



BULLETIN
OF THE
CENTRE FOR POLICY STUDIES

India and the Indian Ocean Region
finetuning maritime diplomacy

With Indian Ocean Region emerging as a complex hub of maritime activity and rivalry, India is finetuning its maritime diplomacy to meet the new challenges. If the 21st century belongs to the oceans, the Indian Ocean, the smallest but most crowded of the three, with busy sea lanes and several densely populated littoral states, has emerged as the hub of global trade and commerce and a theatre of great power rivalry. Experts on strategic affairs describe how it has become 'an area of acute tension and a zone of peril in which not only navies of the littoral states but also the nuclear weapon carriers of seven states—USA, Russia, France, China, India, Pakistan and Israel ply here.' Robert Kaplan writes that the Greater Indian Ocean 'may comprise a map as iconic to the new century as Europe was to the last.' He quotes the late British historian C.R.Boxer who wrote that 'Monsoon Asia, at the cross roads of the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific, will demographically and strategically be a hub of the twenty-first century'.

The Indian Ocean came into prominence with the withdrawal of Great Britain from the zone and the entry of USA to fill 'the vacuum' created by the former's exit. Two lady prime ministers, Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka and Indira Gandhi of India, asserted the autonomy of the littoral states of the IOR by enunciating the zone of peace theory. As strategic affairs analyst C.Raja Mohan observed 'the zone of peace was a continuation of the anti-imperial struggle to rid the Indian Ocean of the ruinous great power intervention and rivalry that had gone on for centuries'. A shift in American policy towards India began resulting in steady growth of strategic relationship between India and the United States. The US desiring to make 'an elegant' retreat from IOR wants India to take its place in checkmating China's designs and ambitions. China has made it abundantly clear that no stone would be left unturned and no pearl left unused in designing the string/chain in the IOR to strangulate India politically, strategically and economically.

Only three weeks ago newspapers carried the statement of US Admiral Harry Harris that the relations between India and the US have been improving with the US acknowledging the surveillance capabilities of Indian Navy of Chinese submarines. "There is sharing of information by the US and India on the Chinese maritime movement in the Indian Ocean Region", said the American Admiral. Indian Navy has stepped up the induction of submarines in response to China's growing presence in the region, according to reliable sources. Against that backdrop Chinese President Xi Jinping's recent statement that China does not believe in 'zero sum game' but thinks that the time has come for 'win-win cooperation between nations,' assumes significance. As analyst C.Uday Bhaskar observes "One fact is irrefutable. If this century is indeed to be an Asian century with China as the pre-eminent economic entity – then the texture of the Beijing-Delhi axis is critical to the realization of this exigency".

The prime minister's foreign policy initiatives have received the approbation of expert analysts for embarking on a new trajectory of connectivity with nations big and small, discarding some outdated concepts and theories. For instance, India now seeks 'strategic influence' in place of 'strategic autonomy' in the IOR. To create a favourable maritime environment India needs to involve the public in promoting maritime awareness. As suggested by the leading analyst, 'the national security establishment and the political class, in particular, should shed inertia moving away from traditional approach in international affairs'. India's quest for global role player status is intertwined with the Indian Ocean environment.

The Editor

No More Committees

Admiral Arun Prakash (Retd.)

Former Chief of Naval Staff
Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee
and Ex-Chairman NMF

Interests of national security demand the urgent creation of an overarching Ministry of Defence Technology & Industrial Production, and other reforms

In 2012, Former Indian defence minister, Jaswant Singh, had reportedly told American Journalist Tom Hundley. "There is no Cold Start doctrine... It was an off-the-cuff remark from a former chief of staff. I have been defence minister of the country; I should know." India's new army chief, by boldly shattering the wall of silence that surrounded the "Cold Start" concept for over a decade, and articulating his views regarding some other sensitive issues may have triggered an era of "glasnost" in India's defence discourse leading, hopefully, to a "national security renaissance" in the form of overdue reforms.

The year 2015 saw China issue a National Military Strategy, Australia putting out a Defence White Paper and the US delivering a Military Strategy as well as a Maritime Strategy. Amidst all this glasnost, India's national security establishment has maintained a deafening silence for 70 years. This inexplicable reticence is ascribed, by some, to India's pacifist tradition that has now mutated into "strategic restraint", and by others, to political disinterest and bureaucratic indifference

A facile excuse offered for this caginess is that open public discussion may compromise national security. In actual fact, it is obsessive secrecy, coupled with the accretion of power, that leads to what is known as a "security dilemma". In this phenomenon, actions by one state, intended to heighten its own security, lead other states to respond with similar measures, resulting in heightened tensions and possibility of conflict. The perilous India-China-Pakistan triangular rivalry is rooted in many security dilemmas that have arisen from the unstated arms race —conventional as well as nuclear—currently underway. As a statusquoist power sandwiched

between two revisionist neighbours, it is in India's vital interest to initiate a bilateral or triangular security dialogue that will encourage transparency, build confidence and cool temperatures, especially in the nuclear domain.

The Cold Start issue, apart from its own salience, has implications for the long-awaited reforms in India's national security arena that call for reflection at this juncture. The provenance of this concept goes back to the December 2001 terror assault on the Indian Parliament. In an uncharacteristic show of resolve and muscle, the government of the day ordered the mobilisation of its million-strong armed forces in the hope of coercing or compelling a recalcitrant Pakistan to behave—However, a three-week delay in positioning the Indian army's "strike corps" at their launch pads not only revealed the ponderous nature of India's mobilisation plans, but also permitted Pakistan to counter-mobilise, draw international attention to the South Asian "hotspot" and thwart an angry India.

Subsequently, army planners came up with an innovative concept that would forward-locate key units and enable full mobilisation within 48-72 hours from a "Cold Start". At the heart of this concept was restructuring the strike corps into smaller "integrated battle groups" (IBGs) —compact, highly mobile formations with their own armour, artillery and aviation support —that could respond swiftly to Pakistani provocations without crossing the "nuclear threshold".

Apart from the political resistance that it evokes, the Cold Start concept will make gut-wrenching demands on an army still steeped in World War II paradigms of attrition warfare, hamstrung by an antiquated higher defence organisation. The IBGs will employ "manoeuvre warfare", whose essence is agility and flexibility in planning as well as execution. This will demand dynamic leadership at all levels, as well as radical changes and the shattering of many shibboleths within our conservative army. Perhaps it is in acknowledgment of these challenges that the army had, so far, remained coy about taking ownership of this concept. In this regard, the new army chief seems to have taken the bull by the horns and may be contemplating a fresh start for Cold Start.

The true textbook for the pupil is his teacher.

- Mahatma Gandhi

Cold Start represents a compellence strategy, meant to deter Pakistan from continued violations of Indian sovereignty by sponsoring cross-border terrorism. However, it has been deliberately misinterpreted by wily Pakistani generals, who now brandish tactical nuclear weapons, such as the Hatf IX missile —a dangerous stratagem, discredited and discarded by the nuclear powers during the Cold War.

As the Indian army's September 2016 cross-border raids proved "Cold Start" remains a practical proposition that needs to be adopted wholeheartedly, even as we acquire the complete wherewithal for its implementation. While more Indian glasnost about Cold Start would bolster deterrence and dissuasion, the formation of IBGs would transform our large armoured and mechanised forces and keep them in an offensive frame of mind. However, the political establishment needs to clearly understand that Cold Start could lead to full-scale war and contains the possibility of "deterrence breakdown" -contingencies they must acknowledge and prepare for, in all seriousness.

This discussion takes place at a juncture when India's security faces grave perils — both internally and externally. The discourse will, however, remain purely academic unless India's national security structure — anachronistic in the context of Cold Start —undergoes a virtual renaissance in three crucial areas.

Firstly, decision-making in the Ministry of Defence (MoD) continues to be languid and capricious, mainly because it is manned exclusively by an itinerant, generalist bureaucracy, unqualified to manage the complex issues of defence and security. The answer lies in integrating the three armed forces HQs with the MOD, so that expertise is pooled and civil servants and uniformed personnel work harmoniously, side by side. Decision-making will, automatically, see a dramatic transformation.

Secondly, the three armed forces badly need integration with each other, not just to enable implementation of modern warfare concepts like Cold Start, but to engender commonality in training, planning and equipment, as well as synergy or "jointness" in war-fighting. As experienced worldwide,

the essential prerequisite for initiating jointness is the institution of a functionary—Chairman Chiefs of Staff or Chief of Defence Staff - who will, in consultation with the three service chiefs, provide military advice to the Raksha Mantri (RM) and FM. He will work alongside his co-equal, the defence secretary, who will constitute the source of advice on defence policy and finance to the RM and FM.

The third area that needs to be addressed is India's half-empty arsenal which calls for a drastic restructuring of India's military-industrial complex. The feckless bureaucrats and scientists, entrusted for 70 years with defence production and defence R&D, have reduced the nation to the status of a supplicant where military hardware is concerned. Neither grandiose-sounding schemes, nor tinkering with procurement procedures will help — major surgery is the need of the day

Interests of national security demand the urgent creation of an overarching "Ministry of Defence Technology & Industrial Production", consisting of three departments (headed by a junior minister) charged with the development and production of land systems, maritime systems and aerospace systems. Each department should oversee many "clusters" composed of research laboratories (reassigned from DRDO) coupled with appropriate production units (ordnance factories as well as defence PSUs). Each cluster should represent a "public-private partnership", with FDI being sought wherever necessary.

The time for committees and task forces is long past because the way ahead is quite clear. A resolute political leadership should be able to overcome resistance from entrenched bureaucracies —civilian and military—and push through the renaissance that will place India's national security on a sound footing and justify our colossal defence expenditure.

(Centre for Policy Studies conveys its grateful thanks to Admiral Arun Prakash)

(Courtesy : *The Indian Express (e-paper)*, Saturday, January 21, 2017)

You should try to understand that bliss is not to be found in persons and material objects. Bliss comes from only within you; you yourself are the source of peace and bliss.

'India should go for stronger regional engagement : Expert'

(Newspaper report on the 2nd Abid Hussain Memorial Lecture delivered by Dr. C. Raja Mohan on January 27, 2017, organized by Centre for Policy Studies)

India needs a regional security strategy, both economic and military, that creates a basis for stronger regional engagement, Director of Carnegie Centre, India, C. Raja Mohan has said.

Doing more with smaller neighbours as well as building a coalition to secure India's interests by negotiating the right terms with the U.S. is imperative to balance China, he said delivering the second Abid Hussain Memorial lecture, organised by the Centre for Policy Studies, on "India and the Geopolitics of the Bay of Bengal" here on Friday.

During the last five years, the government was working on a regional framework, he said. Stating that the Chinese monetary, economic and technical influence in the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal was dramatically rising, Mr. Raja Mohan cautioned that it was going to be India's biggest challenge.

Recalling the European rivalries in the 16th century and the Japanese occupation of the Andamans in WW II, he pointed out that China was building huge infrastructure in a province on the top of the Bay of Bengal and projecting itself into the Bay of Bengal. The Bay was also a link between Indian and Pacific oceans and between Asia and South Asia, he said.

Pointing out how China was economically helping smaller countries providing much more than India, he said India must provide security to them and the Indian Navy should turn a net security provider.

Tracing India's outward and inward orientations during the rise of Buddhism and the British rule, Mr. Raja Mohan said, after Independence, India shut itself. Only after liberalisation, two-way trade grew multi-fold from \$35 billion to \$800 billion today.

'Trading nations build navies with indigenous capabilities', he said adding 'China was not only building the world's biggest Navy but putting in maritime history and abilities to great use. For security interests beyond borders, maritime dimension was huge, he asserted.'

Cities like Visakhapatnam in the heart of Eastern sea board with the Eastern Naval Command and ports should make best use of maritime capacities, he said.

He paid tributes to Abid Hussain's extraordinary spirit, keen intellect and sense of pragmatism.

Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of ENC Vice-Admiral H.C.S. Bisht said India's "Act East" policy would depend on maritime activity in the Bay of Bengal. Indian Ocean has become one of the most sensitive areas of the world and Indian Ocean region was at the crossroads of geopolitics of the world with 66 per cent of world trade passing through it and 40 per cent of the world's population living in the Ocean region.

Andhra University Vice-Chancellor G. Nageswara Rao said that India was in the forefront of space, nuclear and defence research.

Speaking on the topic for the lecture, CPS Director A. Prasanna Kumar recalled Admiral Arun Prakash's observation that there was a re-awakening of the Eastern Seaboard and Vizag would be at the heart of it.

(Courtesy : *The Hindu*, January 29, 2017)

* * * * *

India's Quest for Influence

The story of Bay of Bengal is about India's globalisation and deglobalisation and the need of the hour is to develop maritime domain awareness," said Dr C. Raja Mohan, director, Carnegie India and a renowned analyst on foreign policy and strategic affairs. Delivering the second Abid Hussain Memorial Lecture organised on Friday by Centre for Policy Studies, Dr Raja Mohan spoke on "India and the Geopolitics of the Bay of Bengal". Tracing India's expansive relations with outside world since the

The combination of education and innovation led to a remarkable flowering of prosperity. Today robotics and artificial intelligence call for another education revolution.

- The Economist (Jan 14, 2017)

time of Acharya Nagarjuna, he narrated how Indian labour and capitalists connected to other countries for centuries. It was colonial rule that halted India's maritime growth. After Independence, India's policy was constrained by 'moral values and inhibitions'. Narendra Modi as Prime Minister defined India's new international identity as a leading power discarding such ideas as 'nonalignment and strategic autonomy'. Modi is staking for 'strategic influence'. Dr Raja Mohan commended the connectivity initiatives in strengthening military links and economic partnerships with countries big and small. He made a particular reference to India's strategic and economic cooperation with Japan and the US and its importance in balancing China without hurting China's legitimate interests. Dr Raja Mohan underscored the need for resolving maritime territorial disputes in which India's role as a regional power is crucial. Explaining how China's outward orientation helped its emergence as a great power Dr Mohan called for pragmatism in India's foreign policy. Chinese expansionism in Bay of Bengal has created new challenges for India's policy-makers. "Internationalism is a different field. Even a small country like Maldives can play the China card. Therefore, we have to remember that doing business with small countries is important as most countries want India to do more," he pointed out. Dr. Raja Mohan suggested that not only political class and security establishments, but also civil society groups must promote public awareness of the importance of maritime security and activities.

- A. Prasanna Kumar

(Deccan Chronicle (A.P. Edition) January 29, 2017)

* * * * *

Trump Presidency: Much Global Turbulence Lies Ahead

Cmde (Retd.) C Uday Bhaskar
Director, Society of Policy Studies, New Delhi

It is a little over a fortnight since the assumption of office by US President Donald Trump on January 20 and in this brief period, the tweets and related statements from the White House have roiled the global political, strategic and economic domains in a visible manner.

Iran has been placed under limited sanctions (Feb 3) for its ballistic missile test and the White House has officially put Tehran "on notice." Sensitivities among key US allies have been bruised and UK, Germany – and now Australia are case in point.

In many ways Mr. Trump has been true to his campaign promises (threats?) which had aroused considerable global interest at the time. Post November 8 when the surprising Trump victory was announced, interest transmuted into anxiety about the manner in which the new POTUS (President of the US) would bring about major policy changes.

Iran apart, the most significant development of the last fortnight includes the executive order signed by Mr.Trump wherein he has taken the US out of the 12 nation TTP (Trans-Pacific Trade Partnership) thereby signaling a protectionist trade policy and banning citizens of some Islamic nations from entering the USA. China has been cautioned and the wall with Mexico is yet another Trump goal - two initiatives which could trigger heightened domestic anger and resistance within the USA.

The Trump manner of discharging the many onerous responsibilities that devolve upon the POTUS was discernible in his first public appearance (performance?) after assuming office. The acceptance speech by the new US President was graceless and petulant. He rubbished the contribution of his predecessors – particularly former President Barrack Obama – and vowed to 'make America great' by loudly advocating a simplistic but seductively attractive slogan – 'America first.'

The solemn swearing was a visibly partisan affair and while his core constituency applauded his elevation to the White House, thousands of his detractors marched the streets of the USA in protest. Women across the world joined their sisters in the US

The decline in global inequality is largely the product of the convergence of the economies of developing countries, particularly China and India, with those of the developed world.

- Francois Bourguignon (Foreign Affairs-Jan-Feb 2016)

and demonstrated their street power in denouncing the reprehensible anti-women statements associated with Mr. Trump.

Students have also entered the divisive domestic US debate and the more recent events at the University of Berkley are illustrative. But the Trump reaction remains predictable. He angrily denounced the protesters and lashed out at the media for ostensibly distorting facts about the crowd strength for and against him!

This assertion flew in the face of empirical evidence but this was rubbished and a new phrase has been introduced into the Trump lexicon 'alternative facts.' Is this the new semantic for Trump reality? Some sections of the US liberal media have begun to describe President Trump as 'Liar-in-Chief' – and this is a very unhappy and deplorable start to the four year Trump tenure.

A preliminary assessment of the Trump directives points to more turbulence and uncertainty apropos the hitherto established patterns of globalization and the conduct of inter-state relations. The summary rejection of TPP is the first potentially tectonic exigency. This trade initiative was deemed to be a major achievement for the Obama administration that had brought together 12 Pacific Rim nations into an exclusive trade grouping.

TPP is now in the dustbin. The inference is that the US will now follow an isolationist and protectionist trade policy that goes against the grain of globalization and the effect on the rest of the world will be to adversely impact economic growth. The macro implications of this rejection can prove detrimental not only to the spirit of globalization and the reduction of trade barriers but also enhance the appeal of China (which incidentally was not part of TPP) as a champion of globalization and equitable economic growth – a theme that was avidly projected and supported by Chinese president Xi Jinping at the recently concluded Davos deliberations.

President Trump's security and strategic policies are yet to be formally unveiled in detail but some strands have emerged. The core of the trump

doctrine – as it were – is contained in his acceptance speech and certain elements have been elucidated over the last fortnight by Mr. Trump and his senior advisers. The first security policy priority is a tweet equivalent, where he promised to obliterate radical Islamic terrorism from the face of the earth. While this assertion will be welcomed by many of the nations that have borne the brunt of this scourge – including in India – the means to achieve this objective are still blurred.

Radical Islamic terrorism for the USA is the threat posed by the IS (Islamic state) and the al-Qaida and the violence that rages in Afghanistan. US policies from the time of President Ronald Reagan (1980-88) have pursued contradictory objectives in relation to Islamic terror. While some nations were censured (Iran, Libya and North Korea aka axis of evil) and others invaded on dubious premises (Iraq), countries representing the nursery of such ideology (Saudi Arabia and Pakistan) were embraced as staunch allies. How President Trump and his nascent national security team will square this circle is not evident.

The second strand relates to China and the Trump orientation towards Beijing which is a critical interlocutor for the USA. The Trump team and corporate America cannot be oblivious to the profile of China as the rising power that will soon become the world's number one GDP. As US president elect, Mr. Trump ruffled the feathers of China by accepting a congratulatory telephone call from the Taiwanese President and Beijing is uneasy about the how the 'one-China' policy will be defined by the new White House incumbent.

A statement by Sean Spicer, the new White House spokesman at his first press meet dwelt on the South China Sea (SCS) dispute and it was more assertive than the Obama formulation on this contentious issue. In relation to a media query on the SCS, Mr. Spicer replied: "The US is going to make sure we protect our interests. If those islands are, in fact, in international waters and not part of China proper, yeah, we'll make sure we defend international interests from being taken over by another country."

If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito.

Dalai Lama

The response from Beijing has been swift and sharp. Reiterating the 'indisputable sovereignty' of China over the SCS, the Chinese foreign ministry warned that it would "remain firm to defend its rights in the region". Earlier the just confirmed US Secretary of State, oil tycoon Rex Tillerson had also made statements about the SCS islands deemed to be provocative by Beijing.

Chinese official media ominously warned that such a policy could lead to a 'devastating confrontation' – with the more extreme commentators pointing to the use of nuclear weapons!

This is still the first fortnight of a new American presidency but it is evident that turbulence and Trump are becoming 'hugely' synonymous.

(Courtesy: *South Asia Monitor*, February 4, 2017)

* * * * *

EDUCATION AND FREEDOM OF MIND

Dr. Abid Hussain

Primacy of Freedom of Opinion

It is not an exaggeration to say that the freedom of opinion and expression is the mother of all rights. For, it has been empirically verified that if this right is suppressed, all other rights are abridged. Democracy cannot work without it, nor can human beings, however well they may have been educated, feel the deep impulse to flower into creative beings. This right must be defended at all costs.

The arch-enemy of this right is an attitude of intolerance, which leads to rejection of the basic democratic instinct. Being a cardinal pillar of democracy, dissenting voices may not be palatable to the establishment. Intolerance inculcates a dangerous conviction that the ruling elite has the right to silence the voices of the people who belong to different religions, or hold beliefs, or have interests different from those of the ruling class.

Dubious Role of Schools

These anti-freedom, illiberal and intolerant

attitudes, which vitiate life and suppress human rights and human freedoms, are generally shaped in anti-liberal schools to which we send our children. None is born intolerant. Intolerance is an acquired trait. It is in schools that young minds are indoctrinated to despise others who are different from them in terms of race, religion, caste, culture, and beliefs. This impedes their intellectual development, making them imbibe a lot of fallacious ideas. It is, therefore, important to treat schools as the key to the development of a national ethos.

To elaborate the point, the schools that propagate that there is only one truth are not being faithful to their noble calling. Such schools become the breeding ground of fanaticism. Being so brought up, these children are unable to imagine 'someone else's world'. They do not learn to understand that there could be different forms of lifestyles and different schools of thought. It is in this context that schools assume a crucial role in the development of a just society based on universal human rights. Since a child goes to school at an impressionable age, what is imparted to him then stays for ever; prejudices, once acquired, remain and condition a child's mind. Later, as children grow up, they fail to recognise that, by taking away certain rights from others, they diminish the very essence of the human condition -treating people as equals. Insensitivity makes them petty and irresponsible.

Testimony of History

History is full of instances where young minds, once made intolerant at the school stage, have later become willing agents of the Holocaust in Germany, ruthless creators of Gulags in the Soviet Union, and savage barbarians in some theocratic states. In Afghanistan, under the Taliban regime, intolerance had led to the distortion of a great religion by fanatics and religious men had joined the forces of political terrorism. It is ironic that education that is distorted by violence can turn people into savages. Indeed, the moment you submit yourself to a rigid unidimensional message, you become a fanatic.

The world is the great gymnasium where we make ourselves strong.

Swami Vivekananda

Ubiquitous Urge for Religion

It is a fact that people of different faiths have engaged in violent conflicts through the ages. Though socialist states of the twentieth century argued in favour of atheism and banned religious practices and rituals among their citizens, the enforced age of reason lasted as long as the people were arbitrarily ordered to conform. In former communist countries, religious fervour returned as worship, hitherto neglected, resumed. This occurrence reminds us of Voltaire's witticism: "If God didn't exist, man would have to invent him." Since the beginning of human history, religion has, in various manifestations, dominated man's conscious effort to make some kind of sense out of his sudden adventure into what he has always considered the 'unknown'. Indeed, religious faith is unique to human beings, and it lives on. When guided by positive motivation, it imparts a healing touch to society. Conversely, a confrontationist approach creates social upheavals engendering more prejudices and animosities.

Advocates of Inter-Religious Understanding

Despite fanaticisms, in all societies there are men and women who emphasise and preach inter-religious understanding. Great Indian Emperor Ashoka in his twelfth Edict proclaimed:

"He who does reverence to his own sect, while disparaging the sects of others, wholly from attachment to his own, with intent to enhance the glory of his own sect, in reality by such conduct, inflicts the severest injury on his own sect. Concord, therefore, is meritorious to wit, hearkening and hearkening willingly to the law of piety as accepted by other people."

This is a noble thought (as far as it goes). However, in nine cases out of ten, the followers of one religion hold that their faith does good, but other faiths do irreparable harm. Hence the not-so-infrequent eyeball-to-eyeball confrontations among religions. When the aim of all religions professes to be betterment of humanity, each striving to seek in its own way to help the individual become a better human being and society a better place to live in, then

what prevents the religions from coexisting without friction and feuding? A few comments, though seemingly digressive, will be in order, to provide an answer to this baffling question.

Spiritual and Ritual Realms of Religion

Any religion broadly comprises two realms - the spiritual and the ritual. The spiritual realm is the essence, the core, and the very substance of a religion. Its influence on the individual through the content of worship and meditation serves a dual purpose. First, its metaphysical and philosophical content serves as a guiding light to the individual to seek self-knowledge and approximation to some higher reality. But the individual is also a social being. Hence the second purpose of the spiritual realm is to sublimate his natural instincts and raw emotions and passions through a structured value system to enable him to fulfill his social obligations - ranging from his family, clan, and tribe to wider social configurations.

Even after making due allowance for the necessary exclusivities which demarcate one religion from another owing to the exigencies of age, clime and cultural milieu, the spiritual realms of blatantly 'poles-apart' religions display a remarkably high degree of transcendent unity. That is why some savants preferred the word 'religion' in the singular to 'religions' in the plural, to describe the multiplicity of religions. For describing the multifarious religious beliefs, they thus chose the phrase 'forms of religion'.

The other term, viz. ritualism, which is the outward shell of a religion, is mainly concerned with its modalities and externalities, some exotic and some esoteric, such as modes of worship, codes spelling out the rules concerning dress, personal appearance (like tonsured head or styling one's hair, moustache, or beard in specific manners), food ablutions, self-flagellations of several kinds, sexual behaviour, and so on. Not only transgressing but even the slightest deviation from these so-called sacrosanct and inviolate ritual injunctions is most likely to invite the wrath of the presiding pontiffs of religions and theocratic powers-that-be, resulting in a severest punishment like excommunication, or something even worse.

Great works are performed not by strength but by perseverance.

Samuel Johnson

It will be too simplistic an assumption to say that the ritual rules alone are responsible for discord among religions. Yet it stands to reason that it is the over-emphasis on the ritualism of most religions that at times tends to breed exclusivities and fissures in the social fabric. Such being the nature of the bonding elements vis-a-vis their dividing elements, there is no reason why the transcendent unity emanating from the spirituality of religions should not over-ride and nullify the divisive influence at times cast by their ritual practices.

Constructive Role of Schools

Remedy now lies in undertaking well-thought-out measures to restore schooling and education to their rightful place in society by transforming education into an art of respecting others and endowing the youth with a passion to go against orthodoxy, exposing the postures of ritualistic exclusivity to celebrate transcendent unity in the midst of diversities. Such an education can remake men into good human beings, reforming them so as to embody something beyond their individual selves, some inscrutable deeper spirit of friendship, love and humanism. Guided by ethical, moral and just values, life would become for them a performance before divinity, putting them several steps ahead of the so-called gurus and pretenders to holiness.

Many practical steps could feasibly be taken to create harmony and mutual respect among the various religious traditions. School children could be taken on visits to holy places of different religions and asked to spend some time praying together and reflect on prayers to know people of different better, people who seek inner peace in different ways. They should also be given a chance to listen to discourses of different religions by religious practitioners. They should partake of the celebrations of different religions and participate in their festivals. These would make a deep impact on children's minds and open their hearts to value the traditions of other religions, thus learning to treat each other with respect. This will be a fitting fulfillment of Kahlil Gibran's exhortation: "Say not, 'I have found the truth,' but rather, 'I have found a truth'".

Need for Reformed Syllabi

Reformed syllabi for education, putting emphasis especially on the spiritual elements of religions vis-a-vis the ritualistic elements, can go a long way in creating and promoting tolerance, harmony and mutual respect for various religious teachings. It is, therefore, extremely necessary, especially for multi-religious democratic states, to promote a general study of all religions so that their citizens can understand each other and live amicably together. Syllabi, giving well-chosen information about each of the major religions, should be included as part of the course in citizenship or as part of general education to be introduced in schools and colleges. Careful analysis is required to ensure that biases don't creep into revised texts. Different perspectives must be mentioned lest students grow up with a truncated or doctored version of religious history. Racial and ethnic stereotypes should be thoroughly purged. Reordering of textbooks is a sensitive issue and should not be left to the discretion of those who are not academics in the strict sense of the term. Even the best of scientific findings ultimately reach dead-ends, and without critical appraisal and revision science cannot progress further. As Dr Radhakrishnan said, it is "the homage that the finite mind pays to the inexhaustibility of the infinity."

Unity but not Uniformity

Through scientific education based on inter-cultural understanding, we can achieve unity in diversity in a world that is becoming global and inter-dependent. But we certainly do not advocate attempting to merge our various traditions and diversities into one uniform practice. We need different traditions even in the realm of religion, because a single tradition cannot satisfy the needs and mental dispositions of the great variety of human beings. Moreover, it is diversity that enhances the attraction of a mosaic; the beauty of a bouquet lies in the fact that it is made of flowers of different colours. The symphonies of Beethoven and Mozart, though rendered in different musical instruments, each

Everything that comes to us belongs to us if we create the capacity to receive it.

Rabindranath Tagore

with its different characteristics, when synchronised create an enchanting melody. Education should aim to develop similarly, sharing and respecting each other's religions and beliefs, through well-thought-out syllabi, to know each other's differences and enjoy a harmonious blending.

Achieving a synthesis and coexistence of different beliefs and cultures with respect for human resources is the aim of good education. It is through imbibing the values of all religions in their multiplication and dualities that the essential unity of mankind is achieved. It is through good education, based on tolerance taught and practised in classrooms and on playgrounds that we lay the foundations of a just and moral society, where life is not divided by parochial considerations and "the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls".

Conclusion

Borrowing from Bertrand Russell, the world we should wish to see hostilities engendered by differing religious doctrines or clashing political ideologies. Then and only then shall we be able to realise that happiness of all is to be desired from cooperation rather than strife.

(Lecture delivered by Dr. Abid Hussain in 2002 at Madrid, Spain : From *"Many Sides of Freedom"* Abid Hussain, 2003)

* * * * *

'A Tryst with The Unknown'

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)

A jailed Rani Gaidelieu became a national figure when in 1936 the Indian National Congress included her in the roll of honour of freedom fighters and passed a resolution demanding her release. It was

Jawaharlal Nehru, who in one of his chivalrous moods, referred to her as Rani and the honorific stuck on to her.

She was not only set free as soon as India was free but also accorded recognition as a political sufferer, awarded a pension and other honours.

Nehru, however, was to be once again disillusioned. The Rani went underground in 1960 to organise a militant upsurge of her Zeiing Naga tribe and set up a 'government'. There were already other Naga groups ready to wage war on India, some under the instigation of foreign powers and some inspired by over-ambitious individual leaders. Among them, the Rani's chief rival was self-styled as the Naga Federal Government.

'The Federal rebels made repeated attempts to win over the followers of the Rani but without success. Some time in early 1965, while trying to collect ration and money from Zeiing people a group of hostiles sent the Rani a specific proposal urging her to merge her movement with that of the Federal regime. The fate of the proposal soon became evident as all the nine hostiles in that group were done to death and rumours spread that the Rani had gorged on their blood. Weird tales gathered round the Rani: She was thought to be a witch, a blood-thirsty vampire, a goddess.' - *Nagaland: The Untold Story* by S. C. Dev.

Plans were afoot to destroy the Rani's stronghold by shifting the population of a cluster of villages to a distant place and, as a large number of people antagonistic to the Rani demanded, to confront her militarily and finish her off if that was warranted. Stories galore circulated about her merciless dealing with anyone who tried to make her see sense, not to speak of those opposing her.

Somehow, the officer to whose lot the task of tackling the Rani fell, was made of unusual stuff and deserves to be remembered as a pride of the Indian Administrative Service. Perhaps more than reason, Dev's intuition told him that the Rani was not what the rumours projected her; she was not an incorrigible secessionist.

The modern system of education instead of civilizing the barbarian barbarized the civilized man.

S.Radhakrishnan

Dev sent feelers seeking an appointment and through different tactics persuaded her to grant it. He and nine others, all unarmed and 'without any protection save their faith in the sincerity of their mission and their government's moral strength,' set out for their 'tryst with the unknown'.

It was a journey through most difficult terrain. Treacherously calm, it was infested with beasts and bandits - the latter with political pretensions. At the second phase of their journey they were escorted by armed followers of the Rani. So very stiff was the last stretch of their climb that they took a full day to cover two and half miles.

At last they were in a village from which could be seen the Rani's citadel. 'Situated on top of a hill with almost vertical slopes, it was an impregnable bastion, so well planned that a single man with an LMG could easily hold an entire brigade of attackers at bay. Clearly Rani Gaidelieu was well fortified to defend her virtually invincible position.'

The next day, in a situation tense and suspenseful for Dev, his party met the Rani. 'Were you not afraid of coming to my hideout?' she asked. Dev answered that he came to her with the attitude of a son coming to see his mother.

That moved the ageing lady. The ice was broken. By and by it became clear that what she demanded for her tribe was not a separate state but a district with an identity of its own. It is likely that she had foreseen the futility of her earlier ambitions.

Two of her statements were cardinally important and they radically changed Dev's view of her. The first was: 'We are Nagas and we should live like Nagas. We have beautiful folklore and folksongs, colourful dress and culture. When I see these new converts copying the Western way in a cheap manner it pains me.'

The second was: 'If there is anybody who feels and thinks that he or she is a Naga - I am the one. Also, if there is anybody who feels or thinks that he or she is an Indian - it is me.' Altogether they talked for 21 hours. She would meet the Prime Minister,

Indira Gandhi, but if their talk failed, she must be allowed a safe return to her jungle. Dev had to sign the agreement in his blood. 'I felt foolish participating in this archaic and romantic ceremony. But, thank heaven, that was the only mention of blood during that long session of nerve-wracking parleys.'

The Rani went to Delhi via Kohima and, accompanied by Dev, met the Prime Minister. In an atmosphere of cordiality the latter promised to fulfil her demands. The Rani returned satisfied. The finish was written to a bizarre chapter of the history of the region.

The one who came to lead me to Digboi - 80 km from Dibrugarh - was Anil Bhattacharya, Secretary of Sri Aurobindo Centre.

Assam in the sixties of the 20th century was another name of tranquillity. The road was flanked by green fields teeming with crop and they were guarded by rows of serene hills.

Our car tore through a tender evening.

'Sometimes elephants cross this road, from the hills beyond one side of the fields to those beyond the other. If by chance a pedestrian or a cyclist came their way he had had it! Of course, we are safe, as long as we do not stop,' said Anilda.

His statement had hardly reached its full stop when our car wavered and stopped.

'Don't you worry, I can change the damaged tyre in no time,' said the driver.

We came out into the open. 'How much I wished to enjoy a few minutes amidst this cool and vast Nature!' I said putting up a brave face as if my memory had not at all recorded the fear of elephants!

The tyre replaced, we resumed our journey. Anilda laughed. 'I could somewhat smell the presence of elephants in the vicinity. But nothing to worry about now,' said he. We entered a bazar. 'Do you anticipate any more difficulty with the car? If so, let's tackle it before we leave the bazar behind.'

'No difficulty, Sir,' assured the smart driver.

We had gone no more than four kilometres beyond the bazar when the driver stopped the car which had swerved to a side precariously close to the brink.

'What's the matter?'

'Another tyre, Sir. Gone!'

'So?'

I have neither any extra tyre nor any repair kit, Sir.'

So?'

'I will walk back to the bazar if I don't get any lift and fetch a mechanic. But I don't expect anybody to oblige us at this hour.'

So?'

'The car shall wait here. I'll pass the night at the bazar.' The driver's smartness in proposing a safe plan for himself and his perfect detachment towards our fate were extraordinary indeed.

'We have crossed the elephant infested area,' said Anilda in a reassuring voice, even though I had no longer the zeal to sing my love of Nature. We had to wait for half an hour before any car heading for Digboy could be located. But the very first car we saw and stopped happened to be owned by Mr. Singh, owner of a cinema house, known to Anilda. He gladly shifted to his chauffeur's side, leaving us the rear seats.

The car started.

'You Babus buy cars but do not know how to maintain them,' observed Sardarji looking askance at Anilda.

'True, true,' agreed a slightly embarrassed but grateful Anilda.

'Look at my car. Do you know its age? Twenty years! Not even once ...'

A bizarre noise startled us. 'Brake, brake!' shouted Sardarji.

The car stopped and we got out of it. Its axle had snapped.

'First time in twenty years!' lamented Mr. Singh. What he could have added, but did not, was, 'What kind of stuff are you carrying with you, Anilji?' Had Mr. Singh looked at me suspiciously, I should not have been surprised.

He detained a truck and compelled Anilda and me to sit near its driver whom he instructed to send another vehicle from his establishment to have his car tugged.

How relative things are! That the truck was able to carry us smoothly to our destination seemed to me a minor miracle. We got down in front of what was probably the very first house in Digboy and Anilda telephoned to my host who came rushing to our rescue.

I have made several trips to Assam thereafter - twice during periods of statewide turbulence. But the first trip has excelled them all as memory. It is indeed one of the little ironies of life that little accidents as long as they are harmless to myself make a delicious dish of recollection. There are of course the likes of Harry Graham's Mr. Jones who could evaluate far greater accidents in a different scale:

*'There's been an accident!' they said,
Your servant's cut in half; he's dead!
'Indeed!' said Mr. Jones, 'and please
Send me the half that's got my keys.'*

* * * * *



Shallow men believe luck. Strong men believe in cause and effect.

R. W. Emerson

The Next Task for Shri Narendra Modi : 'AAROGYA BHARAT' or 'HEALTHY INDIA'

The need for Family Physicians & Primary Healthcare.

Dr. Pasumarthi S.N. Murthi.

It is nearly seven decades since we got independence. India made great strides in many parameters and achievements, mainly in Economy, GDP growth, Education, Industrial production, Computer technology, and Space Satellite programmes ISRO etc. Recently under the dynamic leadership of our Prime minister, Shri Narendra Modi several innovative programmes have been introduced like. 'Make in India', 'Swachh Bharath'. But ironically he has not yet fully bestowed his attention to formulate a National Health Policy which can cater to the special needs of the rural as well as the urban poor. They are left to the mercy of QUACKS in many forms. Even in the national capital, Delhi and many big cities all over India, quacks are thriving. It does not augur well to become a developed country.

My sincere suggestion to Shri. Narendra Modi is, "Please start another massive movement for 'AAROGYA BHARAT' or 'HEALTHY INDIA' or any other unique slogan appealing to all Indians. Better Health means More Working Hours, Better Productivity, More Money & More GDP.

The UPA Govt. has introduced several such ambitious programmes like The National Rural health Mission, National Urban Health Mission, Maternal and Child Welfare programme etc. Crores of rupees were allocated. But, the implementation was very poor due mainly to the lack of proper man-power and massive corruption. Several scams have been unearthed. According to a recent statement by The Joint secretary (Medical education & human resources), we need 4.22 Lakh paramedical staff and 4.2 Lakh doctors by 2022. How can the Govt. meet the targets of all the programmes?

The Govt. has introduced "The Right to Education". Along with that they also proposed to introduce a bill for "The Right to Health". It is an uphill task and needs basic infrastructure beginning with the rural level. Infrastructure does not mean more hospitals or PHCs only. 'The essential ingredient' for implementing 'The Right to Health' is the right of every citizen to be seen first by a qualified doctor and not just a Paramedic or ANM or ASHA or an unqualified Quack. The Govt. has realized that the PHCs are in state of utter chaos. The MBBS doctors were and never can be coaxed or forced to serve in the rural areas in spite of some good incentives offered. Successive Governments at the Center and States were trying to implement compulsory rural service for all new MBBS graduates. They have not succeeded. It is a futile exercise. We need a change in paradigm and a more firm and realistic approach to the problem.

So 'The essential ingredient' of the infrastructure to provide qualified doctors in the rural area is to create a new cadre of basic qualified doctors in rural areas. The Nation is in an urgent need for such rural doctors and family physicians.

With my own experience of two decades in NHS, UK, and nearly 50 years of the realities of rural healthcare along with my father who was an old LMP doctor from Royapuram Medical School, Madras, later The Stanley Medical College. The LMPs those days were settled all over rural areas and rendered yeomen services. Soon after Independence, all the LMP students wearing Congress caps marched through the main streets of Madras, with placards for treating them as MBBS with adjusting the same curriculum. The then Health Minister Dr. Rajan yielded to their pressures. He scrapped the LMP course. Thus the Nation lost a huge cadre of rural family physicians.

I have been running a "Lone Campaign" for nearly two decades for the revival of the shortened course in rural medicine. I have written several articles in newspapers, given AIR broadcasts and spoken in various meetings.

I prepared a broad sheet of the plan and sent it to some important leaders like Shri Rajiv Gandhi and

It is not how much we have, but how much we enjoy, that makes happiness.

C. Spurgeon

Dr. Manmohan Singh who gave good compliments. But Dr. Manmohan Singh pointed out that the medical profession is opposing such proposal and added a personal note that "Your life and work are a source of tremendous inspiration." He forwarded my proposal to the Standing committee on Medical Education. They visited several state capitals. I was invited to present my paper at Osmania Medical College, Hyderabad. It was well appreciated and recommended to the Government. After a prolonged and detailed planning, the UPA Govt. approved a 4 year course, 'Bachelor in Rural Medicine & Surgery'-BRMS'. But due to several known and unknown reasons, it was abandoned and renamed as B.Sc community medicine, and ultimately given up.

Part-II : New Health Policy.

The salient points in the proposal for the new cadre of rural doctors are:

1. The Government of India should formulate a Health Policy and pass a bill in parliament, providing adequate powers to regulate the Health services by creating IMS cadre, selecting only Medical candidates similar to IAS etc.

2. Improve the existing infrastructure of the Teaching Hospitals and The District Headquarters Hospitals, which can be used as the teaching Hospitals for the new cadre of BRMS or rename as BFMS, "Bachelor of Family Physicians". They can be named as "Medical College of Family Physicians"

3. A four year course with a suitable curriculum carefully oriented for the basic needs of rural poor. Apart from the essential subjects like Medicine, Surgery, Orthopaedic, Gynaecology & Obstetrics and Paediatrics, equal emphasis must be given to Preventive & Social Medicine, Family planning operations, TB-control, Sanitation, Nutrition, Environmental-pollution-control, Computer literacy and Telemedicine. High cost equipment is not necessary. Critically ill patients can be referred to bigger Super-Speciality Hospitals.

4. Admission: Priority must be given to candidates from rural areas with either 10+2, or B.Sc

or EAMCET candidates who could not get into MBBS colleges. They must sign a bond that they will serve in their village or in any PHC nearby for 5-10 years. Seats must be 50% for women candidates if available. There will be possibility of couples of doctors.

5. One year as House-surgeon in a main Teaching hospital and two years apprentice period at a good Nursing home or with a senior doctor.

6. Indian Medical Association and The Medical Council of India must have statutory powers to regulate the conduct of the doctors and must insist membership registration with both the bodies.

7. The IMA & MCI in association of the state divisions, the District collector and Municipal Authorities should have the power to issue licences to set up practice depending on the local needs. Thus we can regulate the Doctor & Population density.

8. The alternative therapies like Homeopathy, Ayurveda and Unani systems should have similar statutory bodies to regulate the qualifications and training for diploma or degree courses and obtain their registration.

9. Finally and most importantly, quackery in all fields of medical practice must be banned and made a criminal offence liable for a minimum of 5 years imprisonment.

My paper on 'The Current scenario of rural healthcare in India' was accepted and I gave a Power Point presentation at the conference of The International Medical Sciences Academy, held at The Royal Society of Medicine in London. The session on medical education was presided over by The President of the Royal College of Surgeons, Glasgow. He very much appreciated my presentation and reminded that in UK they still have two tiers of medical education, LRCP & MRCP.

Let me conclude by remembering my father telling me, "God cures the disease, Physician gets the fees. Medicine is my Religion. Indian is my Caste". Whenever he used to examine dalit patients thoroughly, they used to touch his feet saying that he touched the UNTOUCHABLE's body and feet. He

Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and blind can see.

Mark Twain

used to immediately bow and touch their feet and tell them that all people are equal and nobody should touch another human's feet.

(The author, FRCS, Rtd. Consultant Surgeon is a 'Social activist' and has recently published a novel based on two important social issues facing India- The Caste-divide & Sexual assaults on women & girl children. 'UNTOUCHABLE NIRBHAYAS OF INDIA & ONE BILLION RISING' Patridge Publishing, Penguin & RH group.)

* * * * *

Vedanta and the Bhakti Tradition

Dr. (Mrs) Prema Nandakumar

(Lecture recently delivered in Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai)

***Sthapakaaya cha dharmasya sarvadharmasvarupine
Avataara varshtyaaya Ramakrishnaya te namaha***

Sabhaayai Namaha.

Revered Swami Gautamanandaji Maharaj, revered Swami Atmashradhdhanandaji, revered Swami Abhiramanandaji, Dr. Balaji, dedicated monks of the illustrious Sri Ramakrishna Math, devotees, friends:

I am indeed overwhelmed by the honour bestowed upon me by the Sri Ramakrishna Math in inviting me to take part in this historic moment. Centenaries are rare occasions for remembrances of the past. But a centenary like this is a living centenary, for here we are able to gauge the future also for the icon whose centenary we are celebrating, Vedanta Kesari: The Lion of Vedanta. A name with which I have been familiar since I learnt to read. We were in Visakhapatnam in the late 'forties and the Sri Ramakrishna Math on the beach road was a daily object of pilgrimage in the evening walks from Waltair uplands. I grew up learning to revere Sri Ramakrishna, Mother Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda, guided by Swami Srirangananda who was in charge of the Math at that time.

Time keeps flowing forward, and the little girl has grown into a very old person, but the Vedanta

Kesari remains young as ever in its thrust, in its innovative presentation and in its task of keeping the ageless Indian culture alive in its thousand-petalled brilliance, truly a Brahma Kamal.

This has been made possible by the founders and the great editors who have given us a life-giving helix of Vedanta and Bhakti to help us put our own lives in the right perspective. The readers past, present and of the future can only bow in gratitude for this continuing shower of Grace as the Vedanta Kesari.

Vedanta has always had two major interpreters: Absolutistic and Theistic. While the Absolutistic interpretation of Reality is adhered to by Advaita and stands by itself without any major branches, Theistic Vedanta has innumerable versions. Among the major variations are Visishtadvaita and Dvaita. Though the Vedas speak of several godheads, it was also understood that the One alone was the reality. Ekam sat vipraa bahudhaa vadanti. Prof. R. Balasubramanian citing the Vedic 'Hymn of Creation', says: "A careful study of this Hymn will show how the primal Being was viewed as both the material and efficient cause rolled into one (abhinna-nimitta-upadana-karana)." It is the interpretation of the Vedic and Upanishadic statements that have given rise to such glorious variety in Indian philosophical thought.

All the same, all the schools of Vedanta look upon three works as their source-books. Known as Prasthan-Traya, they are the Brahma Sutras, the Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads. All of them accept the Brahman as the Supreme. Necessarily, the Advaitic approach has no 'personal' equation with the concept of Brahman as there is no space for the 'other'. It is Ekam, Adviteeyam: One, Indivisible. This approach is helpful for the unification of mankind and to convey the message that there is no high or low when all is Brahman. Sankara's Advaita went to the outermost point – the world we see and live in, is only a superimposition on Brahman. According to Adi Sankara, ignorance is an innate characteristic of the human being and we have to struggle to overcome it.

Philosophy is always difficult to understand for

The 14th Finance Commission emphasized the role of State Finance Commissions and recognized the critical role of States in regard to local bodies.

Y.V.Reddy

the common man and he needs poetic images for the purpose. Adi Sankara knew this and has given two examples at the outset of his Brahmasutra Bhashya:

“Suktika hi rajatavad avabhasate as when we take mother-of pearl when it shines in a trick of light as silver itself; Ekah chandrah sadvitiyavaditi when the eye is pressed by one’s finger shows us two moons though only one is present.”

Poetic images abound in Adi Sankara’s writings and he has also gifted us incandescent stotras to achieve at-one-ment with the Brahman. It is then not surprising that Theistic Vedanta easily sailed into the Bhakti tradition. It added other source material to its argument, while holding on to the Prasthan-traya firmly. The Visishtadvaitic view of Reality is generally known as the Ramanuja Darsana, but there were precursors from times immemorial like Bodhayana, Dramida, Tanka, Guhadeva, Kapardi and Baruchi whom Ramanuja mentions with great reverence. In fact, he has not written any commentary on the message of Vedanta in the Upanishads as Adi Sankara did. It is quite possible Ramanuja did not write a Visishtadvaitic commentary because in his time such an exegesis by the famous Dramidacharya seems to have been in circulation. In the following centuries it has been lost. Fortunately for us, his very first work, the Vedartha Sangraha takes the place of such a commentary though, in its essentials, it is but a preview of his theistic philosophy that has brought together jnana and bhakti as a means to attain the Supreme. One gets a direct view of his bhakti-laden approach in the invocation:

“I offer adoration to Vishnu, the all-pervading supreme Being, who is the overlord of all sentient and non-sentient entities, who reposes on the primordial Sesa, who is pure and infinite and in whom abound blissful perfections.”

Sri Ramanuja then goes on to submit his view in the background of some Upanishadic vakyas like Tat tvam asi and Ayam atma Brahma. According to Sri Ramanuja in his opening statement, three basic concepts are to be found in the Upanishads. These are:

1. An aspirant should learn about the relationship of the Supreme and the individual self (tattva);

2. he should engage himself in action like meditating, worshipping and saluting the blessed feet of the Supreme, parama purusha charana yugala dhyaanaarchana pranaamadi (hita);

3. and hold on to a disciplined life based on this knowledge that would gain him the Supreme (purushartha).

4. If Theistic Vedanta has an immemorial tradition, so has the Bhakti tradition going back to the Pancharatras. What had been sung as prayers and legends in the grand accents of Sanskrit in the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Vishnu Purana, also found its voice in the powerful accents of ancient Tamil in South India. . Some of these works deal with the external life such as war, farming and domestic rituals. Others deal with love, pre-marital friendships and waiting for the beloved to return from foreign lands. The former is known as Puram poetry or poetry of External Life. The latter is referred to as Aham poetry or the poetry of the inner countries of the mind.

Usually they do not overlap and had a far-reaching influence on the Tamil mind even after the Sangam period. This is how we find Puram and Aham inspirations in the hymnologists referred to as Alvars (those who were submerged in devotion to Vishnu).

The religions of the Vedic stream as practiced today have also a special extension in worship of icons with a lot of rituals which trace their sources to the Pancharatra and other Agamas. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee feels that the Dravidian component in today’s temple worship is considerable. He writes:

“The word ‘puja’ and the ritual it denotes are both peculiar to India; they are not found among the kinsmen of the Indian Aryans outside India. The nature of the ‘Puja’ is as follows: The whole universe is filled with the spirit of the Divinity. By a magical rite, the Supreme Spirit is invoked into some special object – an image, a picture, a pot, a pebble or a

The second half of the 20th century witnessed a complete swing of the pendulum in thinking about the role of State in the process of development. This swing was perhaps more pronounced in India, as compared with elsewhere.

Deepak Nayyar

piece of stone, a branch of tree, etc. When this ritual, known as prana pratishtha, is performed, the image or the object becomes a sort of abode of the Divinity, temporary or permanent. The image or symbol is then treated as an honored guest ... In fact, in the deeper aspect of religion, this Dravidian or non-Aryan ritual of 'puja' conduces to a more intimate kinship with the Divine than can be postulated through the Aryan homa. The homa ritual is basically one of 'take and give in return'. In 'puja' we have an attendant spirit of abandon through devotion, which is absent in the homa. In later Hinduism, these two rituals were combined, and both 'puja' and homa have a place in Brahminical Hinduism."

Theistic Vedanta draws considerably from the Tamil tradition. The ancient Tamils worshipped Vishnu as Mayon or Tirumal, and found him a presence in the nature that surrounded them as in this address to Vishnu by Kaduvan Ilaveyinanaar:

"You are the heat within the fire!
 The scent in the blossom!
 The gem within the stone!
 The truth in the word!
 Love that aids Dharma!
 Strength that helps heroism!
 The mantra of the Vedas!
 Space among elements!
 The illumination in the sun!
 The coolth in the moon!
 You are everything! The core of all!
 Hence you do not reside anywhere
 Having no residence of your own!"

It is obvious the Tamils enjoyed setting up temples and worshipping in them and composed poems meant for sacral music either in temples or during holy rituals at home. Obviously they found bhakti to be "the angel of the way" guiding the aspirant while he went forward to gain his

Purushartha. At the same time the Tamil Alvars posited a tremendous transformation of the Sangam world view. The Aham poetics of human love was transformed into the human aspiration for the Divine. Thus was born the incandescent poetry of nayaka-nayaki bhava, underlining the closeness of the individual self to the Universal Self, of the Way and the Goal, hita and purushartha being a linked pair: the hita (way) being, parama purusha charana yugala dhyaanaarchana pranaamadi and the purushartha (goal) as nothing less than the Supreme evam sarvabhutaantharaathma apahathapaapma divyo deva eko narayanah ("He is the inner self of all creatures, free from all imperfections, the divine, the sole God Narayana.") Seen thus, where is the divide?

But the Alvars handle with exquisite care bridal mysticism. After all, it is the lover-beloved relationship which is the acme of godward emotions. This is how we find Tirumangai Alvar and Nammalvar imagining themselves as women and singing of the Beloved. For they knew that of the many approaches to the Divine, as a child, a mother, a father, a friend and teacher, the Lord as the Beloved was the one way in which all distance was annihilated between the adorer and the adored. And the relationship between the two is beyond ordinary logic and the call of the flesh. It is a soul-force that draws the devotee to the deity. As Sri Aurobindo points out when comparing all other approaches and the attitude of the Bride towards her Lord:

"The lover can wound, abandon, be wroth with us, seem to betray, yet our love endures and even grows by these oppositions; they increase the joy of reunion and the joy of possession, through them the lover remains the friend, and all that he does, we find in the end, has been done by the lover and helper of our being for our soul's perfection as well as for his joy in us. These contradictions lead to a greater intimacy. He is the father and mother too of our being, its source and protector and its indulgent cherisher and giver of our desires. He is the child born to our desire whom we cherish and rear. All these things the lover takes up; his love in its intimacy and oneness keeps

Men would never stand up to defend a system which calls itself democracy but presides over an infinite spectrum of human suffering, severe economic decline and lives of humiliation.

Abid Hussain

in it the paternal and maternal care and lends itself to our demands upon it. All is unified in that deepest many-sided relation.”

There was also another major step forward by the Alvars for the bhakti tradition. Vishucitta of Srivilliputtur is well-known as Perialvar. It is said that he won a theological contest in the Pandyan Court and was vouchsafed a vision of Narayana riding the Garuda. Immediately he blessed the Lord with paternal solicitude and so he came to be known as Peria (elder) Alvar. For the first time we find the Lord being seen as a growing child in the household of Yasoda and Nanda. Perialvar’s hymns certainly revolutionised the devotee’s approaches to the deity. This maternal love for child as recorded in verses gave birth to a unique Tamil literary genre called pillai-tamil. Perialvar’s Yasoda feeds Krishna, combs his hair, bathes him and plays a variety of games with him. There is no satiety in this approach as the many facets of matru-bhava get poetic recordation.

However, the bhakti tradition remained close enough to the Vedantic outlook – a kind of questioning mind about man, nature and god. What is this life? Is this Maya? Or is this the Leela of the Supreme? What is this life we lead on earth? Is it worth the struggle? Do we gain any lasting joy in this world of impermanences?

“Even if you reach the Vedic span
Of hundred years, half of it
Is gone in sleep; rest in childhood,
Sickness, hunger, old age and sorrows.
I do not want to be born on earth,
O Lord of Srirangam!”

The Bridal Mysticism inaugurated by the Alvars of the Bhakti Movement was to scale passionate heights in poets like Jayadeva, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Chandidas. One hears easily the throb of the early Tamil hymnologist Andal in the Maithili poet Vidyapati (14th century):

“A new Brindaban I see
And renewed each barren tree;

New flowers are blooming,
And another Spring is; new
Southern breezes chase the dew
With new bees roaming.
And the sweet Boy of Gocool strays
In new and freshly blooming ways.
The groves upon Kalindi’s shore
With his tender beauty bloom
While fresh-disturbed heart brims o’er
By the new-born love o’ercome.”

In the light of Sri Ramanuja’s life, we have also to note the attempts of the bhakti poets to transform the social scenario of casteism and untouchability. After all, the Vedantic oneness is the ideal for the committed devotee.

The twelve Alvars who form the fountainhead of the Bhakti Movement hailed from different castes. Kulasekara was a king, Madhurakavi, Perialvar and Tondar-adippodi Alvar were Brahmins, Tirumangai a chieftain and Nammalvar came from the farming community. Andal and Bhaktisara were foundlings. Tiruppan was a Dalit and no caste is mentioned for Poykai, Bhutam and Pey. Yet, they all became popular and are revered to this day. Perialvar referred to a caste called “Tondak-kulam”, the Caste of the Serviteurs. And Tondar-adippodi affirmed that as long as one was a devotee of Narayana, it did not matter whether he was a Dalit or a leper whom one should shun. All, all are welcome to this democracy of bhakti.

This Vedantic corrective applied by the progenitors of the Bhakti Movement was certainly a tremendous inspiration for Sri Ramanuja. Whether it was King Kulasekara or the Dalit Tiruppan or the woman Andal, all were revered as glowing lamps that showed the way to the Supreme. Kulasekara has an immortal decad on the doctrine of surrender. Everyday life yields him astonishingly perfect similes. Here are two:

“The sufferer loves the wise physician even
when his flesh is cut and burnt. O Lord of the
City of the wise, let thy Illusion inflict on me an

Liberal democracy is a continuous struggle; it demands relentless vigilance; it cannot rest
anywhere but must always strive for higher expressions of citizenship. Dipankar Gupta

endless pain, I will yet remain thy servant, I will yet look up to thy feet.

O Lord of the City of the wise, who didst slay the strong and cruel Beast, ah, where shall I fly for refuge, if I leave thy feet? On the tossing sea the bird leaves the mast of the ship, he flies to all sides but no shore is visible, and he again returns to the mast. I am like that bird."

This transcends mere bhakti and enters the fields of Vedantic oneness and it may be mentioned here that this is exactly what drew Swami Vivekananda to Sri Ramanuja. That bhakti need not set up separative walls and could keep the human family united in Vedantic oneness was the message of the great Nammalvar himself. For instance, the first decad of his Tiruvaimoli, known as the Tamil Marai or Tamil Veda mentions no name anywhere. The sublime tone of the ten verses never wavers beginning with the opening description of the Cosmic Lord:

"He has such high qualities
That none higher exist;
He granted us mental poise
That is not easily swayed;
He is the Lord of the Gods
Who know no tiredness.
My heart! Do obeisance
To His sorrow-dispelling feet"

Again, there are several instances where Vedanta blends with Bhakti in an imperceptible manner. The legend of Chintayanti, for instance. Of the legends concerning Krishna and the gopikas, the story of Chintayanti is most moving. This is not found in the Bhagavata but is in Sri Vishnu Purana. Sri Vishnu Purana says that when the gopis went to the forest to enjoy the Sharad Purnima games, one gopi could not go. She was frightened of her elders sitting outside the house and so remained within meditating intensively upon Krishna as the Supreme. As she withdrew into her inner self thus, she merged with the Absolute, indicating how the Brahmavadini is also a Bhaktivadini:

*"Chintayanti jagatsuutim parabrahmasvarupinam
Niruchvasathayaa muktim gathaanyaa
gopakanyakaa"*

Nearer our times are many devotional poets who have written texts with Vedantic approaches: Vedanta Desika (13th century) who has given us the Sanskrit drama Sankalpa Suryodayam that is a tremendous allegory on Visishtadvaita Siddhanta and Tarigonda Vengamamba (18th century) who wrote the Yakshagana Muktikanta Vilasamu which has long discussions between the ladies Mukti, Jnana and Bhakti.

Advaita Vedanta too has always encouraged the bhakti tradition. Adi Sankara has led the bhakti brigade with his poems of Vedantic import and devotion. One of the finest stotras on Varadaraja of Kanchipuram is by Appayya Dikshita, the renowned Advaitin. Incidentally, he is also the author of a peerless commentary on Swami Vedanta Desika's epic Yadavabhyudayam. Appayya Dikshita is said to have exclaimed that the lines in the epic are literally treasure troves of emotions though couched in gentle-stepping, simple terms:

*Itham vichintya sarvatra bhavaa santi pade
pade Kavi taarkika simhasya kavyeshu lalitheshvapi*

In the last century we had an Advaitin of crystalline realisation, Sri Ganapati Muni who had also immense faith in sadhana through meditating on the archavatara of the Divine. The sage has also pointed out that poetry can be an instrument to achieve the divine life. So did Sri Aurobindo, who was a master of Vedanta and said that he wrote his epic poem Savitri as an extension of yoga. He has also shown how mantric poetry transforms the sadhaka:

"As when the mantra sinks in Yoga's ear,
Its message enters stirring the blind brain
And keeps in the dim ignorant cells its sound;
The hearer understands a form of words
And, musing on the index thought it holds,
He strives to read it with the labouring mind,
But finds bright hints, not the embodied truth:
Then, falling silent in himself to know

He meets the deeper listening of his soul:
The Word repeats itself in rhythmic strains:
Thought, vision, feeling, sense, the body's self
Are seized unutterably and he endures
An ecstasy and an immortal change."

For, mantric poetry can transform us from mere mental consciousness to a vijnanamaya chaitanya. The legend of Chintayanti is proof of this transformation!

This was one of the reasons why Swami Vivekananda admired Sri Ramanuja for propagating Visisthadvaita. He saw that though a brilliant Vedantin, Ramanuja knew how poetry and music appealed to the soul directly and so he helped the propagation of the Tamil hymns of Alvars in a big way. Sanskrit was welcome for Vedanta, but the bhasha songs were the right vehicles to experience Vedantic oneness with Brahman.

We know how Swamiji also loved singing the songs of Tagore and Ramaprasad, Shyama Sangeet, and how Sri Ramakrishna would go into Samadhi as the song proceeded. And the disciples danced and Swamiji joined them too. Vedanta and Bhakti tradition are the perennial Ganga and Yamuna of Indian culture. *Vedanta bhakti yugalam namaami sarvadaa sadaa!*

* * * * *

Saint Composer Thyagaraja

'Our greatest single contribution to world harmony'

On January 17, Thyagaraja's 170th Aaradhana at Thiruvaiyaru on the banks of Kaveri was witnessed by people in India and abroad as leading musicians and aspiring youngsters presented a soulful rendition of the Saint Composer's kritis. The annual aaradhana musical homage reminds one of the beautifully crafted editorial of *The Hindu* of December 22, 1946 on the 100th Aradhana of Sri Thyagaraja. "Once or twice in a millennium the human spirit gathers itself up in a mighty upheaval and a poet, a saint or a master-singer is born. He is made of the stuff of revolution. He contains in himself all the past and the

future. His brief sojourn on earth is a benediction. Some of the finest minds of the West have felt its compelling attraction. Thyagaraja may well prove to be our greatest single contribution to the cause of world harmony," wrote the leading daily.

The flow of Thyagaraja's music, like the flow of the Kaveri, is majestic, serene and perennial. A great devotee of Sri Rama, he like another saint composer of an earlier age Ramadas of Bhadrachalam, spurned royal honours and patronage. Wealth would have poured into his house if only he had nodded his head. A born philosopher, he overcame all the temptations of life so that he could more truly serve his Lord. At the same time, he showed the way to attain salvation through *samsara*. Many scholarly works have come out in English Telugu and Tamil. A book published in 1948 in Telugu compiled by Kalluri Veerabhadra Sastry carries a benediction in Sanskrit by the Mahaswami of Kanchi and a foreword in Telugu by Dr. S.Radhakrishnan. Prof P. Sambamurthy described Thyagaraja as 'melodic emperor.' Sir S. V. Ramamurthi wrote that his music is "a synthesis of South Indian culture and is as great as any form of Indian culture. Its Telugu is as simple almost as the Telugu of a girl that goes home in the evening, singing, with her bundle of freshcut grass. Its tradition is Tamil, the tradition of Alvars and Nayanars. Its grammar is Carnatic, that is to say, South Indian. Its culture is Indian in its vision. Its spirit is human, the spirit of man, the top of the creation, communing with his creator."

A recent and welcome contribution to the Thyagaraja lore is the meticulously researched work of the American scholar Prof. William L. Jackson on the life of the saint-composer. Thyagaraja's music, writes Jackson, "was able to transport the mind beyond the worldly cares" and his music is "gold that has acquired fragrance." Thyagaraja's was a genius that combined 'the stability of rigorous discipline and the vast freedom of impulsive creativity.' His *sangathis* manifest a joyful inventiveness. "The 'poetisphere' of Thyagaraja", he elaborates, consisting of melodies and lyrics rooted and grounded in everyday sounds,

A day of worry is more exhausting than a week of work.

J.Lubbock

language, expectations, musical possibilities, emotional associations, rhythmic patterns and reveries accumulated for centuries in his region in South India.” Jackson found in Thyagaraja “a Gandhi of music, a genius gaining ground, in an Indian artistic domain which impelled people’s lives inspiringly... a great art form that can refresh , prepare, rebalance and tune life.”

The saint-composer of Tiruvaiyaru bequeathed to posterity an imperishable wealth of compositions which has been a source of solace and strength to generations of men and women. There is also a moral from his life. He was an Andhra by birth but was born and brought up in Tamil Nadu. But for the Tamilians’ care and devotion the name of Thyagaraja would not have become so well known. Thyagaraja belongs not to any particular region but to the whole of humanity. The great saint with krithi on his lips begged for alms in the streets of Tiruvaiyaru for his livelihood. Indeed he begged people to know the meaning of life and worship God. Almost every home in South India, like the hallowed streets of Tiruvaiyaru, echoes the music of Thyagaraja. Today his music is sung or heard in millions of homes across the world, offering solace to restless minds and creating space for tranquility and peace in the midst of violence and endless pursuit of wealth. In the words of William Jackson “His music is way to peace. His krithis are wonders, Goddesses of enchanting beauty.”

The Editor

* * * * *

AN ERA OF DARKNESS

THE BRITISH EMPIRE IN INDIA

SHASHI THAROOR

(Aleph Book Company, New Delhi, 2016, promoted by Rupa Publications India, Rs.699, pp 333)

Shashi Tharoor’s latest book is the follow-up of his Oxford Union speech in May 2015 ‘on the proposition *Britain Owes Reparations to Her Former Colonies*’. The speech was sensational as well as con-

troversial. To the ‘astonishment’ of the distinguished author ‘it went viral’ on WhatsApp and email. Persuaded by the well known publisher David Davidar, the Oxford Union lecture of the former United Nations Under-Secretary General and Diplomat and presently Member of Lok Sabha was converted into a book of 333 pages with eight chapters containing thought-provoking titles and subtitles. Shashi Tharoor makes it clear in the preface that ‘this book makes an argument; it does not tell a story’. The argument is made with the courage of his conviction and characteristic candour that Britain should atone for its misrule by offering an apology and a reparation amount of ‘just a symbolic one pound a year’.

The seasoned diplomat displays the skill of a lawyer and the firmness of a prosecutor in exposing the utterly selfish designs and destructive methods of the British empire in looting India. Quoting Indian novelist Amitav Ghosh’s words that the British ‘pretense of virtue will never be forgiven by history’, Tharoor adds “I find it easier to forgive than to forget”. The very first chapter titled ‘The Looting of India’ begins with American historian and philosopher Will Durant’s words in his book *The Case for India* :

“The British conquest of India was the invasion and destruction of a high civilization by a trading company [the British East India Company] utterly without scruple or principle, careless of art and greedy of gain, over-running with fire and sword a country temporarily disordered and helpless, bribing and murdering, annexing and stealing, and beginning that career of illegal and ‘legal’ plunder which has now [1930] gone on ruthlessly for one hundred and seventy-three years.”

Tharoor’s narrative reveals how the British systematically destroyed India’s textile manufacturing and exports and the resultant destruction of textile competition from India leading to ‘the first great deindustrialization of the modern world’. India which had enjoyed a 25 per cent share of the global trade in textiles in the early

The British empire was a gigantic system of outdoor relief for the aristocracy of Great Britain.

John Bright

eighteenth century was destroyed and in the words of Lord William Bentinck “The bones of the cotton weavers were bleaching the plains of India”. The process of deindustrialization begun then by the British in severe loss of exports of manufactured goods in India and acute unemployment. ‘At the end of the British rule, modern industry employed only 2.5 million people out of India’s population of 350 million,’ writes Tharoor.

In support of his vehement argument against British misrule, Tharoor cites the comments of such famous Britishers as Richard Sheridan, Edmund Burke and William Howitt. In his ‘scathing denunciation’, Sheridan said that the Company ‘combined the meanness of a pedlar with the profligacy of a pirate.... Thus it was [that] they united the mock majesty of a bloody scepter with the little traffic of a merchant’s counting-house, wielding a truncheon with the one hand, and picking a pocket with the other’. Edmund Burke accused the Company of ‘cruelties unheard of and devastations almost without name....crimes which have their rise in the wicked dispositions of men in avarice, rapacity, pride, cruelty, malignity, haughtiness, insolence’. In the words of Tharoor, Burke ‘described in colourfully painful details the violation of Bengali women by the British-assigned tax collectors – ‘they were dragged out, naked and exposed to the public view, and scourged before all the people....they put the nipples of the women into the sharp edges of split bamboos and tore them from their bodies’—leading Sheridan’s wife to swoon in horror in Parliament, from where she had to be carried out in distress’. As Horace Walpole sneered in 1790: ‘What is England now? A sink of Indian wealth.’ William Howitt said in 1839 “while the Company was still in power, lamented that ‘the scene of exaction, rapacity, and plunder which India became in our hands, and that upon the whole body of the population, forms one of the most disgraceful portions of human history.’”

To abolish private property of all classes of the society ‘the British ran three major types of revenue systems: zamindari, mostly in eastern India and a third

of the Madras Presidency; raiyatwari or ryotwari in much of the south and parts of the north; and mahalwari in western India, thereby abolishing century-old traditions and ties that linked people to the land,’ writes the author. The British extracted the life blood from the veins of national industry and opposed India, a pioneer of steel, in acquiring global reputation for the finest steel it had produced. Tharoor elaborately describes how the British rule destroyed political institutions causing irreversible damage to Indian society.

He rebuts the claim that Britain was interested in the wellbeing of the people and dismisses the claim in Queen Victoria’s Proclamation that Britain was ruling India for the sake of the Indian people. Every Viceroy followed the principle of ‘divide and rule’ and the creation of Indian civil service which as Jawaharlal Nehru described was ‘neither Indian, nor civil, nor service’. Describing the establishment created by the Raj, the author states how ‘six thousand British officials ruled 250 million Indians with some seventy thousand European soldiers and a larger number of Indians in uniform.’ Among the celebrated intellectuals Tharoor quotes in support of his ‘argument’ figures the leftist historian Eric Hobsbawm who famously summed up the British misgovernance as ‘so easily won, so narrowly based, so absurdly easily ruled thanks to the devotion of a few and the passivity of many’. The arrogance of the Viceroys who ruled was proclaimed in just one line of Lord Mayo: “We are all British gentlemen engaged in the magnificent work of governing an inferior race”. An interesting part of narrative, subtitled ‘British Punditocracy’ mentions the emergence of Anglo-Brahminical clique that began to create space for Brahmins in high positions available to Indians in government service. Tharoor narrates how census undermined consensus and how the Hindu-Muslim divide was created and fomented by the Raj. As a British governor lightheartedly blurted out that of his two wives meaning the Muslim and Hindu sections of his province, the Mohammedan was his favourite. Socially, politically, administratively and even in cricket the British ruthlessly followed the divide and rule policy.

In its very conception and construction, the Indian Railways was a big British colonial scam

Shashi Tharoor

Anglophiles and apologists strongly defend British rule for gifting to India, among other things, tea, English language and cricket. The British grew tea in India for themselves, not for the locals. As Ashish Nandy said ‘cricket is really an Indian game accidentally discovered by the British’. Himself a cricket buff Tharoor offers an interestingly indigenous interpretation of the relationship between cricket and India. A few enjoyable lines of this narrative are worth quoting. ‘Everything about the sport seems suited to the Indian national characterlike music the basic laws are laid down but the performer then improvises gloriously.... glorious uncertainties of the game echo ancient Indian thoughta pastime in which the Bhagvad Gita is performed in the guise of a Victorian morality play. Our cricketers occupy a place in the pantheon rivaled only by gods and Bollywood stars.’ But here also Tharoor is convinced of British self-interest. ‘Britain took care to divide them into Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and the Rest against each other so that on the field of play Indian would be reminded of the differences among them so assiduously promoted colonial rule.’ Alluding to the other British gift, English language, Tharoor confesses his unbounded love for the English language and admiration for Shakespeare and Wodehouse. In his characteristic style he writes: “I am conscious that there is something ironic about English-speaking Indians like myself attacking the British in English for having imparted their English education to Indians. We must concede that we couldn’t have enjoyed the master works of Shakespeare and Wodehouse without English language. One cannot denounce British colonialism and celebrate the doyen of English humorists at the same time.” Quoting Benedict Anderson, Tharoor narrates how the British took advantage of modern developments in transport and communication in consolidating their rule, without any consideration for the welfare of the people. In a strident indictment of the British rule, Tharoor says “Whereas an Akbar might have used such technologies to fuse his diverse people together, the British used them to separate, classify and divide.”

Shashi Tharoor aggressively takes on the defenders of the Raj including Nirad C.Chaudhuri, the doughty champion of English language and British rule, and the renowned Scottish historian Niall Ferguson. The author’s references to their famous works and elaborate rebuttal of their claims add vigour to his argument. Tharoor was frank and forthright in his criticism of famous and popular ‘Anglophiles’. He states how “the notorious Anglophile Nirad C.Chaudhuri” was among those who were impacted by the colonial education and colonization of the minds of Indians by the intellectual system imposed by the west. Niall Ferguson’s interpretation was biased in favour of the west. In the words of Tharoor, “Ferguson saw America’s imperial future in Britain imperial past and he sought quite explicitly to use history of Empire to justify the preposition that just as Pax Britannica inaugurated an unprecedented period of global peace and prosperity, so too would Pax Americana revive the world of the twenty-first century.”

An Era of Darkness has its own warts and all. And Tharoor makes no secret of the adverse comments and criticisms his work has received. There are quite a few instances of Tharoor slipping into controversial areas which make his stand vulnerable. His plea for a presidential system of government in place of the existing parliamentary form is impracticable. Ambedkar and Nehru rejected such a suggestion when the Constitution was being drafted and both of them opted for parliamentary type of government as it was found to be ‘more responsive and responsible’ than the presidential type. Did not the first decade earn for democratic India accolades from even the western media as ‘a role model democracy.’? The authoritarian rule of some of our Chief Ministers has, in fact, raised serious doubts in the minds of the people about the nature of our democracy.

In the eighth and last chapter of the book, Shashi Tharoor wants Britain to atone for its sins by returning at least some of the looted jewellery including the fabulous Kohinoor diamond which was mined near Guntur in the state of Andhra Pradesh in the thirteenth

No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.

Eleanor Roosevelt

century and usurped later by the invaders, the Moghul emperors and finally the British. The author concedes that independent India has failed to live up to the expectations of the people and that democracy has declined into a functioning anarchy. But then, India should draw a lesson from the British misrule and stem the rot that has set into body polity. The past provides a lesson to the future and as Tharoor concludes, 'in hoping to recognize possible future sources of conflict in the new millennium, we have to realize that sometimes the best crystal ball is a rear-view mirror.'

The narrative of this eminently readable work is like a river in flood, full of sound and fury, the current of which washes away anything that comes in its way. But the gifted writer adds a touch of humour and poignancy too by recalling the words of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Martin Luther King Jr. Even if it was apocryphal Nehru's famous reply to Churchill conveyed the uniqueness of the Indian spirit. When Churchill asked Nehru how it was that he felt so little rancor for his jailers and tormentors, Nehru who spent nearly ten years of his life in jail in eight terms

of imprisonment, replied "I was taught by a great man never to hate and never to fear."

The relevance of Mahatma Gandhi's nonviolence beyond time and space was brilliantly summed up by Martin Luther King Jr. when he said that "Christ furnished the spirit and motivation and Gandhi furnished the method." Tharoor, in his inimitable style writes that the ultimate tribute to the British Raj might lie in the quality of the 'Great Soul' who opposed it. Himself an ardent admirer of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, Shashi Tharoor graciously wrote in the beginning itself that he would prefer to forgive but not forget the British for what they did to India. Forgiving the British for the litany of misdeeds and cruelties inflicted on a great country and civilization, so painstakingly narrated in this remarkable work, would be a perfect testimony to Indian culture and true homage to the 'Great Soul'.

A. Prasanna Kumar

CENTRE FOR POLICY STUDIES

Dwarakamayi, 50-52-19, T.P.T. Colony, Seethammadhara, Visakhapatnam - 530013.

Governing Body

Prof. A. Prasanna Kumar, President
Dr. S.Vijaya Kumar, Vice President
Dr. G. Madhukumar, Secretary
Shri D.S.Varma, Treasurer

Shri V.Seetharamaiah,
Shri A.S.N.Prasad
Prof. K.C.Reddy
Dr. K.Venkateswarlu
Prof. I. Dosagiri Rao
Prof. P.Vijaya Prakash
Shri J. Balaji

Members

Dr. N.S. Dhanam
Shri N.V. Ramaraju
Prof. D. Harinarayana
Prof. S. Ramakrishna Rao
Dr. Lucas Peter, I.R.S. (Retd.)
Shri P. Suryanarayana
Dr. K. Kumar Raja

(Edited and published by A. Prasanna Kumar,
Email: ayyagariprasannakumar@gmail.com and
printed at Sathyam Offset Imprints Ph : 984 999 6538)