chosen for the job when P.Chidambaram was the Finance Minister, to become the first Governor to be born after Independence.

His movement from the Finance Ministry (he was Finance Secretary at that time) raised many eyebrows and was received with circumspection and suspicion by many that he would implement the government's agenda as RBI Chief. The book, describes in detail, how the sceptics were proved wrong. The objective of the book, according to Subbarao is not so much as to defend his record or establish his legacy but to explain his perspectives on the issues and challenges that he faced during his five year tenure. The book is a sincere attempt towards this end.

He assumed charge as Governor of RBI on 5th Sept 2008 (Teacher's Day) and immediately plunged into crisis management. "I was plunged into crisis management even before I could sink into the job". It was truly "baptism by fire" as, within 10 days of his assuming office, Lehman Brothers in U.S. collapsed leading to the global financial crisis. Just as the crisis was ending, the challenge of combating and containing high and persistent inflation in the country surfaced. Added to this were record high trade and fiscal deficits and consequent rupee depreciation. Towards the end of his tenure, he had to deal with the rupee panic of 2013, caused by the tapering off the USFED's monetary stimulus. His tenure at RBI, was therefore, marked by one crisis after another, rather occurring in quick succession and he had to steer the RBI and the economy through these turbulent years.

The book discusses these turbulent times in detail and focusses on the actions RBI had taken to deal with one crisis after another in the context of the "turbulent relationship he shared with the two Finance Ministers of the time".

One thing that comes out prominently from the

The task lies in the universalization of primary education, vocationalization of secondary education and rationalization of university education, and in binding all three sectors and thus making a coherent and desirable value system. - Dr.Karan Singh



book is the uneasy relationship between the RBI, the Finance Ministers of the time and the Finance Ministry during his tenure.

Within 1 ½ months of assuming office of RBI Governor, (Oct 2008), Subbarao had his first skirmish with Chidambaram. That was the beginning of the turbulent relationship between the two which continued all through his tenure. The skirmish relates to the first of the many attempts made by the Central Government (Finance Minister) to trample the autonomy of the Central Bank during his tenure and Subbarao was “unhappy” about such interventions.

In the middle of October 2008, Chidambaram wanted to separate debt management from the Central Bank which was one of the core functions of the RBI and which was critical in the liquidity management of the banking system. Chidambaram announced the constitution of a Liquidity Management Committee, headed by the then Finance Secretary, Arun Ramanathan without consulting Subbarao. He was “annoyed and upset” as he felt that “Chidambaram clearly overstepped into the RBI turf as liquidity management is a quintessential Central Bank function”. Subbarao told Chidambaram that his action was totally inappropriate and RBI would not participate in the Committee.

The Interest Rate Regime had been the major cause of friction between the RBI and the Central Government during his tenure. Subbarao had established, during his tenure, a record of sorts – changing interest rates for a total of 23 times while his predecessors moved interest rates in only one direction – either up or down – Subbarao moved the interest rates in both directions (13 times upwards and 10 times downwards).

The book describes the friction between the government and the Central Bank over the setting of interest rates and about the pressures Subbarao faced in this regard. “I have been asked several times if there was pressure on setting interest rates. There certainly was, although the precise psychological mechanics would vary depending on the context, setting and personalities”. “There was constant and decidedly unhelpful friction between the Ministry of Finance

under both Pranab Mukherjee and later, Chidambaram and the RBI on what the government saw as RBI’s “unduly hawkish stance over interest rates totally unmindful of growth concerns”.

Both Pranab Mukherjee and Chidambaram as Finance Ministers pressured for cutting interest rates to revive investments, even though accelerating inflation called for the opposite. These pressures emerge from the inherent differences in priorities with the government focusing on growth and RBI on inflation control. “The logic of why the Reserve Bank should compromise its judgement so as to become a cheerleader for the economy never appealed to me”, Subbarao laments.

Further, Subbarao also points out to a tacit agreement between the Government and the RBI that they keep their differences behind closed doors. Whatever may be the differences, it is a standard practice for the Finance Minister to issue a statement endorsing the RBI’s monetary policy decision in the media, shortly after it was announced.

Subbarao, recalls how there was a “high profile” deviation from this standard practice in October 2012, when Chidambaram publicly expressed his displeasure at RBI’s decision not to cut interest rates. Subbarao’s refusal to yield made Chidambaram to do something very unusual and uncharacteristic – by going public with his strong disapproval of RBI’s stance. Immediately after the RBI’s decision not to cut rates, Chidambaram addressed the media saying “growth is as much a concern as inflation. If the government has to walk alone, to face the challenge of growth, we will walk alone.” Subbarao considers this as a public rebuke of RBI and its Governor.

Besides, there were other attempts by the Finance Ministry to subvert the monetary policy transmission mechanism. “The most conspicuous way in which the government overstepped its ownership privileges (government owns 70% of the banking system) was the way in which it regularly ‘advised’ public sector banks on how to set their interest rates in response to the Reserve Bank’s monetary policy stance.” The Finance Minister used to call for a meeting with the public sector bank chiefs, following

Reserve Bank is an institution that has served the country with dignity and distinction, and will continue to set exemplary standards for professional integrity and work ethic.

- D.Subbarao, former Governor, RBI 21

each monetary policy review of the Reserve Bank and advise them not to raise their lending rates, even if the Reserve Bank had tightened the policy rate. “This overt repression of monetary policy transmission undermined the Reserve Bank’s efforts to contain inflation”, Subbarao bemoans.

Apart from the interest rate regime, there were other issues also - like estimates of growth and fiscal stance that made the frictions even deeper. Government felt that the RBI was ‘too cynical’ in its growth forecasts and wanted the RBI to project a higher growth rate and a lower inflation rate in order to share the responsibilities with the government for “Shoring up investment”. Thus, there was pressure from the government to forecast higher rates of growth, even as it pushed for lower interest rates and pursue an easy monetary policy. The logical inconsistency between these two demands probably escaped the attention of those in the government.

Subbarao had to ‘pay a price’ for all these actions in not heeding the government and for asserting the autonomy of RBI. The government showed its displeasure by deciding not to extend the terms of Deputy Governors – Usha Thorat in October 2010, when Pranab Mukherjee was the Finance Minister and Dr. Subir Gokarn in October 2012, when Mr. Chidambaram was the Finance Minister, in spite of his recommendations. Even his extension in 2011 for two more years came only on the intervention of the P.M. Dr. Manmohan Singh.

If the global financial crisis had to be managed in the initial stages of his tenure, he had to deal with the currency crisis of 2013 towards the end of his tenure which he considers as a more formidable challenge than the former. He discusses, in detail, “how the sharp depreciation of the rupee in 2013 was by far his toughest challenge”. To use monetary policy to defend the exchange rate was by far one of the toughest decisions he had to take, Subbarao recalls. Even here, perceptions differed between the Reserve Bank and Chidambaram. “My concern was that we would go astray in both the diagnosis and remedy if we did not acknowledge that at the root of our external economy problems were domestic vulnerabilities”, Subbarao explains. Subbarao

reasoned, at that time, that the plight of the rupee was primarily due to structural imbalances like high Current Account Deficit driven by non-productive imports like gold, but Chidambaram was “dismissive of the view” and blamed external factors.

Lucidly written, Subbarao’s book is a must-read for all - particularly students, teachers and researchers in Economics and policy makers – as it provides a candid account of and useful insights into monetary policy making and its implementation at a very difficult period in India’s and global economic history. All the five years of his tenure were marked by difficult challenges to financial stability, inflation and exchange rate. The book gives a detailed account of how he faced these exceptional challenges and led the RBI, through five turbulent years, while steadfastly safeguarding the autonomy and independence of the RBI – an institution which today is 81 years old and older than the Indian Republic. Tensions were there even before – his predecessor Dr.Y.V.Reddy also faced similar ones – which Dr.Reddy calls them as “creative tensions” (?). But the tensions that Subbarao faced during his tenure appear to be far more intense and sometimes even fundamental. The issues raised in his book need further debate and discussion in academic and policy fora.

A vast amount of research in the past has shown that a more independent Central Bank is more effective. There is a strong empirical evidence establishing that the more independent the Central Bank, the lower the inflation rate in a country.

As Governor, RBI, every decision and action of his was taken by one and only consideration – the larger public interest - and in this effort, he never “swerved from the Reserve Bank’s Dharma”. These words aptly sum up the man and his commendable work.

MAY HIS TRIBE INCREASE!

- Prof. M. Jagadeswara Rao

(Prof. M. Jagadeswara Rao, former Dean of Academic Affairs and Head of the Department of Economics, Andhra University, was supervisor of Mr. Subbarao’s doctoral thesis)



You in the West have the spiritually poorest of the poor.....I find it easy to give a place of rice to a hungry person, to furnish a bed to a person who has no bed, but to console or to remove the bitterness, anger, and loneliness that comes from being spiritually deprived, that takes a long time. - Mother Teresa

## 'Down-to-earth advice to job aspirants'

(Newspaper report on a lecture delivered by Shri M. Hari Narayanan, I.A.S., Commissioner, Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation at Visakhapatnam Public Library on September 27, 2016 at a meeting jointly organised by Centre for Policy Studies and Visakhapatnam Public Library.)

Stepping down the dais, reaching out to audience, speaking simple English laced with Telugu and giving his own example of preparing for the all-India services, Municipal Commissioner M. Hari Narayanan connected to youth with his down-to-earth approach.

Getting down to the basics of preparation, he advised them to be honest with themselves and evolve their own individual method and learn continuously from teachers, elders and experience.

By quoting his experience of chucking architecture practice for civil services examination against seemingly formidable competitors, he dealt with the dilemmas in preparing for any "examination for a job" even if it was civil services.

The jumpacked meeting of Centre for Policy Studies and Visakhapatnam Public Library for the career-minded on "Challenges and opportunities for youth," the second in the series on Tuesday, saw youth coming out with questions, including the state of affairs in the system.

"Compare equals considering the young, democratic India that stepped into industrialisation very late," he told them. Systematic improvement of systems has made a sea-change in the way people got passports, commodities through PDS or welfare pensions, Mr. Harinarayanan said. Measure success by the way you add to incremental happiness of people, he said.

"Be yourself, be thorough with basics and follow decorum. You can't be an encyclopaedia," he told young Uma Maheswari on facing interviews.

CPS Director A. Prasanna Kumar and library secretary D.S. Varma participated.

(Special correspondent, *The Hindu*, September 28, 2016.)

## Anniversary of Centre for Policy Studies

Today, October 2, 2016 Centre for Policy Studies completes twenty one years and Its Bulletin reaches the milestone of twenty years. Both were launched on Gandhi Jayanthi, the former in 1995 and the latter in 1996. On this happy occasion Centre for Policy Studies deems it a privilege to convey its profound gratitude to all those who have helped it, directly and indirectly, in its activities during the last two decades and more. It is an occasion for CPS to rededicate itself to its objectives and also to expand its domain of activities. Accordingly it is being restructured as an autonomous body with an advisory body, a new management board and a new director, besides shifting to a new premises very soon. CPS has stood the test of time as a forum to promote a healthy debate on public issues and policies on contemporary relevance in its own humble way thanks to the generous support of well-wishers and the public at large.

CPS conveys its grateful thanks to Gayatri Vidya Parishad, its President, Shri A.S.N.Prasad, Secretary, Prof. P.Somaraju and members of the governing body for their support during the last fourteen years. To late Prof.B.Sarveswara Rao, founder-president of Gayatri Vidya Parishad, his successors Prof.B.Swami and late Shri D.V.Subba Rao Centre for Policy Studies is ever grateful for their inspirational guidance and encouragement.

The Bulletin of Centre for Policy Studies has been receiving the gracious support of distinguished authors, administrators, writers, scholars, scientists and legal luminaries through their invaluable articles. CPS cannot adequately thank them for enriching the Bulletin with their writings. To the readers of the Bulletin CPS is deeply indebted for their unfailing support.



*Hearty Congratulations on the occasion  
of the Centre for Policy Studies  
completing 20 long years.*



***B. Sri Krishna Murthy***

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