

Denouement at Doklam: India must take long-term measures

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Accustomed as we are to shrill hyperbole in India's public discourse, the description of the tense Himalayan face-off as the "incident at Doklam" and its denouement as "expeditious disengagement of border personnel" by the Ministry of External Affairs came across as refreshing examples of phlegmatic understatement. The diplomatic finesse shown by India stood in stark contrast to the Chinese spokesperson's somewhat gauche declaration that India had "pulled back all the trespassing personnel and equipment".

Political pundits and diplomatic analysts are likely to spend days deciphering the hidden meanings underlying the Chinese conduct and dialectic, seen and heard during the past six weeks. The common man has, understandably, heaved a sigh of relief at the (short-term) resolution of a dire crisis; an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation between two major military powers and nuclear-armed states.

The Chinese do not risk the outcome of a conflict on a single clash; they plan elaborate multiple strategies and the patient accumulation of small gains. Doklam was, by no means, India's last confrontation with China and there is, thus, no cause whatsoever for our soldiers, diplomats and political leadership to become complacent -- for four reasons.

Firstly, our 1962 military defeat was due to the egregious misreading of China's intent by India's political leadership. Fifty-five years on, clarity and resolve are still lacking vis-a-vis our strategic stance and policies towards an increasingly bellicose China.

This seeming diffidence is partly rooted in a fear of the unknown; i.e. our profound ignorance about this huge neighbour. We have neither created a substantive pool of Mandarin speakers, nor fostered

many organisations dedicated to researching China's history, culture, economy, industry and strategic thought. With bizarre perversity, we have been spurning the huge window, into China, that a willing and cooperative Taiwan has been offering to us, for years. We need to stop groping in the dark and create strategies to counter China's long-term intentions.

Secondly, China, translating its enormous economic gains into coercive military power, expects neighbouring nations to voluntarily submit to Chinese hegemony. This is a clear echo from the distant past. In 416 BCE, when the mighty Athenian state overpowered the tiny island of Melos, it had delivered an ultimatum, conveying a similar chilling message: "The strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must."

Servile and devious politicians like Philippine President Duterte have given China false illusions of grandeur and power by kowtowing for economic gains. These illusions have been reinforced by America's aborted "pivot to Asia" and ineffectual "freedom of navigation" operations by US Navy units. The artificial South China Sea islands are here to stay and China knows that possession is nine-points of law.

PLA Colonel Liu Mingfu's 2010 book, "China Dream", provides many pointers. It defines China's national goal as to become "number one" in the world, but rejecting the "peaceful rise" thesis, it advocates a "military rise" along with its "economic rise". A part of the "Chinese dream of national rejuvenation" is the establishment of a "unified global system", or Empire, termed 'tianxia' in Mandarin. Order, in this system, is maintained under the aegis of a hegemon state, which dominates by virtue of its acknowledged superiority.

According to former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, the Chinese have been shrewd practitioners of 'realpolitik' and follow a strategic doctrine distinctly different from the rest of the world. Indians, followers of the game of chess or "shatranj", think in terms of striking blows, decisive battles and finally checkmating or claiming total victory over the

opponent. The Chinese counterpart of shatranj is the game of “wei-qui”, based on “surrounding pieces” and “strategic encirclement”. Opponents seek empty spaces and building up of strength, surrounding and capturing opposing pieces. While chess encourages single-mindedness, wei-qui generates strategic flexibility. Let us learn to play wei-qui.

Thirdly, while patting ourselves on the back for deft diplomacy, let us not forget that we have had a close call. While our gallant armed forces could certainly have given a “bloody nose” (so eagerly sought by militant TV anchors) to the PLA on many fronts, a general war or even a limited clash would have been equally damaging to both nations and their economies.

Let us, also, remind ourselves that the PLA is undergirded by a military-industrial complex, established in the 1950s, which is a prolific producer of missiles, tanks, fighters, warships, submarines and ordnance. While the world has an inkling that the “Make in India” project is awaiting take-off, the feckless office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India saw it fit to choose this juncture to reveal every single shortcoming in India’s half-full arsenal.

Avoiding knee-jerk responses, let us undertake long-term measures to ensure that our armed forces are always equipped and ready to fight a 30-day “intense war”. Let us also find ways to prevent statutory bodies like the CAG from endangering national security.

Finally, while the vision of China’s grandiose, “one-belt one road” (OBOR) may be impressive as well as intimidating, the project relies on ports, seaborne commerce and sea lanes. India’s non-participation in the project is already causing concern in Beijing. Chinese President Hu Jintao’s famous reference to the “Malacca dilemma”, which acknowledged the vulnerability of China’s seaborne trade and energy, was, no doubt, rooted in India’s dominant oceanic location and the possibility of trade warfare being waged by the Indian Navy. India must do everything to keep Hu Jintao’s nightmare alive.

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Marshal Arjan Singh(1919-2017): Man of stupendous achievements

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It is appropriate and befitting, given his stature and distinctive profile, that the only Marshal of the Air Force (MAF), Arjan Singh, was accorded a state funeral with the national flag flown at half-mast.

The MAF is the equivalent of a five-star Field Marshal (FM) in the army and India had earlier elevated only two officers to that rank – Sam Bahadur Manekshaw and later ‘Kipper’ Cariappa. Air Chief Marshal Arjan Singh was elevated to Marshal of the Air Force in January 2002.

In an unprecedented but welcome gesture, the President and the Prime Minister led the country in paying tribute to an ‘icon’ – not just of the Indian Air Force, or the Indian military – but for the entire nation.

Born in 1919, the MAF was just two years short of his ‘century’ and while his demise is indeed very sad, he lived a life that will remain an inspiration for a younger generation that can only glean some part of his professional trajectory from military history books and related documentation.

The bare statistics about the MAF’s life are stupendous. Commissioned in the erstwhile Royal Indian Air Force in December 1939, he began life as a fighter-pilot in the earliest bi-planes of the time and was awarded for high gallantry with a DFC (Distinguished Flying Cross) during the Burma campaign in 1944.

Arjan Singh was appointed the Indian Air Chief in 1964 – when he was only 45 years of age and retired five years later when he was just 50 years old! During this period he led the IAF with aplomb in the 1965 war against Pakistan – and saved the day, as it were for the beleaguered Indian Army – and

the nation. The introduction of air power at a critical point in the war tilted the tactical balance in India's favour.

The MAF's recall of his interaction with the political apex of the day – Defence Minister Y B Chavan and Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri - provide very useful insights into the texture of civil-military relations 50 years ago. I will always remain grateful to the Marshal for the generous manner in which he shared his experience and prescription apropos the the quality of higher defence management in India. Devoid of any certitude or 'in my time' kind of bravado and extravaganza, "Arjan Sir", to the people of the defence forces, was the quintessential wise warrior-gentleman.

In the period 1939 to 1969, the MAF flew as many as 60 types of aircraft and he also oversaw the transition of the IAF to the modern generation of fighter aircraft. A professional of the highest order, his gentle and courteous demeanour was combined with a quiet but steely kind of leadership that is rare.

Arjan Singh had a very special relationship with his subordinates – the officers and men – and the stories about his kind of bonding and leadership by example is legendary. Modest to a fault, he was less flamboyant than FM Sam Manekshaw but no less revered by his men.

It is a matter of permanent shame and regret that when Field Marshal Manekshaw breathed his last in June 2008, the government of the day was indifferent and even the service chiefs were not present at his final journey. This was deplorable, indefensible and shabby.

Military icons like MAF Arjan Singh and FM Sam Bahadur are few and far between in a nation's history. We mourn their passing, even as their life and accomplishments are to be cherished and celebrated

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MAHATMA - THE PILGRIM OF ETERNITY

Nani Palkhivala

THE SECOND OF October has again come by, and our hearts and minds go back to the pilgrim of eternity. Smt. Kamala, the director of this Gandhi Memorial Centre, gave us a beautiful thought when she said that a part of all the great spirits of the past might have found a place within the soul of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhiji's impact on those who came in contact with him was almost magical. Rabindranath Tagore said:

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

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

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

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

Gandhiji gave a decisive new direction to history. What was it about this man which held the human race in thrall? Who was this individual? And how did he come to wield such influence over the rest of mankind? He himself said that he was a very strange individual. He confessed that he was not intellectually brilliant, but he added that while there are limitations to the development of the mind, there are no limitations to the development of the heart.

If one were to denote in a word what the Mahatma had, it is the Sanskrit word, *buddhi*-the

The voice of Gandhi will be heard ever more clearly. No label should be put on his thought but the expansive one of humanism.

Hiren Mukherji

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

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

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

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

It was the only science and the only art of Mahatma Gandhi-to trust the soul’s invincible surmise. Before I go further into some of the ideas which the Mahatma propagated, I would like to mention one interesting point. There seems to be a mystic-*karmic*-bond between the United States and India, and you see this link in the case of Mahatma Gandhi. When he was in South Africa (he went there in 1893), the two foreigners who befriended him were both Americans. They gave him succour and shelter. After he came back to India, the first foreigner to spot his incredible spiritual strength was an American. On 10 April 1922, Reverend John Haynes Holmes delivered a speech in an American Church on ‘Who is the Greatest Man in the World?’ Reverend Holmes declared that he had no doubt that the greatest man alive was Mahatma Gandhi. He compared the Mahatma to Christ. In 1922 no other foreigner had the conception of the Mahatma as the prophet of the twentieth century.

Then came the great years of Mahatma Gandhi in India. There he started his civil disobedience movement, which he implemented with phenomenal

success. The one person who influenced him the most in his thinking on civil disobedience was again an American-Henry David Thoreau. He had read Thoreau in the year 1907 when he was in South Africa. He had reproduced extracts from Thoreau’s writings in *Young India* which he was editing at the time in South Africa. The last man to be the disciple of the Mahatma was an American—Vincent Sheean. He met the Mahatma in Delhi on 27 January 1948, three days before the Mahatma was assassinated, and offered himself as a disciple. The Mahatma talked to him at some length on that day on a variety of subjects, and quoted to him the lines from *Upanishads* : ‘The whole world is the garment of God; renounce it then and receive it back as the gift of God.’ Sheean was most impressed and met him again on the 28th. They were to meet again in the evening of the 30th, but that was not to be.

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

In our times his influence on America has been of the most significant character. It was his influence which led Martin Luther King to start a civil disobedience campaign on non-violent lines. Vice-President Mondale has publicly stated how deeply influenced he was as a young man by Mahatma Gandhi’s teachings.

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

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

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

This is what the Mahatma has to say about truth and nonviolence:

"I may be a despicable person; but when Truth speaks through me, I am invincible.

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

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

"Non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man."

"I do not believe in short cuts which involve violence. However much I may sympathize with and admire worthy motives, I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest of causes. There is, therefore, really no meeting-ground between the school of violence and myself."

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

"To me God is Truth and Love; God is Ethics and Morality; God is fearlessness; God is the source of Light and Life, and yet He is above and beyond all these. He is even the atheism of the atheist; he transcends speech and reason.'

Ralph Waldo Emerson, who was well-versed in Indian culture, has written a poem called 'Brahma', where this very idea is memorably expressed:

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

God is the doubter and the doubt, and God is the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Mahatma dealt with problems which are timeless and universal, because they spring from enduring weaknesses of human nature and human society. Since the solutions he found for them were

based on eternal verities, his influence and his relevance are also timeless and universal.

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

(from : Nani Palkhivala : *Selected Writings 1999*)

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Back to the Drawing Board -III

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Co-existence for centuries led to inter-mingling of Hindu and Muslim cultures, culture in the sense of way of life as well as of artistic expressions to intermingling of cultures and the emergence of a shared composite culture. Due to reciprocal influences, a composite culture came into being among the courts, nobles and landed gentry in many parts of the country of which the composite Hyderabad culture is a good example. In North India, Hindus and Muslims, particularly the uppers strata and their associates, began to wear the same kind of clothes, eat similar type of food, and have similar artistic pursuits, and pastimes such as hunting and games. To elaborate a little bit, the Hindu practice of chewing betel-leaf became very popular among Muslims. A new cuisine emerged from the fusion of Indian and Iranian culinary practices; thus, pilau and qawarma, imports from Iran, acquired a distinctly Indian flavour and taste because of their seasoning with rich spices and chillies, a practice almost unknown in Iran. Due to Indian influence, rings, necklaces, and other ornaments began to be worn by Muslims even though strictly forbidden to the Faithful by Islamic law. The reciprocal influence is discernible even regarding social structures and practices. Most Muslims in India are converts, and many retained many some aspects of the Hindu way of life. Thus, many Muslim communities retained the caste system even though a cardinal tenet of Islam is that all the Faithful are equal; consequently, what differentiated a Muslim craftsman from his Hindu counterpart was mainly religion. The intermingling

of cultures led to cross-fertilisation of ideas, religion and morality also. The Bhakti movements and the Sufi sect of Islam have strikingly common features such as the approach to God through love and devotion, and intellect and intellectual life being regarded as a positive hindrance to a spiritual life and salvation; further, both are tolerant of other religions. There were many fakirs and saints who were venerated by Hindus and Muslim masses, and they preached the need to recognise the essential unity of faiths; pre-eminent among them was Kabir. His verse Bhajaman Ramarhim, Bhajman Krishnakareem captures the ecumenicalism of Bhakthi and Sufi movements. Suffice to say, Muslims did not cease to be Muslims or conversely Hindus Hindus; yet both communities had come to share some aspects of culture, and this sharing facilitated peaceful co-existence. To dabble in a bit of theory, a culturally diverse society like India or the United States cannot have a shared culture which covers all aspects of culture; if it does it ceases to be a diverse society. Shared composite culture is partial; yet being an offshoot of the cultural intermingling of communities it is something in which each of the communities can see of themselves and can take pride of . It is a valuable base to forge national identity and foster a sense of togetherness. Yet composite culture is usually a thin layer over deep strata of distinctive cultures, and that layer might be frayed because of exogenous (eg., Islamic radicalisation) or endogenous (eg., a narrowly defined nationalism) factors which might cause one or more cultural communities to ignore the shared composite culture, and to behave as if cultural differences matter more than the shared culture. Once such a behavior sets in it creates a vicious cycle of suspicion and hatred and communal disharmony, thereby weakening national cohesion.

Whatever, Mahatma might have failed to win over the majority of Muslims to his point of view. However, his approach anchored in religion and Hindu tradition, and his personal example ensured that the type of nationalism he espoused was so acceptable to the Hindu masses that Hindu nationalists who believed that India should be organised as a Hindu nation had little following; not only that, he could get

I think Gandhi was the first Christian politician since Jesus-Washington, Jefferson & Lincoln not excepted.

Milton Mayer

millions of Hindus to question age-old evil practices like untouchability. The conception of the Mahatma and its 'secularised version' and the Hindu nationalist conception perceived the whole of undivided India to be one nation.

III. Cultural Diversity & the Constitution

How a Nation-State deals with cultural diversity is a seminal political question having a bearing on social cohesion and national survival; an ineluctable challenge a culturally diverse nation faces is to provide adequate space for cultural variety and cultural differences and at the same time ensure that variety and differences do not degenerate into fragmentation, social and cultural isolation and social conflict, or in other words, ensure that the nation does not degenerate into a federation of communities instead of being a collective of equal citizens. That difficult challenge is often missed out by the credo one often hears that diversity should be celebrated.

Policies to address cultural diversity have three inter-related aspects: (i) legal rights, (ii) organization of polity, and (iii) cultural aspects. The first aspect deals with the question whether every citizen, irrespective of belonging to the majority population or the minorities, has the same civic rights, and whether minorities are subjected to discrimination by the State and the majority population. second aspect deals with the question whether the polity is so organised that every citizen, irrespective of belonging to the majority population or the minorities, has an equal right and equal opportunity to participate in the conduct of the collective affairs of the Nation-State. The third aspect relates to the right of minorities to preserve their cultures in conditions of equality, human dignity and non-discrimination. Non-discrimination is the cornerstone of our Constitution which Regarding legal rights, the constitution guarantees to all citizens equal civil rights such as the right to equality, freedom of association and expression, and the freedom to profess, practice and propagate religion. A few exceptions were made in the interest of interest order as well as to the State to undertake affirmative policies for women, SCs, STs, and economically and socially

backward classes; however, the Constitution-makers did not envisage that such policies would be needed permanently. The Constitution also provides cultural and educational rights to minorities. Article 29(1) which is not limited only to minorities confers on any section of Indian citizens having a distinct language, script or culture of its own the right to conserve the same, and Article 30 (1) grants educational and linguistic minorities the right to establish and manage educational institutions.

Secularism is another cornerstone of our Constitution. Given that secularism is at the heart of the contemporaneous ideational and political contest, and further that the term secularism is bandied about without much understanding of its multilayered meaning a bit of elaboration is called for. Like the words 'nation' and 'culture' 'secularism' has been conceptualised in different ways and is value-laden. From the policy perspective it is useful to differentiate between secularism as a doctrine and secularism as a policy response to religious diversity in a society. Secularism as a doctrine is anchored in the West European experience of the conflict between the State and the Church as well as the philosophical point of view that Man should be guided by reason alone and not by irrational belief and superstition. It follows that religion and religious organisations should not enter into the affairs of the State as well as politics, and further that even personal lives should be free of religion which is an embodiment of superstition, bigotry and irrationality. The French policy of laïcisme (anti-clericalism) which was in force from 1905 to 1959 is a classic example of the enforcement of secularism as a doctrine. That policy divested religion of any power to intervene in the affairs of the State, and banned public manifestation of cultural and religious identity such as the wearing of hijab (head scarf) and burqa. It is inconceivable for a French President or for that matter any public official being sworn-in over the Bible. Census in France does not collect data on population by religions. All in all, the French policy of integration républicaine requires full civic assimilation of all the minority cultural communities and their giving up. This policy has come in for criticism as being insensitive

With five hundred motivated men, it will take me fifty years to transform India; with fifty women, it may take me only a year.

Swami Vivekananda

to the cultural differences of the Muslim immigrants and inadequate for addressing Muslim alienation and Islamic terror. Associated with secularism as a doctrine is the hypothesis that secularisation, the process by which secularism advances, is an inevitable, irreversible and universal process which would engender a 'modern' society. Governance would be increasingly free of the domination of religious institutions and symbols, and personal religious belief and practice and their influence on personal lives decline culminating in the disappearance of religious faith and practices. The hypothesis has proved to be partially right and partially wrong. Right in that the role of religion in the affairs of the State had declined all over the world, and progressively, legal systems and laws all over the world, including Islamic countries where according to tradition religion cannot be separated from the State, are being disassociated from religion. However, religion is not totally excluded from affairs of the State even in Western democracies; a survey of 25 countries brings out that all of them fund religious education in some way, 76 percent of them have religious education in State schools, 52 percent collect taxes for religious organizations, and 36 percent have established religions (these include all the Scandinavian countries and the United Kingdom have established religions). Even the French Government financially supports Catholic schools provided they follow the national curriculum and admit students of all faiths. The French Government and local Governments also finance most Catholic Churches, half the Protestant Churches and about a tenth of synagogues. Contrary to the hypothesis that religious belief would decline over time there is a remarkable resurgence of religion in many parts of the world including India, Islamic countries and Africa, so much so that theorists of politics and religion feel that the secular doctrine is in crisis, and inappropriate for many parts of the world, and had come up with alternate theories of secularism. Some theorists like Charles Taylor who wrote extensively on multiculturalism, cultural pluralism and secularism had argued that the difficulties secularism is facing arises from the fact that a wrong model is being used, and that secularism is

not about the relationship of the State to religion but about the correct response of the democratic State to religious diversity.

The American system of erecting a wall between the Church and the State is a longstanding example of a policy response to religious diversity. That policy is a response to the fact that many of the initial immigrants including Mayflower Pilgrims emigrated to escape religious persecution, and given their personal experience they strongly believed that 'one of the greatest dangers to the freedom of the individual to worship in his own way lay in the Government's placing its official stamp' on one particular kind of worship. In short, while the French policy is designed to protect the State from religion the American policy aims to protect religious liberties from the State, and not to marginalise religion. The American policy had been characterised as 'mutual exclusion', a policy wherein 'neither the State nor religion to interfere in the domain of the other'. Thus, unlike in France, banning ostentatious display of religious symbols like hijab in public places would be an intrusion of the State in religious matters, and as such not permissible. The Congress has no power to legislate on any matter pertaining to religion even when some of the values such as equality are violated within the religious domain. An example was the helplessness of President Obama in the face of a threat to publicly burn the Holy Quran.

The Indian policy of secularism is similar to the American policy, but not the same. The deliberations of the Constituent Assembly would bring out clearly that almost all members had in mind a conception of secularism which rejected 'the reality of an unseen spirit or the relevance of religion to life'; for them secularism meant that 'the Indian State would not identify itself with or be controlled by any particular religion', that 'no one religion should be given preferential status, or unique distinction'. In essence the secularism the Constitution-makers had in mind was sarva dharma samabhava. There is one significant difference between American and Indian secularism in that the freedom of religion is not absolute, and

that the State could steer social reform even though connected with religious practice. That takes this narrative to personal laws such as laws relating to marriage, divorce, and inheritance of property.

The British introduced uniform criminal laws which applied to all subjects irrespective of religion, custom or usage; this was not so in respect of personal laws. Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and Christians had their own laws; however, it is not correct to believe that scriptures, customs and usage alone shaped personal laws. What eventually came to be known as 'Hindu and Mahomedan laws; were indeed 'creations of the colonial state ... rather than a simple codification of religious commands'. Acts like the Hindu Gains of Learning Act, 1930 and the Hindu Women's Right to Property Act, 1937 did not have 'clear precedent in the scriptures or in regional Hindu practices, and entailed using civil authority to expand the scope of individual property rights within the family, thereby completely reconstituting the form of the Hindu family'. Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937 provided that the shariat and not customary law or Anglo-Muslim law should be applicable to the Muslim community; it was backed by the Muslim elite's desire to project Indian Muslims as a unified religious and politically autonomous community . There were heated debates in the Constituent Assembly about a uniform civil code; those in favour of uniformity argued that laws should not discriminate between citizens, and those against arguing that personal laws are an integral part of religion and the foundational sources of the Muslims laws are Koran and other scriptural texts. In deference to the strong objections of the Muslim members a compromise was struck. The competence of the Indian State to modify personal laws was asserted in two ways. First, Entry 5 of the Concurrent List vested in the Union and the States the power to make laws in respect of 'all matters in respect of which parties in judicial proceedings were immediately before the commencement of this Constitution subject to their personal law'. Secondly, subjecting the freedom of religion in Article 25 to two provisos; the first authorised the State to regulate or restrict any secular practice which may be associated

with religious practice, and the second authorised the State to make any law providing for social welfare and reform. At the same time while enumerating the reform needed the Constitution specifically mentioned only Hindu practices like untouchability which was abolished by Article 17, and barring entry to temples to some classes and sections of Hindus. And further, the enactment of a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India was included only in the Directive Principles. By virtue of its power to regulate or restrict any secular practice which may be associated with religious practice, and to make any law providing for social welfare and reform the Indian State had been characterised as an interventionist secular State. However, the objective of interventions is 'emancipatory', that is to say reform religious and social practices, and not to restrict religion as in say Ataturk's Turkey.

One hears in the contemporaneous discourse on cultural diversity that India should practice multiculturalism which can loosely be defined as accommodating diversity of all types- diversity of individual lifestyles and diversity of the ways of life of different cultural communities. The praxis of multiculturalism often faces the dilemma of some culture-specific customs and practices being obsolete, and even transgressing civic rights eg., social taboo against education of girls after puberty, honour killings, entry of women to religious places like the Shani Shingapore Temple in Maharashtra, Sabarimala Temple in Kerala and the Haji Ali Dargah in Mumbai, and triple talaq (a Muslim practice for husbands summarily divorcing wives). The question also arises whether the personal laws should be governed by religious canon or uniform civic laws. While one side frames the issue as one of upholding the primacy of Constitutional rights like freedom of expression, right to equality and right to life with dignity the other side frames the issues as one of trampling the religious beliefs and traditions. The policy response to such issues could be one of the two alternatives: first, leave it to the good sense of the cultural community to adapt its practices and customs to changing times, and secondly one or more of the three organs of the State to take the initiative

We are what our culture is and what our values are.

Max Weber

and bring about change. Given that the Indian State was designed to be an interventionist secular State and had abolished some obnoxious practices like untouchability the Constitution did not envisage the practice of unqualified multiculturalism. Whatever, once the State initiates and steers cultural change it goes against the basic tenet of multiculturalism that the distinctiveness of cultural communities and their customs and values should be respected. Suffice to say, unqualified multiculturalism is an impossibility; for that reason a multicultural society is sometimes so defined as a society which allows all cultures/sub-cultures to keep their peculiarities intact subject to their respecting in the public domain the broader contours of an overarching (composite) culture and a single set of individual rights.

IV. Developments After Independence

The Constitution envisioned a society of citizens based on equal consideration of individuals without regard for caste, creed or gender. The greatest challenge Independent India faced -and still faces - was transforming a society of castes into one of citizens based on equal consideration of individuals without regard for caste, creed or gender. The Constitution provided the necessary legal framework but 'by itself could not conjure into existence the attitudes without which the transformation could hardly be effective'. With the wisdom of hindsight it can be said that the present political and intellectual conflict about the society and polity we should have stems from the failure to foster the necessary attitudinal change.

Turning to secularism, there were two alternatives: either vigorously pushing through the version of secularism which Nehru favoured or the Mahatma's conception of sarva dharma samabhava. Neither of these are natural sentiments but have to be assiduously cultivated and continually reinforced. With the wisdom of hindsight it can be said no such attempt was made. Nehruvian secularism necessitates putting in place a policy akin to those in France and Ataturk's Turkey of banning religious rituals and symbols in Governmental places and functions, and using the schools to craft an overarching national identity. Nehru was too much of a democrat and disciple of the Mahatma to impose such policies, a case in point being the controversy over the reconstruction of

Somnath Temple. In October 1949, a Trust was formed to reconstruct the Somnath temple which was raided first by Mahmud of Ghazni, was built again and again every time it was razed it till it was totally destroyed by Aurangzeb. Whatever historians like Romila Thapar might say in Hindu popular imagination Somnath embodied the spirit of defiance against religious oppression, and in public affairs perceptions matter more than 'facts' and cold logic. Patel and K.M.Munshi were in the forefront of the effort to reconstruct the temple. Nehru opposed the reconstruction on the ground that it would promote Hindu revivalism. He objected to President Rajendra Prasad participating in the opening of the reconstructed Somnath Temple on the ground that public officials should never publicly be associated with faiths and shrines. Rajendra Prasad disregarded his advice and in his address at the function made an eloquent plea for inter-religious harmony reiterating Mahatma's arguments, and made clear that 'I respect all religions and on occasion visit a church, a mosque, a dargah and a gurudwara'. He made it clear that the reconstruction of the Somnath temple was not designed to reopen 'old wounds which have healed to some extent over centuries', but rather to 'help each caste and community to obtain full freedom'. The question as he implicitly saw was why deny the majority of its long cherished aspiration to reconstruct the temple on an undisputed site with private funds because some in the minority community might feel insecure by perceiving the reconstruction as Hindu resurgence. And further, why should he not participate in the function when the Constitution did not bar State functionaries like the President from participating in religious functions? Nehru did again and again use his position as pre-eminent leader to lash at Hindu communalism but he did not walk the talk by putting in place appropriate policies or crafting the education system. To be honest he did not 'face up ideologically to the causes and consequences of a persisting Muslim (& Hindu) cultural identity for India's national identity and public philosophy'. Consequently, his conception of secularism had little impact either on his Party-men or the Centre; and State Governments, pujas came to be commonplace in State functions, and secularism became a mere catchword in politics.

(to be concluded)

* * *

MULTI - FACETED

Dalit Head of State

Gandhiji's wish

On the Dalit question Gandhi proposed a strong symbolic move: appointing a Dalit woman or man as free India's first President. His objective was to pre-empt a polarization over caste as destructive as the polarization over religion. The proposal was sparked off by the death, at the end of May, of Chakrayya, a talented young Andhra Dalit who had been with the Sevagram ashram from its inception. Gandhi had nursed high hopes for Chakrayya. "I feel like crying over his death, he said, but I cannot cry. For whom should I cry and for whom should I refrain from crying?". On 2 June he said at his prayer meeting:

The time is fast approaching when India will have to elect the first President of the Republic. I would have proposed the name of Chakrayya, had he been alive.

On 6 June he repeated the thought in a conversation with Rajendra Prasad, suggesting at the same time that some prominent leaders should stay out of the government:

If all the leaders join the Cabinet, it will be very difficult to maintain contact with the people at large... That is why I suggested even in my prayer speech that a Harijan like Chakrayya or a Harijan girl should be made the nation's first President and Jawaharlal should become the Prime Minister... Similar arrangements can be made in the provinces too...

Three weeks later he returned to the idea:

27 June: If I have my way the President of the Indian Republic will be a chaste and brave Bhangi girl. If an English girl of seventeen could become the British Queen and later even Empress of India, there is no reason why a Bhangi girl of robust love of her people and unimpeachable integrity of character should not become the first President of the Indian Republic... By electing a Harijan girl to that office we shall... show to the world that in India there

is no one high and no one low... She should be chaste as Sita and her eyes should radiate light... We shall all salute her and set a new example before the world. After all she does not have to concern herself with running the Government of India. She will have a cabinet of ministers and she will act on its advice. She will merely have to sign papers. If such a girl of my dreams becomes President, I shall be her servant and I shall not expect from the Government even my upkeep. I shall make Jawaharlal, Sardar Patel and Rajendra Babu her ministers and therefore her servants.

(from *Mohan Das - Rajmohan Gandhi*)

OXFORD Vintage VVIP car !

There was no road from Wardha to Sevagram; only a dusty cart track which became unusable during the rains. Gandhi was not enthusiastic about a road connection with Wardha; he wanted the national leaders who came to see him to understand the problems of those who lived in villages. Jamnalal Bajaj had improvised a curious vehicle – which he called 'Oxford' – for journeys between Wardha and Sevagram; it consisted of an old Ford motor car drawn by a pair of oxen. This was used by Nehru, Patel, Rajagoplachari and others; it was, however, a fair-weather arrangement. There was no electricity in Sevagram, and kerosene lamps were used; Gandhi tried to reduce dependence on kerosene by encouraging the use of the locally available non-edible oils for lighting lamps. Yet, whether he liked it or not, it was impossible to keep Sevagram insulated from the world. The District Board built a road to connect it with Wardha, and the Postal Department opened a cottage post-office.

(B.R. Nanda - *The Making of a Nation*)

Live as if you were to die tomorrow; learn as if you were to live forever.

MAHATMA

Gandhiji's Humour

In Anakapalle, (Andhra Pradesh) some people of the town requested Gandhi to give permission to name the big market square after him. Gandhi gave permission after cracking jokes on name-giving, about the possibility of appearing boards such as 'Gandhi Cigarettes', 'Gandhi Whisky' and 'Gandhi Country liquor'.

While the Mahatma always made his point in straight and simple terms, he occasionally mixed them with gentle humour and mild sarcasm. He found that in Andhra people wore a lot of jewellery and he did not hesitate to ask for it. With characteristic smile, he once remarked 'In Andhra Desh, men wear jewels like women. It is fatal to show ornaments to me. Ladies are afraid of coming out to see me because, when they come I look at their jewellery. When crores of people are starving, there is no cause for them to wear jewellery. They must give away all their jewellery to Daridranarayana.'

Sutrakara and commentator

Congress historian Dr. B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya wrote huge volumes of Congress history and authored books on Gandhism. The Mahatma quipped 'I am the Baniya sutrakara and Dr. Pattabhi is the Brahmin commentator'

Exchange of telegraphic greetings

Between Mahatma Gandhi and Gurudev Tagore (on Tagore's 81st birthday in 1941)

To Gurudev Shanthiniketan

"Four Score not enough may you finish five – Love-Gandhi"

Tagore's Reply : To Mahatma Wardha

"Thanks message but four score is impertinence, five score intolerable – Rabindranath"

Bapu - 'the perfect artist'

During his long life, full of hard work and activity and novel adventures out of the common rut, there is hardly any jarring note anywhere. All his manifold activities became progressively a symphony and every word he spoke and every gesture that he made fitted into this, and so unconsciously he became the perfect artist, for he had learned the art of living, though the way of life he had adopted was very different from the world's way. It became apparent that the pursuit of truth and goodness leads among other things to this artistry in life.

As he grew older his body seemed to be just a vehicle for the mighty spirit within him. Almost one forgot the body as one listened to him or looked at him, and so where he sat became a temple and where he trod was hallowed ground.

Even in his death there was a magnificence and complete artistry. It was from every point of view a fitting climax to the man and to the life he had lived. Indeed it heightened the lesson of his life. He died in the fullness of his powers and as he would no doubt have liked to die, at the moment of prayer. He died a martyr to the cause of unity to which he had always been devoted and for which he had worked unceasingly, more specially during the past year or more. He died suddenly as all men should wish to die. There was no fading away of the body or a long illness or the forgetfulness of the mind that comes with age. Why then should we grieve for him? Our memories of him will be of the master, whose step was light to the end, whose smile was infectious and whose eyes were full of laughter. We shall associate no failing powers with him, of body or mind. He lived and he died at the top of his strength and powers, leaving a picture in our minds and in the mind of the age that we live in that can never fade away.

(from *Jawaharlal Nehru*, (Ed) S. Gopal)

A Tale Of Two Cities And A Tragic Hero

Prof. Manoj Das

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

A visit to the most attractive of all the monuments in modern Pimpri was the last item in my itinerary in that inique and unexpected site and that was the one to leave the lasting impact on my memory. It was where the story of *Silappadikaram* had been sculpted, scene by scene.

Two thousand years ago South India was the very example of political and religious harmony. Three great dynasties, the Pandyas, the Cholas and the Cheras, ruled over three large regions of the land, for the most part of time respectful of one another. Often the members of a single family followed three different faiths, Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism, without causing any disharmony.

In Pimpri, the capital of the Cholas, lived a couple, Kovalan and Kannagi, the former the scion of a noble family and the latter the daughter of a prosperous seafaring merchant.

They lived happily, but it could not be happily everafter. The one to sabotage it unwittingly was Madhavi, a charming damsel and a highly gifted danseuse. She was launched into her career as a courtesan through a performance in the presence of the king and the nobility. According to custom, the garland she received from the king was to be offered for a price; the one to buy it would become the courtesan's first lover.

In frail anklets bejewelled with circlets, Madhavi, the beauty of Pimpri, displayed upon the stage her dance, her precise diction, subtle sense of timing, her knowledge of all rhythmic patterns, of the five sorts of temple songs, of the four systems of music, of the eleven kinds of dance." The entranced

Kovalan, probably before he knew what he was doing, had become a candidate for the coveted position of Madhavi's first lover. Nobody could have dared to rival him. Madhavi received him with warmth and courtesy. But what ought to have been a casual affair proved to be lasting. Deviating from the way of the courtesans, Madhavi looked upon Kovalan as her husband. Kovalan forgot his home, Kannagi, and his business and spent all his time with Madhavi at the latter's residence. He was hardly aware of the fact that his business was in doldrums, that his staff and household were being maintained by Kannagi with great difficulty. And his sudden disenchantment with Madhavi came at a stage when he was left with nothing.

His disenchantment, however, was inexplicable. It could have been the outcome of a prolonged but suppressed sense of guilt at neglecting the faithful and noble Kannagi and a momentary doubt, unfounded though, in Madhavi's faithfulness. It surfaced arbitrarily on a festive night on the seashore when Madhavi sang some nostalgic songs and Kovalan interpreted them as her longing for some other lover. He deserted her forthwith and returned to Kannagi.

The sad but serene Kannagi, though reduced to a wreck, received her prodigal husband kindly and was ready to help him rebuild his life. If he was broke to the wide, she had at least a pair of valuable anklets left which could yield capital enough for a new business venture. But the repentant and embarrassed Kovalan was no longer willing to work amidst familiar faces. He must begin his life anew in some distant city.

He and Kannagi set out at night for Madurai, the capital of the Pandyas. It was an arduous walk spread over ten days. Atlast the destination seemed to be nearer. On their enquiry some travellers told them: "Do you not feel the southern breeze blowing from the city and bringing us the mixed fragrance of sacred *akil* and sandalwood? This breeze comes here laden with the odors of saffron, chives, sandal paste and musk. On its way it may have wandered over newly opened buds of sweet water lilies pouring out their abundant pollen; or trailed along champaks in bloom,

Democracy consists of choosing your dictators, after they've told you what you think it is you want to hear.

Alan Corenk

or lost its way in groves of jasmine and *madhavi*, or caressed the buds of garden *mullai*. It brings us a smell of good food, for it went through the fumes of big bazaars, where pan-cakes are fried in countless little stalls. It brings with it a heavy odor from the terraces where men and women crowd close together. It is thick with the smoke of sacrifices and many other pleasing smells. It blows through the palace of the great Pandya king... the wealthy city is not far off and you need have no fear. Even if you go there alone you will meet no danger on your way.' (Translated by Alain Danielou)

Alas, but danger lurked from a rare, unfortunate coincidence. An anklet from a pair of the queen's was missing and the king was furious about it. When Kovalan tried to sell one from Kannagi's pair to the goldsmith who had access to the palace and who, in fact, was the thief, the fellow reported to the king that the stolen property as well as the thief had been found. The king who was in a bad mood ordered Kovalan to be put to death. The order was executed by a drunkard who did not let the guards follow the formalities which would have allowed some time to pass and probably better sense would have prevailed in the king.

Kannagi who was waiting for her husband to return with the value of the ornament soon learnt about his fate. She rushed into the street out of her shelter and shouted, "Is there no God? Is there no God in this country? Can there be a God in a land where the sword of the king is used for the murder of innocent strangers? Is there no God, no God?"

She went on daring the stunned people to answer her and then, taking position in front of the palace, she dared the king to do the same. To the confused monarch she proved with the other anklet of her pair that her husband had been falsely accused and wrongly killed.

Never had a ruler of the illustrious dynasty made that kind of blunder. The king collapsed and died. The queen followed suit.

But Kannagi's wrath did not end with that. She plucked her left breast and dashed it on the ground and cast a terrible curse on the city. A great fire engulfed it at once. However, she prayed to the god of Fire to spare the devotees, the honest and truthful men and women, the crippled, the aged and the children. The city, including the magnificent palace of the Pandyas, was reduced to ashes. That is the moving story of *Silappadikaram*. The name of its author, Ilango Adigal, means the ascetic prince. Legend says that when he was very young, an astrologer predicted an illustrious career for him. His elder brother, the heir to the throne, was beset with the suspicion that it was Ilango and not he who would inherit the crown. The younger prince understood his brother's apprehension, renounced his royal status and became a Jain hermit. The tastefully made building depicting the story contains two lifesize figures of Kannagi and Madhavi. Great care had been taken to project in detail, after research in ancient Tamil literature, how a danseuse and a lady belonging to the aristocracy should have looked 2,000 years ago.

From Pumpuhar to Madurai we drove along the way once believed to have been walked by Kovalan and Kannagi.

For a certain stretch of the road the couple had the company of a hermit woman. When a pair of young men, loafers, showed their propensity to tease Kannagi, the spell of the hermit woman metamorphosed them into jackals. Their pathetic howls could be heard from the bushes. Two millennia later the society has teasers galore, but no spell at its disposal to award them the form that is rightfully theirs.

It was evening by the time we reached Madurai. *A son et lumiere*, giving the story of the city, had just begun amidst the walls of the palace of the Nayaks. "Who are you, O woman, you audacious stranger, to accuse us, the Scions of the mighty Pandyas, of injustice? Don't you realize the absurdity of your accusation?" demanded an anguished Pandya king of Kannagi. And Kannagi thundered out her answer.

* * *

Democracy is a device that ensures we shall be governed no better than we deserve.

George Bernard Shaw (15)

Freedom and Practice of Dharma: A Dialogue - II

Dr. Mrs. Prema Nandakumar

Sri Aurobindo's cantos that bring Satyavan to us reveal the future man in the Aurobindonian mould. Even the material world of this future comes through in clear terms. It will not be a world devoid of the colour and clang of strife, but it would be no terror to the soul:

"A highland world of free and green delight

Where spring and summer lay together and strove

In indolent and amicable debate,

Inarmed, disputing with laughter who should rule..."

And Satyavan himself. There is nothing effete about him. He is indeed Vivasvaaniva tejasvi:

"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

His figure led the splendour of the morn.

Noble and clear as the broad peaceful heavens

A tablet of young wisdom was his brow;

Freedom's imperious beauty curved his limbs,

The joy of life was on his open face.

His look was a wide daybreak of the gods,

His head was a youthful Rishi's touched with light,

His body was a lover's and a king's."

Satyavan was not brought up in the harsh man-made dharma. He learnt his lessons directly from Nature. Do the animals and birds stand in judgement over fellow-creatures? Obviously one who could present a cool argument against capital punishment in the Mahabharata was certainly an extraordinary person imbued with the powers of the intellect and the holistic gaze of spiritual consciousness. Surely "a soul made ready through a thousand years"!

When Satyavan invites Savitri to his leaf-hut and speaks of the glory and the good of forest life, we know why Satyavan has not preferred the way of revenge. He speaks without rancour of the loss of his father's kingdom. It is the loss of his eyesight that pains him. Frankly speaking, that is the real tragedy:

"Outcast from empire of the outer light,

Lost to the comradeship of seeing men,

He sojourns in two solitudes, within

And in the solemn rustle of the woods.

Son of that king, I, Satyavan, have lived

Contented ...

I reigned in a kingdom of a nobler kind

Than men can build upon dull Matter's soil ..."

Contentment! And he was intelligent enough to realize what is it that places men in separative shells of ego. Their consciousness is in shards.

"What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow

Out of this stony rubbish? Son of Man,

You cannot say, or guess, for you know only

A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,

And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,

And the dry stone no sound of water."

Lacking a holistic view, they cannot get to the ananda consciousness which is native air for Satyavan:

"In men I met strange portions of a Self

That sought for fragments and in fragments lived:

Each lived in himself and for himself alone

And with the rest joined only fleeting ties;

Each passioned over his surface joy and grief,

Nor saw the Eternal in his secret house."

This is the fractured, egoistic consciousness we have to transcend to reach a state where there would be no need for punishment and certainly no need for

capital punishment! So free of rancour is Satyavan the Future Man that the union with Savitri does not make him think of armed power to overcome the state of exile. Instead he sees Savitri's coming as a way of overcoming the assaults of the Inconscient that refuses to allow man's consciousness to rise to a higher, unitive consciousness.

"I glimpsed the presence of the One in all.

But still there lacked the last transcendent power

And Matter still slept empty of its Lord.

The Spirit was saved, the body lost and mute

Lived still with Death and ancient Ignorance;

The Inconscient was its base, the Void its fate.

But thou hast come and all will surely change:

I shall feel the World-Mother in thy golden limbs

And hear her wisdom in thy sacred voice.

The child of the Void shall be reborn in God,

My Matter shall evade the Inconscient's trance."

One might wonder. How come Satyavan who had spent his childhood, boyhood and youth in the forest's silences now argues with Dyumathsena who has regained his Shalwan crown? Sri Aurobindo prepares the ground in Savitri, reading between the lines of Vyasa's Upakhyaana in the Vana Parva. The passage where he describes to Savitri how he "groped for the Mystery with the lantern, Thought" shows how we might try our best with the mental consciousness, still we fall short of something and that is why Satyavan tells Dyumathsena that one must go in for spiritual practices to transform people into becoming good. After all, when things go wrong with their subjects, kings do feel ashamed and take to tapasya for atonement. Enactment of laws or severe punishments will never make this world wholesome.

Earlier we had the passage: "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.'" Actually, the verse does not call for this extreme explanation. It simply says

that if a king is unable to change the evil person into a good person through ahimsa (taan na saknoshi chet sadhun paritraatumahimsayaa), he should perform the Bhutabavya sacrifice to put an end to his evil ways (kasyachit bhutabhavyasya laabhenaantam thathaa kuru). This has been interpreted that the king should use the person as a sacrificial animal in some yagna and thus put an end to him. If the conversation is followed from the beginning, this advice of Satyavan seems totally out of place. He had been strongly pleading against the killing of the guilty in the name of capital punishment as that would render his dependents helpless. So how does the death of the person in a sacrifice change the picture? The rather strange explanation offered by commentators is that the person killed will himself be happy as he would be going to heaven because of giving up his life in a sacrificial rite and that Satyavan felt this was merciful, certainly better than death by hanging! It is totally out of character when we consider the personality of our hero. Satyavan was no quibbler, if we have understood Rishi Narad's description in Vyasa or meditated upon Sri Aurobindo's reference to him as "erect and lofty like a spear of God." It is quite possible that Sri Aurobindo may have considered the image of the Bhutabavya sacrifice as tapasya for transforming the consciousness of the 'other'. In fact the reference to Bhutabhavya is followed by a reference to how kings undertake tapasya when they feel ashamed of the crimes of wrong-doers in their land. It is a question of perfecting oneself before seeking to perfect the race, as we notice in Sri Aurobindo's poem, 'The Rishi'.

With Savitri's coming, Satyavan had gained the "gold link", the transformatory touch that not only perfects oneself but perfects the 'other' as well. The conversation between Dyumathsena and Satyavan reported by Bhishma in Shanti Parva thus projects the Shalwa dynasty walking into the Next Future. There would be no more need to judge; and if one had to judge, the right judgement would come, causing no violence to anyone or anything. The world would be full of the Kingdoms of the Greater Knowledge:

"A wisdom waiting on Omniscience

Sat voiceless in a vast passivity;

It judged not, measured not, nor strove to know,
But listened for the veiled all-seeing Thought
And the burden of a calm transcendent Voice.”

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

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Aaron Swartz - Hacker or Hacktivist?

Prof. Mrs. B.Parvathi

Former Head, Department of English
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Are geniuses misfits in the most organized human associations? Do they very often happen to be hypersensitive individuals? Are geniuses commonly afflicted with some debilitating physical condition? Does creativity come hand in hand with a desire for perfection coupled with a dissatisfaction about how the world functions? Does it result in a life wasted against the tide of conformity? Are parental preconceptions of free development at the root of non conformist behaviour in their progeny? Does a too well defined application of law take its toll? And what is the extent to which order can be ruffled in the several areas of public life are the many questions that the book *The Idealist* raises about Aaron Swartz. The answers have to be in the affirmative in the case of Aaron who believed that he could make some part of digitized knowledge available for the third world without having anyone to beg someone for it or pay for it.

Aaron Swartz was a wizard of a programmer at the age of thirteen. This young man did not go through regular schooling because his father believed in giving his son the freedom in charting his own course of ‘education’ and development. He was not after money but millions accrued into his account because of his “magical powers” at computer programming even when he was a teenager. This money, however, was not enough to fight his arrest in 2011 and the

charges of digital theft and felony against him. Aaron was an avid reader who summarized difficult narratives and uploaded seventy of these-- including Kafka’s *The Trial*-- for easy reading. Chomsky’s *Understanding Power* impressed Aaron’s young mind. He was, above all, a person who hated positions of authority and domination of all kinds. He could not absolutely do anything that would put him in a dominant place —be it the very simple act of asking for a book from the librarian, or giving an ‘order’ to a waitress in restaurants! He suffered from a condition of acute ulcerous colitis. He was associated with the “free culture movement” which believed in removing barriers to information access. Aaron Swartz committed suicide on January 11, 2013. One would not have heard of this young man at all on this side of the globe but for Justin Peters.

Justin Peters’ book *The Idealist Aaron Swartz And The Rise Of Free Culture On The Internet* is an excellent effort which shows how a host of things became available at the click of a button in the present era. It speaks about the various stages through which a portion of this intellectual harvest is freely available today for academics and public through the internet. *The Idealist* happened to be a random pick for me from the ‘New Arrivals’ shelf on the first floor of Jack Langson Library, University of California, Irvine. I turned its pages, and the few paragraphs it made me read were so compelling that it needed more visits to the library made possible thanks to its friendly staff and its courteous Librarian. *The Idealist*, published last year that is 2016 by Scribner, An Imprint of Simon & Schuster Inc. New York, was very well received in USA. It is journalist Peters’ first book which grew from an article he wrote on Aaron Swartz for the online magazine *Slate* after the young man’s death at the age of twenty six.

Aaron called himself a hacker. “In the hacker viewpoint, any system could benefit from an easy flow of information, a concept known as transparency in the social sciences.” A hacktivist is one who puts computers and computer networks to subversive use to promote a political agenda or a social change. As one involved in a movement called “free culture”--

Life only demands from you the strength you possess. Only feat is possible – not to have run away.

Dag Hammarskjöld

the term 'free' meaning unrestricted access to information-- he downloaded millions of articles from academic journals in the MIT campus from the journal storage digital library called JSTOR founded in 1995. "Originally containing digitized back issues of academic journals, it now also includes books and primary sources, and current issues of journals. It provides full-text searches of almost 2,000 journals." JSTOR, after its initial displeasure however, relented to ignore the charges filed against Aaron.

It is common knowledge that MIT --a premier institution, is reputed for its research output and its very liberal campus atmosphere. The institution took an indulgent view and delight as its youth played pranks on the campus. It encouraged their creativity and celebrated their achievements. It was also well known that security at MIT was negligible. Aaron's father Robert Swartz worked for the institution and it is no wonder that Aaron's tingling fingers took the route to MIT servers. Recurrent crashing of the institution's servers led the trail of investigation to Aaron. He was booked for downloading papers from research journals without permission. An FBI investigation followed. His friends said if only he mentioned they could have done the downloading for him without drawing any attention. But Aaron did not want someone else to do it for him in a clandestine manner. It was his firm belief that the downloading was for public good. With this in mind Aaron initiated over 200,000 download sessions in a single hour in the year 2010. He made a "robotic harvesting" of articles ignoring copyright regulations to achieve his goal of placing academic journals in public domain. Though his act could never be equated with indulging in financial fraud he could still be convicted on charges of felony for his violation of regulation.

Aaron's act throws light on the question of intellectual/ institutional copyright versus such unpermitted acts of making knowledge resources available in the electronic public domain. The generally liberal MIT chose to be silent and neutral on this issue and the investigating officers of FBI went by the book. At first Aaron put up a brave front but the later procedures did unnerve him. On a calm January

evening he hanged himself without giving his friends even a faint idea of his intention. Aaron's suicide came as a shock to all. His father Robert Swartz simply said that Aaron did not commit suicide-- that the system had killed him. Doctors who have had patients with ulcerous colitis opined that disruptive liver functioning most often drives such patients like Aaron to take this sudden extreme unexpected step to suicide.

Young Aaron believed that any reluctance to embrace free culture is a function of greed. He believed that 'computer programmers have an ethical responsibility to advance public welfare'. Carl Malamud is a data liberation activist who launched a non-profit website called public.resource.org to host public domain data sets of all sorts. He took the long route in sourcing data to public domain. Aaron unlike Carl Malamud made a short cut in violating PACER and JSTOR's terms and conditions of use. Peters says that Aaron 'sacrificed caution for celerity' and paid the price for it. In his zeal as convener of "Progressive Change Campaign Committee" which comprised political activists of grand ambitions and limited budgets (and perhaps abilities too) he tried to be a one man OCLC --Online Computer Library Centre. Justin Peters writes in one place that wanton scattering of books in a library is one thing and the toppling of bookshelves another altogether. What this young man of twenty six did was like crashing into book shelves in his zeal for grabbing books. Aaron's magical digital command did not have the nerve either to justify his stand and fight, or yield to plead guilty, and he chose the third option-- to end his life.

Journalist turned author Justin Peters gives remarkable insight into the story of copyright matters and internet activism in *The Idealist* tracing it to England and Queen Anne's time and American Noah Webster's time. The book divulges little known facts about the hard times English writers like Dickens and others faced in nineteenth century because the financial gain they had from sale of their works in America was a pittance compared to what printers gained from printing cheap editions of English novels. He also unfurls an unknown fraction of the history of

If liberty and equality, as is thought by some are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be best attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost.

Aristotle

free and young America. It would be very insensitive on my part to merely acknowledge Justin Peters as an effective writer, that his approach to the subject of copy right matters, internet and social concerns is excellent and captivating. Anyone who picks up this book will not miss its brilliance as well as its pain at the ending of a life so gifted and so wasted; yet as author of this partial biography Peters does not lose sight of the steady ways of mature activists such as Malamud or Lessig and their efforts to give greater access to knowledge. It is this balance of view which ranks Justin Peters with the best of contemporary writers.

* * *

Dr. S. RADHAKRISHNAN

'Teacher *to* and *for* humanity'

- A.Prasanna Kumar

"We cannot always control events, but we can always control our attitude towards events," remarked President Radhakrishnan in 1963 when the then US President, John F. Kennedy, expressed disappointment at the rain that spoilt the warm reception the latter had arranged to India's Head of State.

It was not the first time for Kennedy to make note of such words of wisdom. Ten years earlier, as Senator, he had made a note of a sentence from Radhakrishnan's address to the US Congress as the Vice-President of India: "No society is static; no law is unchanging; and no constitution is permanent. Given time and patience, radical changes may happen both in human nature and in systems of society which reflect human nature."

At the other end of the ideological spectrum, the Soviet dictator and the coldest of cold warriors, Joseph Stalin, was moved to tears when Radhakrishnan, the then Ambassador of India to the Soviet Union, patted Stalin on the cheek and advised him to take care of his health. "He is the only man," the stone-hearted dictator confessed, "who treats me not as a monster but as a human being."

The builder of the "rainbow bridge" between the age-old wisdom of India and the new knowledge of the West, as Radhakrishnan was hailed, became almost a 'cult figure' in Europe and America. His philosophy stemmed from a fusion of Indian and Western thought and his outlook presented a harmonious blend of tradition and modernity.

In 1904, philosophy chose Radhakrishnan - born at Tiruttani (Tamil Nadu) on September 5, 1888 - to be its student when the lad passed the Intermediate examination in first class. That his cousin passed on his textbooks in psychology, logic and ethics was an accident that prompted the poor youngster to choose BA in philosophy. If he had money, he might have chosen, some other course. Poverty made his early life hard. But it could not corrode his spirit or dampen his zest for intellectual pursuits. Poverty had once saved him from the jaws of death when a highway robber searched on the boy's person in vain for gold ornaments. Finding only peanuts in his pocket the robber changed his mind and let Radhakrishnan go. Otherwise he would have been pushed into a nearby well. The family, was so poor that there was no money to buy banana leaves on which food was usually served and the family members ate off the floor after cleaning it! He borrowed money and even auctioned his university medals to maintain the family. The 'unseen hand' as Radhakrishnan chose to describe God's will always guided his life. Equally interesting was the fact that for want of a post he was first 'appointed in a temporary vacancy as Malayalam Master in the Madras Presidency College. Years of hardship preceded the young lecturer's upward career graph. His output was prolific and of a high quality. His article on the Gita secured for him the appreciation of Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak and writings on Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, the "grateful admiration" of India's first Nobel laureate. Tagore's, work was "a mystical torrent" that paved the way towards transcendence synthesised "the ideals of Indian philosophy, religion and art". Radhakrishnan was convinced that Tagore was God's gift to India. Another great influence on him was Mahatma Gandhi, the masterpiece volume on whom Radhakrishnan edited in 1939. He wanted to revise it and present it

Learning, the destroyer of arrogance, begets arrogance in fools, even as light that illumines the eye, makes owls blind.

Panchatantra

to Gandhiji on his 80th birthday on October 2, 1949, but as the editor wrote, "Fates decreed otherwise and it has now become a memorial volume." Earlier, when he went to Gandhiji for permission to dedicate the volume. to him, the latter said:

"Who am I? What is my service? You are my Krishna, I am your Arjuna." Professorship at Mysore and Calcutta and lectures at Oxford proclaimed his credentials as a philosopher and teacher of rare eminence. The farewell he received at Mysore in 1921 was one of the most memorable events in his life. Detaching the horses from the carriage in which he was to travel to the railway station, the students pulled it themselves to the destination. The platform was flooded with flowers and people and the compartment' with roses as Mysore gave a tearful send-off to the young professor of 32 summers. Calcutta honoured him no less, and as King George V Professor, Radhakrishnan earned the admiration of such stalwarts like Asutosh Mukherjee and Brajendranath Seal.

Radhakrishnan delivered the first convocation address of Andhra University in 1927 and received an honorary degree at its convocation the next year. Even now people recall with pride and nostalgia the outstanding work he did as Vice-Chancellor at Waltair shaping the infant Andhra University into a famous centre of learning. His son, S. Gopal, the eminent historian who passed away recently, records in his biography of his father that he brought to Andhra University eminent teachers and researchers from far and near. Sir C.V. Raman was co-opted as a member of the syndicate and made honorary professor of physics; Sir M. Visvesvaraya was put in charge of technology; S.C. Chawla was brought from Lahore for mathematics and T.R. Seshadri for chemistry, besides Humayun Kabir, Hiren Mukherjee and V.K.R.V. Rao for humanities.

Interestingly, Radhakrishnan invited C.K. Nayudu, 'the Tendulkar' of those times, to coach cricketers at Waltair and the legendary Nayudu accepted the offer though the plan did not materialise as the VC had left Waltair in 1935. The greatest tribute to Radhakrishnan as VC came from Raman himself:

"He waved a hand and a university has sprung up. In his frail body is enshrined a great spirit - a great spirit which we have learned to revere and admire, even to worship."

What an intellectual feast it was when in 1934 Tagore delivered the Sir Alladi Krishnaswami Iyer Endowment Lecture at the university on 'Man', with Radhakrishnan in the presidential chair!

This teacher to and for humanity, who passed away on April 17, 1975, was indeed the 'pride of Andhra University, which celebrates with fervour his birthday as Teachers Day. Recalling the glory of those halcyon days is, of course, a matter of pride to the city of Visakhapatnam also. It is a different matter that such a great man has a small bust in an inconspicuous place on the Andhra University campus as a memorial for him!.

(The Hindu, (Vizag Edition) October 14, 2002)

* * *

HOMAGE FROM A MAN OF THE WEST TO GANDHI

- Romain Rolland

Gandhi is not only for India a hero of national history whose legendary memory will be enshrined in the millennial epoch. He has not only been the spirit of active life which has breathed into the peoples of India the proud consciousness of their unity, of their power, and the will to their independence. He has renewed, for all the peoples of the West, the message of their Christ, forgotten or betrayed. He has inscribed his name among the sages and saints of humanity; and the radiance of his figure has penetrated into all the regions of the earth. In the eyes of Europe he appeared at a moment when such an example seemed almost a miracle. Europe had barely emerged from four years of furious war, of which the ravages, the ruins and the rancours were persisting, sowing the seeds of fresh and even more implacable wars, conjoined with the overturning of revolutions, with their fatal train of social hatreds, which was gnawing the heart of nations. Europe was under the weight

of a heavy night, pregnant with misery and despair, without a single ray of light. The appearance of Gandhi, this feeble and nude little man, who repudiated all violence, whose only arms were his reason and his love, and whose humble and stubborn gentleness had just achieved its first victories, seemed a paradoxical defiance hurled in the face of the politics and the thought, traditional, accepted, and unquestioned, of the West. But it was, at the same time, a beam of health which shot through the despair. One could hardly believe it. . . . And it was some time before one could be convinced of the reality of such a prodigy. . . who knew this better than I, who was one of the first in the West to discover and to spread the message of the Mahatma? . . . But in the degree that the certainty of the existence and the constant, patient and progressive activity of the spiritual master of India made itself felt, a torrent of recognition and of faith flowed from the West towards him. For many, he was like a return of Christ. For others, for independent thinkers, disturbed by the disordered movement of the civilization of the West, whose direction was no longer governed by any moral principle, and whose marvellous genius of discovery and invention is monstrously distorted towards its own ruin, Gandhi was a new incarnation of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and of Tolstoy, denouncing the illusions and the crimes of civilization, and preaching to men the return to nature, to the simple life, to health. Governments pretended to ignore and despise him. But the peoples felt him to be their best friend and their brother. I have seen here, in Switzerland, the pious love that he inspired in humble peasants of the countryside and the mountains. But if his message of wisdom and love, like that of the Master of 'The Sermon on the Mount,' has touched the hearts of countless good people, he did not depend upon it (any more than he would have counted on that of the Master of Nazareth) to change the course of destiny of a world which was itself dedicated to war and to destruction. To be applied to politics, the doctrine of NonViolence requires a very different moral climate from that which pervades the Europe of to-day; it demands a total, immense and unanimous Sacrifice of self, which has no present chance of Success, in the face of the growing ferocity of the new systems of totalitarian

dictatorships, which have been established in the world, and which have left their pitiless traces in the blood of millions of men. The radiance of such sacrifices has neither the possibility nor the hope of exerting a victorious influence except at the end of a very long period of trial for the peoples. And the latter cannot find the heroism to support them unless they feel sustained and exalted by a faith like that of Gandhi. This faith in God is lacking in the majority of men in the West, among the people as much as among their leaders. And new faiths (nationalist or revolutionary) are progenitors of violence. The most urgent task for the peoples of Europe is to defend by all means their liberties, their independence and even their lives, menaced by the devouring imperialisms of allied fascist and racist States. Their political abdication would inevitably lead to the servitude of humanity, perhaps for centuries. In these circumstances we cannot recommend the practice of Gandhi's doctrine, however much we may respect it. It seems to us that it is called to play in the world the role of those great monasteries of the Christian Middle Ages, wherein were preserved, as on an islet in the midst of the Surging ocean, the purest treasure of moral civilization, the spirit of peace and of love, the serenity of the spirit. Glorious and sacred role! May the spirit of Gandhi, as aforetime that of the great founders of the Christian orders, of St. Bruno, of St. Bernard, of St. Francis, maintain, among the raging torments of the age of crisis and of transformation which the human race is traversing, the Civitas Dei, the love of men, harmony! And we, intellectuals, men of science, men of letters, artists, we who are also working, within the limits of our feeble strength, to prepare for the mind that "City of all men, where reigns the "Truce of God"-we who are "the third order" (to use the language of the Church) and who belong to the panhumanist confraternity, we offer our fervent homage of love and veneration to our master and brother, Gandhi, who is realizing, in the heart and in action, our ideal of humanity to come.

(From Mahatma Gandhi (Ed) Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan)

Freedom and independence must be our continuing quest, and in such a manner as to accelerate our evolution as a free and safe nation through bold and swift actions.

A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

Book Review:

**WHY GANDHI STILL MATTERS
AN APPRAISAL OF THE
MAHATMA'S LEGACY**

- Rajmohan Gandhi

(Aleph Book Company PP 201 Rs.499, 2017)

Rajmohan Gandhi has come up with yet another eminently readable book on his grandfather. Though short in size he hopes "it will present a relevant, fallible, amazing and accessible Gandhi." The size of the little book is, in many ways, similar to William Shirer's *Gandhi A Memoir* to which a reference is made by Rajmohan Gandhi in the second chapter of the work. In just two hundred pages both Rajmohan and Shirer encapsulate the life and work of Mahatma Gandhi who as a Nobel Laureate in Medicine Albert Szent Gyorgyi wrote "chased out almost single handed the greatest military power on earth." Rajmohan Gandhi's earlier works on Gandhiji *THE GOOD BOATMAN A Portrait of Gandhi* in 1995 and *MOHANDAS A True story of a Man, his People and an Empire*, a meticulously researched massive volume of 745 pages were significant contributions. *WHY GANDHI STILL MATTERS* is the result of the author's lectures delivered at Michigan State University in 2016. The main purpose of this work is to make an appraisal of Gandhian legacy and the place of Gandhian values and ideas in these troubled times.

In the introductory note Rajmohan Gandhi refers to the flaws of 'the imperfect Gandhi', 'an astonishing human being' a multi dimensional and complex person. The nine chapters that follow begin with 'The Legacy of Gandhi', Three things constitute the Gandhi legacy: nonviolence as weapon of struggle, the independent nation of India, and signposts for life today anywhere on earth. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. whom the author met in Washington DC gave 'a remarkable sermon on 22nd March 1959' when he just turned thirty. A line from King's sermon is quoted: "Gandhi was able to achieve for his people

independence from the domination of the British Empire without lifting one gun or without uttering one curse word". Four years later in 1963, Dr. King led a march on Washington and delivered his 'I Have a Dream' speech, according to Rajmohan Gandhi. The author refers to the influence of Gandhi on such famous persons as Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr., the Dalai Lama and Aung San Suu Kyi in the first chapter.

Writing on Gandhi's Passions in the second chapter, Rajmohan describes 'how the spinning wheel empowered the weak and equalized the 'untouchable' with the Brahmin, demolishing every caste barrier' and how it taught elite, rich and privileged Indians to earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow. Rajmohan quotes the Arab poet Mikhail Noema: "A spindle in Gandhi's hand became sharper than the sword; the simple white sheet wrapping Gandhi's thin body was armour plate which guns from the fleets of the master of the seas could not pierce; and the goat of Gandhi became stronger than the British Lion."

Another interesting narrative is on Gandhi's gift and his God, the struggles of Gandhi in South Africa beginning with the most important of all, his inner conflicts and contradictions. In one line Rajmohan sums it up. 'The inconsistent Mahatma was also a very human and very Indian, Mohandas Gandhi'. In the chapter on 'Ahimsa and Gandhi' the influence of Henry David Thoreau, 'one of the greatest and moral men America has produced, on Gandhi is traced. *Hind Swaraj* written in 1909 and the significance of *Ahimsa* and *Satyagraha* are discussed in the seventh chapter. Gandhi's adoration of his God Rama finds a place along with his admiration for Jesus Christ's 'perfect sacrifice'. He made it clear that 'there is no superiority or inferiority in the Hinduism' of his conception.

Ahimsa and Satyagraha, explains Rajmohan became synonymous. It is a multi-pronged weapon to fight oppression and national evils like untouchability and Hindu-Muslim discord. The 'twin components' of Gandhi's non-violence were 'fear not' and 'hate not' which were difficult to practise and the first found wider acceptance than the second. The author

observes that hatred proved more resistance than fear. The Mahatma's conquest of communal riots through love and fasting was the triumph of spirit over force. The words of Rajaji are quoted: "In my considerate opinion, there has been nothing, not even independence which is so truly wonderful as his victory over evil in Calcutta."

There is an interesting reference to Sardar Patel's letter to B.R.Ambedkar when he married Sharada Kabir, a Brahmin doctor, (his first wife died in 1935), in which the former wrote to the latter "I am sure if Bapu were alive he would have given you his blessings." Ambedkar replied "I agree that Bapu, if he had been alive, would have blessed it". The reference to Gandhiji's faith in Ramanama is touching. "It is my hope," said the Mahatma, "that when I die I shall

die with Ramanama in my heart. I am sustained by Ramanama. If I am perfectly fit, it is due to Rama's grace."

On the blurb of the book, it is written that 'Taken together, the author's insights present an unsentimental view of aspects of Gandhi's legacy that have endured and those that have been cast aside by power-hungry politicians, hate groups, castiest organizations, venal industrialists, terrorists and other enemies of India's promise'. After reading Rajmohan Gandhi's WHY GANDHI STILL MATTERS the only question that one ventures to ask: Will Gandhi ever cease to matter in this world of growing violence and hatred?

- A.Prasanna Kumar

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