



## Allan Octavian Hume

K. Iswara Dutt

IT WAS VERY RARELY, if ever, that a country's leading political organisation and the main instrument of its freedom, was the handiwork of a foreigner. It was the singular privilege and supreme triumph of a retired British Member of the Indian Civil Service to have brought the Indian National Congress into being—at one end to organise the scattered elements of public life and focus them into an institution for political articulation, and, at the other, to enable the British Government to be in touch with popular feeling and profit by the increasing association of the people's representatives with the management of affairs. ALLAN OCTAVIAN HUME was the man. As subsequent events indubitably established, he sowed the seeds of a larger growth and passed into history as one of Britain's noblest sons and India's greatest benefactors.

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The Humes hailed from the hardy sea-faring race on the north-east coast of Scotland. Allan Octavian Hume was not the first of the Humes, to have had links with India. His father, Joseph Hume (1777-1855), was in the service of the East India Company, before he entered Parliament where he distinguished himself as "a Radical of the deepest dye" and for thirty years the recognised leader of the Radical group. He retained his interest in India and on occasions eloquently championed her cause.

Allan Hume was born in 1829. His earliest ambition was to enter the Royal Navy; at 13 he was a junior midshipman, cruising in the Mediterranean. Next he was at Haileybury for training. Later, he studied medicine and surgery at University College Hospital.

He was 20 when he came to India and joined the Bengal Civil Service. From 1849 to 1867 he worked as a district officer, for the next three years as the head of a centralised department and from 1870 to 1879 as a Secretary to the Government of India. It was towards the middle of 1879, when he was fifty, that he came into conflict with the ruling authorities while within three years he resigned.

Before his retirement he declined the Lieutenant-Governorship of the Punjab as he thought it meant a great deal of entertaining, for which neither he nor his wife cared much. Lord Lytton then recommended him for Home Membership and a K.C.S.I. but Lord Salisbury turned down the suggestion on the ground that Hume was "stiffening Lord Northbrook" against the repeal of cotton duties.

From a wider point of view, Allan Hume's stay in India was ever memorable for his unparalleled work as an Orinthologist. In 1872 he started at his own expense in Calcutta an orinthological quarterly journal—expressively entitled *Stray Feathers*, in 1873 he brought out a standard work, *Nests and Eggs of Indian Birds*; in 1879 he emerged as the author of *The Game Birds of India*, in three volumes and 140 coloured plates; in 1891 he made a magnificent gift of the heads and horns of Indian big game animals—and subsequently of 82,000 birds and eggs, to the British Museum. Allan Hume, appropriately came to be recognised, and enthusiastically hailed, as The Pope of Orinthology.

Greater than what he bequeathed to the British Museum was his legacy to the British people—his example of selfless and dedicated service to India. Within hardly three years of his retirement, "combining political insight with dauntless courage and untiring industry", he laboured hard for the advent of India's greatest organisation, the National Congress.

As an official, Hume confronted the Government with the proposition that "assert its supremacy as it may, at the bayonets' point, a free and civilized Government must look for its stability and permanence to the enlightenment of the people and their moral and intellectual capacities, to appreciate its blessings". During his whole official career, he held, and expressed, strong views in favour of India's Self-Government. Within a year of his retirement from the I.C.S., Hume issued his famous circular to the Graduates of the Calcutta University, as he thought that, as a large body of the most highly educated Indians, they should "constitute also the most important source of all mental, moral, social and political progress in India". He argued that, however much "aliens" like himself

Let us carry Mother India in our hearts, India on our lips, India in our brains

Annie Besant

might “love India and her children” and give their time, money and thought for her good, and even struggle and sacrifice in her cause, they lacked “the essentials of nationality,” and that “the real work must ever be done by the people of the country themselves”. It was out of this fervent appeal that there sprang the “Indian National Union” which was subsequently renamed “Indian National Congress”.

In 1887, after the third session of the Congress at Madras, he issued a pamphlet entitled “An Old Man’s Hope”, in which he made a direct and passionate appeal to the Englishmen at home, to take a tender view of the “dull misery of the countless myriads” in India, for,

Toil, toil, toil; hunger, hunger, hunger; sickness, suffering, sorrow, these, alas, are the key-notes of their short and sad existence.

The speech he made a year later at Allahabad advocating mass propaganda on the lines of the Anti-Corn League in England, created such a furore that officials desired to suppress the Congress and even deport Hume. And something more serious happened when in 1892, out of the fear that the existing system of administration in India was, apart from making people desparately poor, preparing the way for “one of the most terrible cataclysms in the history of the world”, Hume hit out thus:

Do not fancy that Government will be able to protect you or itself. No earthly power can stem a universal agrarian rising in a country like this. My countrymen will be as men in the desert, vainly struggling for a brief space, against the simoom. Thousands of the rioters may be killed, but to what avail, when there are millions on millions who have nothing to look forward to but death—nothing to hope for but vengeance; as for leaders—with the hour comes the man—be sure, there will be no lack of leaders. This is no hypothesis. It is a certainty.

This circular leaked out in the press when the hostile section sought to interpret Hume’s outburst as an open incitement to violence. Some Indian leaders, Dadabhai Naoroji not excluded, were obliged to write to the Times, a letter explaining it away. “I am

distressed to have had to sign that letter after what Hume has done for us”, wrote Dadabhai to Wacha.

Though it was he who emerged as the founder of the Congress, it had somehow never happened to Hume to preside over a plenary session even once. However, for over twenty years, though during the first four by implication and only later by regular appointment, he was General Secretary of the Congress. Thus, right from 1885 till 1906, his was the guiding hand, indeed “the kindly light”, that the Congress had. Six years later, on July 31, 1912, in his 84th year, Allan Octavian Hume had a peaceful end. As he passed away his was the consoling thought that, so far as India’s future lay, “though sorrow may endure for a night, joy will come in the morning”.

In him, while England lost a man of far-sighted wisdom and vision, India lost a true benefactor and an unfailing friend. The national sentiment of grief at his passing, was eloquently expressed by Mudholkar from the presidential chair at the annual session of the Congress at Bankipur (1912):

The father, the founder of the Congress—he who worked for it day and night, winter and summer, through good repute and ill, to tend, to nourish the child of his affection, he who in the most critical and difficult period of its existence laboured for it as no other man did, has gone, and we all mourn his loss as that of a parent.

(Congress Cyclopaedia - The Indian National Congress : 1885 to 1920, The Pre-Gandhi Era)

## **A THIRD ARROW IN THE MALABAR QUIVER**

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The 2<sup>nd</sup> week of July 2017 saw the waters of the Bay of Bengal roiled by frothy wakes of warships and submarines, of three navies, as their jets streak across the skies. The 21<sup>st</sup> edition of Exercise ‘Malabar’ has two aircraft-carriers, a helicopter-carrier, nuclear and diesel submarines, cruisers, destroyers and maritime patrol aircraft belonging to the Indian, Japanese and US

Gradually, give up evil thoughts and evil actions. Not only should your speech be good, but your seeing and thinking should also be perfect.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Navies participating. For a week, these units, divided into 'Red' and 'Blue' forces were pitted against each other in mock-combat, involving, surface, under-water and aerial warfare. Naval exercises don't get more complex or sophisticated than Malabar-2017.

For the Indian Navy (IN) it has been a long journey from professional isolation of the non-aligned era, to being the 'belle' of the 'Malabar ball'. Soviet patronage and naval hardware had commenced flowing in the 1960s, but since they never undertook professional interaction or exercises at sea, the IN found itself clinging to outdated NATO doctrines. Disintegration of the USSR saw India losing not only its steadfast political ally and sole purveyor of arms, but also the inhibitions that went with non-alignment. The US, perhaps, waiting for this moment, lost no time in despatching Pacific Army Commander, General Kickleighter, with proposals for military to military cooperation in 1991.

Keen to shed its insularity, the IN initiated the first ever Indo-US naval drills in May 1992. These became the precursor for bilateral exercises with the navies of a dozen other nations; which have become an annual feature on the IN calendar. Having got off to a good start, the Indo-US exercises, named 'Malabar' were interrupted by US sanctions imposed after India's 1998 nuclear tests. Resumed in 2001, these naval interactions have not only provided the IN invaluable insights into the tactics, doctrines warfare techniques and best practices of the US Navy, but also enabled periodic self-assessment, using the world's most powerful navy as a professional yardstick.

The path of these exercises has neither been smooth nor untroubled. Externally, China has sustained a determined opposition to Malabar because of its paranoid suspicion that India is colluding with US in an attempt at 'containment' from seaward. Consequently, when the 2007 edition of this bilateral exercise, held off Okinawa, was enlarged to accommodate Australia, Singapore and Japan, China issued a shrill demarche, conveying its fear and displeasure. It took another eight years before Japan was formally admitted to make Malabar a tri-lateral.

Domestic opposition to Malabar has come from diverse sources. Notwithstanding the steep decline

of Communism as a political force, there is a strong residual streak of leftist ideology in many of India's political parties. At the same time, the right wing has its ultra-nationalists and xenophobes. Thus, an accusation of being 'pro-American' can still become a damaging political tool. Another factor that sometimes, poses an impediment is the public anger about America's continuing economic and military assistance to Pakistan despite its use of *Jihad* as a strategy and its duplicity *vis-a-vis* anti-India terrorist groups.

However, it is the far-reaching geo-political impact of these exercises that needs to be kept firmly in sight. Although India's traditional strategy of 'non-alignment', and its more recent mutation, 'strategic autonomy', have served to preserve its freedom of action, India's past leadership did not allow it to come in the way of national interest. The aftermath of the 1962 Sino-Indian crisis as well as the impending 1971 Indo-Pak War saw our leaders suspend their beliefs in national interest; in the first case to seek military aid from the West, and in the second, to sign a treaty of friendship with the USSR.

With the 1998 nuclear tests and the 2005 Indo-US nuclear deal having resulted in a fundamental transformation of India's status, PM Modi has also given clear indications that India's foreign policies will be guided by pragmatism and national interest, rather than idealism. As we note the hostility and aggressive posturing by a rising China, both on our land borders and at sea, we need to recall the words of Greek historian, Thucydides, about the cause of Peloponnesian Wars: "It was the rise of Athens," he said, "and the fear that this inspired in Sparta, that made war inevitable." Today, *realpolitik* demands that India takes necessary steps to avoid the 'Thucydides Trap' by ensuring a favourable regional balance-of-power, through cooperation and partnerships; striking short-term alliances if necessary.

Apprehensions about the Trump administration's stance on Indo-US naval relations have been set at rest by repeated mentions, in the recent Trump-Modi joint statement, of Indo-Pacific security, of maritime cooperation and of the significance of exercise Malabar. Japan, too, is easing its laws *vis-a-vis* foreign military relations. The stage is, therefore set for the three navies to expand their linkages beyond exercises at sea.

In the realm of maritime warfare, the three navies could derive mutual benefit from their diverse operational expertise. Given China's sinister intent in acquiring bases in the Indian Ocean, and increasingly frequent transit of PLA Naval units through our waters, cooperation in strategic anti-submarine warfare as well as maritime domain awareness deserve top priority. Equally, amphibious operations, trade-warfare, maritime interception operations, anti-access concepts and, of course, disaster relief, must receive due importance.

Our navy's indigenous warship-building programme is still heavily reliant on key inputs from foreign sources. We must seek help from the advanced US and Japanese military industrial complexes to acquire the competence for designing and building our own weapons and sensors. Heading our 'wish list' should be electric-drive technology for our amphibious-warfare ships and (hold your breath) nuclear reactors to propel our submarines as well as aircraft-carriers.

Indo-US naval cooperation has, for 25 years, formed the sheet-anchor of bilateral relations; stoically weathering political and diplomatic storms. With the invaluable accession of Japan to this partnership, the India-Japan-US triad must, now, be elevated to strategic status. A proposal worthy of contemplation would be the creation of a 'maritime-infrastructure and economic initiative' that reaches out to smaller Indian Ocean nations in an endeavour to wean them away from the Dragon's maw.

## **Full-time defence minister can bring reform the way Rao-Singh combine did to the economic sector**

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At a time when the India-China stand-off in Bhutan is showing no signs of moving towards a modus vivendi and the NSA (National Security Adviser) Ajit Doval having attended a BRICS related event from July 27- 28 in Beijing, it is appropriate to review the Indian experience of the Defence Minister's portfolio in the cabinet — and interrogate the proposition of why India needs a full-time incumbent in this critical office.

The track record over the last 70 years is mixed and specific to China — then Defence Minister (DM) Krishna Menon played a disastrous role in the 1962 war with China. In many ways, the Menon chapter of India's military history is a template for what a DM should not be and the dangers inherent in a feckless interpretation of the civil-military relationship in a robust democracy.

An empirical review is instructive. The current incumbent Arun Jaitley is the 30th DM and has the distinction of holding a dual charge since March, along with the onerous responsibility of being the Finance Minister, having successfully steered the GST bill through tempestuous waters. Jaitley was also the 28th DM when he assumed this charge (again as a dual hat) from May to November 2014.

A dual charge has been resorted to in the past and in NDA, Jaswant Singh was both defence and finance minister from March to October 2001. Some PMs have also retained the defence portfolio for brief periods and this includes Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi and PV Narasimha Rao; as also VP Singh and Chandra Shekhar for the few months they were in office.

Some individuals have been in the chair twice — and Jaitley apart, the list includes Narasimha Rao (first as DM and later as PM/DM); Jagjivan Ram, Swaran Singh; and Indira Gandhi (as PM/DM). This empirical record would suggest that the PM of the day has retained the flexibility to either have a dedicated DM — or has shared the responsibility through the PMO or within the cabinet.

However, given the enormity and complexity of India's external and internal security challenges, the need to have a dedicated DM needs little reiteration and even more than a single individual from among the ruling party who is appointed DM for a reasonable length of time — there is a case to nurture a gene-pool among legislators who have some affinity and empathy with the security domain.

Tending to India's national security interests in a holistic and objective manner goes beyond the tenure of one PM and needs both temporal continuity and all party consensus in the legislature. This, alas, has been elusive in the Indian context where defence/

Dadabhai Naoroji immortalized himself by his good work and shed the greatest luster upon the family and the country to which he belongs.

P. Ananda Charlu (1891)

military issues are rarely discussed objectively and constructively. Arid zero-sum bickering has become the norm in Parliament.

India's higher defence management is in dire need of reform and this was identified in a cohesive manner after the 1999 Kargil War. However, then PM Vajpayee, who to his credit embarked on this Herculean task was unable to see it through.

One could argue that this was largely due to a strategic culture within the Indian political constituency that is indifferent to national security and the more arduous task of rewiring an institution inherited from a colonial past.

A dedicated DM could revisit this challenge of reforming the security domain in much the same manner that the Narasimha Rao-Manmohan Singh combine did to the economic sector in the early 1990s. PM Modi, for all his earnest rhetoric apropos national security, is in urgent need of domain expertise in the manner that Dr Singh and his team provided PM Rao.

Normatively, a dedicated Indian DM ought to provide the civilian political oversight and guidance to a huge constituency that includes — a one million plus uniformed fraternity, the vast defence production empire, the DRDO, the Indian private sector, and external interlocutors who include the neighbours and the major powers.

Without a full-time DM, many of the functions and long-term national defence and security planning that should be the mandate of the DM is now being performed differently by the PMO, the MEA, DRDO, AEC and the Home Ministry. This is undesirable and the result of this stasis is evident across the spectrum.

From being unable to reduce the import bill for military inventory to ineffective responses — as the Mumbai attack of 2008 and the more recent Uri-Pathankot attacks have revealed — there are numerous gaps that need to be redressed. From nuclear deterrence to introducing joint commands, managing internal security and dealing with neighbours such as China, even a dedicated DM would have a full plate and lots spilling over.

As India prepares for its 70th anniversary of independence — the sanctity of protecting this cherished status merits dedicated attention in the cabinet. Over to you PM Modi.

(Courtesy : DNA)

## Back to the Drawing Board -II

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It was Mahatma Gandhi's genius which put in place, a strategy which united the Hindus and Muslims in the struggle against the colonial rule without abandoning deep faith in religion. He stressed the essential unity of all religions, and popularised that message of unity through his prayer meetings where among others the famous *Bhajan - Raghupati Raghav Rajaram* with its memorable line *Iswar Allah Tere Nam* (Iswar and Allah are your names) was rendered. All in all, he was an 'essentialist' invoking the Hindu eclectic tradition of *Sarva Dharma Sama bhava* (viewing all religions alike) to foster Hindu Muslim unity. He took for granted the fact that India was a nation, and fervently believed that everyone who was born and brought up in India was an Indian irrespective of his religion. In his seminal work *Hind Swaraj* (1909) he convincingly offered elaborate reasoning as to why religion cannot be the basis for nationhood, why 'the introduction of Mohammedanism [had] not unmade the nation', and why in spite of differences between Hindus and Muslims 'at every step' (eg., Muslims looking down on Hindus as idolaters, killing the cow which is worshipped by the Hindus) they do not cease to be one nation, and why there is no 'inborn enmity' between Hindus and Mohammedans. Like an astute lawyer he advanced several lines of reasoning. The reasoning based on pragmatism highlighted the fact that if the Hindus believe that India should be peopled only by Hindus, they were living in a dreamland. The Hindus, the Mohammedans, the Parsis and the Christians who have made India their country were fellow countrymen, and they all would have to live in unity, if only for their own interest. The reasoning

It is not too much to say that never before in the history of this country, have intellect and character such as those of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, been devoted to the furtherance of secular aims in the spirit of renunciation.

K.Natarajan

based on spirituality highlighted the fact that religions are different paths converging to the same point, and hence there was no reason to be at war with those whose religion we may not follow. The reasoning based on a reading of history highlighted the fact that India had a great capacity for assimilation. Talk of 'inborn enmity' was appropriate when Hindus and Muslims fought each other but not after they ceased to fight. Even before the British arrived, each party recognised that mutual fighting was suicidal, and that neither party would abandon its religion by force of arms. Both parties, therefore, decided to live in peace. The Hindus flourished under Moslem sovereigns and Moslems under the Hindu. Quarrels recommenced only after the English advent. And then he resorted to reasoning by analogy; the followers of Siva and Vishnu used to quarrel, and Vedic religion is different from Jainism but does it mean that Saivites and Vaishnavites, Hindus and Jains were different nations? Hence how could one argue that past quarrels between Hindus and Muslims make them separate nations? His arguments in regard to cow slaughter and non-violence are ingenious and vividly bring out that he was not a moral perfectionist who would force his beliefs on others but a pragmatist who was willing to achieve a reasoned compromise. The Mahatma respected the cow with deep reverence but at the same time he respected all his fellow men, and that being so if he fought with or killed a Muslim in order to save a cow he would be the enemy of the cow as well as the Muslim. The only method he knew was to persuade his Muslim brother to protect the cow for the sake of the country, and if he did not succeed in persuading his brother he would 'let the cow go for the simple reason that the matter is beyond my ability'. If he were overfull of pity for the cow he would, in conformity with the law of his religion, give up his life for the cow instead of killing his Muslim brother. It is human nature to oppose imposition, and therefore the more the Hindus were insistent on stopping cow slaughter the more the killing of cows. Consequently, cow protection societies were in fact cow killing societies.

The Mahatma's conception of the Indian nation was one of the four competing conceptions. The first

alternative could be described as a 'secularised' version of the Mahatma's conceptualization of which Nehru was the foremost exponent. Nehru was one with the Mahatma in holding that religion cannot be the basis for nationhood and that India should not be organised as a Hindu nation; however, the fountainhead of his approach was the 'secular' tradition dating back to the Enlightenment. It would not be correct to say that he was not spiritual for he wrote evocatively about the 'personality', and 'soul' of India, of the 'vital impulses' that gave her strength and her 'destiny'. Yet like most intellectuals leaning to the Left he had a dim view of religion, particularly organised religion, and held that religious outlook on life, so pervasive in the country, should gradually give way to scientific temper, and that in the interim religion should be relegated to the private sphere. Whatever, the Mahatma's conception as well as its secularised version fall in the category of civic-territorial nationalism as they hold the whole of India in spite of enormous diversity is one nation and every inhabitant of that nation is a citizen with equal rights and obligations.

The other alternatives to the Mahatma's conceptualization are variants of cultural nationalism. The second alternative of the Two Nation theory is straightforward and simple: because of deep cultural differences – religion, customs, literature, and way of life Muslims and Hindus- are separate nations. The third alternative of Hindu nationalism conceives India as the land of Hindus in which Hindus are entitled to a privileged position. Even though there are subtle differences in the conception of Savarkar and that of the RSS in a broad sense, the term Hindus include all who profess religions originating in India such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism; all of them share a common *samskrithi* (culture). Muslims and Christians may consider India to be their *pithrubhoomi* (homeland); however, by virtue of their religion they do not consider India as their *punyabhoomi* (holy land), and cannot have as much attachment to India as Hindus. The texts of Hindutva do not propose their exclusion but call upon them to 'assimilate' themselves in the Hindu mainstream by acknowledging that

We cannot always control events, but we can always control our attitude towards events.

S. Radhakrishnan

India is the land of the Hindus, accept the centrality of Hinduism to Indian civilisation, and demand no special rights by virtue of being minorities.. The fourth conception holds that there are not two nations in India but several. In the 1940s, applying Stalin's theory about nationalities Indian communists contended that like the Tsarist Empire, India was not one nation but a multinational entity and that the different nationalities were entitled to self-determination. This theory had no practical application except the support extended by communists for the demand of Pakistan; however, it provides a rationale to the demand of the Akalis on the eve of Partition for a Sikh homeland and the subsequent Khalistan movement, the demand for a Dravidastan and the demand for an independent Nagaland.

The mainstream nationalism comprising Mahatma's conception and its secularised version was without doubt espouse civic-territorial nationalism; however, it had strong cultural moorings, a fact missed out by many Left-liberals. Identifying unity in diversity in various aspects of Indian life, society and culture was a major nationalist project, and Nehru's *Discovery of India* is itself a search for that unity in diversity. That project was necessitated to rebut the claim of many colonial administrators that India is a mere mosaic of races, religions and languages having nothing in common with one another, and that 'there is not, and never was, according to European ideas ( of nationalism), an Indian nation or " people of India"'. It was also necessitated by the imperative of mobilising the diverse people constituting India to support, if not participate in, the Freedom Struggle. Nationalists considered that harping too much on diversity was an anti-Indian activity; an anecdote narrated by the noted sociologist M.N.Srinivas brings out vividly this feeling. Srinivas went to the Andhra Gymkhana Club in 'Bezwada' to meet a lawyer and inquire about caste sub-groups in Andhra. No sooner than he broached the lawyer about caste subgroups when the lawyer chased Srinivas out of the Club shouting 'Are you trying to do for Andhra what Katherine Mayo had done for India?', Katherine Mayo' being the author of the book *Mother India which* created outrage across India for its intemperate criticism of everything Indian, its society, culture and religion.

To give an example of the unity in diversity project , few countries in the world have the multiplicity and variety of languages as India; the landmark linguistic survey conducted under the direction of George A. Grierson identified 179 languages and 544 dialects spoken in India. Notwithstanding this bewildering diversity, India is not a Tower of Babel. Eminent linguists like Suniti Kumar Chatterjee highlighted the fact that what is surprising for a continental nation like India with diverse ethnic elements and socio-cultural forces of historic and pre-historic past was not the multiplicity and variety of speech forms but the extent to which common elements and strong affinities existed amongst the various Indian languages. Over the 3000 odd years of contact a number of common characteristics 'which may be specially called Indian' are to be found in the languages belonging to the three major language families, Austric, Dravidian and the Aryan; these common characteristics overlies the genetic diversity of the languages. The multiplicity of languages masks the fact that according to the 2001 Census 96.56 percent of the population has one of the 22 Scheduled languages as their mother tongue. Not without reason did Nehru said with a trace of irritation that ' the oft-repeated story of India having five hundred or more languages is a fiction of the mind of the philologist and the census commissioner who notes down every variation in dialect --- although spoken only by a few hundred persons'. As to literature, all 'the literary languages of India have habitually drafted to meet every new situation of requirement for expression of a new idea, or shade of meaning upon that vast , that inexhaustible treasure house of vocabulary, phrase, idiom and concept, comprised by the Sanskrit language and literature'. In the words of S.Radhakrishnan, Indian literature has ' a unity of outlook as the writers in different languages derive their inspiration from a common source and face more or less the same kind of experience emotional and intellectual'. All in all, Indian literature was one corpus but expressed in different languages.

To give another example of the unity diversity project, nationalist narratives of history depicted Indian history as a saga of continuous cultural assimilation and

Like the gentle dew that falls unseen and unheard and yet brings into blossom the fairest of roses, has been the contribution of India to the thought of the world. Silent, unperceived, yet omnipotent in its effect, it has revolutionized the thought of the world, yet notably knows it did so.

- Swami Vivekananda

synthesis. It is significant that unlike now during the Freedom Struggle few doubted the Aryan invasion. The nationalist narrative held that Aryan incursion took place over a long period during which synthesis between the culture of the pastoral Aryans and of the indigenous people many of whom had a high degree of material civilization took place; it was this synthesis which gave birth to neo-Aryanism or Hindu religion and culture. The nationalist reconstruction of the history of the 'Muslim' period is an impressive intellectual feat, and was built around the central theme that while there were episodes of conflict and religious bigotry there were long periods of peaceful co-existence of Hindus and Muslims. Even while acknowledging. In contrast to the English, the Afghans and Turko-Mongols who invaded India 'became completely Indianised with their roots in India, looking upon India as their homeland'. Most of the time, most rulers conducted themselves as all rulers do, and not particularly as Islamic rulers. Ruling a country that was conquered required at the very least that the hostility of the populace should be reduced. While the policy of winning over the Hindu princes and populace was consummated during the reign of Akbar, as a matter of deliberate policy even the earlier dynasties, 'toned down their early ruthless methods, became more tolerant ... and tried to function not as conquerors from outside but as Indians born and bred in the land'. The rulers had to rely on the Hindu lower bureaucracy to administer their realm; while the higher officials and judges were mostly Muslims it was not rare for Hindus to be appointed to high civil and military office. Therefore, the British era was the only period of foreign rule in the sense that the country was governed essentially by foreigners from a foreign country in foreign interest. Village life continued mostly as it was, and the Hindu peasants were not displaced. Muslims did not take to trade and therefore commerce and trade remained mostly in Hindu hands. Nationalist historical narratives also faulted colonial historians for narrating gruesome stories of Muslim rule without noticing 'the harmony which evolved in social and economic life between the two communities'.

(to be continued)

## Tenzin Gyatso, the XIV Dalailama

**Shri C.Anjaneya Reddy, IPS (Retd.)**

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Dalai lama's great friend and another Nobel Peace Prize winner, Bishop Tutu recently said of him:

"I admire him enormously....I always say to people, after being in exile over 50 years, how many would show the same serenity, the same joy, and the eagerness to spread goodness and compassion in the world."I would be very sulky, and there'd be a part of me that is sad .... it would show in my face. It doesn't in his. I mean I'm just saying, he is there for us as a beacon to tell us that you can, in fact, overcome some of the most horrendous circumstances, and, and emerge on the other side, not broken. So, he is a very great gift to the world. *And maybe the Chinese, without intending it, have given the world a wonderful gift"*

Dalai lama deserves all that and much more! One should read his autobiography *Freedom in Exile* to understand his attitude to life and its tribulations. The fact that he was forced to flee his country and the misery that the Tibet and its people have gone through without any prospect of a final settlement, in the last 6 decades have not made him bitter! On the other hand, his passion for inter-religious harmony, universal peace and happiness and the hope of resolving the Tibetan problem through non-violent means, remain his concerns as they have always been. Looking back one feels, Indian leaders in the 50's in their new-found fascination both for 'socialism' and the Chinese –those were the days of *Hindi-Chineebhai-bhai* –let him down by recognizing Tibet as part of China, which it was not historically. Our anxiety to please China got the better of our sense of history. We paid for it by suffering a national humiliation in the 1961 cross-border conflict with China!

The Dalailama considers India his spiritual homeland; he claims he is a son of India both spiritually and physically: spiritually because he lives by the *Nalanda* tradition of Mahayana Buddhism and physically because he lives on Indian *dal and roti!* He

See the flower, how generously it distributes perfume and honey. It gives to all, gives freely of its love. When its work is done, it falls away quietly. Try to be like the flower, unassuming despite all its qualities. (as described in the Bhagavat Gita)

- Vikram Sarabhai

often says what he has been preaching all-over the world is India's ancient wisdom. In his autobiography, he recalls the comment of Morarji Desai that Indian and Tibetan cultures are two branches of the same trunk. He holds Acharya Nagarjuna's teachings in the highest veneration and visited Nagarjuni Konda as a young man immediately after he came to India. Tibetans hold that, of the six great Mahayana masters or *six jewels* as they call them, four – Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Dignath and Dharmakeerthi - are from the Telugu country and the other two, Asanga and Vasubandhu are from North-west India, now in Pakistan. Tibetans also believe though Buddhism started in North-India, some of its greatest masters came from the South. For this reason, South India has a special place in Dalai lama's esteem.

The Dalailama has won the admiration of the world for the way he has been handling the Tibetan tragedy – its occupation by China, continuing suppression of its language and culture (often described as cultural genocide by the critics) and the long-drawn non-violent struggle of Tibet and the great effort that has gone into preserving and spreading Tibetan culture outside Tibet particularly in India and the US. By his spiritual authority, he marginalized the extremist elements who wanted to take to violence to resolve the issue and proposed to the Chinese government in the true Buddhist spirit, a *middle-way* solution of political and cultural autonomy to Tibet as part of China. In a sage advice to the Tibetans, he counselled the extremists to understand the reality of the situation and the imminent disaster that would follow any violent uprising! He made it known that he would withdraw his support should Tibetans use violence in their struggle. In this, he was much influenced by Gandhi who, he believes, proved the efficacy of the Buddhist doctrine of non-violence in political struggles. He made an offer to the Chinese Government that Tibet can be a part of China if it is granted political and cultural autonomy and the Dalai lama would cease to wield any political power. He wants Tibet to be demilitarized and turned into a zone of peace and its ecology which is so vital for the Asia's rivers to be protected and conserved!

There can be no better or more acceptable solution to the Tibetan problem which has subjected

deeply religious and mild Tibetans to untold misery for six decades now. The Chinese Communist government is yet to respond favourably; they seem to wait for his exit from this world and brand someone of their choice as the new Dalailama, a trick they employed when the Panchen Lama passed away a few years ago. This is not going to work as the traditional process of selecting a Dalailama is strongly rooted in the consciousness of Tibetans and any tampering by the Chinese government would be counter productive. Shrewd as he is, the Dalai lama has already forestalled the Chinese moves by asserting that when the Dalai lama has gone away from Tibet in this life, there is no question of his successor being born in China! The Chinese 'stratagem' to have a Dalai lama of their choice is most likely to be still-born!

The Dalai lama has already shed his political authority and entrusted it to an elected Prime Minister, a clear departure from the centuries-old tradition of the Dalai lama wielding both temporal and spiritual authority. Following his example, the Buddhist ruler of Bhutan also gave up his absolute power and compelled his people to elect a government to run their country.

Braving the vast propaganda machinery of the Chinese Communist government, the Dalailama succeeded by the sheer force of his personality to turn the world attention to the Tibetan problem and find safe homes in different countries for the Tibetan diaspora through sheer goodwill. Single-handed, he is responsible to bring about a well-educated generation of Tibetans in exile who will be the face of Tibetan struggle for freedom. He travelled the world – the first Dalailama to do it – and achieved world-recognition for Tibetan Buddhism and literature. Over the years, wherever he goes, he has become a 'star' attraction and young people in the west come in thousands to pay and listen to him! His friend Bishop Tutu 'envies' the magic in him to gather thousands of people at his meetings even though he has difficulty in speaking English fluently! The Bishop knows that it is all due to his cheerful and compassionate presence! The great Buddhist practitioner that he is, the two virtues of Wisdom and Compassion come naturally to him; his unpretentious cheerfulness is infectious and affects

India is a land of diverse faiths, creeds and languages. In the midst of it all there is no doubt about our Indianness.

Babu Jagjivan Ram

people who come to listen to him! He blames his inadequate English on his playfulness as a young man in not taking seriously the lessons of Mr Menon, his English teacher on arrival in India!

The Dalai lama has defined for himself a role in the wide world – propagating human values that would ultimately make people happier, inter-religious harmony recognising and accepting the common good in all religions and the cause of the Tibetan people who are the victims of a cultural genocide. Notwithstanding his advanced years, he hopes to return to Tibet some day; for this he counts on the changing Chinese society which, in his opinion, would ultimately secure its prosperity with political rights! Interestingly many Chinese Buddhists support the Tibetan cause and want the Dalailama back in Tibet so that he can help Chinese Buddhists back into their traditional religion. The Chinese govt. recently discovered, to their surprise, that many of their officials have been secretly contributing funds to the Tibetan cause!

Recognizing his non-violent struggle, twenty-seven countries in the world, have honoured the Dalailama with their country's highest civilian honour; these include, the US Congressional Medal and the Nobel Peace prize. Yet the Government of India is still to honour him with Gandhi Peace prize or *Bharataratna*. This indifference to a great Buddhist monk who has been living in our country for fifty years claiming to be a son of India, openly proclaiming that what he has been preaching is India's ancient wisdom and hailing our father of the nation as his inspiration for his non-violent struggle for Tibet. How do we explain this? Appeasement of China? China amply demonstrated its near-contempt for India by claiming parts of Arunachal Pradesh and taking a part of Gilgit from Pakistan for its Belt Road project, knowing full well that it is disputed territory. It is time we abandoned defensive foreign policy, adopted a pro-active stand that would secure our country's interest.

Tibetan culture is ancient Indian culture; Tibetan script is derived from the Brahmi ancestor of all Indian scripts. It is time we realized Tibetans are our Himalayan neighbours as much as Nepalese or Bhutanese. We have a historic responsibility to stand

by them in furthering our common interest. India's borders are safe with Tibet as our neighbour, not China who is brazenly expansionist! Isn't it time, we apologized to the Tibetans and the world and declared that we made a mistake in recognizing Tibet as part of China when it was not! China may not part with it easily but might start rethinking!

## The Tragedy of Greatness (2)

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*)

With the dawn breaking out, two riders arrived bringing the message, directly from Rani Padmini: Khilji's will be done! The first quarter of the night two days later was auspicious according to the almanac for solemnising a life-long union. Rani Padmini would surrender herself to Khilji ceremoniously, as behoves her status, accompanied by her entourage. Meanwhile Khilji must treat his royal hostage honourably.

Khilji was in ecstasy. He gave all his attention to decorating his camp. He had no fear. He might have failed to infiltrate the fort, but his huge army would easily defeat the Maharana's in an open battle on the plains.

The Rajputs kept busy collecting as many palanquins as they could from the houses of the nobility. At last, after sun-down on the third day, a procession of seven hundred palanquins wended its way along the slope and the meadow below it, amidst sound of tender music and occasional blowing of conch shells.

Khilji's heart "leaped like a frog" - as a rustic Rajput put it, at that wondrous cavalcade streaming down, flanked by flaming torches. The procession entered the garden. The chief escort, the tall and handsome Gora, a cousin of the Maharana, got down from his horse and greeted Khilji.

My lord, my revered sister, Maharani Padmini, would naturally like to have a brief meeting with

her husband for the last time. She expects you to be chivalrous enough to grant this first ever request of hers.'

Khilji appeared hesitant.

Gora laughed, albeit mildly. 'Do you by any chance doubt her having come?' At a sign from Gora, the bejewelled screen of the first palanquin was removed by a maid and a lamp was raised. The blushing profile satisfied Khilji. This is the face that had adorned the mirror.

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships and burnt the topless towers of Ilium?' Three centuries before Christopher Marlowe wrote this of Helen of Troy, Rani Padmini wrought comparable havoc with her 700 palanquins. The aftermath of that night's episode burnt the topless towers of Chittor, but unlike the destruction of Ilium, it was not an unmixed tragedy so far as the Rajputs were concerned; it was a triumph of their spirit over their social and political misfortune.

The face which dazzled Khilji's eyes was marvellously beautiful, the face Khilji had seen on the mirror - the face of a brave maid of the Rani, the solitary lady in that cavalcade of palanquins, but a face by no means Rani Padmini's.

Khilji allowed his illusion of Padmini to visit his prisoner. No sooner had the Maharana's room been unlocked than the gentle and humble Gora gave out a deafening cry. Fourteen hundred Rajput soldiers leaped out of the 700 palanquins. The 2,800 bearers, too, turned into fighters. They drew their swords concealed in the palanquins and unleashed a holocaust on Khilji's camp.

General Gora's first task was to arrange for the safe escape of the Maharana to the fort, along with the maid acting as Rani Padmini. Taking advantage of this momentary diversion of the general's, Khilji fled like a hounded fox. Gora pursued him as soon as he grew conscious of the arch-villain's escape, calling out to a group of his soldiers, but without waiting for them to join him. The fleeing Khilji and his men stopped abruptly, found Gora alone, and killed him. His soldiers caught up with him a moment later,

but a moment that had proved fateful. Khilji had disappeared in the darkness. Khilji's entire army was routed in an hour. The Rajputs returned to their fort with the dead body of their leader.

Gora had a dear friend in another young noble, Badal. He swore revenge. The author of this plot executed successfully, though falling short of perfection, was none other than Rani Padmini herself, according to the bards. Khilji's humiliation and defeat were a matter of rejoicing, but the Maharana and the Rani felt certain that he would strike again.

Strike he did - with an army five times larger than the earlier one. His sea of violent men besieged the fort. The battle claimed thousands of lives every day. Doom was closing in on Chittor and the Rajputs knew it well. But there was no question of compromise or even negotiation.

Each day two Rajput nobles would lead their defence and fight on until death. The grim routine was religiously followed. At last came the turn of Maharana Rawal Ratan Singh himself and Badal - and everybody knew that to be the final day of the battle. From a small window on the main palace Rani Padmini witnessed the end of the last two heroes. The pyre had been kept ready in the courtyard. The women of the dynasty, led by Padmini, offered their prayers. The pyre was lit and they entered it. The fire filled the entire courtyard and the maids jumped into it from the terraces. As massive columns of smoke rose and kissed the clouds, all the gates of the fort were thrown open and the last battalion of Rajputs without any captain burst into the advancing enemy horde, killing many before being trampled to their deaths.

A sepulchral silence descended on the fort. The mushroom clouds of smoke and a few stray clouds hanging over the towers assumed a fearsome hue reflecting the setting sun and the flickers of the mass pyre.

Khilji, surrounded by his generals, entered the quiet fort, his face a picture of anxiety, uncertainty and fear, still tinged by some hope. He had walked through the fort a year ago, viewing its splendour

The visit of Ram Mohun Roy to Europe in 1830 was from the point of view of Asia no less important than the arrival of Vasco d Gama in India. It was the first step in India's discovery of Europe.

K.M.Panikkar

with envy. He had desired its ruination, but had desired something more too. His first desire had been fulfilled, but, as he advanced, he grew sure that his second and his fondest desire was not going to be.

Silence and smoke could never have been more terrifying. The smell of the burning corpses vied with the fragrance of sandalwood, musk and other incense to dominate the atmosphere; the result was sickening.

Khilji felt giddy and drained of all zest. His arms resting on the shoulders of two generals, he stepped into the main palace.

The last flame of fire virtually sneered at him before a gust put it out. The Sultan broke into a mad delirium, say the bards. Never did he smile or laugh normally thereafter. If he did, it was a wild laugh, sudden and sinister.

That Sultan Aladin Khilji attacked Chittor first in 1302 and finally in 1303 when he destroyed it, and Padmini committing *johar* are facts of history. Those who view the other episodes as only a legend argue: (1) for the Sultan to trust that Padmini would come down to submit herself to his desire was improbable; (2) a cavalcade of 700 palanquins ought to have made him suspicious; (3) there would have been a monument to mark Padmini's triumph had it been a fact.

Those who look upon the legend as history argue (1) the Sultan had kidnapped Ratan Singh with the sole intention of winning Padmini. Going by his own values, there was nothing unusual in his expecting the elders of the dynasty deciding to sacrifice a woman for the sake of their king's life. For the Sultan, Padmini was a beauty, an object of enjoyment. He did not see her as one endowed with a will of her own, one capable of engineering a dramatic strategy; (2) there was nothing unnatural for the Queen of Mewar to be accompanied by 700 maids, more so when it was a ceremonial procession. Even in the 19th century so many British officers in India moved about with more than a hundred attendants each - as witnessed by William Howard Russel, Correspondent of the *Times* (London). They

knew that to be a matter of status in Hindustan. May be 700 palanquins is an exaggeration. Whatever be their number, the Sultan was hardly in a mood to spoil the flattering occasion with any suspicion. His was a large army. And he had Ratan Singh as hostage. Could the Rajputs endanger their king's life? Besides, the fake Padmini in the palanquin assured him of his trophy coming within his reach; (3) Rani Padmini's triumph having lasted only for a year, there was no time to erect a monument to immortalize it. Besides such a monument was bound to remind posterity of Rawal Ratan Singh's humiliation. A far more lasting and inspiring monument had been built by the people - in the way of ballads, plays and a dozen legends with imaginative variations.

Aladin, an awfully lusty and ambitious illiterate who had mercilessly killed the founder of the Khilji dynasty, Jalaluddin, his patron as well as his uncle and father-in-law, and who had usurped the Rani of Devagiri, Kamala Devi, could very well have coveted Rani Padmini, resulting in her committing suicide. Posterity avenged her death and Chittor's destruction through the legend, which, all said and done, could very well have been true to some extent.

Gusts of breeze swept over Udaipur throughout the night. Dawn was still an hour away when I marked a shadow outside my window. I shifted the screen. Shombhudas stood with a tray.

I opened the door hurriedly.

'You - and so early!'

'Our cook comes late. Better I make tea for you, I thought. After all, you have to start early for Chittor in order to come back by evening,' Shombhudas explained.

'Thanks, my brother, but I don't think I can make it to Chittor.'

Shombhudas smiled. 'Get ready, sir. Soon after you retired a car for you arrived. It is from Bhupalsagar.'

I remembered having received a phone call from an unknown well wisher residing at Bhupalsagar. Since he enquired about my programme I had casually told him of my desire to see Chittor and had asked

about the time the travel by public transport takes, I had not expected him to be so kind.

I was at the portico as soon as I could and the young driver greeted me with a smart salute. Another Rajput!

### **Three conclusions**

(From *My Experiences as an Ambassador*)

#### **Nani Palkhivala**

Many months' stay abroad has made me reach three basic conclusions.

First, the innate intelligence and inborn skills of Indians are so great that India can reach the top—if only we can have education, organization and discipline. It is no doubt a very big 'if' India has today the third largest force of scientists and engineers in the world, the first being the United States and the second the Soviet Union. We have this achievement to our credit while two-thirds of our people are still illiterate. Consider what will be the tremendous scientific and industrial strength of this country when education spreads and the populace becomes literate. What height can we not reach when the entire human potential of our country is deployed and each citizen recognizes his duty as a nation-builder!

It is organization which enables any enterprise or nation to put its talent and manpower to the maximum advantage. At the Cessna Aircraft factory at Wichita in Kansas, I met a couple of Indian technicians who have migrated after having been employed in the Hindustan Aeronautics factory at Bangalore. They told me that 10,000 workers are employed in the Cessna factory and they produce 5,000 planes a year; while 35,000 workers are employed in the Hindustan Aeronautics factory and they produce 100 planes a year; and that the level of talent and skill is as high at Bangalore as it is at Wichita and the plant at Bangalore is as good. The difference in output is largely due to the absence of competition at Bangalore and the absence of business organization of the type which prevails in first-class American corporations. Organization is the one facet of business

management which is continuously kept under review in the United States. On an average, a significant organizational change takes place once in four years in dynamic US corporations. Most enterprises in India have yet to learn the art and science of management.

The sad feature of the post-Emergency era is the lack of discipline. It is agonizing to read about the acts of violence after the rebirth of freedom. We need to be reminded again and again of the great saying of Mahatma Gandhi that non-violence is the law of human beings, even as violence is the law of the brute. Our fledgling democracy has had a very narrow escape. Let us not tempt the fates again. Good fortune may not come our way as it did in January 1977 when general elections were announced. It is the duty of each citizen not only to observe discipline himself but to inculcate it in the people around him. The citizens of Bombay will remember the visit of the Pope several years ago. There were crowds of more than 100,000 people and yet how totally disciplined they were. Our armed forces are as disciplined as any in the world. This shows that we are as capable of total discipline as any other people, but, as is demonstrated by the traffic on our roads, we have grown accustomed to a sloppy way of behaviour and accept it as a fact of Indian life. This acceptance of indiscipline is even more disastrous than indiscipline itself.

Secondly, we must eschew the fallacy that all problems can be solved by governmental action. It is this fallacy that makes people willingly countenance unlimited extension of state power which, as Mahatma Gandhi repeatedly observed, is fraught with incalculable mischief. The freedom of the subject is the silence of the laws.

Thirdly, as the late Dr E.F. Schumacher pointed out in his posthumous book *A Guide for the Perplexed*, the western man has become rich in means and poor in ends. The ancient wisdom of 'India has steadfastly maintained that man's happiness is to move higher, to develop his highest faculties, to gain knowledge of the highest things and, if possible, to see God. The modern experiment of living without faith has failed.

Higher education has also to satisfy the emerging political requirements of how newly formed nation-state and democratic and socialist society that we want to establish there in. V.K. R. V. Rao

-Goethe said, 'Epochs of faith are epochs of fruitfulness but epochs of unbelief, however glittering, are barren of all permanent good.' The modern man, despite all his comforts and conveniences, is still perplexed. He cannot call home the heart to quietness, because his spirit is not in tune with the Infinite and he is troubled by

'The restless throbbings and burnings  
That hope unsatisfied brings,  
The weary longings and yearnings  
For the mystical better things.'

The greatest force in the world is love—and there has never been, and never will be, a substitute for it. From a failure to realize this elemental truth, stems the feeling of rootlessness and loneliness in modern society.

Dr Schumacher's thesis is that one must develop the neglected art of learning to know oneself: The cultivation of self-knowledge has fallen into virtually total neglect except, that is, where it is the object of active suppression. That you cannot love your neighbour unless you love yourself; that you cannot understand your neighbour unless you understand yourself; that there can be no knowledge of the "invisible person" who is your neighbour except on the basis of self-knowledge--these fundamental truths have been forgotten even by many of the professionals in the established religions.'

'We see all sights from pole to pole  
And glance and nod and bustle by,  
And never once possess our soul  
Before we die.'

In the case of every soul, however troubled, restoration can come only from within. This is the lesson taught by the great Indian sages, from the nameless ones who lived in the twilight of history to Sri Aurobindo. There is still hope for India, and for the world, if we relearn this lesson today.

(Nani Palkhivala : *Selected Writings*)

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## Freedom and Practice of Dharma : A Dialogue-I

Dr. Mrs. Prema Nandakumar

After coming back to India in 1893, Sri Aurobindo plunged into a deep study of India's epic and classical literature in Sanskrit. The Mahabharata, drew his attention in manifold ways. Indeed, here was a great revelation. These were not mere ancient legends but artifacts that were absolutely contemporaneous in relevance. Re-reading the Mahabharata could certainly illumine what was dark in us and teach us the methodology of resolving conflicts. Certainly the characters of the epic stand before us as shining teachers both by what they say and what they do so that we learn the art of living a blameless life and as purposive life. Sri Aurobindo says "His very subject is one of practical ethics, the establishment of a Dharmarajya, an empire of the just, by which is meant no millennium of the saints, but the practical ideal of government with righteousness, purity and unselfish toil for the common good as its saving principles ... Vyasa's ethics like everything else in him takes a double stand on intellectual scrutiny and acceptance and on personal strength of character; his characters having once adopted by intellectual choice and in harmony with their temperaments a given line of conduct, throw the whole heroic force of their nature into its pursuit. He is therefore preeminently a poet of action."

It is said that there is nothing in this world which is not in the Mahabharata. And if something is not there in the epic, it means it does not exist. One of the approaches of Sri Aurobindo to the epic was from the political point of view. After all, the beginning of his Mahabharata studies in Baroda coincided with his baptism in Indian politics at the close of the last century. No wonder then, that the passages from the epic that he chose to translate from time to time had a direct relationship with the nationalist politics of which he was a key figure. He was particularly tuned to the Udyoga Parva where Krishna is seen as an ideal statesman. Sri Aurobindo has given us a literal prose translation of the passage:

Twenty- first century India has seen corruption increase exponentially at all levels –central, state, and local.

N.Ram

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“To all of you it is known how Yudhistere here was conquered by Saubala in the hall of the dicing; by fraud was he conquered and his kingdom torn from him and contract made of exile in the forest; and though infallible in the mellay, though able by force impetuous to conquer the whole earth, yet the sons of Pandu stood by their honour religiously; harsh and austere their vow but for the six years and the seven they kept it, noblest of men, the sons of Pandou; and this the thirteenth year and most difficult they have passed before all your eyes unrecognized; in exile they passed it, the mighty-minded ones, suffering many and intolerable hardships, in the service of strangers, in menial employments, cherishing their desire of the kingdom that belongeth to their lineage.”

Though Duryodhana and his advisers are not willing to give to the Pandavas what is theirs by right, Krishna does not speak of war as yet. For, peace is of prime importance both to the contenders and the common people.

“Moreover none knoweth the mind of Duryodhan rightly, what he meaneth to do, and what can you decide that shall be the best to set about when you know not the mind of your foeman? Therefore let one go hence, some virtuous, pure minded and careful man such as shall be an able envoy for their appeasement and the gift of half the kingdom to Yudhistere.

Analysing the speech of Krishna carefully, Sri Aurobindo marvels how Krishna wants peace, not war:

“It will be seen from Krishna’s attitude here as elsewhere that he was very far from being the engineer and subtle contriver of war into which later ideas have deformed him. That he came down to force on war and destroy the Kshatriya caste, whether to open India to the world or for other cause, is an idea that was not present to the mind of Vyasa. Later generations writing, when the pure Kshatriya caste had almost disappeared, attributed this motive for God’s descent upon earth, just as a modern English Theosophist, perceiving British rule established in India, has added the corollary that he destroyed the

Kshatriyas (five thousand years ago, according to her own belief) in order to make the line clear for the English. What Vyasa, on the other hand, makes us feel is that Krishna, though fixed to support justice at every cost, was earnestly desirous to support it by peaceful means if possible.”

Thus the Mahabharata may be about a great war and yet it is a tablet for peace. Sri Aurobindo realized that Vyasa must have been in the same predicament as the intellectual of the twentieth century when the atom was split in 1939. The splitting of the atom produced a masterly satire of dire prophecy from his pen on 25th September. 1939:

“One dreamed and saw a gland write Hamlet,  
drink

At the Mermaid, capture immortality;

A committee of hormones on the Aegean’s  
brink

Composed the Iliad and the Odyssey.  
A thyroid, meditating almost nude

Under the Bo-tree, saw the eternal Light

And, rising from its mighty solitude,

Spoke of the Wheel and eightfold Path all right.

A brain by a disordered stomach driven

Thundered through Europe, conquered, ruled  
and fell,

From St. Helena went, perhaps, to Heaven.

Thus wagged on the surreal world, until  
A scientist played with atoms and blew out

The universe before God had time to shout.”

The argument on the subject entered all his writings in one manner or the other. Is the violence of war justified? But how else to uphold Dharma? Do we not need Kshatratej to back Dharma? Kshatratej, of course, is not the final answer but it is the best possible solution under the circumstances. After all humanity is still in the mental consciousness where hate coexists with love and darkness is never far away from light. The Ramayana has given us the story of Viswamitra and Vasishta when at one stage

the former renounces the power of the sword: Dik balam kshaatra balam, brahma tejo balam balam! But all humanity has not yet reached the stage of Viswamitra! Hence Sri Aurobindo's detailed study of the problem in Essays on the Gita.

For the Gita also continues the argument. There are times in the life of a nation when even a Yudhishtira has to reject peace. According to Sri Aurobindo the message of the Gita was clear:

"When you have disarmed your slaves and legalised the infliction of bonds, stripes and death on any one of them, man, woman or child, who may dare to speak or act against you, it is natural and convenient to try and lay a moral as well as a legal ban on any attempt to answer violence by violence, the knout by the revolver, the prison by riot or agrarian rising, the gallows by the dynamite bomb. But no nation yet has listened to the cant of the oppressor when itself put to the test ... To shrink from bloodshed and violence under such circumstances is a weakness deserving as severe a rebuke as Sri Krishna addressed to Arjuna when he shrank from the colossal civil slaughter on the field of Kurukshetra."

Though I have been a student of Savitri for several decades, I was not aware for long the other reasons which led Sri Aurobindo to re-tell the legend of Satyavan and Savitri. Satyavan has no visible part in Vyasa's Upakhyana. We hear him speak only in the concluding passages of the legend. Even here, he is quite brief. Then, how is it that Sri Aurobindo chose to devote a considerable portion to Satyavan himself in the epic? Re-reading Sri Aurobindo in the light of Vyasa gave me new leads. Sri Aurobindo's Satyavan is all sweetness, filled with sattvic calm. Sri Aurobindo's description is apt: "Satyavan is the soul carrying divine Truth". This is imaged in the serenity of the ashrama ensconced in nature:

"Here in this solitude far from the world  
Her part she began in the world's joy and strife.  
Here were disclosed to her the mystic courts,  
The lurking doors of beauty and surprise,  
The wings that murmur in the golden house,

The temple of sweetness and the fiery aisle.  
A stranger on the sorrowful roads of Time,  
Immortal under the yoke of death and fate,  
A sacrificant of the bliss and pain of the spheres,  
Love in the wilderness met Savitri.

As for how Satyavan looked, we have Sri Aurobindo again:

"As might a soul on Nature's background limned  
Stand out for a moment in a house of dream  
Created by the ardent breath of life,  
So he appeared against the forest verge  
Inset twixt green relief and golden ray.  
As if a weapon of the living Light,  
Erect and lofty like a spear of God."

Apart from this sattvic and brilliant nature of Satyavan that one gets from the Upakhyana through the descriptions of Rishi Narada, there is not much for us to know about Satyavan. Rishi Narad had spoken out:

"He has subdued his passions, is soft-natured, is a youth of heroic deeds, is full of truth, and has regulated senses; he is friendly with everybody, without envy, and is of a reserved shy disposition, radiant as he is. Those who have advanced in tapasya, and grown rich in virtuous nobility, say briefly about him that he is always straightforward, and is steadfast, and is well-established in those qualities".

This of a young man who knows his revered father has had to live as an exile because of the cupidity of the nation's neighbours. Though trained in the martial arts as a kshatriya, yet Satyavan is not thirsting for vengeance! Even after uniting with Madran royalty through marriage, he expresses no wish to take Aswapati's help in worsting the enemies of Shalwa. Was he worried that such attempts may cause harm to the citizens of Shalwa? When Sri Aurobindo made the sattvic tapasvini of Vyasa into a Mahashakti, Mata Durga facing Death in his epic poem, why did he not transform Satyavan into a battle-hero?

You are rewarded by your work, not for your work. Work performed brilliantly need not solicit any gain. The work itself earns the reward.

A. Parthasarathy

But Sri Aurobindo was following Vyasa. A battle at the spiritual level does not cause harm to the lesser mortals who go on with their lives as always. Our ancients knew the harm of wars on the material plane too and so often preferred a single combat to sort out issues. Hence they created an elaborate system of kshatra-dharma. The heroic soldier would not cause harm to old people, the young, women, the sick. Unarmed persons were not supposed to be killed. There should be no warfare after the sun goes down. The list is long. Satyavan is a total pacifist and to make of him a battle warrior against Shalwa's enemies could not be appropriate. The input for this approach is already found in another important canto in the Mahabharata where Vyasa brings in this argument again in Shanti Parva. The subject is one that has been exercising our minds for centuries. Is capital punishment justified?

Yama Dharmaraja's decree has had immediate effect. Dyumathsena has become the King of Shalwa again and now Satyavan is the Crown Prince. This is the scene evoked by Bhishma when Yudhistira asks him: "How, indeed, should the king protect his subjects without injuring anybody. I ask thee this, O grandsire, tell me, O foremost of good men!" Bhishma recounts the "old narrative" (itihāsam purāatanam).

Some criminals had been brought to justice. Dyumathsena had pronounced the capital punishment on them and ordered that they should be impaled. Satyavan intervened and said something unprecedented: "Sometimes righteousness assumes the form of iniquity, and iniquity assumes the form of righteousness. It can never be possible that the killing of individuals can ever be a righteous act."

Dyumathsena tells his son that there are people who have committed heinous sins and they do not deserve to live at all. And if the king does not punish the evil-doer in a befitting manner, it would not be possible to have the rule of dharma. In the Kali age this is just not possible. However, if Satyavan thinks there is a way in which we can preserve the world-order in a dharmic manner, he would be most happy to listen to the same.

Though Satyavan had been brought up as a kshatriya, his environs had been forest hermitages. Nature is red in tooth and claw in the forest. Must the same type of destruction go on in places nurtured by civilization? Satyavan is not against punishment. But he cannot accept killing as a punishment and gives his reasons in detail:

"Without destroying the body of the offender the king should do that unto him which is directed by the scriptures. The king should not act otherwise, neglecting to reflect properly upon the character of the offence and upon the science of morality. By slaying the wicked, the king (practically) slays a large number of individuals that are innocent. Behold, by slaying a single robber, his wife, mother, father and children are all slain (because they become deprived of the means of life). When injured by a wicked person, the king should, therefore, reflect deeply on the question of chastisement. Sometimes a wicked man is seen to imbibe good behaviour from a righteous person. Then again from persons that are wicked, good children may be seen to spring. The wicked, therefore, should not be torn up by the roots. The extermination of the wicked is not consistent with eternal practice. By smiting them gently they may be made to expiate their offences. By depriving them of all their wealth, by chains and immurement in dungeons, by disfiguring them (they may be made to expiate their guilt)."

The destroying of a person roots and all, is not Sanatana Dharma, *na moola gaatah karthavyo naisha dharma sanatanah*. Also, Satyavan considers this approach to be the command of the Creator, *Daatru saasanam*. Satyavan is firm that punishment should not be withheld, even if it is a Brahmin or monk who has committed a crime. But to whatever varna one may belong, they should not be killed in the name of justice. Dyumathsena does not contradict Satyavan but recounts the history of punishment up to condemning a person to death.

"Men of remote and remoter times were capable of being governed with ease. They were very truthful (in speech and conduct). They were little

disposed to disputes and quarrels. They seldom gave way to anger, or, if they did, their wrath never became ungovernable. In those days the mere crying of *fie* on offenders was sufficient punishment. After this came the punishment represented by harsh speeches or censures. Then followed the punishment of fines and forfeitures. In this age, however, the punishment of death has become current. The measure of wickedness has increased to such an extent that by slaying one others cannot be restrained. The robber has no connection with men, with the deities, with the Gandharvas, and with the *Pitris*. What is he to whom? He is not anybody to any one. This is the declaration of the *Srutis*. The robber takes away the ornaments of corpses from cemeteries, and swearing apparel from men afflicted by spirits (and, therefore, deprived of senses). That man is a fool who would make any covenant with those miserable wretches or exact any oath from them (for relying upon it)."

A promise given by such declared offenders means nothing. They are incurable and it is best their lives are put an end to for the health of the society. Satyavan's reaction is interesting. If there is so much power in yagas and yagnas to make people lead a prosperous life, there must be a way to transform villains into good people also! Why should a person impale the offender on a stake? He could with equal felicity transform him through his Vedic sacrifice!

"Satyavat said, 'If thou dost not succeed in making honest men of those rogues and in saving them by means unconnected with slaughter, do thou then exterminate them by performing some sacrifice. Kings practise severe austerities for the sake of enabling their subjects go on prosperously in their avocations. When thieves and robbers multiply in their kingdoms they become ashamed.. They, therefore, betake themselves to penances for suppressing thefts and robberies and making their subjects live happily. Subjects can be made honest by being only frightened (by the king)."

The guilty should be shamed into becoming honest! Is this possible in human affairs today? So the two continue to argue for a while. The extended

discussion found in *Santi Parva* must have exercised Sri Aurobindo's mind. He may have wondered why Satyavan who had grown into a heroic young man did not set out to avenge his father's exile. At least, after his marrying Savitri, he could have received all the help needed for an expedition against the illegal occupiers of Shalwa. Why did he not do so? Was it because he felt that a war to get back the kingdom for Dyumathsena and himself would also result in the death and suffering of Shalwan citizens? What kind of pacifist is Sri Aurobindo's Satyavan?

(to be concluded)

(Paper presented at the National Conference on "Re-reading Sri Aurobindo" held on 4th-5th March, 2010 at the Department of English, Pondicherry University.)

**Book Review :**

## **PATHWAYS TO GREATNESS**

Coming Together for Change

**A.P.J. ABDUL KALAM**

Harper Collins Publishers India 2017 pp163 Rs.250/-

Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the late 'people's president's famous formula for India's development was that everyone should dream, convert dreams into vision and vision into plan of action. The seer among scientists and statesman among leaders, fixed 2020 for India to fulfill its tryst with destiny. Straight from the Rashtrapati Bhavan, on completing his tenure as Head of State, he went to the classroom/lecture hall to ignite young minds with his words of wisdom. He undertook tours of different parts of India meeting people to learn about their problems and visited seats of learning, high and low, to motivate students. It was at one such meeting that the great man slumped while lecturing and breathed his last on July 27, 2015. He completed his book *Pathways to Greatness, Coming Together for Change* which Harper Collins brought out in 2017 as a posthumous publication for the benefit of "people from all walks of life, from students to house holders to leaders who could draw from and add to it." Dr Kalam wrote in the preface " here I offer my observations about how the life of every average Indian can be transformed into one of dignity, purpose

India is not an important but perhaps the most important country for the future of the world.  
All the convergent influences of the world run through this society.

- E.P. Thompson

and above all, divinity.” His hope was that India would “withstand the forces of change and lead the whole world on the pathways to greatness.”

The publishers have done well to bring out his ideas and conversations in this treasurable publication with the editor summing up the quintessence of the book in just one line: “The premise of Pathways to Greatness was simple: laws, rules and values cannot be dictated from top down- they have to become part of our value system.” This small book of 158 pages is divided into three sections—the first being MUSINGS, the second OATHS and the third FINAL THOUGHTS. WHAT MAKES A NATION GREAT? is the title of the first chapter. Kalam’s answer is “What is most important is national character, born out of the value systems that exist in our families, what schools teach students, and the culture of the nation.” Political leaders, he suggests, should ‘set an example for civil society by articulating a vision for the nation and engaging in development politics.’ The laws of the land must be respected and not violated with impunity, to ensure that justice is done fast and fair. He wants our education system to promote legal literacy through formal and informal mechanisms, particularly for the rural community. Kalam emphasized respect for mothers who nurture the young minds and help in raising clean and green homes. He wanted India to become “a nation that is one of the best places to live in on earth and bring smiles to a billion faces.” For that purpose he went on to administer oaths to the thousands of people he met, keeping in mind the group or profession they belonged to including youth, teachers, farmers, sarpanches, health care providers, civil servants, judiciary and political leaders. This oath which he administered reflects his faith in human goodness, notwithstanding the fact that violations of law and rules begin in politics with oath taking by elected representatives and high functionaries.

Kalam’s focus is on children in primary and school education who spend “about 25,000 hours in school during the twelve years of their primary and secondary education.” There are 6.5 million school teachers in the country and ‘each one of them is a burning candle that lights many more’ said Kalam.

Exhorting parents and teachers to come together, he says: “I am sure that the best of creativity in students will emerge through the integrated influence of principals, teachers and parents.”

Referring to our health care system, he shows the inadequacy of medical staff and the urgent need to reform it thoroughly. As of 2015, he wrote, there were about 9,50,000 allopathic doctors in India. In government hospitals, there is one doctor for 11,500 people. Every government hospital serves around 61,000 people, with one bed catering to 1,833 patients. ‘India thus has a long way to go in improving health care profile,’ he observes.

He appeals to parliamentarians, ‘the sculptors of mother India’ as he describes them, to help in building the nation reminding them of the adage ‘like King, so the people.’ He appreciates the role of Civil service for working in an integrated way for national development.

Touching references are made to individuals who changed the course of history with their vision and leadership. Vikram Sarabhai as the father of space research, Satish Dhawan in the field of aerospace research and rocket building, C.R. Krishnaswamy Rao Sahib as cabinet secretary, Father Peter Bernard Pereira who honoured Vikram Sarabhai’s request for land in the church premises for building the space centre, and some scientists and administrators with whom he interacted. He lavished high praise on Prime Ministers P.V. Narasimha Rao and Atal Behari Vajpayee who had the courage to take difficult decisions boldly, even though the consequences of such decisions had great national and international significance.”

Kalam’s final appeal to the people of India was to strive to build an India that is vibrant, vigilant, safe and secular, with the exhortation that “when there is a vision for a nation with focused missions, problems like terrorism and violence will be eliminated.” A timely work that must be read by all, especially the youth in schools, colleges and seats of higher learning.

- A.Prasanna Kumar

Today cricket is not only an escape from reality but an integral part of the commercial world.

- Scyld Berry

## Book Review :

### WHY SCAMS ARE HERE TO STAY

N.RAM

Aleph Book Company 2017 pp 202 Rs 399

As the intrepid leader of the team investigating the Bofors scandal that rocked the Congress party and made Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's position vulnerable, N. Ram, became nationally famous. The Editor-in-Chief of the *The Hindu* known for its objectivity and adherence to values, Ram, the leftist intellectual undertook a sensational investigation into what he called 'The Defining Grand Corruption Scandal.' David Davidar, the noted publisher and novelist, deserves to be congratulated on persuading Ram to write a book on corruption in India. Studies on corruption tend to be stereotyped and boring and the exception was the small yet brilliant book, published fifteen years ago by the former CVC N. Vittal, on *The Menace of Corruption: The Strategic Dimension*. As Vittal had said the process of corrupting institutions grew into institutionalization of corruption with the system being supported by the deadly combine of the *neta, babu, dada, jhola* and *lala*. From criticizing and tolerating corruption in the first twenty years democratic India has begun to honour it with high positions and awards. Nietzsche's words apply to India of today-what is to be feared is not the corruption of the great but the fact that corruption can lead to greatness.

Ram begins by pointing out the inadequacy of the definition of corruption by Transparency International as 'a manipulation of policies, institutions, and rules of procedure in the allocation of the resources and financing by political decision-makers, who abuse their position to sustain their power, status, and wealth. He emphasizes the need for conceptual clarity in the study of corruption —'its pervasiveness, its omnipresence, and its multifariousness'- not as a 'mode of moral and social behavior.' He voices the concern and despair of many when he says that 'twenty- first century India has seen corruption increase exponentially at all levels —central, state, and local.'

Explaining the genesis of the widely used term he writes that " Scam is not a scientific term but as a commentator on English usage points out, it seems to contain its meaning within the sound of the word itself—it's short and clear and the sound is just unpleasant to put you on guard.' Describing journalism as 'a discipline of verification,' Ram lends a touch of humour too by referring to the leading daily, *The Hindu's* practice of sending 'a staff member to the house of the departed to make sure that he or she was not of this world' while reporting on death! He recalls how 'The Indian Express's bold and meticulously documented 1981 investigation, 'spearheaded by Arun Shourie of Abdul Rehman Antulay's transgressions showed the way forward, achieving for the first time in recent Indian history a quest for fair name in politics— first through popular and political discourse, then through legal discourse.'

In the chapter on Political Corruption through a Marxist lens, he refers to the Marxist argument that 'corruption has always been an inherent feature of capitalism'. Ram opines that even if "Marxists cannot claim to have all the answers to the question of corruption and its forms and functions in political economy, theorists and crusaders can draw from the theoretical perspectives and lived experiences that Marxism brings to the subject."

The key chapters are 7 & 8 on TWO CASE STUDIES—BOFORS-THE DEFINING GRAND CORRUPTION SCANDAL and TAMILNADU'S SCIENTIFIC SYSTEM OF POLITICAL CORRUPTION. A broadcast of April 16, 1987 by Swedish radio started it all and Bofors, from then on became the hot subject in public discourse thanks to Editor N.Ram and his investigating team with the Geneva based stringer of *The Hindu*, Chitra Subramaniam being the confidential source. Sten Lindstrom, Swedish police official 'raised in the best traditions of social democracy' who was upset by 'the scale of political involvement in Sweden breaking all rules' became the 'principal and key source' throughout the investigation. The payoffs in the Rs 1432.72 crore deal amounted to Rs 64 crores. The case against the government dragged on for years, thanks to

‘the unpredictable judiciary’ and the CBI before it was finally buried in 2005. The moral of the story, sums up Ram, is that journalistic investigation has succeeded in proving ‘its case in the court of public opinion and made a worthwhile difference to politics by bringing the issue of grand corruption to the core.’

Tamil Nadu, one of the few best developed states in the country with many achievements to its credit, became notoriously corrupt after the demise of Chief Minister C.N. Annadurai. Ranjit Singh Sarkaria, a former supreme court judge appointed by the government of India to inquire into corruption charges against the Karunanidhi government of Tamil Nadu, described Karunanidhi and his colleagues as “masters of scientific corruption.” MG Ramachandran, during his second term, strengthened ‘the system of scientific corruption’ which reached its peak under his successor Jayalalithaa. Ram shows how ‘Vyapam is an example of the systematic subversion of a state administration and, even more damagingly, its system of medical education and medical practice.’ Illegal granite mining in Madurai district had ‘devastating effects’ on the lives of the poor people.

Ram traces the growth of corruption in India from the time when the East India company took over the reins of power and began to sow the seeds of corruption. The seasoned journalist diagnoses the roots of the disease when he writes that “Indian society is more hospitable to corruption than most other societies.” The private-public partnership is a fraud in his opinion as ‘a state-engineered redistribution of wealth in favour of a few and at the explicit or implicit expense of the many.’ Parties may change but there is no end to corrupt practices at all levels. For instance ‘the money spent on the elections between 2010 and 2014 over the past five years exceeded 150,000 crore, half of which came from unaccounted money.’ The author also refers to the fact that India is the world’s sixth largest military spender among countries, with the estimated military expenditure of 51.3 billion in 2015, accounting 2.3 per cent of GDP.

Finally Ram offers nine suggestions for fighting corruption. 1. action needed on the legislative front. 2. action needed to overcome the lack of enforcement

capacity 3. the need for stricter, cleaner, and more effective regulation 4. raising the visibility of corporate and private sector fraud 5. reforming and cleaning political finance and electoral funding 6. the need for judicial accountability in adjudicating corruption cases 7. the need to develop capabilities to anticipate and prevent corruption in, and exercise systematic vigilance over, high-risk, vulnerable sectors 8. what journalism can do for the fight against corruption 9. political education and mobilization is the key.

The progress in the fight against corruption ‘depends on the quality and effectiveness of political education, organization, and mass mobilization,’ concludes Ram in this masterful narrative.

- A.Prasanna Kumar

## **Kantian Ethics, Enlightenment and Perpetual Peace**

(Summary of a lecture delivered by Dr. N.S. Dhanam on ‘Kantian Ethics, Enlightenment and Perpetual Peace’ at a meeting organised by Centre for Policy Studies on June 24, 2017.)

German Philosopher Immanuel Kant born in 1724 wrote extensively on Ethics and Politics. Kant’s intellectual movement generated out of his conviction gave him the impetus to locate the human suffering that existed. The monarchies were intruding much into the lives of the people who were not able to voice their opinions and the dissatisfaction grew. Kant observed that moral norms are often ignored and this condition prevailed at local, regional, national and international platforms. Kant’s ultimate norm of morality gives importance to one’s duty and reason. These concepts play distinct role in the ethical behavior of individuals. Basing on these Kant developed the “Categorical Imperative” in three formulae stipulating the maxims, to combat the moral evil which is self destructive causing many internal conflicts in the human mind. Ignorance and non compliance of moral values is of grave concern. Kantian views on Enlightenment and Perpetual Peace paved the way to better the human understanding and contributed to uplifting the

Science is essentially ‘an artistic enterprise’ stimulated, largely by curiosity, served largely by disciplined imagination, based largely on faith in the reasonableness, order and beauty of universe of which man is part.

Karl Popper

mankind and the human race. Kant changed the framework within which philosophical inquiry has been carried out accomplishing a paradigm shift consisting of innovations. Kant provided substantial motivation to the subsequent generations and his inputs facilitated to spread compassion and love to the fellow beings adhering to the moral and ethical values.

### **'Importance of healthy lifestyle highlighted'**

'Exercise five days a week, oil-less food will go a long way: expert'

(Newspaper report on a lecture delivered by Dr. K. Venkateswarulu, Emeritus Professor of Neurology, Andhra Medical College on 'Adding Life to Years - Importance of Preventive Measures' at a meeting organised by Centre for Policy Studies on July 15, 2017.)

Identifying the early signs of paralytic attack and getting adequate treatment along with training in rehabilitation mechanisms would help patients be independent enough and get back on track. Emeritus Professor of Neurology of Andhra Medical College K. Venkateswarulu has said.

Delivering a lecture at Visakhapatnam Public

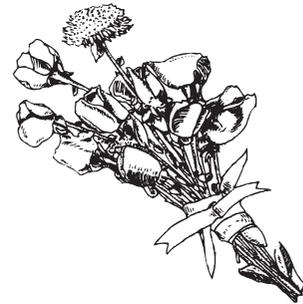
Library on Saturday organised by the Centre for Policy Studies as a part of its monthly round-table on 'Adding life to years-importance of preventive measures'. Dr. Venkateswarulu explained the significance of replacing the sedentary lifestyle with a healthier one.

Dr. Venkateswarulu suggested the participants to utilise the technology available and emphasised the need to maintain normal blood pressure levels all the time.

"A majority of strokes can be prevented if we pay attention to early signs such as slurring speech and approaching the medical facility at the right time. Doing exercise at least five days a week and consuming oil-less and salt-restricted food should be an integral part of life," he said.

The session that concluded with an interactive session was attended by a number of senior citizens.

(The Hindu July 16, 2017)



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