

PRESIDENT RAJENDRA PRASAD

Shri K. Iswara Dutt

(From *The Indian Express*, Dec 3, 1955)

Of Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the honoured President of the Indian Republic who has happily woken up this morning at 71 amidst the nation's prayerful wishes for his long life and continuous, dedicated service, it may well be said that if he was Bihar's gift to Gandhiji, he was Gandhiji's gift to India. Was it a mere coincidence, or was it an act of Providence, that their association began when Satyagraha in its pristine setting had its first manifestation on our soil in Champaran? In a sense, Gandhiji was all alone when unknowingly he ushered in a new era in our politics, out of revolt against the oppression of the tenants by indigo planters; he had however no need to feel lonely when he found by his side 'Rajendra Babu' who had felt drawn to him as if by instinct.

That was 38 years ago when Dr. Rajendra Prasad was only 33 but was marked out as the rising hope of the newly created Bihar. After an academic career of exceptional brilliance he joined the bar in Patna and rose to a commanding position. Behind his professional eminence lay a continuous striving for public service since as a student in Calcutta he was deeply stirred by the national awakening in the wake of the anti-partition agitation and Swadeshi movement. And by then he had also come under the magnetic influence of Gokhale and very nearly rallied round his banner as one of the 'Servants of India'. It was a tremendous strain to him to have, for compelling domestic reasons, withstood Gokhale's call to join the society formally and asked for, or taken more time to dedicate himself to the nation with a sense of completeness. When he however, met Gandhiji in 1917 in his own home-state as a moral crusader, he saw things in a new light; indeed, he saw light. Life was not the same for him; it acquired a larger meaning and meant a grimmer purpose.

That this union of hearts or minds or spirits betwixt two such unusual men should have taken place where it did was a dispensation of Providence. For, what better region could there have been for so happy a consummation than Bihar, 'the Maghad and Videha of

the ancients, the birth place of Budha... Bihar of Chandra Gupta and Asoka of the Mauryan dynasty, whose dominions extended beyond the seas and in whose court Megasthenes sat and Pliny wrote; Bihar of Pataliputra and Nalanda?'

There had been hectic development since. In 1919, in the year of the Punjab tragedy, the agitation over the Rowlatt Act drew Dr. Rajendra Prasad into the world of events and he signed the pledge to break unrighteous laws. In 1920 when the Congress plumped for non-cooperation (with the British) he gave up his lucrative legal practice. For all his earnings – such was the measure of his austerity – he had but a sum of Rupees 15 left in the bank! But his faith in Gandhiji was unlimited though the Master offered him nothing but poverty, incarceration and suffering.

He stood the test, despite chronic asthma. His moral earnestness and spotless character highlighted the Gandhian struggle so much so that Bengal's veteran leader, C.R. Das, who became critical of Gandhiji, openly said that Dr. Rajendra Prasad was the only excuse for the continuation of Gandhism. He could have asked for no greater tribute: he earned it richly. This struggle continued unabated. Dr. Rajendra Prasad was undergoing one of his periodic terms in the jail in 1934 when Bihar was rocked by the biggest earthquake in India's history. It became a moral obligation on the part of even the bureaucracy to set the acknowledged leader of the Province free. He salvaged Bihar.

The nation paid its homage by offering him the Congress 'throne' in 1934 at the Bombay session. Since then it was to him that the Congress had turned whenever there was a crisis – after the fiasco at Tripuri and later when Acharya Kripalani, after presiding at the Meerut congress, tendered his resignation. Inside the Congress none was more loved; outside it, none was more respected. His top-level association with it, with his emphasis on the Gandhian code, was a guarantee of its unflinching standards.

In the nation's eye, he was alongside of the Mahatma. On December 11, 1946, the Constituent Assembly which was to draft Free India's Constitution,

The mind is a restless bird; the more it gets, the more it wants and still remains unsatisfied.

Mahatma Gandhi

was to choose its permanent President. The great office called for a rare combination of qualities – knowledge, patience, a sweet temper, a just mind and the capacity to command universal respect. The House had not the slightest difficulty in making its choice. Without a single dissentient voice, it voted for Dr. Rajendra Prasad – and had since set its heart on his primacy in the affairs of the State. It was a proud day in his life when Dr. Rajendra Prasad about three years later signed India’s great charter – the new Constitution.

“Had he not joined Gandhi”, said the American journalist, John Gunther, of Dr. Rajendra Prasad, “he would have certainly reached the highest position possible to an Indian in British India; he would have been a Supreme Court Judge or a Provincial Governor. But history has it that, having joined Gandhiji and come nearest to him, he has risen to the highest position within Free India’s gift”.

A man of solid intellectual attainments and a great jurist, Dr. Rajendra Prasad has a wide range of interests. As India’s Food Member in the first National Government, he set a high example. He has an abiding interest in nation building work. Among other things he has promoted the cause of Indian history and championed that of Hindi. On the wider arena he has led the world pacifists. His chief title to distinction is, however, on the moral plane. And it is a tribute as much to his political prescience as to his moral instinct that, as President of the Indian Republic, he decided to spend some time every year in the Southern climate and reconcile regional factors, if not obliterate altogether regional distinctions.

Here is a man who, in all the heated controversies of party strife and fierce conflicts of political warfare, has not caused or received a single bruise. There is nothing like bitterness in him and political acerbities have left him untouched. His gentleness and innate nobility, his simplicity and sweetness, his sincerity of conviction and earnestness of purpose, and, above all, his selflessness, have given him a moral stature that the Nation has learnt to adore.

No man has by his personal example raised the tone of our public life more. India knows no gentler man nor a greater gentleman. Simplicity never looked so great as in his presence. His modesty and humility have acquired an epic quality.

There is nothing dazzling about Dr. Rajendra Prasad. Like Mr. Nehru, he is not of the legendary type that can move a multitude, nor like Sardar Patel is he of the stern type that strikes awe in men’s bosoms, but he is of the more enduring type that instinctively creates confidence and wins respect. He lacks the fire of original passion but has the steadier blaze of noble compassion. He is our Aristides the Just. Wearing the stainless escutcheon of Gandhism, President Rajendra Prasad is the symbol, alike of a new Republic and an old civilisation, that is India.

(From: ‘My Portrait Gallery’ – K. Iswara Dutt, 1957)

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Forging national security

Admiral Arun Prakash (Retd.)

Former Chief of Naval Staff

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Defence reforms should be a priority, the most vital being the creation of a Chief of Defence Staff.

EACH OF INDIA’S post-Independence conflicts has seen the Indian public aroused by intense patriotic fervour; a phenomenon duly accompanied by suitable bombast from politicians. But no sooner has the crisis passed, that more mundane and pressing concerns about issues like “roti, kapda, makan, naukari”, rightly, resume their significance in the lives of people as well as “netas”. India’s politicians have, traditionally, not considered national security worth their time and attention because it was never a “vote-catching” issue. Therefore, for 70 years, they happily left the management of defence and security to the bureaucracy, and devoted themselves to political survival.

Never try to control the mind. Follow the intellect and then, the mind naturally submits itself.
The master of the mind is the intellect.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

The run-up to the 2019 general election seems to have changed this forever. The Pulwama terror strike and its sequel saw a major shift of political focus with national security issues being accorded prime importance in election rhetoric. Post-election analysis has convincingly shown that the ordinary voter was indeed swayed by security issues. The NDA government's show of resolve, as demonstrated by the September 2016 cross border raids and the February 2019 air strikes on Pakistani targets, was noted and applauded. These audacious actions also seemed to have mitigated resentment on account of demonetization and overtaken concerns regarding unemployment and other issues amongst both rural and urban voters.

While this dramatic paradigm shift may have upset the Opposition's calculations and led to their rout, it should bring cheer to the security and defence establishments. National security, having proved itself a prime "vote-catcher", is guaranteed henceforth to garner the politician's close attention. Another more recent development that prima facie bodes well for national security is the upgradation of the NSA from minister of state to cabinet rank.

The prime minister, by creating a fullfledged "Minister for Security", has added a sixth member to his Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), currently comprising ministers of home, defence, finance and external affairs. The present NSA's credentials and expertise in the fields of internal security and intelligence as well as the affairs of our "near abroad" are well-known and his elevation could be the key to ensuring that focus is retained on national security.

There are, however, certain critical aspects of national security where the current state of play leaves room for ambiguity and uncertainty, starting with haziness of the concept itself. Theoretically defined as "multifaceted and all-encompassing", national security is often stretched to include a mind-boggling diversity of issues. This is precisely the reason why repeated endeavours at formulating a national security doctrine have failed. India's bureaucracy is simply incapable of digesting and processing draft doctrines that have attempted to address vast agendas ranging

from economic, food, cyber and energy security to border-management, governance and Centre-state relations.

There is clearly a need to view national security through a narrower prism and evolve a less ambitious doctrine that focuses on matters directly related to defence and security. It must provide strategic guidance to the military within clearly defined national aims and objectives. But for this to happen, a crucial "grey area" in our higher defence organisation (HDO) needs to be addressed.

The Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC), has many key roles to play in the HDO but his current status and empowerment constitute a serious national security lacuna, which has neither been acknowledged nor rectified by successive governments. As the senior-most serving officer of the armed forces, the primary function of the Chairman COSC is to oversee functioning of joint formations like the Strategic Forces Command (SFC) and the Andaman & Nicobar Command, as well as tri-service training institutions through an Integrated Defence Staff, created post-Kargil to support him.

Far more critical is the chairman's role in the nuclear command chain. As boss of the CinC, SFC, who tasks the army's missiles, the navy's submarines and air force fighter bombers for nuclear weapon delivery, he constitutes the key link and military interface between the prime minister, who is the head of India's Nuclear Command Authority, and India's nuclear forces. Bringing clarity to the role and responsibilities of Chairman COSC will reinforce the credibility of our nuclear command and control, especially with nuclear-armed INS Arihant and the Agni-V inter-continental ballistic missile on the horizon.

Under existing rules, this post is held in rotation by serving Chiefs who discharge the chairman's duties on a part-time basis. The enormous incongruity and farcical nature of this system has recently been demonstrated. The retiring Naval chief passed the mantle of Chairman COSC to the Air Chief, who has three months to serve, before the latter hands it over to the Army Chief, who retires just three months later!

Higher education has failed democracy and impoverished the soul of today's students.

20 years after Kargil: India's military modernisation remains unaddressed

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But 20 years after Kargil, the tangible military capacity of the country and the quality of the intelligence apparatus and the skillset of its myriad operatives remains well below the required median. The 26/11 terror attack on Mumbai in late 2008 is illustrative of this abiding chink in the national armor, writes C Uday Bhaskar for South Asia Monitor.

July 2019 marks the 20th anniversary of the Kargil war that caught India by surprise in the summer of 1999. Pakistani troops under the guise of being 'irregulars' violated Indian territorial sovereignty in the Kargil sector of the Himalayas and, to the credit of the then Vajpayee led government, despite various constraints - lack of appropriate resources being the most visible - the Indian military was able to ensure a victory that compelled Pakistan to withdraw from the mountain peaks it had illegally occupied.

The fact that the Kargil war took place a year after India and Pakistan had acquired nuclear weapons added to the distinctive nature of the conflict : two nuclear armed neighbors in a war-like situation, albeit in a limited geographical area and a territorial dispute was at the core of the conflict.

While then Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif dashed to Washington DC and met with US President Bill Clinton on July 4 to negotiate the terms of the unilateral Pakistani withdrawal, India celebrated the Kargil "victory" later in the month, when all the intruders were evicted. The 20th anniversary celebrations this year will be spread over three days from July 25-27 and given that national security was a major plank for the emphatic electoral victory of the Modi-led BJP in the 2019 election, this event will receive a high degree of political attention and involvement.

Kargil remains a tactically audacious intrusion into India and a high-stakes gamble by the Pakistani army chief at the time, General Pervez Musharraf, who later

Both the UPA and NDA governments have, over the past 15 years, spurned expert recommendations that India's nuclear-deterrent, as well as demands of 21st century warfare call for urgent defence reforms, the most vital being creation of a Chief of Defence Staff. As an interim measure, they suggest the appointment of a full-time "Permanent Chairman COSC" with a fixed tenure. Having ignored this advice, the last government went on to constitute a Defence Planning Committee (DPC) headed by the NSA to "facilitate comprehensive and integrated planning for defence matters". This step, sidelining the Raksha Mantri, was another reminder that the NSA's role and charter in the nuclear command chain and his relationship with the Chairman COSC need early formalisation and promulgation

Given the radical military transformation, modernisation and down-sizing recently undertaken by China, it would be extremely myopic for India to stall defence reforms any longer. Such reforms, the world over, are wrought by visionary and enlightened politicians often in the face of fierce opposition by service chiefs. In the UK, three defence ministers-Sandys, Heseltine and Nott -are celebrated for their reformist role in creating a genuinely integrated MoD and enforcing jointness. In the US it took herculean struggle by two pro-active politicians, Senator Goldwater and Congressman Nichols, to bring about radical security reform through an act of the US Congress.

Is it possible that Rajnath Singh could be India's man of the hour?

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(Courtesy: *The Indian Express*, (E-paper Editions), 13 June, 2019)

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It is bad enough that the world in which we live has so much deprivation of one kind or another (from being hungry to being tyrannized); it would be even more terrible if we were not able to communicate, respond and altercate.

- Amartya Sen

became that country's president. However, the resolve and restraint demonstrated by the Indian leadership ensured that the more abiding strategic gain accrued to India. The global community led by the USA admonished the Pakistani military for its adventurism against a nuclear backdrop and commended New Delhi for its prudence in the face of grave provocation. One may even aver that the manner in which India conducted itself over Kargil burnished its profile as a 'responsible' nuclear power and laid the foundation for the Bush-Manmohan Singh nuclear rapprochement that was concluded in the fall of 2008.

Kargil was a case of India being 'surprised' and this had happened earlier in October 1962 in relation to China and the brief border war that followed. Thus in the immediate aftermath of the July victory, the Vajpayee government set up a Kargil Review Committee led by the late K Subrahmanyam (father of the current Foreign Minister S Jaishankar) and its principal recommendation was that the higher defence management of India and the intelligence grid of the country needed a major review and revamp. However, it is a matter of deep concern that the Kargil Committee report submitted in the summer of 2000 and its many recommendations remain mired in political stasis. Thus, 20 years later, the higher defence structure of India and the re-wiring of the intelligence network of the country remain relatively unchanged. The only major change that has been effected in Modi 2.0 is that the National Security Adviser has been accorded cabinet rank and has become the de facto single point security czar of the country.

But 20 years after Kargil, the tangible military capacity of the country and the quality of the intelligence apparatus and the skillset of its myriad operatives remains well below the required median. The 26/11 terror attack on Mumbai in late 2008 is illustrative of this abiding chink in the national armor. The modernization of the Indian military remains woefully unaddressed and it is part of the parliamentary record that the country does not have adequate war fighting inventory by way of ammunition and relatively modern platforms. Acquisitions are piecemeal and the military as an institution is being relegated by way of its institutional relevance.

The just announced budget highlights the fiscal resource constraint that bedevils the national security aspiration. India's trans-border military capability is predicated on the technological index of its air force and navy. In this financial year, the air force has been allotted a capital budget of Rs 39,302 crores while its committed liabilities are Rs 47,413 crores.

For the navy the comparable figures are Rs. 23,156 crores and Rs. 25,461 crores. In other words, the current financial allocation for the military will only enable payment for that inventory which has already been committed to and no significant new induction is possible. This is the grim reality of how bare the Indian military cupboard is - 20 years after Kargil.

(Courtesy: 'South Asia Monitor' July 15, 2019)

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TRANSLATION AS CREATIVE LITERATURE

Dr.(Mrs.) Prema Nandakumar

We are right now living in a world that has certainly shrunk in many ways. Gone are the days when our earth spaces seemed vague stretches of land and spreading sheets of water including unimaginable areas. Such is the scientific advancement that we know almost exactly earth's area. However, the speeding up of communications has not been paralleled by a matching integration and mutual familiarity with cultural values. Apart from a handful of scriptures or authors of each country, what do we really know of the nations that exist in this world? And yet, a wider understanding of one another could make the people of the world reflect on the need to live in loving togetherness, make them recognise that mutual suspicion and the arrogance of pride did never bring happiness to man in his limited span of life. If at all we do not feel utter strangers to one another at the intellectual level, it is because of a few common denominators like the Bible, the Gita, Shakespeare and Dante Alighieri.

Within our nation, again, we encounter a like problem. There has been a tremendous coming together in this century that an old lady in a Tamil village doesn't feel really astonished when Bengalis or

I want to work towards the restorative ethics of the basic political process, the possibilities of change, the very idea of change, the prospects of turning what is currently the crisis of change into a real challenge of change which is taken on in the full spirit of transformative and emancipatory politics.

- Rajni Kothari

Punjabis stroll around the ancient temple in her place. In the same manner, with effortless ease she plans her travels all over India. No more the need to go by cart and trudge distances for days without end. She can just pay for a seat in a tourist bus and then go on a Bharat Darshan. But the language problem is never overcome. Some brief, utilitarian words, yes. But she is quite ignorant of the nuances of her neighbour's language (and the vast literature represented by it), even as the neighbour cannot comprehend Tamil. For all its political unity and basic cultural oneness, India is still a compartmentalised structure divided by several languages.

This compartmentalisation is a fact of constant regression even for the educated young persons in the Indian society. What do we really know of the rest of Indian literature except a few books that have received a national prize? Even here, it is mostly titles. Handicapped by the linguistic curtain, we are ignorant of the parallel trends that exist in other Indian literatures. Thus our view of Indian literature is necessarily fragmented.

And yet, in India, literature in translation has now speedily become a genre of its own. There is a happy mass in this area and translation has even transcended the mere utilitarian value of communication and has become as an instrument to produce creative literature. For instance, when we read Tamil translations of Vyasa's *Bhagavad Gita* by Subramania Bharati, Maxim Gorky's *Mother* by T.M.C. Raghunathan and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Ananda Math* by Mahesh Kumar Sharma (the pen name of Kuppuswami Iyer), we feel that we are reading original works of creative exuberance and realise that they are translations only because of the unfamiliar names.

It is undeniable that a fine translation enters the realm of creative literature. Ah, the Cinderella of translation gets transformed into the Princess of creative writing!

There are many aspects to translation: the theory and practice of translation, translation that is actually a transcreation most of the time, the experiences of seasoned translators and novices in the field, the problems encountered by translators, the use of translation in the classroom and of course, the

unenviable task of translating from and into English where we have to transcend linguistic and cultural problems as well as a certain colonial mind-set that colours the ink flowing from the pen of translators. As far as I am concerned, it has been a fulfilling experience in several ways.

Can translation be taught? Yet, it has to be taught and learnt because teaching English literature in the Indian classroom becomes difficult as we are unable to place the text in the background of a Western experience. An increasing lethargy at the library level (and how can we blame anybody in this age of the visuals led by the tyranny of the television?) keeps the Indian student unaware of the political and social history that gave rise to the English language and literature as we know it. In this context, the English teacher in the Indian classroom becomes a translator of words, phrases, idioms and ideas.

In a world that is becoming increasingly global, translations from Indian languages into English has also become a necessity. The recent spurt in Dravidology has given a fillip to translations from Tamil into English. There is also the need for translations from one Indian language to another to keep the integral nature of our land firm and safe from fissiparous tendencies. Hence, in the same breath when we hail the emergence of translated works as creative literature, we also need to make the art of translation a class room subject.

The Indian classroom has certain disabilities. At the collegiate level, English is used widely but at the school the student often takes the choice of the local medium and has no need to burden himself with extra care in learning the English language or its literature properly. Yet, when he comes to the college he finds that this 'language of opportunity' (B.N. Pattanayak) is irreplaceable as his local medium cannot supply him with standard text books and reference volumes, a wider variety of reading matter associated with the subject, and can be of no help if he wishes to go abroad for higher studies.

At one time Sanskrit or Persian was the language of opportunity. B.N. Pattanayak describes the language of opportunity as "one which can serve as the means to gain access to modern knowledge in various fields

Perhaps, the most impressive part of India's ambitious economic reform programme is the smoothness with which the transition from a closed, protected economy to an open export-oriented economy has occurred.

- P.V.Narasimha Rao

including those of science and technology, is rich in registers so that it can be used to discuss a very wide range of subjects, and which can be effectively used in a large number of formal and semi-formal contexts.”

At a time when the English language has become so important to the Indian student, it becomes necessary to teach him the language not only as a tool but as a pliant helper to do his job with ease and grace, so that out of the mass of translations, there would be a core volume of literature that has lasting value. How are we to do it when around us whirls the hoarse cry of the falling standards in English?

The answer for this problem does not lie in thrusting the language of opportunity down the child’s throat at the school level for psychologically the best way to begin one’s learning process is through one’s mother tongue. Only, when the student rises to the collegiate level, should he be aided to master the language of opportunity without sacrificing the language of his natal culture. In this twin-language experience lies also the strength of the Indian classroom. If we go about in the right manner, what appears as a problem at the time of the medium transition at college will turn out to be a blessing.

Generally at the time of transition we tend to go over to the language of opportunity totally and neglect almost completely the language that was learnt at school. This is an incalculable wastage of the learner’s intellectual make-up. On the contrary, if we are able to strike a balance and continue to treat the two languages as the two eyes on our face, infinite good would result. The roots will not be disturbed nor the flowering impaired. That way, the Indian student emerging from his graduation would have laid strong foundations in the mastery of a Source Language and a Target Language. The rest would come with experience.

Actually, with the Indian’s innate genius to master languages (the great editor, A.N. Sivaraman had mastered seventeen languages and may be termed as an exception; but experience has taught me that mastering half a dozen languages is nothing unusual

for Indians), the student at the collegiate level must involve himself with one other Indian language. I find that it is because of this lack of interest in learning another Indian language that Tamil writing remains neglected in other Indian languages.

In a multilingual society like India, languages (and hence literatures) apart from the mother-tongue and the language of opportunity cannot be ignored if the teacher wishes to give the student a feel of the Indian culture. It is, of course, humanly impossible to learn all the languages but it is not very difficult to gain a clear idea of the identities and differences among the different linguistic groups if we seek at least one or two Indian languages to supplement our mother tongue.

Admittedly, a translation cannot convey the original in toto. But because of an integral cultural background that is the same for people all over India, it is quite possible to project almost entirely what is in one Indian language into another language. This background is provided by our Vedic, Upanishadic and Itihasic heritage. In fact such an integral background for the vast Indian sub-continent was made possible only through translation. It was thanks to the innumerable translations and adaptations of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata that an Indian is no stranger in any part of this big country. Translation definitely helps towards a wider vision of the world around which is the basic requirement for any humanistic view of life.

How then can translation be made to play a significant role in the Indian classroom? There are no simplistic answers to such a question. The aim should be that when teaching the English language (or when using the English medium), our students should not jettison their mother tongues and become foreigners in their own motherland. At the same time students using their mother-tongue should not be compartmentalised in a hermetically sealed linguistic dungeon. By encouraging the use of the two languages in conjunction, and introducing a third with ease, the teacher can certainly find easier ways of comprehension for the student in the classroom.

The Indian classroom ought to encourage an “active partnership between English the developed language and the developing languages (which) will be very healthy for the growth of Indian languages”.

This would help English in India as well and save it from the fate of becoming a degraded tool of diminishing efficiency. As A.K. Biswas has said:

“Languages, hundreds of dialects and the related cultures are our `eyes`; English could only be a window or mirror. It is the `eye` or the insight which enabled Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan to popularise English in India and without which anglicised young men of India would merely indulge in using English slangs and blindly ape some rootless, flotsam variety of Western behavioural pattern. To ensure intimate and fruitful association between English on the one hand and the Indian culture and languages on the other, we must immediately ban all English-medium schools (as Gandhi suggested) which are the breeding grounds for the affluent snobs.”

While we need not be detained by the drastic and doubtful remedy suggested by Biswas, we cannot deny the truth in his basic premise. The situation obtaining today is best reflected by D.P. Pattanayak:

“In a country like India, the question is not whether English or Indian languages but English and Indian languages ... Those who speak of throwing English into the Indian ocean and those who wish to enthrone it as the exclusive language in India are equally blind to the ethos of multilingualism.”

Now to the practicalities of the situation. How do we use the instrument of translation for enriching the Indian classroom at the collegiate level? Be it literature, history, economics, science or technology, the Indian classroom has to have a double vision. The student should have access to books in both the languages so that his native intelligence would draw the most from what is taught in the classroom. Even if there are no translations available, the teacher should be one who can communicate with ease in English and the mother tongue. There is certainly nothing regressive if the Professor teaching Shakespeare in a class takes the trouble of referring to Shakespearean

appreciation in the Indian languages and to translations and adaptations of the Bard of Avon in Tamil or Telugu. Shakespeare is not merely dates, Anne Hathaway and the Dark Lady of the Sonnets. Shakespeare in the Indian classroom is also the dramatist who has inspired the Indian writer in several ways. For instance, if a translation of Shakespeare's Macbeth (say, the version of K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, 1961) is brought to the notice of the classroom, the very induction of the mother-tongue sharpens audience-awareness of the drama. Prospero, Ferdinand and Miranda cease to be shadowy figures to the student who psittacises a few questions and answers for passing the examination. These Shakespearean characters become part of our everyday experience when the Professor can put up a translation of value beside the original. Thus Macbeth on the contemplated crime:

“If it were done when ‘tis done, then ‘twere well
It were done quickly. If th’ assassination
Could trammed up the consequence, and catch,
With his surcease, success; that but this blow.
Might be the be-all and the end-all here --
But here upon this bank and shoal of time --
We’d jump the life to come.”

Though this is not a literal translation and even contains several imaginative extensions, the native accents of Tamil do make the understanding of the play easier. Apart from introducing translations, the teacher would do well to guide the student in terms of contemporary linkage. As how near Shakespeare is to our world-view; and yet often, how far, far away.

By bringing the classroom close to the language and culture in which the student lives, boredom is easily banished from the classroom. The student gains a life-long awareness of the basic unity of creation and of the widening frontiers of knowledge.

Above everything else, the recourse to on-the-spot translation when dealing with seemingly familiar but trickily identical words in English can help avoid misunderstandings. With a due sense of responsibility I would like to point out that there is a percentage (mercifully small, I hope!) of English teachers who assume that they know what they do not, never having

tried to understand the precise meaning of English words by immediately comprehending them in terms of their mother-tongue. When an assistant Professor in a leading Tamil Nadu college assures her class that 'cultivation' and 'civilisation' are interchangeable terms, and that baseball is only another version of football, it is time for us to think of remedial aids for the English classroom. For, as Socrates says in his last words, "to use words wrongly and indefinitely is not merely an error in itself; it also creates an evil in the soul."

Apart from a good English-to-English dictionary for this particular case, one could recommend an English-to-Tamil or English-to-Telugu dictionary and even the teaching of the text with an appropriate translation in Tamil. Teach English in Tamil/Telugu! One may gasp. But why run away from the realities of the situation?

When the roles are somewhat different, when the class-teaching is conducted in the regional language, in view of the global reality, it is best the student is drawn to the language of opportunity (English in this case) through attractive translations and encouraged to improve his linguistic skills. Immediately a whole set of questions assault us. How do we decide which is the best translation to recommend? In the absence of a translation, what should be our criteria for preparing a translation?

Fifty one years ago when I began my career as a translator with the book, *Bharati in English Verse*, I had been assailed by several doubts. Should my translation be loose or close? Free or literal? Paraphrase or metaphor? Today, I look back down the arches of the years and can only ruefully smile that I have not been able to fix for myself a firm credo. But throughout it has been an infinitely enriching experience, a constant challenge to wrestle with and gain a sense of joyous fulfilment.

This applies to the reader of a translation as well. Whatever the style, as long as it is not bad grammar, a translation is always a helpful instrument to gain a wider understanding of the world around us. To the Tamil student of Chittirappavai, my translation

however imperfect can yet lead him to the vistas of Henry James's fiction because of the title I have chosen for the translation: *Portrait of a Woman*. From Akilon's *Portrait of a Woman* to Henry James' *Portrait of a Lady* is a logical step. And then comes the wider understanding with the student's own immersion in Akilon and James. As K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar puts it:

"Between these two novels, however, there is the stretch of almost a century, striking differences in the social, intellectual and moral climate, and differences in technique and style as well. But one as much as the other is the story of a tragic misalliance, and equally Isabel and Anandi go through the fire and brimstone of unconscionable suffering before they can hope to come out of the pit that is, partly at least, of their own contriving."

To ask the student himself to take up translation would be a good investment for the future. If our regional languages should flourish in a healthy manner, we must produce books on all subjects: standard books, fanciful books, inspirational books. Of the students who learn today to toddle in the classroom by their attempts at translating history, economics, politics or literature, a few at least might gain stability and achieve speed by the time they settle down in a job. Then they would be unable not to translate: that anxiety to persevere and succeed is the only way to enrich our intellectual treasury.

Yes, just as the student learns his trade, ethics and morality in the classroom, it were wisdom to learn the art of translation also in the classroom. The classroom itself would then shed much of its pontifical dullness since the teacher and the taught would be engaged in an exploration of new vistas presented by the different languages and their cultures. By and by they will come to realise that they were studying two distinct things united at one end, that the whole of man's moral universe is as much a solid mandala as the physical universe is, and that no man is an island. That way lies the future of peace to be shaped by the students of today.

* * *

To be conservative is to prefer the familiar to the unknown, to prefer the tried to the untried, fact to mystery, the actual to the possible, the limited to the unbounded, the near to the distant. Like classical liberalism, conservatism is a child of the Enlightenment.

Michael Oakeshott

CORPORATE JUSTICE AND LEGAL CHALLENGES

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Justice in any form, corporate or otherwise, fundamentally cannot ignore the constitutional mandate of the rule of law.

The term “Corporate Justice” consists of two words- “corporate” and “justice”. What do they stand for? I am sure most of you would have heard of the term “justice”. What does it really mean? Where is it defined?

As lawyers, we have the habit of looking for definition of concepts under statutes. But there is no statute that defines “justice”. What about the mother of all statutes- the Constitution of India?

Interestingly, while the Constitution does not define the term “justice”, it does contain a provision that mandates the Supreme Court of India to do “complete justice”. Indeed, Article 142(1) of the Constitution of India reads:

“The Supreme Court in the exercise of its jurisdiction may pass such decree or make such order as is necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before it, and any decree so passed or order so made shall be enforceable throughout the territory of India in such manner as may be prescribed by or under any law made by Parliament and, until provision in that behalf is so made, in such manner as the President may by order prescribe.” (emphasis supplied)

Is Article 142 the reason because of which judges are called Justices? Well, not really. But, what does one make of Article 142. Do we have adequate understanding of the term “justice”? If not, what do we make of “complete justice”?

Since neither the statutes nor the Constitution defines “justice”, we will perforce need to turn to other sources to find meaning of the term “justice”. Perhaps legal scholars and philosophers can help us.

One of the most famous names in the field is that of Professor John Rawls. He wrote a book called *A Theory of Justice*. Please take careful note of the title- “a” theory of justice, not “the” theory of justice. Implicit in the title is that there could be several competing theories.

While Rawls propounded a slightly nuanced theory which has stood the test of time, I wish to jump to our own, venerable Professor Amartya Sen who wrote a book titled – *The Idea of Justice*.

Again, please note the title – despite the usage of the definitive “the”, it is implicit that there could be several competing theories as “the” is followed by “idea”. There could be several ideas.

In *The Idea of Justice*, Professor Amartya Sen speaks about three hypothetical persons – Anne, Bob and Carla fighting for a flute on the following grounds:

Anne :

“She is the only one of three who knows how to play it”

Bob :

“He is the only one among the three who is so poor that he has no toys of his own”

Carla :

“She has been working diligently for many months to make the flute with her own labour... and just when she had finished her work... these expropriators came along to try to grab the flute away from [her]”

Professor Sen points out that since there could be competing claims about “justice” – with each claim being equally forceful – sometimes it may be useful to focus upon “injustice” rather than “justice”. As an instance, he indicates, as you may guess from Sen’s work, that no one would disagree that poverty and deprivation are instances of “injustice”.

But, would that solve our problem? If we don’t understand “corporate justice”, could we make any sense of “corporate injustice”?

Perhaps Bhopal gas disaster would come to our mind. Nobody could contest that Bhopal case was an instance of corporate injustice – and, we have still not been able to compensate the victims!

But, surely not all corporates are Union Carbides. Unless corporates serve a useful function in the society, why does law allow it to survive?

Since the economic reforms of 1991, India has consistently managed to increase its rate of growth and has lifted millions of poor people out of poverty. While there is still a lot of work left to do in this project for eradication of poverty, rest assured that without the helping hand of corporates rising the rate of growth, the task would be impossible.

So, the lesson probably is that corporates could be good for the society as well as bad for the society – not very different from individuals – who could equally be either good or bad or in most cases, a mean of the two extremes.

I wish to take a step back now – while we could make some sense of “justice” through Professor Sen, we sort of jumped a step while looking at “corporate justice” – what, after all are “corporates”? Is it a defined term?

The Companies Act, 2013 deals with companies but does not define the term “corporate”. Ironically, the administrative ministry implementing the company law is called “Ministry of Corporate Affairs”.

There is a statute, however, that throws some light on the meaning of “corporate” – the Competition Act, 2002 while defining a “person” states that the term “person” includes “anybody corporate incorporated by or under the laws of a country outside India” indicating that the term “corporate” denotes an artificial juridical entity.

How have these corporates influenced the dispensation of justice? There are three visible trends in this context.

First, since usual court set up leads to lots of delays, there has been increased emphasis upon arbitration as a form of dispute resolution.

Second, since a lot of pending cases at the trial court level, there has been increasing tribunalization – a lot of new tribunals have been set up to ensure that

corporates have an alternative forum, - outside of the legal system for the common people.

Third, there is increasing emphasis upon self-regulation in so far as corporates are concerned.

While the first and the third may be benign, the second trend could be fraught with problems. And, indeed the increasing tribunalization in the form of setting up of National Company Law Tribunal has become a reality.

But, we shouldn't get lost in the maze of litigational challenges. After all, even within the Companies Act, 1956 didn't we have separate forum in the form of Company Law Board? The specialized High Court benches terms as “Commercial Courts” – Have they not become a reality today?

What is the rationale behind such a differential treatment for corporates? Is it in accordance with justice? Or, is that unjust?

There is another constitutional mandate that requires some attention in this context – that of Article 14 of the Constitution of India. It states, quite tersely, the following:

“The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India”.

In common parlance, Article 14 embodies the notion of the “rule of law” – be ye ever so high, the law is above you!

Through a short – cut method for corporates, is Article 14 being violated?

The answer could be complicated. After all, Article 14 does allow unlike cases to be treated unlike. For instance, reservation is allowed for socially and educationally backward classes. But, would the same logic hold for corporates?

Is this Ann, Bob and Carla's flute problem mentioned by Professor Amartya Sen being played all over again?

Regardless of whether a differential treatment for

Communication is a matter not of speaking but of making people speak. Information involves not knowing but making people know.

Jean Baudillard.

corporates is in accord with the mandate of Article 14 of the Constitution of India, the point to be noted is that justice in any form, corporate or otherwise, cannot ignore the constitutional mandate of the rule of law.

In Professor Sen's terminology, discrimination which is not in accordance with Article 14 of the Constitution would not merely be unconstitutional but also "unjust".

* * *

A SEASON OF BIOPICS: ARTIST AS LEADER - III

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Pundits in Viswamitra's Court

Soon after Independence, as part of nation-building efforts, Government of India set up the three National Academies of Literature, Music and Dance, and Fine Arts which go by the names of Sahitya Akademi, Sangeet Natak Akademi and the Lalit Kala Akademi. States including Andhra Pradesh followed suit. Many of these akademis were ravaged by internal conflicts, and allegations and counter-allegations. Narla Venkateswara Rao the eminent journalist and litterateur was commissioned by the NTR Government to inquire the functioning of the Akademies, and his report was quite damning. There were far too many Akademies, eleven as compared to the three National Akademies, and most of them failed to promote the objective for which they were established. Acting on the report of Narla, NTR wanted a single focal point in the State for the propagation of Telugu culture in its entirety, and hence merged the Sahitya (Literature), Sangeetha (Music), Nataka (Drama), Nritya (Dance) and Lalitha Kala (Fine Arts) Akademies, International Telugu Institute and Telugu Bhasha Samithi with the Telugu University. The merger of the Akademies with the University was widely resented by the artistic communities, particularly by artists who occupied

important positions in the Akademies and wielded the power of patronage. The merger was dubbed as an anti-democratic act as the governing bodies of the Akademies had elected representatives of the artists.

Within a year of the establishment of the Telugu University, the Government of India appointed a high-powered committee to review the performance of National Akademies and the National School of Drama; the Chairman was P.N.Haksar, the famous Secretary to Indira Gandhi, and its members included K.V.Ramathan (KVR), a distinguished IAS officer and my former boss who these days is better known as father-in-law of Jairam Ramesh (those days Jayram Ramesh was known as KVR's son-in-law - such is the effect of Kala), and Dr. Premalata Sharma, eminent musicologist and Vice-Chancellor, Indira Kala Sangeet Vishwavidyalaya. One of the problems that the Committee had to consider was the deep internal conflict in the Lalit Kala Akademy (LKA), and the spate of allegations and counter-allegations of malpractices and irregularities. To jump the story ahead, the deliberations of the Committee did not put an end to the sorry state of affairs in LKA, and when I assumed office as the Secretary in the Department of Culture, Government of India about a decade later in 1997, I found that the management of the LKA had been taken over by the Government, and that one of my major tasks was to revise the Constitution of LKA, and hand over the management back to a newly constituted Governing Body. As I analysed the reasons for the internal conflict in LKA, the thought struck me that the fountainhead of creativity in visual art was supra-human sensibility and perception, extraordinary ego and self-esteem; the very elements which drive creativity also infuse a rebellious spirit, a propensity to shock, and seek *succès de scandale* in the belief that an artist gets a pass on bad behaviour. The meeting of the Haksar and his Committee members with NTR was during NTR's prime time, before dawn when he partook a heavy breakfast of Andhra specialties like pesarattu in the company of those who came to meet

By 2040 India may have a larger pool of highly educated workers aged 20 to 49 than China and its advantage will be increasing with every year.

Nicholas Eberstadt

him. That meeting was a lively scene from a hilarious comedy. NTR was in the midst of producing the film Brahamarishi Viswamithra, and he was literally inhabiting and living that role. In the breakfast meeting with Haksar, NTR waxed eloquent over Viswamithra, liberally embellishing the Viswamithra legend, and offering his own interpretation of that legend. In his long soliloquy, he described Viswamithra as the grandfather of India and rhetorically asked 'are we not descendants of Bharata, the son of Viswamithra and Menaka?' NTR insisted that Viswamithra was more learned than Vashishta, and worsted Vashishta in a debate on caste; he knew skills like the wielding of Kodanda (archery) which Vashishta did not know, and which he passed on to Rama. Strange but true, Haksar played the role of a courtier and said what would please his host rather than draw him into a serious discussion on the substantive issues under consideration of his Committee, elicit 'from the horse's mouth' the reasons for merging the Akademies with the Telugu University, and seek out NTR's views on the question whether a university could be an appropriate forum for cultural promotion. He failed to give due recognition to the fact that NTR was a distinguished cultural personality in his own right, and that the passion with which NTR was promoting Telugu culture was exemplary. As far as I could surmise, the only reason why Haksar did what he did was that he could not overcome the hubris of an intellectual who shared the contempt of Delhi sophisticates towards the provincials, and towards commercial and pauranic (mythological) films which in their view were archetypes of the commodification of culture. Whatever, no sooner when NTR finished his soliloquy, Haksar suddenly began to recite loudly the Gayathri Mantra, which legend has it was composed by Viswamithra; NTR was thrilled and launched another long soliloquy, this time on the Gayathri Mantra. The members of the Committee followed the cue given by the Chairman. NTR was in seventh heavens when KVR suggested to him that as an actor in Tamil films of yesteryears, it was only proper that he make the film Brahamarishi Viswamithra in Tamil

also. Thereupon NTR switched on to Tamil only to find that KVR broke into Telugu and made a great show of his knowledge of Andhra and the Telugu language which he acquired in the initial years of his service in Andhra before it was separated from the Madras Presidency. He described his first encounter with pesarattu in Machilipatnam, Krishna District where he was under training. As the gathering broke, KVR told NTR that I and Sanjeeva Reddy, NTR's Secretary, had earlier worked with him, and remarked *antha mana valle* (all are our people). NTR invited Haksar and his team to witness the shooting of Viswamithra, and to visit his dream child, the Telugu Lalitha Kala Thoranam, an auditorium he got built in the Public Gardens to screen films and stage cultural events. Those days, whenever I sat through meetings with NTR where he donned the garb of Viswamithra and attended to his official business, I would fall into a reverie. In keeping with that habit as NTR's meeting with Haksar and his entourage went on and on I fell into a reverie in which Brahamarishi Viswamithra was in his durbar seated on a throne. All his courtiers were in attendance; Haksar and KVR were visitors from faraway lands. Haksar was dressed in the traditional garb of a Kashmiri Pandit, and KVR was Tambrahm of yesteryears personified.

The Committee transacted its business next day in its meeting with me and the cultural personalities of the State. Haksar expressed his scepticism about the capability of a university to promote culture, and Premalata Sharma observed that a university has too rigid a structure to permit proper *riyaj* or *sadhana* (rigorous practice) necessary for proper transmission of *parampara* (cultural tradition). True to the civil service tradition of civil servants defending the decision of the Government they served, I mounted a strong defence of the decision to vest the functions of Akademies with the Telugu university. I observed that *ex-facie* there was no reason why a university could not be engaged in the promotion of culture the way Akademies were expected to. A university has three

It is quite true what philosophy says, that life must be understood backward. But then one forgets the other principle that it must be lived forward.

Soren Kierkegaard

overarching social missions: teaching, research and public service. In our country, universities do not give as much importance to the mission of public service as they ought to, and on its part, the public too does not expect that the universities should engage in public service other than teaching and research. This is not necessarily the case in all countries. In the United States, for example, the Land Grant Universities rendered yeoman service to farmers by disseminating good agronomic practices; the Agriculture Universities in our country which were modelled after Land Grant Universities are also engaged in the service of farmers. It was not that everything was hunky dory with Akademies, and elections to the governing bodies had been inducting factionalism in some Akademies. A few decades earlier, like Akademies, universities used to have an elected element in their governing bodies; however, it was noticed that elections to governing bodies were not conducive to good governance, and hence the selection through elections was given up in favour of nominating persons who were expected to be knowledgeable and public spirited. Unity of teaching and research was a key principle of the modern university, and what the Telugu University wanted to do was to add cultural promotion to teaching and research in language and culture; this was to be welcomed. If the elected element is removed, the governing body of an Academy is not much different from that of a university. Further, what is said about the undesirability of elections to university governing bodies applies equally well to Akademies. As to riyaj, I agreed with Premalata Sharma that music education in the university system is inferior to the traditional mode of learning from a Guru through gurukulavasa (living with Guru for long years); however, the traditional mode has almost vanished as a result of the forces unleashed by modernisation. Be that as it might be, riyaj is not relevant to the question under consideration, namely whether a university can discharge the functions of an Academy. I thought I made a good defence of the Andhra system; this, however did not appear to have

made any impression on the Committee for its Report made no mention of the Andhra system at all. There was also a lively discussion of the integration between culture and education, a favourite theme of Haksar. Ever the contrarian and eager to score a point by being different, I argued that while integration of education and culture was no doubt important, one should not ignore the fact that there were several educational streams, the educational stream in villages where enrolment and retention were major problems, the educational stream in towns comprising those who wished to fly from the lower middle class existence and whose only educational goal was to secure a seat in a professional college, and the educational stream of the elite. If culture is given a broad meaning as a way of life, the socialisation process does indeed transmit culture, particularly in the villages. If culture is taken to be high culture, one cannot ignore the fact that economic problems dominate the life of the poor; mankind, in the words of Marx, must first of all eat, drink and have shelter and clothing before it can pursue science, art, religion, politics etc., No doubt, I was flippant; however, my attitude was symptomatic of the fact that integrating education and culture, far from being a priority, did not figure in the agenda of Central and State education officials. As desired by the members of the Committee, I gave an overview of the various art forms in the State, and while doing so observed that the heyday of modern Telugu drama was in the 1950s when the Indian People's Theatre Association was active; thereafter it is in an anaemic state .

(Concluded)

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Riches suffocate - intellectual, material or spiritual if they are not used in the right way. In the home begins the disruption of the peace of the world.

SCHOOL EDUCATION NEEDS TO BE SCALED UP

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Chairman Investment Board

Apart from improving infrastructure, a massive overhaul of teacher training is a must to improve quality of education.

Bill Gates, in a restrained observation that ought to make us cringe, stated that his “biggest disappointment when it comes to India, is the education system. It should be far better.” Without reforming its educational system significantly, India will be a left behind country. China and even smaller nations like Vietnam (now a star for quality school education) have already pulled well ahead of India education-wise.

Nearly a decade after coming almost at the bottom of the heap in the OECD’s 2009+ PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) tests, India withdrew from future participation though this decision has been reversed. But we need not look to our performance in the PISA tests to tell us how badly off we are educationally. There is enough evidence from the nongovernment and government sources to show Bill Gates was spot on in his observation.

Pratham, a highly respected NGO, has, for some time now, been bringing out an ‘Annual Status of Education Report,’ or ASER, on educational attainments of children in rural India where much of India’s neglected young live. Shockingly, the ASER 2018 report brought out that only 73 per cent of class 8 children can read a 2nd standard textbook and only 44 per cent can solve a three digit by one digit numerical division problem correctly.

Most of India’s students are in classrooms which do not have the minimum required to ensure quality

education – good school buildings, well-trained, well-paid and motivated teachers with a record of being consistently present in class and being good at their job. Most of our schools also lack chairs and tables and adequate sanitary facilities to ease a day in school, especially for girls.

Is it any surprise then that only half of the millions who enroll in class one – even with the added incentive of midday meals – are still there at the upper primary level and even fewer go further up the educational ladder? The obfuscating data in the 2018 annual report of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) buries all this in a maze of statistical legerdemain that few can make any sense of. However, persistent trawling yields some alarming statistics.

Our educational planners and administrators have primed us to fail as a country in school education. The higher the classes the fewer the schools India has. Out of a total of 15 million schools at all levels, 55 per cent are at the primary level. Of the rest, 28 per cent are at the upper primary level dropping dramatically to 9.1 per cent at secondary and 7.3 per cent at higher secondary levels.

Enrolment, drop-out rates of the 260 million students enrolled in schools in 2016-17 at all levels, 49 per cent are in primary schools with only 25 per cent at the upper primary level. A mere 15 per cent or 39 million are at the secondary level and just 9.5 per cent or a little less than 25 million complete higher secondary. These dismal figures have only marginally improved since 2016 but they are still damning for a country of over 1.3 billion people.

With less and less schools to go to at higher school levels, it is not surprising that children drop out of education in such alarming numbers, giving India the dubious distinction of having the largest number of un-educated and undereducated young population in the world and it shows.

It is science which has brought forth the danger, but ultimately the real problem is in the minds and hearts of men.

Albert Einstein

The only way to break out of this cycle of lack of schools and high dropout rates is to accept that we need to significantly hike investment in school education, set up institutional mechanisms to rapidly increase the number of schools while ensuring their quality, and make education accessible to all from primary to higher secondary levels.

India does not have the luxury of developing altogether new school systems, but in the Kendriya Vidyalayas we have a fairly good, but by no means outstanding - model to adopt and adapt. It is also the most extensive school system in the country, covering over 1.3 million children through over 1,200 schools and it is very scalable.

Presently these schools cater mostly to children of government officials, providing a uniform quality of education from the 1st to the 12th standard across the country. Given the will, this system can be scaled up to cover all the children in the country – an educational equivalent of the GST, accommodating State-to-State variations. Of course, there will be costs.

According to figures put out by the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, the cost of educating one student in the Kendriya Vidyalaya system is approximately Rs.35,000 per year. Thus an additional educational budget of around 54-lakh crore should cover 100 million most-in-need children annually, including those who now drop out of education at various stages of schooling. The amount required is in addition to the 194,000 crore allocated at the Central and around 2.5-lakh crore spent at the State level.

Educational emergency : We would do well also to declare an educational emergency since deficiencies in education is affecting our country in every area from job creation to defence. For a start it would be a good idea to dismantle the moribund MHRD at the Centre and the education departments in States and replace them by a result oriented authority that will do

for school education what ISRO has achieved for us in space or the Atomic Energy Commission has in the nuclear field.

No offer of a universal basic income package, or sops of any kind, including the un-implementable RTE, will make up for the educational deficit that the country has been accumulating over several decades making it uncompetitive while condemning it to languish in a lower middle income backyard.

The New Education Policy (NEP) draft recognises much of what has been stated here. These include the urgency for a deep reform of school education, including the need to go in for a massive overhaul of teacher training and force a radical shift in pedagogical methodologies and learning outcomes. It even envisages an authority headed by the Prime Minister to oversee the implementation of the New Education Policy

The present NDA Government is in a strong position to dramatically change India's dismal school education scene for the better over the next five years. It can do so by making it possible for all those entering school every year to be able to complete their 12th standard. This is a strategic necessity no less than the aircraft carriers and fighter planes we are procuring. The money, if we look hard enough, is available. What we need is the political will.

* * *



So long as the human heart is strong and the human reason weak, royalty will be strong because it appeals to diffused feeling and republics, weak because they appeal to the understanding.

Walter Bagehot (17)

Fabled Chandernagore

Prof. Sachidananda Mohanty

Member, Governing Board, Auroville Foundation,
Former Vice Chancellor,
Central University of Orissa and
Former Prof. and Head, Department of English,
University of Hyderabad

If there was one metaphor that has lent character over millennia to the Indian experience, it must surely be the idea of the sacred spot as a site of pilgrimage. Not surprisingly, tourism, as conventionally understood, appears to be a Western import. In modern times, the recovery of the idea of the sacred spot has been typically by western spiritual travelers to India such as Sister Nivedita, Aldous Huxley and Paul Brunton. We seem to take our own uniqueness for granted. We have turned our back to the sites and habitats, the cradle of our freedom movement and our civilization.

* * * *

For the followers of Sri Aurobindo, no place or site is more precious than the former French colony of Chandernagore. It is here that He spent more than a month before sailing out to Pondicherry on 31 March 1910 on board the S.S. Duplex. Outwardly, a place of refuge and exile, Chandernagore was also the place for intense spiritual Sadhana. The letters Sri Aurobindo wrote to Motilal Roy from Pondicherry record the evolution of his spiritual life and the Yoga he was preparing to usher into the world.

Early efforts at venturing to Chandernagore were not very successful. Some of my Bengali students from Chandernagore were less enthused about their home town than me. Clearly time had taken its toll and much had changed in the French enclave from the pre-independence times. Perhaps it was not the young but the town planners and custodians of local culture that were to blame for the growing erasure of cultural memories from the public mind. The mention of the intrepid Kanailal evoked the name of the Biplabi among the students. Many of the local schools and institutions sported the names of the legendary personalities of the town. And thus there is the Kanailal Vidyamandir, Sri Aurobindo Vidyamandir and the Prabartak Sangha. But Chandernagore was not part of the national antennae, no longer the source of inspiration to millions as it was during the Freedom Struggle.

An opportunity came my way in the late nineties thanks to the help of Sri Aurobindo Bhavan, Kolkata. I spent a memorable day in the place of my dream and imagination.

By the time my car reached Chandernagore, it was approaching noon; time for a quick history lesson! I recalled that the French came to Chandernagore for the first time in 1673. Obtaining permission from Ibrahim Khan, the then Nawab of Bengal, French Commander Deslandes commenced trade and business in Hooghly. The next year, the French had the permission to carry out duty-free business in Bengal, Bihar and Odisha. Soon, the town won recognition as a leading trade outpost reaching out to Basra, China, Pegu, Jedda and Tibet.

A major Indigo plant was established in the town by Louis Bonnard. The prosperous Indian cloth merchant Balakrishna Ghosh had his origin here. Well known Indian entrepreneurs in drug and chemical industry had close association with Chandernagore. The town changed hands with the British in March 1757; it was possessed by the French through a treaty; lost again to the British in 1794. Eventually the enclave was ruled by the French from 1816 to 1950 who left a legacy in terms of institutions like Ecole de Saint Mare, a convent for the welfare of women set up by Alfred Curjon. Locals contributed to the war effort during the first war of 1914-18. Mahatma Gandhi visited the Pravartak of Motilal Roy in 1925 and in 1927. On 2 October 1955, Chandernagore merged completely with India.

I visited the Relics Center of Sri Aurobindo, a little distance from the River Ghat, and offered floral tributes; the plaque aptly commemorates Sri Aurobindo's sojourn at Motilal Roy's residence. A narrow stairway leads to Sri Aurobindo's room where he lived incognito. The house is an ancient one and appeared to be renovated recently with a coat of paint. Thank God, the building was in safe hands of the devout.

A little distance lay the Ashram of the Prabartak Sangha, founded by Motilal Roy. The place is in a state of decline, the buildings in bad conditions. With the founders gone, and patronage in question, the place is a poor image of its earlier self, useful as a shelter for widows and the destitute.

In politics there is no morality, only expediency.

Lenin

Motilal Roy was both a revolutionary leader and a spiritual seeker in close touch with Sri Aurobindo. In a letter dated 6 March 1912, C.J. Stevenson-Moore, Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal, wrote to the Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department in revealing terms of the state of affairs in Chandernagore :

The Government of India are well aware of the history of the political movement in Chandernagore during the past three years, and it will suffice to recapitulate the leading facts in brief. In 1908, the attempt which was made in the life of Monsieur Tardival Maire of Chandernagore was undoubtedly the work of the revolutionary party. Two of the members of the Manicktolla gang, Kanai Lal Dutt and Upendra Nath Banerjee were residents of Chandernagore.

The report concluded by stating ominously that Noni Gopal Mukerji who was arrested for the attempted bomb outrage at Writers' Buildings, 'confessed that he had acted at the instigation of Narendranath Banerji of Chandernagore and was in fact the tool of the Chandernagore gang, the leading members of which were Sirish Ghose, Moti Lal Roy, Charu Chandra Roy and Basanta Banerjee, all closely allied to the Manicktolla gang'.

It is worth recalling in this context the words of Motilal Roy:

One morning, probably towards the close of the month of Magha, as I was starting for my place of business after breakfast, a friend [Srischandra Ghosh] called me aside and said, 'Have you heard of the sensational occurrence?' I looked up in surprise. Sensational occurrence meant at this time, some political event of gruesome nature. Over and above, a high police official, named Samsul Huda [Alam] had recently been murdered in the High Court of Calcutta. I anxiously waited to hear if there were some more events. My friend added, 'Aurobindo Babu has made his entry into Chandernagore. He may even have gone by now. What a pity the matter should end so discreditably!'

I could not catch his meaning and thought that he might have come on some errand. What was wrong in it if he had left, I reflected. But what the friend said in one breath made me apprehend that Aurobindo Babu had run away from Calcutta to Chandernagore and

that the gentleman whose shelter he had sought [Charu Chandra Roy], having refused it, he had probably to go back.

I further heard that Sri Aurobindo had informed his old friend at four o'clock in the morning. It was nearly six o'clock now....

Here is a rare glimpse of the intense yoga- sadhana the whole group had in the company of their Guru in a surcharged atmosphere :

The whole noon used to be devoted [by Sri Aurobindo] to the teaching of yoga. I still can recollect a discussion about the divine principle, enmeshed in a quadruple sheath. He discoursed ecstatically about Vasudeva, Sankarshan, Prodyumna and Aniruddha, and I listened with rapt attention. On the subject of re-incarnation, he cited instances of the philosophic and practical types of manifestations, explaining in detail that Vyasa was the philosophic type and Sri Krishna the practical. He freely expounded the Upanishadic principles, too. I hardly have words to depict the joy with which we passed the noon-days.

* * * *

It is hard to fathom the real significance of the Chandernagore chapter in Sri Aurobindo's life and career. We can only draw attention to the letters He wrote to Motilal Roy which find place in the Autobiographical Notes. Readers will also benefit from the lesser known book, Light to Superlight, 'with explanatory notes by Arun Chandra Dutt and revealing annexure'.

The volume contains a useful foreword along with twenty six letters of Sri Aurobindo written during this period. The appendix containing six sections make compelling reading. In the foreword to the book, D.S. Mahalanobis declares:

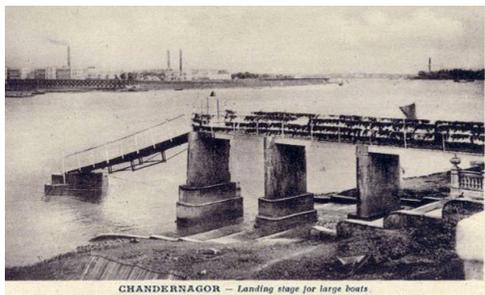
There are twenty six letters in this series, written between 1912 and 1921, all addressed to Sri Motilal Roy except the second one, which was to Anandrao. Sri Aurobindo's letters of this period are not only gripping of national interest to his countrymen but are of master importance to a greater humanity that could read in them the extraordinary evolution of a meteoric politician emerging out of his ten years' veil to become the renowned architect of The Life Divine. It may be helpful to unknowing readers better to understand the

Most people around the world still prefer U.S. leadership to the prospect of Chinese leadership.

Jessica Chen Weiss

situation in which he wrote these letters, with a little contextual preliminary background which we shall try to supply here briefly.

Chandernagore means many things to many people. Those interested in tourist spots may visit the Chandernagore River Ghats, along the banks of the Ganges. The Museum and the Institute, [Institute de Chandernagore] are home to a rare collection of art and artifacts, dating back to the French colonial period. There is the ancient Church, over two centuries old; the Nandulal temple built in 1740 by Indra Narayan Choudhury, and finally the Underground House (Patal Bari) where luminaries like Vidaya Sagar and Tagore stayed.



But for me, Chandernagore remains the fabled town, the quintessential spiritual site haloed by the footprints of Sri Aurobindo.

* * *

The New MBBS Curriculum – Will It Be Better?

Dr.Ravi Venkatachalam Chitrapu

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August 2019 will see the launch of a new curriculum for the thousands of bright and expectant students who would be entering the portals of medical colleges all over India. The last time the MBBS program was tweaked was in 1997 but the changes that followed then, were minor (it seems now) compared to the changes being envisaged now. The Medical Council of India (now superseded by a ‘Board of Governors’, and, which in all likelihood will be replaced by the National Medical Commission soon) has done a laudable and painstaking job of bringing of drafting the new MBBS curriculum and bringing out several guiding documents – a 3 volume list of competencies that the medical graduate has to learn, a supporting document for the medical teachers (Curriculum Implementation Support Program), a module to teach Ethics & Communication Skills, and, a Foundation Course module. In this article I propose to present a summary of the changes and my own viewpoint on the new syllabus.

Today an intellectual means a man who is intelligent enough to know on which side his bread is buttered.

1. A one month Foundation Course will mark the beginning of the MBBS program – besides providing the standard orientation to the medical course, it will provide training in computers, first aid, soft skills, ethics, professionalism, learning strategies/skills, etc. Some hours have also been allotted to sports and extracurricular activities and for those wishing to learn the local language or English.

My feeling is that the introductory sessions could have been restricted to a week or so and the rest of the skills (computers, ethics, soft skills, etc.) imparted concurrently with the medical subjects through the first year.

2. The training method is being changed to a ‘competency based system’ wherein the student has to learn the prescribed competencies in order to be declared ‘competent’ and promoted to the next stage/term. This would mean that if the student has not acquired some skills, they will have to undergo the training again till they are certified as competent. To this end, a full set of competencies/outcomes has been prepared for the entire MBBS curriculum and there are nearly 3000 of them. There have been a few complaints that certain subjects have been curtailed and some ‘topics’ not included, but this is a list of ‘core’ (essential) competencies only; moreover, the MCI has clearly stated that this is a ‘living document’ open to reviews and revision.

I concur that some competencies have to be revisited (some to be included and some to be down-graded). I also strongly feel that the committee should have made a more radical overhaul – in fact by revisiting the subjects taught and being tested. The clinical subjects being taught, and for which the student has to take a summative / final University examination, have largely remained the same since the beginning – ENT, Ophthalmology, Surgery, Medicine, Pediatrics, Orthopedics, Gynaecology, etc.

My argument is that ENT and Ophthalmology have become too specialized surgical specialities now and an MBBS doctor is unlikely to perform ENT / eye surgeries today – hence these subjects could have been clubbed with the general surgery examination rather than having two separate test papers for them. Or they can be clubbed with similar ‘smaller’ subjects like

Anesthesia and Radiology and mini-exams conducted.

Emphasis must be more on common disorders like infections, hypertension, diabetes, trauma, maternal / child health, etc. and more weightage /time given to these competencies; they could have added mini-assessments in these topics to certify competence.

3. The MCI has also prescribed the mode of training laying more emphasis on learner-centred, interactive/participatory, problem solving, small group teaching rather than rote learning. This indeed is a very good move and is expected to yield good educational results.

4. Early Clinical Exposure is another concept that is being advocated. All along, medical students learnt basic sciences of Anatomy, Physiology, etc. for 18 months and then visited hospitals to interact with patients and learn from them. The new syllabus includes hospital / PHC visit during the first year itself to learn how to talk to patients and elicit their history.

This is again a laudable move but, in my view, inadequate. The one or two hours of visit to the hospital as envisaged in the new document is barely enough to learn any skills. We must emulate the nursing education where, from the first day, the probationers work for about 5-6 hours every day and then go to classes in Anatomy, etc. This gives them good and graded practical training over 3 years.

We could have done the same for the medical students in the new curriculum, where they would be working in the hospital setting from Day 1, for increasing hours over the years (beginning with about 4-5 hours in the first year to 6-8 hours and even night shifts in the final year). This move would have a huge impact on learning the practical management of common problems and the students would feel more confident about treating patients – because currently, medical students are involved in actual treatment only in their one year internship. Asking them to work with patients during their entire training will enhance their communication and clinical skills greatly.

5. In a welcome move, a new AETCOM module (Attitude, ETHics, COMmunication) has been prepared to provide formal training throughout the entire 4 ½ year period. A carefully crafted module with sample cases for discussion, it should fill the current void of

not having any formal training in these skills. This training is to be imparted in a 2 hour session every fortnight in small groups of 20-30.

The only snag is that there is no formal exam for this and currently, student attendance is deemed sufficient. Hopefully, soon, some form of mandatory assessment will be prescribed.

6. 'Electives' is a new concept proposed in the new syllabus. Two months have been allotted wherein the student can choose any two subjects / departments, of their interests, to work in, and acquire specialized skills or do a small research project.

Again, a praiseworthy experiment, but the timing can be changed I feel. The board has suggested it in the middle of their 'final year' – soon after their ENT/SPM/ Ophthal exams and before the majors – Medicine, Surgery, etc. It may be better after the final exams in Medicine, when anyway they have to wait for 2-3 weeks for announcement of their results.

7. Skills labs have been mandatory in all medical colleges by the year end – these would have manikins and models for the students to learn / practise on, instead of having to learn on real patients (as happens currently). Of course, ethically and scientifically, it seems reasonable to have such labs and manikins but they are all quite expensive, especially for the specialized skills; I wonder if they are advisable in government hospitals where there is such a huge patient load which could easily provide more than adequate training opportunities to students.

Several other changes have been mooted, including integrated teaching (involving two or more departments), student log books and portfolios and self directed learning. The humanities as a learning module has been proposed but does not seem mandatory – it has been left to the discretion of the college.

Lastly, will the changes make a better MBBS graduate? Why is the MCI undertaking this change now? Several issues come to mind. Pedagogically speaking, the document is technologically sound on all its prescriptions to make a better primary care doctor. But while the national/MCI goal of making a competent doctor of first contact is laudable, does the

student share the same goal? Not really because today, MBBS has become a sort of intermediate education/ stepping stone to do an MD/MS postgraduate specialization later on. Very few stop at MBBS and even among them, mostly it is because they are shifting into another workspace – the IAS / IPS or hospital administration or pharma industry, etc. So while we visualize the MBBS as a system to give us doctors, the students see it as a step to specialization.

There is a more important and interesting news which few know of and which the MCI too doesn't seem to have made any public comment upon. The USA has announced that starting from 2023, foreign medical graduates will be allowed to enter the country, only if their medical college is accredited by an agency that is recognized by the World Federation of Medical Education. Hence there is an urgent need to align our medical syllabus on par with the global curriculum and put in place a system of accreditation by our NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council) which will then have to apply to the WFME for the necessary approvals.

I would end with another take on the health care system in India. We often hear that we don't have enough doctors and there is a mad rush to increase the number of medical seats and permit every health care system to practise modern medicine (allopathy). In my humble opinion, this is not true of the entire nation – the southern states seem to fare better in this regard. There is a highly skewed distribution of not only doctors, even hospitals and medical colleges. If the government is really interested in increasing access to medical care to all citizens, it should build new colleges / hospitals or relocate existing ones to needy regions, so that, there is one hospital every 60 to 80 km. Secondly, every doctor must compulsorily work in a rural hospital anywhere in the country where they are posted, for at least one year, irrespective of their specialization. That would greatly address the shortage of medical personnel. Lastly, if the government feels that dentists, AYUSH doctors, nurses are so much in excess that they can be transferred to the field of modern medicine, why don't we close our AYUSH and dental college or convert them to MBBS colleges?

In America every man is of the opinion that he has no social superiors, since all men are equal, but he does not admit that he has no social inferiors.

Bertrand Russell

The medical and health system needs a radical transformation and the new MBBS curriculum is but one very small step in that direction. Hopefully we will see other well meaning changes which are brought in, in the true interests of the people, and, without any vested interests.

(The views expressed in this article are my own and do not reflect those of either my institution, the MCI or the government.)

* * *

“Future generations will face the brunt of global warming”

(Newspaper report on a lecture-meeting on ‘Climate Change’ delivered by Prof. D.V.Bhaskara Rao, Former Head of the Department of Meteorology and Oceanography, Andhra University on June 20, 2019 organised by Centre for Policy Studies and Visakhapatnam Public Library)

Temperatures going up by 0.2°C per decade, warns expert.

Future generations would face immensely difficult living conditions unless urgent steps are not taken to combat global warming, warned D.V.Bhaskara Rao, retired professor of meteorology and oceanography at Andhra University.

“Future generations may have to live under more

complicated and challenging situations in view of global warming as rising temperatures pose multiple threats to human life,” Prof. Bhaskara Rao said.

In a lecture on climate change organised jointly by the Centre for Policy Studies and Visakhapatnam Public Library, Prof. Bhaskara Rao, Fellow of the Indian Meteorological Society, spoke on the effects of global warming which is leading to an increase in temperatures by about 0.2° per decade due to a rise in anthropogenic greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide.

Climate Changes

“The increase in CO² is due to burning of fossil fuels and rapid industrialization. The climate change has been responsible for a rise in sea levels and an increase in extreme weather events. The impacts are reflecting in the occurrence of stronger cyclones, intense local storms and a rise in droughts and floods,” he said.

He also explained how climate change affects the economies of different countries, helping the GDP of countries in colder regions to gain and countries in war tropical regions to shrink as the current warming helps the cool countries to spend less on CO² controls and gain from production whereas developing countries like India have to look for newer technologies for CO² reduction and spend more of their resources on combating the impact of climate change.

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