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MAHATMA GANDHI'S LEGACY *A beacon to India and the World*

“When communal unity possessed me I was a lad of twelve years. From my childhood up I have spent my life fighting and my struggle has been to extract good from evil,” wrote Mahatma Gandhi. It was no ordinary ‘struggle’ but a spiritual odyssey he embarked upon in quest of, among other things, liberation of India from colonial rule, eradication of untouchability and promotion of communal harmony. With unflinching faith in God and Satyagraha as his main weapon, Gandhiji led the non-violent freedom struggle climaxing in independence for India on August 15, 1947 and within six months the martyrdom of Mahatma.

As B.R. Nanda wrote ‘religion transformed Gandhi but he also transformed religion. Every religion, said the Mahatma, must be subject to the acid test of reason. The way to God is to see Him in His creation and be with it.’ He was firm in his belief that ‘politics bereft of religion is a death trap that would kill the soul.’ The master communicator perfected the art of explaining profound truths in simple words, in his writings and public speeches. Even his silence on every Monday conveyed a message. “God has chosen me as His instrument for presenting non-violence to India for dealing with her many ills. It is the supreme law. By it alone can mankind be saved. There is no God higher than Truth. Non-violence (ahimsa) and Truth (satya) are inseparable and pre-suppose one another,” he declared. Gandhiji became ‘the great bridge,’ observed Ernest Barker, ‘between the great Indian tradition of devout and philosophic religion and the western tradition of civil and political liberty in the life of the community.’

‘I am not a visionary. I claim to be a practical idealist. The religion of non-violence is not meant merely for the Rishis and saints. It is meant for the common people as well. Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute,’ wrote the Mahatma. To him, social transformation of the people was as important as emancipation from colonial rule. Often times the question whether the Mahatma was a saint or a politician is raised and debated. Gandhiji himself replied with characteristic humility and a touch of humour that while “most religious men I have met are politicians in disguise. I, however, who wear the guise of a politician am at heart a religious man.” Radhakrishnan referred to the Mahatma’s sense of humour: “Gandhiji had an unusual sense of humour, a certain light-heartedness, even gaiety which we do not associate with ardent religious souls. This playfulness was the outcome of an innocence of heart, a spontaneity of spirit.” Dr Francis Neilson wrote in his book that “Gandhi is unique, a Diogenes in action, a St. Francis in humility, a Socrates in wisdom.” Laurence Houseman, however, raised the doubt that confronted some. Presiding over a meeting, arranged in London in honour of Mahatma Gandhi, Houseman said: “Mr. Gandhi you are a strange man; you are so simple that you puzzle people; you are so honest that we doubt you.” Gandhiji went on fasts in Delhi and Calcutta to stem the tide of communal clashes. “With every breath I pray God to give me strength to quench the flames or remove me from this earth. I who staked my life to gain India’s independence, do not wish to be a living witness to its destruction. Death for me would be glorious deliverance rather than that I should be a helpless witness of the destruction of India, Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam,” he said. On August 15, 1947 when India was celebrating the advent of independence, the Father of the Nation was fasting and praying in a poor house in Calcutta. Forty seven days later on his last birthday on October 2, 1947 he said: “I do not wish another birthday to overtake me in an India still in flames.” The Mahatma’s desire was that whoever killed him should be forgiven. He had his wish fulfilled by uttering the word Ram when he shed his mortal coil. His body was consigned to the flames on the banks of the Yamuna on January 31. Eight Muslim workmen who were among those who built the funeral pyre said that the Mahatma was a true friend of the Muslims. ‘A Dalit shyly picked up a twig and placed it on the burning wood whispering, Gandhiji, bless me and my people.’

‘The legacy of Mahatma Gandhi will be a beacon to India and the world for centuries to come,’ said Jawaharlal Nehru. - The Editor

Scriptures cannot transcend reason and truth; they are intended to purify reason and illuminate the truth.

Mahatma Gandhi

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Mahatma Gandhi

1. The Gandhi story is inexhaustible like the Ramayana and Mahabharata combined, and like the epics it is equally amenable to revered study and mercenary exploitation. The Kavi and the Kapi merged and the Mahatma became Hanuman, the servant through time of the Eternal Master.

K.Swaminathan

2. “The Mahatma’s secret was the spirit. He believed that spirit is a reality. He trusted it as more potent than the sword. He lived in it as love in the midst of hate, as forgiveness in the midst of vengeance, as good in the midst of evil. The spirit which is God within the soul of man-this can overcome the world. Here was Gandhi’s secret which he called “truth”. In his own faith and practice he proved it to be true; and we must accept it if we would live. It is the atom bomb or Gandhi — choose ye this day which ye will serve!”

University of Chicago Round Table February 1, 1948.

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

Romain Rolland

“He is a social scientist because he follows social truth by the scientific method of observation, and intellectual hypothesis, and experimental test. He is not a mere scientist; he is a great scientist, in the realm of social truth. His greatness as a social inventor is shown by the close adaptation of his methods to the culture and modes of thought and feeling of the people and to their economic and technological resources.”

Richard Gregg

In 1896 Gandhiji visited Poona and learnt his first lessons in politics at the feet of Tilak and Gokhale. The former appeared to him, he said, like Himalayas – great and lofty, but unapproachable, while the latter appeared like the holy Ganges in which he could confidently take a plunge. In 1939, Gandhi has risen to the heights of Himavan but easily accessible and has fathomed the depths of the Ganga and is ever purifying .

Dr. B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya

“I do believe that, where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence. Thus when my eldest son asked me what he should have done, had he been present when I was almost fatally assaulted in 1908, whether he should, have run away and seen me killed or whether he should have used his physical force which he could and wanted to use, and defended me, I told him that it was his duty to defend me even by using violence. Hence it was that I took part in the Boer War, the so-called Zulu rebellion and the late war. Hence also do I advocate training in arms for those who believe in the method of violence. I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour than that she should in a cowardly manner become or remain a helpless witness to her own dishonor”.

Mahatma Gandhi

I have therefore ventured to place before India the ancient law of self-sacrifice. For Satyagraha and its offshoots, non-co-operation and civil resistance are nothing but new names for the law of suffering. The Rishis, who discovered the law of nonviolence in the midst of violence, were greater geniuses than Newton. They were themselves greater warriors than Wellington. Having themselves known the use of arms, they realized their uselessness and taught a weary world that its salvation lay not through violence but through non-violence.

Mahatma Gandhi

* * *

Mahatma Gandhi lives in the hearts of millions, and he will live for immemorial ages.

He was the greatest symbol of the India of the past and of the future.

Jawaharlal Nehru

‘A beacon to the generations to come.’

His death must bring home to us all the peril in which we stand from which the issue can only be won by following the precepts on which his whole life was founded. No one in modern history has exercised such influence over the minds of men by his individual strength of character, his purity of motive and selfless devotion to the cause in which he believed. I believe that like other prophets his greatest work is still to come.

Philip Noel-Baker

“India has become the symbol of a people freed from foreign rule, but in spite of continuing strife Mahatma Gandhi’s recent fast won deep respect for India. Never had his spiritual prestige and India’s risen so high in the USA as during the past month. Mahatma Gandhi’s death comes at a strategic moment and respect is increased to reverence for a martyr. Everything now depends upon the people of India. The world watches and waits

Pearls S.Buck

Mahatma Gandhi is essentially a man of religion. He can never think of any complete release from evil apart from God’s grace. Prayer is, therefore, of the essence of all his work. The very first requirement of one who is a Satyagrahi--a striver after Truth--- is faith in God, whose nature is Truth and Love. I have seen the whole course of his life changed in a few moments in obedience to an inner call from God which came to him in silent prayer. There is a voice that speaks to him, at supreme moments, with an irresistible assurance; and no power on earth can shake him when this call has come home to his mind and will as the voice of God.

C.F. Andrews

Freedom for Gandhi was not a mere political fact. It was a social reality. He struggled not only to free India from foreign rule but free her from social corruption and communal strife. “I shall work for an India in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country in whose making they have an effective voice; an India in which there shall be no high class and low class of people; an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony. There can be no room in such an India for the curse of untouchability or the curse of intoxicating drinks and drugs. Women will enjoy the same rights as men. Since we shall be at peace with all the rest of the world neither exploiting nor being exploited we shall have the smallest army imaginable. All interests not in conflict with the interests of the dumb millions, will be scrupulously respected. Personally I hate the distinction between foreign and indigenous. This is the India of my dreams.”

S. Radhakrishnan

Bapu has done a giant’s work for India and the world and even for our poor selves, and he has done it astonishingly well. And now it is our turn not to fail him or his memory but to carry on the work to the best of our ability and to fulfill the pledges we have so often taken.

Jawaharlal Nehru

“People who do not know Gandhiji personally and have only read his writings are apt to think that he is a priestly type extremely puritanical, longfaced, Calvinistic, and a killjoy, something like the ‘priests in black gowns walking their rounds.’ But his writings do him an injustice; he is far greater than what he writes, and it is not quite fair to quote what he had written and criticize it. He is the very opposite of the Calvinistic priestly type His smile is delightful his laughter infectious and he radiates light-heartedness. There is something childlike about him which is full of charm. When he enters a room he brings a breath of fresh air with him which lightens the atmosphere. He is an extraordinary paradox.

Jawaharlal Nehru

* * *

Praise feeds the fire of egoism and fogs faith.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

FOR A STABLE PEACE

Admiral Arun Prakash (Retd.)

Former Chief of Naval Staff
Ex-Chairman, National Maritime Foundation

Delhi must build power-balancing alliance, or come to honourable accommodation with China.

For reasons of national security as well as self-respect, India cannot continue to remain in a “reactive mode” to Chinese provocations and it is time to respond in kind.

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru has been rightly excoriated for his government’s nonchalance in the face of stealthy Chinese incursions into eastern Ladakh in the 1950s and 60s, and the lame justification offered by him for the inaction. “Not a blade of grass grows in Aksai Chin,” he told Parliament, suggesting that the loss of this barren plateau was no big deal.

The debate has persisted whether it was China’s National Highway 219 cutting across Aksai Chin or Nehru’s misguided “forward policy” which constituted the actual casus belli for the Sino-Indian border-conflict of 1962. After declaring a unilateral ceasefire on November 20, troops of the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) withdrew 20 kms behind what China described as the “line of actual control” (LAC), which generally conformed to the British-negotiated McMahon Line. In the west, the Chinese stuck to their 1959 claim-line in Ladakh, retaining physical control of the 14,700 sq km Aksai Chin.

Although the 1962 ceasefire line became the de facto Sino-Indian border, in a bizarre reality, both sides visualised their own version of the LAC, but neither marked it on the ground; nor were maps exchanged. This has inevitably led to frequent face-offs. If Nehru is blameworthy of strategic naïveté, his successors must be regarded as equally culpable of timidity and lack of resolve for not seeking a resolution of this issue.

Post-conflict, it is customary for belligerents to undertake early negotiations, in order to establish stable peace and eliminate the casus belli. Strangely, in the Sino-Indian context, it took 25 years and a serious military confrontation in 1987 to trigger a dialogue — leading the two countries to sign the first-ever

Sino-Indian Border Peace and Tranquility Agreement (BPTA) in 1993. Indian diplomats claim that this has helped maintain “mutual and equal security”, while the bilateral relationship has progressed in other spheres. And yet, the failure to negotiate a boundary settlement after 22 meetings of special representatives of the two countries cannot be seen as anything but a failure of statesmanship and diplomacy.

In stark contrast to India’s vacuous strategic thinking, China’s post-civil war leadership had conceived an early vision of the country’s future. Ambitious and realist in scope, this strategy visualised China attaining, in the fullness of time, great-power status and acquiring a nuclear-arsenal. Since the vision saw no room for an Asian rival, neutralising India became a priority. It was for this specific purpose, that Pakistan was enlisted in 1963 as a partner. In China’s anti-India strategy, Pakistan has played an invaluable role by sustaining a “hot” border and holding out the threat of a two-front war.

In China’s grand-strategy, an undefined LAC has become a vital instrumentality to embarrass and keep India off-balance through periodic transgressions. These pre-meditated “land-grabs”, blunt messages of intimidation and dominance, also constitute a political “pressure-point” for New Delhi; especially since the Indian Parliament had passed a quixotic resolution in 1962 demanding that “every inch of Indian territory” be recovered from China.

While Indian troops have, so far, shown courage and restraint in these ridiculous brawls with the PLA, there is no guarantee that in a future melee, a punch on the nose will not invite a bullet in response. In such circumstances, rapid escalation into a “shooting-war” cannot be ruled out. Thereafter, should either side face a major military set-back, resort to nuclear “first-use” would pose a serious temptation.

For reasons of national security as well as self-respect, India cannot continue to remain in a “reactive mode” to Chinese provocations and it is time to respond in kind. Since India’s choices vis-à-vis China are circumscribed by the asymmetry in comprehensive national power, resort must be sought in realpolitik. According to theorist Kenneth Waltz, just as nature abhors a vacuum, international politics

We have not digested Gandhiji’s teachings. We have strayed from the right road and must get back to it and understand Gandhiji’s teachings and apply them in life.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel

abhors an imbalance of power, and when faced with hegemonic threats, states must seek security in one of three options: Increase their own strength, ally with others to restore power-balance, or, as a last resort, jump on the hegemon's bandwagon.

India's decision-makers can start by posing this question to the military: "For how long do you have the wherewithal to sustain a combat against two adversaries simultaneously?" Depending on the response, they can consider the options. Neither Nehru, when faced with an aggressive China in 1962, nor Indira Gandhi in the run-up to the 1971 war, had any qualms of jettisoning the shibboleth of "non-alignment" and seeking support from the USA and USSR respectively. Today, India has greater freedom of action and many options to restore the balance of power vis-à-vis China. Even as Xi Jinping opens multiple fronts — apart from the COVID-19 controversy — across the South China Sea, South East Asia, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Asia, Donald Trump is burning his bridges with China. In the world of realpolitik, self-interest trumps all and India must find friends where it can. Given China's vulnerabilities in the Indian Ocean and the real possibility of America losing its strategic foothold in Diego Garcia, India has a great deal to offer as a friend, partner or even an ally; with or without the Quad.

However, if ideological or other reasons preclude the building of a power-balancing alliance, coming to an honourable accommodation with China remains a pragmatic option. Zhou Enlai's proposal of 1960 — repeated by Deng Xiaoping in 1982 — is worth re-examining in the harsh light of reality. The price of finding a modus vivendi for the Sino-Indian border dispute may be worth paying if it neutralises two adversaries at one stroke and buys lasting peace.

Neither option will be easy to "sell". But given his nationalist credentials, a huge parliamentary majority, and a Teflon-coated image that has enabled many difficult decisions, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is possibly the only leader who can do it.

(Courtesy: *The Indian Express*, June 6, 2020)

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WHAT IS INDIA'S INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY?

Cmde. (Retd.) C. Uday Bhaskar

Director of the Society for Policy Studies and
Former Director, IDSA & NMF

As the world's major powers pivot to an increasingly important part of the world, Delhi's balancing act will become crucial

In recent weeks, the Indo-Pacific maritime domain has come into focus due to four developments with one common strand: China.

The most visible of them all has been the tense military stand-off between India and China along the contested Line of Actual Control, the 4,000-kilometre loose demarcation line that separates territories controlled by the two countries. An often articulated view is that, while naval power will not have a bearing on what is happening in the high Himalayas between the two Asian giants, it is a leverage that Delhi could consider using in order to manage an assertive Beijing.

The other three events pertain to reports recently released by the US Department of Defence and the German foreign ministry, as well as a China-Russia joint communique.

Assessed together, these documents point to the emergence of the Indo-Pacific as a domain for competition and a degree of contestation among the major interlocutors: China, Russia and US. This exigency would also hold a strategic and security relevance for India and other littoral nations of the Indian Ocean.

With the world in a state of uncertainty and flux due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the geo-politics of the post Covid world disorder (that will follow the 9/11 global turbulence) will in all likelihood be played out in the maritime continuum of the Indian and Pacific oceans.

The US DoD report and its naval/maritime focus on China is stark. The summary is that the People's Liberation Army Navy currently has more ships and submarines than the US Navy – 350 versus 293 – and that Beijing is determined to expand its footprint across the Indian Ocean. It notes that, in addition to the base in Djibouti, the Chinese military

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

Rabindranath Tagore

is seeking additional facilities in Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Seychelles, Tanzania, Angola, and Tajikistan. Clearly, the geographical spread is expansive.

China's determination to consolidate its position in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) has its own strategic considerations, and this is subsumed in what Beijing refers to as the "Malacca Dilemma" – the fact that China is dependent on the sea lines of communication for its trade and energy requirements. Beijing is also cognisant of a centuries-old tenet that, for a major power to be truly credible, it must be able to maintain effective military presence in two of the world's navigable oceans at will.

It is evident that the US, which enjoys its position as the No 1 military power, is determined not to allow China to displace it in a routine uncontested manner.

This framework illuminates the relevance of India in the geopolitics of the IOR, for it is in a favourable orientation due to geography and naval pedigree. While India's naval/maritime capabilities are more modest than those of the US and China, the two bigger powers are aware that their respective geopolitical aspirations and anxieties specific to the IOR can be significantly impacted by the posture that India adopts.

Currently three major non-littoral powers that have a visible military presence in the IOR are the US (in Diego Garcia), France (in Reunion) and China (in Djibouti). It is also instructive that Germany has now identified the Indo-Pacific as a domain where it plans to take greater interest than it has in the past.

Speaking at the release of his government's report, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said: "We are sending a clear message today – the Indo-Pacific region is a priority of German foreign policy. Our aim is to strengthen our relations with this important region and to expand our co-operation in the areas of multilateralism, climate change mitigation, human rights, rules-based free trade, connectivity, the digital transformation and, in particular, security policy."

Mr Maas further added that Germany wants to

help shape the order in the Indo-Pacific so that it is "based on rules and international co-operation, not on the law of the strong". The allusion to China is unstated but evident.

Japan is also a stakeholder in the IOR. Shinzo Abe, who recently stepped down as prime minister, is seen as the prescient leader who first envisioned the confluence of the Indian and Pacific oceans as one strategic space. His country is a part of the «Quad» grouping that also includes Australia, India and the US – a cluster often referred to as a concert of maritime democracies committed to a free and open Indo-Pacific space that would be rule-based.

There is, however, an alternate formulation and a strongly held viewpoint that was articulated in Moscow at a meeting last week between the foreign ministers of China and Russia.

Their joint communique said: "We noted the destructive character of Washington's actions that undermine global strategic stability. They are fuelling tensions in various parts of the world, including along the Russian and Chinese borders. Of course, we are worried about this and object to these attempts to escalate artificial tensions. In this context, we stated that the so-called 'Indo-Pacific strategy', as it was planned by the initiators, only leads to the separation of the region's states, and is therefore fraught with serious consequences for peace, security and stability in the Asia-Pacific Region."

For India, this is an anomalous development. It is because Delhi is a part of different groupings that place it under the same umbrella with Beijing and Moscow – the Russia-India-China trilateral grouping, Brics and the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation. Curiously, India was at the Moscow meeting where the China-Russia bilateral statement was issued.

In other words, squaring this nettlesome Indo-Pacific circle – even as it strives to retain its strategic autonomy along the troubled LAC in the Himalayas – will require India exerting a great deal of skill and diplomacy.

Share September 20 2020

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

Albert Einstein

THE LAST FRONTIER OF FREEDOM TO BE WON

Prof. Manoj Das

Professor of English Literature
Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education
Pondicherry

Address of the Chief Guest at the Ist Convocation of the Yoga Bharati University, a wing of the Bihar School of Yoga, Munger.

Once in a while Time presents an event which is greater than its celebration, which has a significance that transcends the present moment and assumes an all-time status. We are witnessing such an event today. This is for the first time – we do not know after how many centuries – that a convocation of this nature has been possible. We know that once upon a time the Guru pronounced a disciple to have graduated in Yoga, giving him the authority to teach the Vidya to others. The temporal authorities of those days, the royalty, endorsed the Guru's right to do so. Times changed. Yoga became an anachronism. It is not long ago that when a western seeker travelling in India asked another foreigner who had spent the greater part of his life in India if he had ever met a Yogi, the latter wondered what Yogi meant – if the traveller was referring to some kind of Himalayan animal.

But that times have changed once again, is signified by this event at the beginning of the new century as well as a new millennium – the first convocation held by Bihar Yoga Bharati, Bihar School of Yoga, recognised by the present day temporal power, the highest academic and administrative wings of the Union Government. It indicates that once again India's greatest gift to mankind, Yoga, is on the way of ascendancy. A discipline that used to be dismissed by some as irrelevant to practical or pragmatic life and feared by others as something other-worldly, is re-establishing itself in its full glory, driving home the truth that 'all life is Yoga', to quote a phrase from Sri Aurobindo.

But this revolutionary change in man's attitude to Yoga, which is still in an imperfect and preliminary stage, has not been an arbitrary development. Behind this lies a long history of man's quest for his

own material and psychological satisfaction, if not consciously for truth, in other words, his struggle for freedom from poverty, injustice, tyranny and whatever stands in the way of his asserting his right to be happy, to fulfill himself as an individual in a society that is conducive to that goal. To focus on the history of this endeavour will require a different and longer occasion. Let us look into some recent developments.

The century that recently came to an end, the twentieth century, had been a tumultuous time. Never before in history had years been so very crowded with events and ideas. Imperialism, colonialism and feudalism which had deprived individuals and nations the great need for their growth, namely freedom, folded up. What is even more amazing, the institution of monarchy that had been with humanity from the very dawn of civilization, which had patronized the noblest of human creativities, also collapsed. It showed that once its role is over, any institution, however lofty, becomes redundant

If the time-spirit imposed democracy and socialism on the several nations of the world, some others imbibed them spontaneously. We also saw the sudden withering away of Soviet communism – that brand of socialism which proved to be an impediment in the way of man's free growth.

Among the formidable forces moulding our time past and time present have been scientific and technological revolution. Science, viewed spiritually, is a great aid to human quest for truth because it sees through the appearance of things and invites us to go to the core of the phenomena, but with all its marvellous revelations, it cannot satisfy our query on the fundamental "Why" of things. It is entirely dependent on mind, intelligence and intellect – faculties that are incapable of solving that puzzle.

Nevertheless, intellect, if tempered by humility, can contribute significantly to our aspirations for Truth. In fact, the most noteworthy discoveries of modern science instruct us to be humble. Take for example this revelation termed as the grand unifying theory of nature, recreating for us the old good concept of the Brahman, the one and indivisible Reality:

Without electromagnetism there would be no atoms, no chemistry or biology, and no heat or light

Pluralism of faith was for Gandhi a political choice as well as a moral obligation

- Ramachandra Guha

from the sun. If there were no strong nuclear force then nuclei could not exist, and so again there would be no atoms or molecules, no chemistry or biology, nor would the sun and stars be able to generate heat and light from the nuclear energy. Even the weak force plays a crucial role in shaping the universe. If it did not exist, the nuclear reactions in the sun and stars could not proceed, and supernovae would probably not occur, and the vital life-giving heavy elements would therefore be unable to permeate the universe. Life might well be impossible. When we remember that these four very different types of force, each one vital for generating the complex structures that make our universe so active and interesting, all derive from a single, simple superforce, the ingenuity of it all literally boggles the mind.’ (Paul Davies: Super Force.)

Mind had given man all it could in terms of material and intellectual knowledge, science and political and social management of life. It had also added as much as it could to his search for happiness. At the same time it had landed him in an impasse marked by paradox of many kinds. Far from feeling that he had arrived, man rather feels lost amidst his monumental achievements in every field. He does not know the destination where his culture of anarchy, drug and hedonism is dragging him by the nose.

The basic malady which is at work beneath man’s preoccupation with dubious and destructive propensities is a subconscious sense of insecurity, not so much because of any external danger to him, but because of the incapacity of his mind to cope up with the evolutionary force which would like him to discover some hitherto unfathomed depth of his consciousness for his own future.

Unfortunately, man’s reflective perspective today is narrow. He is preoccupied with his present state of affairs alone – and this preoccupation is quite hedonistic. Christopher Lash in his Culture of Narcissism poignantly described this collective state of mind. According to him, in the 19th century, trust in and allegiance to different authorities, religious and mundane, had irreparably weakened. On the other hand nothing greater had taken their place. Narrow self-concern and self-love had crept into the emptiness thus created.

Thus the prime paradox today is, while our opportunities are global, while even our material achievements invite us to develop a cosmic outlook, we are prisoners of our superficial self, engrossed in an illusory romance with our individual ego - and what is even more fatal – the collective ego.

What then is the diagnosis of this sickening situation?

There is a dichotomy between our craving for happiness and our ability to create that happiness through the external means at our disposal. Every new innovation in entertainment is only a new hope of happiness, but not happiness proper. A grand new invention or discovery is not a proof of our greater intelligence, but only an addition to the list of achievements brought about by an extension of the same quality of intelligence. The intelligence has spread out horizontally; it has not ascended to any higher sphere. Intelligence can behave erratically; it can run amuck and take pride in inventing ever new methods of cruelty and destruction. It can never be trusted to remain faithful to any ideal, as long as the ego continues to be its master.

And the ego cannot be tamed by moral or ethical lessons or commitment to any ideology. It can always justify its wrong actions by the help of the same intelligence. The reality is, we have reached a stage in evolution when our mind must be replaced by a new kind of consciousness – a consciousness that can handle all the material progress the mind has put at our disposal, with a spontaneous mastery over them. Otherwise the gap between our material achievements and our present quality of consciousness may prove fatal.

If Providence had any purpose in launching the process of evolution, it could not have felt the purpose fulfilled looking at us, the present humanity, the latest product of the process. There must evolve something more than this creature which is still groping in darkness, still unpredictable in its conduct and still eager to cut one another’s throat under numerous pretexts. Providence must be waiting for a new consciousness to manifest.

Sri Aurobindo calls this new consciousness Supermind. He says:

Chinese assertiveness on the Indian border has hardened opinions in India and it will drive the country closer to the United States.

Shivshankar Menon

“The full emergence of supermind may be accomplished by a sovereign manifestation, a descent into earth consciousness and a rapid assumption of its powers and disclosing of its forms and the creation of a supramental race and a supramental life: this must indeed be the full result of its action in Nature. But this has not been the habit of evolutionary Nature in the past upon earth and it may well be that this supramental evolution also will fix its own periods, though it cannot be at all a similar development to that of which earth has hitherto been the witness. But once it has begun, all must unavoidably and perfectly manifest and all parts of Nature must tend towards a greatest possible luminousness and perfection. It is this certainty that authorises us to believe that mind and humanity also will tend towards the realisation that will be far beyond our present dreams of perfection. A mind of light will replace the present confusion and trouble of this earthly ignorance; it is likely that even those parts of humanity which cannot reach it will yet be aware of its possibility and consciously tend towards it; not only so, but the life of humanity will be enlightened, uplifted, governed, harmonised by this luminous principle and even the body becomes something much less powerless, obscure and animal in its propensities and capable instead of a new and harmonised perfection. It is this possibility that we have to look at and that would mean a new humanity uplifted into Light, capable of a spiritualised being and action, open to governance by some light of the Truth-Consciousness, capable even on the mental level and in its own order of something that might be called the beginning of a divinised life.”

We have seen how the twentieth century was a time that achieved for us numerous freedoms, but the greatest of freedoms, a freedom without which all other freedoms are futile, is yet to be achieved - our freedom from ignorance. Our age-old mystic tradition believes that this last freedom is not a mere possibility, but a certainty inherent in the very nature of creation. What is demanded of man is an unshakable faith in his sublime destiny and a conscious rejection of the values that oppose it. He is endowed with the power of discrimination between the truth and the falsehood. On his choice would depend the duration of the crisis. A determined aspiration for the transformation of

the inconscient in us can lead us beyond the present crisis, into a sublime future, a new phase in evolution, when man can become a Gnostic being, realising the ultimate contribution of Yoga – union with the Supreme.

Yoga is the process that can redeem us from our serfdom to our false self and false values; the Yoga alone can unravel to us the splendour that is there both within and without us. Those blessed students who are receiving their degrees today bear the promise of becoming forerunners in the making of a new humanity; they have received something which alone can bring a touch of refinement, to speak at a low key, to all the other scholars who qualify in other subjects. Indeed, Yoga is not an alternative to any other branch of knowledge, but it brings a golden touch of fulfilment to each one of them.

(From Manoj Das ‘*Of Mystics and Miracles and other Essays*’)

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SISTER NIVEDITA: OFFERING OF GRACE

Dr. (Mrs.) Prema Nandakumar

I could simply begin thus: I am writing now because of Sister Nivedita. I would be literally and metaphorically correct. It is true that Indian women have entered the worlds of knowledge in a big way because a young Irish lady dedicated herself totally at the feet of her Guru to serve India. The Guru was Swami Vivekananda.

When Swami Vivekananda was going around India to get a first-hand idea of the needs of his motherland, he realised that two areas cried out for immediate action: the world of Dalits and the world of women. Action needed the backing of money. He resolved now to go to the United States to earn funds for his work. After his speech at the Chicago Convention in 1893, he glowed like a flame atop a hill in the western world. On his way back to India, he tarried in London to give a few speeches in 1895. He may not have got the expected funds in England but he received the priceless gift of a peerless disciple, Sister Nivedita.

Tagore, Gandhi, Radhakrishnan and Nehru were a galaxy representing the spiritual, moral, literary, philosophical and political panorama of modern India.

K. Natwar Singh

Margaret Elizabeth Noble (28,October1867-13,October1911) was the child of an Irish family, religious and patriotic. Having received a good education, she chose the profession of a schoolteacher, and was happy to be one. Even as she taught, she kept improving herself by continuing to study, and became a good orator and journalist. She was also very much in demand as a journalist writing for *Wimbledon News*, *Daily News* and *Review of Reviews*. Hers was an enquiring mind as she was no stranger to disappointments. Twice she had to face disillusionment in love. What is this life? Is there nothing more than living for oneself? Living seemed pointless without an aim, without an ideal. Then came the invitation to Lady Isabel Margesson's home to attend a speech by a renunciate from India.

When Margaret entered Lady Isabel's drawing room, she found a tall and well-built young man in ochre robes sitting self-lost in a chair. As the audience remained completely silent, full of expectancy, a prayer rose from Swami Vivekananda: "Shiva, Shiva, namah Shivaaya!" His listeners remained spell-bound, while the Swami spoke in well-modulated tones using well-chosen and most appropriate words from the English language, but simple, direct and ah! so close to their heart. Margaret was all attention. She took her time to check whether her heart was responding in the right direction. She attended more lectures by the Swami and took part in group discussions. She was a strong person, ready to face challenges and Swami Vivekananda's invitation gave her exactly that. Would she help bring education to India's marginalized masses which included Indian women as well?: "I have been making plans for educating the women of my country. I think you could be of great help to me."

There followed a couple of years of correspondence, the Swami patiently answered her questions. Once Margaret took a decision, there was no going back. She also firmly believed in the simple assurance given to her by her Guru: "The tusks of the elephant come out but never go back; so are the words of a man never retracted. I promise you I will stand by you unto death."

She came in 1898 and was initiated by Swami Vivekananda on March 25 at Belur and became a probationer of the Order of Sri Ramakrishna, and

was given the name, Nivedita. After a session of meditation and music in which the monks participated, the Swami pointed to the opposite bank of the Ganges and said: "Nivedita, that is where I would like to have a convent for women. Like a bird that needs two wings to fly, India must have both educated men and educated women."

This was a time when Indian women were still strangers to education and had no idea that if they could become self-supporting, the tyranny of a patriarchal society could be shown the door. After proving her grit to her Guru by plunging into plague-relief in Calcutta, she opened the first school for girls in November of the same year. Among the problems were the unwillingness of the families to educate the girl child, the lack of money and her own need to master Indian philosophical and religious literature so that she could be a worthy novice of the Order. So she travelled abroad to collect funds for her school; she travelled all over India to understand this continent. She found out that this was no Continent of Circe but that of Saraswati. Never was a moment wasted by her. Always working, reading or writing and of course, meditating. If there was divine passion in what she wrote about Indian culture, Sri Ramakrishna and Mother Kali, there was an unstoppable force in her services for women's education and India's freedom movement.

When the eminent scientist, Jagadish Chandra Bose, was subjected to racial discrimination, she boldly came to his help, rendering editorial assistance for preparing his research papers and getting sponsorships for him. And how can one gauge the depth of her services for the freedom movement of this nation! She was a highly valued friend of Nationalist leaders like Bhupendranath Dutt, Sri Aurobindo and Barindra Kumar Ghose. These were heroes of the movement and naturally they admired her for her readiness to face danger. Who would not when she who wore but a flowing robe and a garland of rudraksha beads and went around as a fashionable foreign lady on an errand and was not recognised even by her own friends!

All the same, Nivedita did become a suspect in the eyes of the British Raj. When Bhupendranath Dutt, the editor of the Nationalist paper, **Yugantar**,

The modern politician in any part of the world does not represent the soul of a people or its aspirations.

Sri Aurobindo

was arrested, she even emptied her personal coffers to raise money for his bail and helped other members of the magazine office as well. When it became known that the Raj was prepared to act against her, her nationalist friends begged her to withdraw from the field of action for a while, for their sake. She spent 1907-8 abroad. It was a much-needed change for her to rest, recuperate, take up her lecturing and journalism to an adoring public. All the time her eyes were fixed back on her Mother India which had become her land of destiny:

“She was the center of attraction at Lady Sandwich’s saloon. On the day she spoke of her Bagh Bazar school, Emma Calve gave a recital. When she described her trip to the famine-stricken regions, at the Russian Embassy, people rushed there to hear her. After the Duchess of Albany suddenly decided to attend one of her meetings, the English aristocracy took her to their hearts. The women questioned her and envied her freedom. The men were flattered by the ironic wisdom of her arguments. The doors of the House of Commons were opened to her whenever Indian affairs were on the agenda. She was not wasting her time.”

She never did. She was the apt pupil of Swami Vivekananda in this matter as well. Nivedita never wasted time in mindless conversations or looking before and after. If she had a disappointment, a shiver of frustration or even self-pity, she never brooded on such expendable emotions. A brief note in her personal journal was enough to act as a cathartic. During these two years abroad, she visited Ireland and it was an emotional return to the country of her birth. There is an undercurrent of poignancy in Ms. Raymond’s description of the scene:

“She greeted the trees, the ivy, the hedges that imprisoned the wandering night fogs. Everywhere the wind-swept ruins and the sea spray told her of perennial struggles, and of the traces of an ancient pre-Christian Aryan culture. She stopped to speak with the laborers in the fields, and heard them boasting about Ireland, with a passionate longing for liberty. Before their hardened and vigorous faces she wept over the fate of the Hindus who were so ill-prepared for the struggle. Seeing this her brother felt a pang of

jealousy because Ireland had been ousted by India in her heart.”

Sister Nivedita’s travels in the United States were good but she had to rush back to England. After her mother’s calm passing, Nivedita returned to India and was once again drawn into helping the Nationalists in a big way. When Sri Aurobindo had to go away first to Chandernagore and then to Pondicherry, she edited his **Karmayogin** with brilliant and incisive penmanship. She was certain that the spirit of Swami Vivekananda was guiding Sri Aurobindo both in his political and spiritual work. For quite a few months no one knew where he was, such was the vigour with which Sister Nivedita filled up the journal’s spaces. And when its work was done and **Karmayogin** was folding up, she published her credo which she has also left behind for us all as a guardian-charm for sculpting our lives:

“I believe that India is one, indissoluble, indivisible. National unity is built on the common home, the common interest and the common love.

I believe that the strength which spoke in the Vedas and Upanishads, in the making of religions and empires, in the learning of scholars, and the meditation of the saints, is born once more amongst, and its name today is Nationality”. I believe that the present of India is deep-rooted in her past, and that before her shines a glorious future”.

She never wrote a sentence in vain. Always the words came from her heart. She had trained herself so from her younger days and Truth became her flagstaff after she became the disciple of Swami Vivekananda. Though the general public had access to her classics like **Kali the Mother, Cradle Tales of Hinduism, Footfalls of Indian History, The Web of Indian Life** and **The Master as I saw Him**, and there was also a collected edition of her speeches and papers, it was only when Lizelle Raymond published her well-researched work on Sister Nivedita in 1953 that the complete woman moulded as a classical Indian heroine appeared before us.

Like them – Draupadi, Sita, Savitri, Nivedita was no stranger to sorrow and pain. When she gave her allegiance, it was total. She had come to India to educate girl children, and just as she drew them close

The historical process is not a mere external chain of events, but offers a succession of spiritual opportunities.

to her heart, the Indian nation itself became her mother. She had been an activist in the Irish desire to be freed from British overlordship. So she knew the sorrow of belonging to a subject nation. With the same passion for Irish freedom, Margaret now began to work for the freedom of Mother India. Swami Vivekananda had ordained her into the Sri Ramakrishna Order and given her the name 'Nivedita'. So apt, for had she not offered her entire being to the Divine's work in India? And as perfect a description of her work in India is Swami Vivekananda's blessing to Nivedita, long before she would become involved in the freedom struggle of the nation: let us remember that a Guru's blessing is never in vain.

“The mother's heart, the hero's will
The sweetness of the southern breeze,
The sacred charm and strength that dwell
On Aryan altars, flaming, free;
All these be yours and many more
No ancient soul could dream before-
Be thou to India's future son
The mistress, servant, friend in one.”

As one who was working with the Nationalists, she knew what exactly was the need of the hour. Hence she promoted domestic industries since economic self-dependence was a key factor for a free nation. Swadeshi! She was tireless in encouraging young men to come forward and take responsible positions in the work, she managed to send some of them to England, United States and Japan where they learnt new techniques. Thus she furthered the dimensions of Swami Vivekananda's neo-Vedanta that did not forget the society nor its elemental needs like freedom and pride in the nation.

“She (Sister Nivedita) sought a spirituality that was eminently practical, that mingled with life and had become a part of life. Whenever she discovered some foreign article in the stock of a shop in the bazaar, she was furiously angry. But the most simple Hindu wares – an earthenware cup, a finely made oil lamp costing less than one cent – were full of charm for her. They became the subject of newspaper articles. Her descriptions emphasized the elegance of simple lines, and established canons of taste. She revealed beauties which the Hindus themselves had failed to see, and which they discovered with her.”

Such was her timely intervention to stop the juggernaut of western culture which had already destroyed much of the glory and good in Indian culture. English education had thrown on the wayside the priceless Sanskrit heritage. Fortunately, Sister Nivedita's **Cradle Tales of Hinduism**, started a trend among Indians to go back to their ancient tales and legends, write about them in a simple style and thus helped the English-educated Indian to return to his own life-giving sources. By writing vividly about her pilgrimages, she instilled in the Indian a pride in his past and even a touch of shame for having neglected his art, architecture and painting. She had no sympathy for the westerner who said Indians have no sense of history while this was a unique land which was itself history.

“If India itself be the book of Indian history, it follows that travel is the true means of reading that history. The truth of this statement, especially while the published renderings of our history remain so inadequate and so distorted, ought never to be forgotten. Travel as a mode of study is of infinite importance. Yet it is not everything. It is quite possible to travel the world over and see nothing, or only what is not true. We see, after all, only what we are prepared to see. How to develop the mind of the taught so that it shall see – not what its teacher has led it to expect, but the fact that actually passes before the eyes – is the problem of all scientific education. In history also, we want to be able to see – not the thing that would be pleasant, but the thing that is true.”

Travelling to places is nothing new in Indian culture for pilgrimages are part of the religious and spiritual training of the Indian. For instance, the pilgrimages of AdiSankara, Sri Ramanuja and other spiritual luminaries have been recorded in extenso. Indeed, sannyasa itself seems to have been equated with wide travels as the aspirant for monkhood was expected to go on a long pilgrimage. Swami Vivekananda spent a few years wandering to sacred places in India, before he went to America. Sister Nivedita had known all this. However, she felt that this has also kept the Indian away from keeping his eyes and ears open to 'other' beauties and significant spaces in these pilgrim spots. He took it for granted that it was all familiar once he heard the name of

Adi Sankaracharya not only synthesized the different philosophies and ideals but he purified them.

Nani Palkhivala

the spot or the religion associated with it most. Yet he was not separatist, he rejected nothing and ever pressed forward towards a glorious synthesis which is why there are so many layers of history imbedded in all of India. Which is all the more reason for the modern Indian to travel with his eyes and ears open:

“But one of the master-facts in Indian history, a fact borne in upon us more deeply with every hour of study, is that India is and always has been a synthesis. No amount of analysis -- racial, lingual, or territorial -- will ever amount in the sum to the study of India. Perhaps the axioms of Euclid are not axioms after all. Perhaps all the parts of a whole are not equal to the whole. At any rate, apart from and above all the fragments which must be added together to make India, we have to recognise India herself, all-containing, all-dominating, moulding and shaping the destinies and the very nature of the elements out of which she is composed. The Indian people may be defective in the methods of mechanical organisation, but they have been lacking, as a people, in none of the essentials of organic synthesis. No Indian province has lived unto itself, pursuing its own development, following its own path, going its way unchallenged and alone.”

What a tremendously intuitive summing up of the character of a nation! There is no aspect of Indian culture that Nivedita touched upon without making it glitter brilliantly, warts and all. She was so totally stationed in Truth that the right words came to her, as she absorbed the history and culture of the nation at first hand. She was saddened, even angered, at the way the Indian male had treated women and the society had set aside a group as “untouchables”. Swami Vivekananda’s views were taken up by her and studied in depth with the relevant literature. As one concentrating upon women’s empowerment, Vaishnavism came to her as a breath of fresh air. Hadn’t Chaitanya’s advent helped Indian womanhood for a while? Meera had gone in search of Brindaban and thereby gained emancipation. And Nityananda’s receiving thirteen hundred women into the congregation proves the strong conviction of the Vaishnava that women too had as important a part in the life of a nation’s religion. All this and more we learn when we turn the pages of her books.

Sister Nivedita was an icon from my childhood because the celebrated Tamil patriot-poet Subramania Bharati had saluted her as his guru. He met her in Calcutta and immediately recognized in her a burning brazier of pure Shakti. She was unhappy that he had not brought his wife Chellamma to the Congress Session “as she would not understand about great Movements like the Congress”. With her characteristic directness she gave vent to her anger and pain: “How can one half of a society win freedom when it enslaves the other half? Let the past be forgotten. Henceforth, do not think of her as something different. Hold her as your left hand and praise her in your heart as an angel.”

It was during this encounter that Bharati received a lesson in equality as she asked him to forget all these differences of gender, caste, class and birth. A nationalist was an Indian, a child of Bharat Mata. So how can there be differences between children of the same mother? Also, the patriotic Indian must first prepare to send the foreign oppressor away! “Your people must become brave. You must have daring to stab us here!”

This is how the Brahmin journalist-poet from Tamil Nadu became an intense disciple of Sister Nivedita. He dedicated his first two books of poems to her and preserved the leaf of a Himalayan tree she gave him and revered it till the end of his life. She was a major inspiration for his group of poems on Bharat Mata and Shakti.

Sister Nivedita passed away on October 11, 1911. However, Bharati’s gem-like poem is a living memorial to Sister Nivedita, the flaming pioneer of the Omnipotent Shakti who had come to befriend and guide the modern Indian woman, and after the passing of her guru in 1902, remained in India to guide the entire nation as well:

“Nivedita, Mother,
Temple consecrated to love,
Sun dispelling my soul’s darkness,
Rain to the parched land of our lives,
Helper of the helpless, Offering of Grace,
Destructive fire to the evil in men,
My salutation to you, Mother.”

* * *

This is the ancient land where wisdom made its home before it went into any other country. It is the same India which has withstood the shocks of centuries, of hundreds of foreign invasions, of hundreds of upheavals of manners and customs.

- Swami Vivekananda

THE P.V. I KNEW – II

Dr.R.V. Vaidyanatha Ayyar, I.A.S.(Retd)

Former Secretary, HRD, Govt of India &
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II The Perennial Challenger

Once PV formed the Government, my Ministry, MHRD, acquired a solid Minister in Arjun Singh who decisively presided over the Ministry for three and half years; during his helmsmanship, the Ministry was a happening place always in the news. The Deputy Minister was Kumari Selja. When she was appointed as a Deputy Minister in July 1992, the *Hindustan Times* greeted her appointment with a cartoon in which she was depicted as a school girl at waiting a bus stop for the school bus; a grandfatherly PV was shown handing over a school bag entitled 'education'. From the point of view of the press MHRD was a happening place not so much for the many important policy and programme initiatives undertaken by the DOE as for being the citadel of the main challenger of the Prime Minister. Arjun Singh's brilliant tactical moves as a challenger, his spicy comments, and paper missiles (missives) he continually hurled at the Prime Minister made him a darling of the media. Arjun Singh was an arch realist; whenever faced with an unpleasant situation, he would say 'what is to be done, has to be done', or '*Ab theek hai, jo ho gaya tho ho gaya* (Now it's all right. Whatever has happened has happened)'. He built his political career around a fiery commitment to secularism, leftist economic ideology, and social justice. The ideological commitment he professed served him well in his battles with political rivals, be it the BJP in his home State Madhya Pradesh, or PV whom he saw as a pretender who happened to land on the throne and managed to cling to it. His career subsequent to 1991 can be admirably summed by the one-liner that the gifted Telugu journalist Tirumala Ramachandra came up with to describe the frequent change of political parties by Acharya N.G.Ranga till 1980 when Ranga moved to Congress party and stayed put in that Party till his death: *prathama sthanam raadu, dwitheeya sthanam paniki radu* (cannot get the first position but cannot be reconciled to the second position). When the Congress Party was

in power from 1991 to 1996 and again from 2004 to 2009 Arjun Singh was a perennial challenger, using ideology as a tactical weapon to discomfit whoever was the Prime Minister from his Party. Even while continuing in the PV Government he was an unrelenting and sharp critic of almost all the actions and decisions of the Government. He continually demanded that Government and the Congress Party should return to the Nehruvian secularism, and adopt Nehru's line that RSS and Hindu communalism were a greater threat to the nation than communists. He imaginatively used media to create and sustain the impression that he wanted the Government to take a categorical stand against the Ramajanmabhoomi movement, and that he was opposed to the efforts of the Prime Minister to effect a negotiated settlement of the dispute. He glossed over the fact that some of the actions of the Rajiv Gandhi gave a tremendous fillip to the Ramajanmabhoomi movement and tried to make it appear that it was PV alone who sought to temporise over the Ramajanmabhoomi issue. Yet when the Babri Masjid was demolished he did not resign from the Government and stayed on for full three years giving rise to the criticism that he was committed not so much to the ideology he professed or the issues he espoused as to their tactical use for political advancement. MHRD is a vantage point for furthering political ideology for many aspects of education and culture are intertwined with political ideology and the Ministry offers enormous opportunities for patronising like-minded educationists, historians and cultural personalities. Department of Culture, then a constituent of MHRD, dealt with archaeology, literature, performing and visual art, and apart from education the Department of Education, another constituent of MHRD, dealt with the Indian Council of Historical Research. Like his predecessor Saiyid Nurul Hasan, Arjun Singh made full use of the vantage point he occupied, and creatively and fully used the official patronage at his disposal to reinforce the ideological image by cultivating 'progressive' intellectuals. In synch with the realignment of Indian politics leading to the emergence of the BJP as a major political force bitter contests emerged over many aspects of ancient and medieval Indian history; the combatants in these

If the Creator had a purpose in equipping us with a neck, He surely meant us to stick it out.

Arthur Koestler

contests were two schools of history one of which could be labelled Hindu Nationalist and the other Marxist-Secular; Arjun Singh was a great patron of the Marxist-Secular school. It is therefore not surprising that Arjun Singh's political activities, and his tactical, unabashed use of his Ministry to further his political objectives and aspirations caught the attention of the media more than the politics-free, substantive aspects of the initiatives taken by the Ministry. A case in point is the press conference he held on 11 June 1993 after his return from an official visit to Mauritius; the Conference was arranged to announce the decision of the Government to hold the EFA-9 Summit in December 1993, and the approval by the World Bank of the UP Basic Education Project, the first elementary education project to be funded by the World Bank in the country, and that too with a mind-boggling (for those) outlay of Rs. 729 crores. When I arrived at the PIB Conference Hall, I found the ambiance to be like that of a performance of Michael Jackson or Madonna; the Hall was overflowing with audience agog with pleasant anticipation. The invitation issued by the Press Information Bureau (PIB) specifically mentioned that the press conference would be on educational matters, and in his welcome address, Swagat Ghosh, the Press Information Officer of the Ministry, requested the media persons to stick to education. Even while nodding his head in agreement with what Ghosh said, Arjun Singh quipped, 'There's no press censorship', and that was cue for what followed in the press conference which Arjun Singh himself described as a 'roller-coaster' press meet. Arjun Singh disposed of education in just five minutes by reading a statement prepared for him by me, and then pulled out from his pocket a note on the Harshad Mehta scam, the *pièce de résistance*. Harshad Mehta claimed that after receiving a suitcase containing a crore of rupees, PV had 'pledged his total support and asked us to fall back upon him in the event of any difficulty faced by us ... (and) told us that his doors were always open to us', Right away, I knew that Harshad Mehta had blown his case. Anyone who knew PV even remotely would know that he was incapable of exuding such cordiality and pledging unstinted help. In fact, politically all his life he was a loner and even in Andhra Pradesh, he had little following was due to

the fact that he did not extend cordiality even to his closest supporters and was renowned for not helping anyone except perhaps a select few. My assessment proved right as pundit after pundit pontificated in the national press about the impossibility of PV saying what Harshad Mehta said he did. Whatever, the enormity of the stock market manipulation rocked the country, and the scam turned out to be a convenient stick for rivals of PV in the Congress Party to beat him, and for all the Old Believers who were opposed to economic reforms to castigate the reforms and strove to plant in popular mind an indelible association between reforms and corruption. A couple of days before the press meet, Sharad Pawar issued a statement calling upon the Government to give protection to Harshad Mehta, and to obtain information from him treating him as if he were an approver. In response, the Congress Party spokesperson V.N.Gadgil virtually said 'nothing doing', and that the law must be allowed to take its course. The situation was a golden opportunity for Arjun Singh, and he was not one to miss it. He read out the note he had prepared on the scam which called upon the Prime Minister to prove his *bona fides* by acting on the commitment he made to the nation that there would be no compromise in meting out punishment to the guilty. The statement was cleverly crafted in that while it insinuated against the Prime Minister, it did not come out in support of Pawar. He subtly conveyed his view that one should get at the truth, and yet protection to Harshad Mehta, if any, should be circumscribed by legal parameters. After that, as *Times of India* reported 'goodies for the newshounds kept pouring in. Questions on education were met with howls of protest from pressmen who had come for "political *masala*". Education hardly figured for five minutes in the hour-long press conference; the irony of it was not lost on some journalists who commented on political agenda hijacking a meet organised for educational matters, and the Minister talking politics while being flanked by senior officials of the Ministry. The event was widely reported by newspapers which carried photographs of Arjun Singh being flanked by me and another official of MHRD; I was scared to death that the Intelligence Bureau would report against me for being a *chela* of Arjun Singh.

Nehru I regard as one of the few really great people I have ever met – worlds above Gandhi in strength of character and insight.

Harold Laski

15

III Status Quo-ist who can be a Radical if Absolutely Necessary

In October 1991, Arjun Singh along with the Education Secretary Anil Bordia and me met PV to seek his guidance on the forthcoming General Conference of UNESCO. PV reminisced a great deal about the election of Frederico Mayor in the General Conference of 1987 as Director General (DG) thwarting the bid of his predecessor Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow to be re-elected for a record third term. As Minister, MHRD, PV attended the UNESCO General Conference in which M'Bow lost his bid, and as such he was *au courant* with that elections and abrupt shift of India's stand in that election. Bordia told him that UNESCO's position was slipping badly, that Mayor was making tall claims but was not able to deliver his promise to get United Kingdom and United States return to UNESCO, and that Japan the largest contributor to UNESCO was tightening screws on the organisation. He posed the question whether India should continue to take an interest in UNESCO and wanted PV's guidance in the present context. PV launched a long 'I told you so' monologue. When M'Bow visited India to canvass support, the Government assured him unstinted support, and yet India switched its support to Mayor in the fourth round as Natwar Singh, Minister of State in Ministry of External Affairs, Sardar Swaran Singh, India's representative in the UNESCO Executive Board, and Ambassador Arundhati Ghosh, India's representative to UNESCO prevailed upon Rajiv Gandhi to effect the critical switch. From his talk, it appeared that he was out of the loop of decision-making, and that his assessment of Mayor was that he was not up to the mark (*Yeh Nahi Chalega*). When PV remonstrated with Swaran Singh about India breaching Third World solidarity, Swaran Singh informed him that Third World solidarity was artificial, that M'Bow was fast losing support, and that on ideological considerations there was no point in backing a candidate who would lose. PV was upset about letting down M'Bow and estranging the African countries who were strong supports of M'Bow, the only DG, UNESCO from Africa. Responding to Bordia's query he said that while India should continue to take interest in UNESCO, it

had lost its moral leadership by ditching M'Bow and could not do much. His guidance was also sought on the desirability of Ambassador N.Krishnan contesting for the chairmanship of UNESCO Executive Board; Krishnan was much respected in the Executive Board for his sagacity, and there was a fair chance of his being elected in a contest for the position. PV was of the strong view that given the hurt sentiments of the African countries on no score should Krishnan contest an election; the delegation should subtly test the waters before attempting to secure his election by consensus. What struck me was the fact that though PV had by then began dismantling the License-Permit-Control *Raj* in so far as foreign policy was concerned, he seemed to be still attached to the idea of non-alignment and solidarity of the developing countries. It was only after the collapse of the Soviet Union three months later did India's foreign policy began to shift subtly, and the 'Look East Policy' was initiated; that policy focused on improving relations with ASEAN and East Asian countries. As part of that policy, PV visited China in September 1993, and signed an accord with China. That accord focused on building confidence building measures so that the relations between the two countries could be restored to normalcy. All in all, PV was a *status quo-ist* by inclination but pragmatic enough to change when there is no alternative. No wonder that one of the most incisive comments in those days was that PV decides nothing, and could be eloquently silent in a dozen languages, but then when there are no alternatives, he is the fastest decision-maker.

Whatever, in respect of M'Bow and Mayor, PV was wrong, and Sardar Swaran Singh was right. M'Bow's tenure (1974-87) was the most contentious in UNESCO's history culminating in the organisation losing its universal character, and about thirty percent of its revenues because of the withdrawal of the United States, United Kingdom, and Singapore. Had he been re-elected, there might have been a mass exodus of several other countries, and this was the consideration which reportedly induced the Soviet bloc to persuade M'Bow to withdraw in the fifth round of ballot. It did not take the astute diplomat Mayor too long to win over all African countries with

Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants.

Omar Bradley

a charm and carrot policy, and he was re-elected by acclamation in 1993. And further, before he finished his second term, he was successful in prevailing upon the United Kingdom to return. To understand why the decision to shift the support to Mayor was right it is necessary to briefly outline the stormy tenure of M'Bow which coincided with the last outburst of Cold War in countries such as Angola, Mozambique and Afghanistan, and the shrill rhetorical confrontation in the United Nations General Assembly between the 'North' and 'South' over issues like the New International Economic Order. The first oil crisis of October 1973 loomed large over the international scene when M'Bow was elected as Director General. The OPEC countries could vividly demonstrate the enormous economic and political power that developed countries could wield through collective action. In one stroke, the OPEC countries could ensure transfer to themselves from the developed countries of about US\$60 billion a year, several times larger than the total 'aid' offered by developed countries. Here was David splendidly defying Goliath; that successful defiance emboldened the G-77 (a group of developing countries), figuratively a Club of Davids, to confront Goliaths in diverse areas such as trade, foreign investment, and finance. The Preamble to the UNESCO Constitution declares that 'since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed'; this provision necessitates UNESCO to critically reflect on the extant world order and envision alternatives that are more conducive to peace. The composition of UNESCO's General Council is similar to that of the UN General Assembly; so is its decision-making principle of one-country-one-vote. More importantly, the UNESCO General Council is not subject to any checks and balances as the UN General Assembly is by way of the Security Council. It was therefore inevitable that the sharply polarised debates and the East-West and North-South confrontations in the UN General Assembly were re-enacted in the UNESCO General Council. What complicated the matters was the fact that as the first Director General from the Third World, all the more so from Africa, M'bow chose to be a protagonist rather than a disinterested statesman attempting to mediate between the contending groups

and douse the flames of controversy. What he told the General Council on 24th November 1973 on the occasion of being elected as Director General was a pointer to the role he was to play:

But since every man bears the mark of the environment into which he was born and in which he grew to adulthood...it is in the spirit of the African people, and in their wisdom, that I shall find the initial motivation of my action...I also interpret your vote as a gesture of consideration and esteem for regions and people...those of the Third World- which have so long been confined to a peripheral role in reaching decisions and exerting influence at world-wide level. I feel certain that, as you do today, millions of men and women will regard this election...as evidence of a desire to set international cooperation on an increasingly equitable footing.

With M'bow as helmsman, UNESCO played a lead ideational role against Western countries and their dominance in political, economic, and information and communication order; UNESCO effectively complemented the role of UNCTAD in promoting the interests of G-77 countries in trade by vigorously sponsoring ideas like endogenous development, and the New World Informational and Communication Order (NWIOCO). Such a role brought M'Bow into conflict with the Western countries that provide the bulk of budgetary resources of UNESCO. In addition to its normative role, UNESCO has also a functionalist, operational role as Article I of the UNESCO Constitution mandates the organisation 'to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture'. With the exception of Julian Huxley, the first DG, M'Bow's predecessors laid more emphasis on the developmental and technical role of UNESCO's. M'Bow veered to the other extreme and strove to directly address the question of justice and economic rights rather than address subjects as scientific cooperation, literacy programs, and cultural preservation and exchanges. In doing so, he sharply polarised the Member States and UNESCO. In the UN system itself, UNESCO was isolated, and its relations with agencies like UNDP, UNICEF and the World Bank which provided

You cannot love your neighbour unless you love yourself.
You cannot understand your neighbour unless you understand yourself.

E.F. Schumaker.

considerable extra-budgetary resources to UNESCO turned sour. M'bow should be credited for introducing a six-year medium term plan to serve as a framework for UNESCO's activities; however, because of a shrinking resource base the implementation of the strategy was mostly limited to the normative domain, and with many posts left unfilled the capacity of UNESCO to discharge the technical and development role was eroded. Particularly contentious was the New World Information and Communication Order (NWIOCO). M'Bow appointed a Commission to look at the global level problems of concentration and of the media, commercialisation of the media, and unequal access to information and communication. Many recently decolonised Third World countries felt dominated by cultural and communication flows from the United States and other developed countries and demanded flow of information should be balanced through affirmative policies. Naturally such moves were stoutly opposed by the developed countries and media giants. Among others, the Report called for democratisation of communication, and strengthening of national media to avoid dependence on external sources, collaboration between developed and developing countries and assistance by the developing countries to build up the communication infrastructure and skills in developed countries. However, the specific proposals based on that report swelled the ranks of opposition to M'Bow as most of the Western media rushed to thwart the NWIOCO. While there was general agreement on the goal of giving underdeveloped countries greater access to media technology, controversy developed over some parts of the NWIOCO which, among others, proposed licensing journalists and required the news media to allow rebuttals by Governments to stories they thought were unfair. In the words of Cushrow Irani, Chairman of the International Press Institute and publisher of the *Statesman*, Calcutta the licensing proposal would 'transform the press into an instrument of Governments'. While the provision for licensing was deleted from the NWIOCO at the 1983 UNESCO General conference, the damage was already done. There were complaints galore of

financial mismanagement and nepotism, demands for reform and threats of a few countries to withdraw from UNESCO. M'bow claimed the complaints to be part of a smear campaign against him and claimed that the withdrawal of a few countries would make no difference as long as the other countries had the *will* to cooperate internationally. The acrimonious controversy culminated in the withdrawal of Singapore, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and a consequent one-third reduction of budgetary contributions for an already cash strapped organization. That was bad enough but far worse than the monetary loss was the impact on the image of an organization which set great store on universality. What began as a promising tenure ended as a tragedy, and in retrospect UNESCO never regained the lead role it had in its areas of competence in the first twenty-five years of its existence before M'bow assumed office. Looking back at M'bow's tenure I cannot but help recall the question whether after an election a Prime Minister or a President should attempt to be the leader of his whole country instead of limit himself to being the leader of his party. Likewise, should the head of a multilateral organization remove himself from partisan fray and attempt to bring the conflicting groups together or should he be a crusader for causes dear to his group? Whatever, the acrimonious North-South confrontation passed away as 1970s gave way to 1980s.. Many reasons account for the fading away of the North-South confrontation: (i) the end of the Cold War and implosion of the Soviet Union which acted as a bulwark of the South and fueled North-South Confrontation; (ii) the South ceasing to be a monolithic bloc with sharp fault lines developing due to differential rates of development of the Third World countries and the growing divergence of interests of those countries; (iii) the fall from grace of the policy prescriptions of development economists and *dependencia* theorists and the rise of the hegemony of neo-liberal economic theories and a growing consensus that statist policies should give way to policies which do not eschew markets.

(Concluded)

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America is not lie;it is a disappointment. But it can be a disappointment because it is also a hope.

Samuel P. Huntington.

Book Review:

WHAT DOES CHINA THINK?

Mark Leonard

London 2008

Dr. Uday Balakrishnan

Indian Postal Service (Retd.)
Former Member Postal Services Board and
Chairman Investment Board

An Update From The Reviewer:

Since this book was published in 2008, China has pulled far ahead of India and has emerged as the largest economy in the world (PPP). It is powerful militarily and incredibly arrogant, suffering from a sense of victimhood that justifies all its present and future actions. India meanwhile has been steadily going down economically wasting the one advantage it has, its demographic dividend by not focusing on education or vocational training.

Right up to 2015 the Asian Century was considered as much an Indian story as it was of the rest of Asia. At the heart of India's decline is corruption on a humongous scale of the kind that precludes development while destroying the national morale to achieve. We still have a small window to grow dramatically but our short-sighted politicians aided by a self-serving bureaucracy only see problems where there are opportunities. We also talk big which the Chinese did not until their economic might backed by military power became too obvious not to be noticed. The review was written when India still had hope and aspired to match China and even beat it. That dream lies shattered today.

Mark Leonard's book is one of the first to bring out the rainbow hue of opinions and views within China.

The 800-pound Chinese gorilla has suddenly descended on the world's front garden and is squatting untidily on the flowerbed and the cabbage patch. It looks set to be there for a long, long time and no one, not even the gorilla, seems to know what to make of all this.

Mark Leonard, head of the first pan-European think tank, the European Council on Foreign Relations, has asked questions and sought answers for this phenomenon within China itself and now lets the world know about what he learnt in a remarkable

book, *What Does China Think?* It is the kind of work that makes you wonder why it was not written earlier.

As books on China go, I do not recollect a smaller one; at around 160 pages *What Does China Think?* can almost be passed over in a bookshop for a less than serious work on that huge and confounding country, meriting no more than a flip through and a return to the shelf. But the book's size belies its importance and uniqueness; it is one of the first to bring out the rainbow hue of opinions and views within China. These are influencing Chinese policy at all levels and impacting on countries as small as Nauru and as populous and large as India or the United States.

China's rise is indeed one of the two big stories of our time the other, largely ignored by much of the world, is India's progress, mostly viewed as a glass half-empty, but in reality about as significant as China's and as vital for the rest of the world to know. Having said that, without doubt China is the flavour of the day. Its rise is indeed as stupendous as it is unprecedented; nothing in history has prepared the world for this, compelling us to agree with Leonard that without understanding China it would be impossible to understand world politics.

An accidental Sinologist, Leonard spent several years trying to understand China through those who influence its policies. He travelled extensively in the country and met and interacted closely with leading opinion-makers. Amongst those he met were New Left intellectuals, die-hard nationalists, middle-roads and champions of reform.

Many of these intellectuals and experts have been educated in the best universities of the West or have held influential positions in China for a long time. What Leonard discovered was that through the ruling Chinese Communist Party, such intellectuals and experts do significantly influence national and foreign policy. To understand China, one, therefore, needs to know what such people think; Leonard gives us a very good introduction to several in his book.

Contrary to popular perception, the billion plus Chinese are not quite the robots they have been made out to be; there are a few more opinion-makers, influencers and shapers of policies in China than the world is aware of. They are varyingly contributing to the changes taking place in China, which, as Leonard

History doesn't repeat itself, but it often rhymes.

Mark Twain.

informs us, are leading to steady improvements in developing the rule of law and professionalising its civil service.

Will all this lead to the emergence of liberal democracy in China (a persistent Western obsession) is something that only time will tell. But China's exemplary openness in handling its most recent disaster, the huge earthquake that has killed thousands and left millions homeless, is a warning, suggesting that India needs to watch out.

As we fritter away the advantages of an open society it is possible that China is well on its way to becoming one; with its ever-rising prosperity, it also looks fully capable of sustaining it.

If, in a few years down the line, China does emerge as the world's largest economy with much more political liberty for its people, it would then have emphatically closed the ongoing debate on development and freedom. However, the jury is still out and it is somewhat premature for Leonard to conclude that China is the first country since the end of the Cold War with the ingenuity, scale and global exposure to shape the world in its image or that because of its stunning economic record, people around the world are starting to listen and copy the Chinese model.

If indeed there is a model, it is as yet not obvious to anyone. China, for all its success, is very much a work in progress and the future is uncertain and not only for China. In a famous interview with Edgar Snow in 1975, Mao Zedong observed with great perspicacity that future events would be decided by future generations, and in accordance with conditions we cannot foresee.

For more than three decades now, China continues to unceasingly astonish the world. It has become the largest consumer of steel, cement and soon oil. In no time at all it has become the world's second largest producer of cars, largest manufacturer of computers and has now emerged as a leading builder of ships as well.

Leonard cannot contain his astonishment that every year a city the size of London comes up somewhere in China. Astounded by all this, he concludes that China is fast emerging as a political and possibly intellectual role-model for the rest of the world. One needs to contest that. China continues to

be an authoritarian state albeit one which is allowing a lot more freedom to creep into the lives of its people every day.

The intellectual base for policy making is still too narrow for a country so large. Unlike India, which wears all its problems on its sleeve, much of what is dirty about China its environmental degradation, its low-intensity conflicts and intense local-level tyrannies, and its ineptness in managing protest continues to be masked by a regime that has brought Yahoo and Google to heel and sent a cannot-bend-anymore-backward Murdoch packing.

China's reforms, which began a long time before India's, have brought unprecedented prosperity to its people, lifting nearly all of them out of the kind of abject poverty that still blights India. But however much China impresses, we need to recognise that it is a hard and often nasty road that it has taken to get to where it has got today. Leonard glosses over all this, just as he also underplays the fact that China is still an evolving entity.

Leonard, while so impressed by China's achievements, almost completely ignores India about the only other country it can be compared to. Several of India's problems are horrendous and some, such as its caste conflicts, endemic corruption and continued mass poverty, are inexcusable. But with all that, to the utter surprise of everyone, India too has progressed in a robust manner while remaining an open society, providing the world with a unique model in nation building.

India's achievements, especially in integration under extremely difficult and trying circumstances, have been spectacular. No other country in history has so successfully accommodated so much of regional, ethnic and religious variety and yet thrived as a nation as India has.

The European Union, to which Leonard belongs, would do well to look at India's experience in nation-building, as it expands and struggles to come to terms with ethnic and religious differences and endlessly waffles over the entry of Turkey into the E.U. China, in sharp contrast, has as yet, nothing comparable to offer.

Leonard can be excused for being bedazzled by China. Who, India included, is not? Nothing that is happening there is less than mind-bogglingly

Democracy is always a beckoning goal, not a safe harbour.
For freedom is an unremitting endeavour, never a final achievement.

Justice Frankfurter

gargantuan the mostest of everything! Just take air travel; the latest Economist informs us that 47 million Chinese journeyed overseas and 1.6 billion made trips at home. All this is set to quadruple in the next decade. Huge airports, massive buildings, spectacular universities, maglev trains China has them all. Every time one asks the question Will all this last?, China yanks yet another monster rabbit from a seemingly inexhaustible hat.

What Leonard and the rest of the world, however, fail to recognise is that the lack of public debate on important issues in China leaves its in-favour intellectuals dangerously empowered to speak for more than a billion people. As Chinas relentless progress continues, this one shortcoming can lead to a huge mistake that can derail everything; history is replete with examples.

Having said that, Leonard does significantly enlighten us on What does China think? in a refreshingly interesting, yet serious, way. For that reason alone Leonards slim work is important one that must be read by anyone trying to understand a massive country that is getting stronger by the day, feels that its time to lead the world has come and frets that it is not allowed to do so.

China indeed is the world's first maximum country a reality we all have to live with and make sense of; reading Mark Leonard helps.

(Courtesy FRONTLINE: June 20, 2008)

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LINGUISTIC COMMUNITIES AND NEW HISTORIOGRAPHY CONSTRUCTING A MARITIME TRADITION IN COLONIAL ODISHA -II

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New Historiography/Oral History/Local Tradition

The parody and the satire here are not just against the empirical claims of the English historians

Marshman and Todd, but more crucially the 'English educated Babus' who must constantly imitate a derivative discourse. Fakir Mohan's local historian is deliberately modeled after a humble Ekadusia Chandra [the 'name' in Odia is meant to provoke laughter]. The critique is against historiography based on rationally verified accounts of 'Truth' to be seen against the claims of local/oral history tradition which would gain acceptance much later in the West. In so doing, Fakir Mohan seems to pose challenge to the dominant modernity project and offer an alternative modernity/ epistemology.

The menace of the Western modernity finds recurrent mention in *Chha Mana Athaguntha* that was serialized in *Utkal Sahitya* and had an enormous mass appeal.¹ Talking about the Asura Pond before the women appeared, Fakir Mohan's narrator declares in a tongue in cheek manner:

There is another equally irrefutable proof to support this contention that [there are fish in the pond]. Look over there! Four Kaduakhumpi birds are hopping about like Gotipuas, like traditional dancing boys. The birds are happy and excited because they are able to spear and eat the little fish that live in the mud. Some might remark that these birds are so cruel, so wicked that they get pleasure from spearing and eating creatures smaller than themselves! What can we say? You may describe the Kaduakhumpi birds as cruel, wicked, Satanic or whatever else you like; the birds will never file a defamation suit against you. But don't you know that among your fellow human beings, the bravery, honor, respectability, indeed, the attractiveness of an individual all depend upon the number of necks he can wring?

Some sixteen to twenty cranes, white and brown, churn the mud like lowly farmhands, from morning till night. This is the third proof that there are fish in the pond. A pair of kingfishers suddenly arrives out of nowhere, dive into water a couple of times, stuff themselves with food, and swiftly fly away. Sitting on the bank, a lone kingfisher suns itself, wings spread like the gown of a memsahib. Oh, stupid Hindu cranes look at these English kingfishers, who arrive out of nowhere with empty pockets, fill themselves with all manner of fish from the pond, and then fly away. You nest in the banyan tree near

The Indian cultural tradition, rich, deep, and undogmatic, has been able to absorb
the most advanced intellectual concepts.

Granville Austin

the pond, but after churning the mud and water all day long, all you get are a few miserable small fish. You are living in critical times now; more and more kingfishers will swoop down on the pond and carry off the best fish. You have no hope, no future, unless you go abroad and learn to swim in the ocean.

Here is Fakir Mohan at his best parodying English logic and legalese used in abundance to get even with the native populace. Suitable warning is held out by the narrator to be watchful lest one is stripped at any time of one's rightful claims. That the whole discourse comes in the guise of humor and sarcasm does not minimize the seriousness of the situation. The image of the pond and its denizens on the lookout for life and liberty stands as an objective correlative to the British Rule.

Modernity and New Historiography

If the flipside of the modernity project has been shown by Chandrasekhar Mishra, then the idea of modern historiography gains ground in many essays in *Utkal Sahitya*. It must be noted here that although Odisha had a rich tradition of voyages abroad to faraway lands like Lanka, Java and Bali, there are very few accounts available, based on historical documentation. Most narratives have been in the realm of legends, folklore and the oral tradition. This has been largely true of other regions in India as well. In fact, western historiography based on a set of empirically verifiable facts, has not been as pervasive in India as in Europe. An astute editor, Biswanath Kar, conscious of his role as a 'modernizer' spearheaded efforts to fill this gap. Consequently we find in the pages of *Utkal Sahitya*, a number of essays that deal with Odisha's historical past. The article 'PrachinaUtkalareJalajatra' ('Sea Voyages in Ancient Utkal') combines history, myths, legends and folklores in order to trace the traditions of seafaring activities in Odisha, but there is little here that can bear scrutiny in empirical terms.

Birupakhya Kar begins the essay by alluding to the rich sea-faring tradition of Athens, England and America. There is glory in association, but can such association take us far? He asks a pointed question rhetorically:

Three parts of India are surrounded by water.

Consequently, Indians must be adept in sea voyages. Was India ever a maritime nation? That is not the main objective of this essay. A small part of India, namely Odisha or ancient Kalinga's maritime tradition is the subject of this essay. (265).

Kar outlines the history of Odisha from the earlier period when it stretched from Ganga to Godavari. The objective that he sets before himself is to prove 'the excellence of Odiyas in the sea-faring activities. (266)

He alludes to the Buddhist period and the annals of the Buddhist pilgrim Bigyandujtta. Referring to Chanakya's *Artha Sastra* in 4th Century AD, he speculates that the voyages referred here must surely refer to Kalinga, [emphasis mine]. The shift from Chanakya to Kalinga occurs through qualifiers such as 'perhaps' and 'maybe'. Assertions are made with the help of speculations and surmises. He links the verses from Chanakya to the practices in the Odia villages during the month of Kartika, when women paint their houses and draw the picture of the native ships and worship them.

He then refers to the history of colonization by the Odias during the first century AD. According to him, in 75 AD, Odias established a colony in Java. Known as 'Klings', these tribes continue to live in Malaysia and Singapore as well. In his support, he alludes to the accounts of Ptolemy and suggests that the ports mentioned by the Roman historian such as Pakoura, Nanigaina, Katidarmana, Kosamba, Tyndis, Dosaram and Adamas refer actually to places and rivers like Pakura (near Ganjam), Puri, Cuttack, Kosamba (Balasore), Brahmani and so on in Odisha. Similarly, he invokes the traditions of art, sculpture, temple architecture, costumes, as well as the journey of travelers who came to Odisha from Arabia and Persia. Poetry of Dinakrishna and that of Chaitanya Dev too comes handy to support Kar's claims.

At the end of this survey, largely based on myth, hear-say and speculations, Birupakhya Kar turns to the present with a sense of sadness. He reflects pensively:

Today, the name of Odisha is not uttered in lands and nations that have excelled in maritime activities. The Odias seem fearful of the sea; they are

The communication of the dead is tongued with a fire beyond the language of the living.

T.S. Eliot

socially ostracized when they travel abroad by sea. Afraid of swimming in the ocean, most Odiyas today amuse themselves by throwing coins into the sea and watch the antics of fishermen.

It would be seen that Birupakhya Kar's essay on the sea-faring tradition of Odisha, while claiming to be 'historical' is based, for the most part, on legends, folklore, iconography and poetry. He makes speculative claims and uses expressions such as 'It must have been so', 'Perhaps it was so' and so on. The attempt at producing historiography of the western kind signals the yearning for rationality, objectivity and empiricism, all parts of colonial modernity. Ultimately this desire fails because of an inability to provide a recorded history. The claim to a glorious and golden past remains a recurrent feature, however. It is a past that is idealized, given the existing crisis of identity.

Anthropocentrism

The conflicting approach to writing history continues to be manifest in the pages of *Utkal Sahitya*. For instance, the same issue of the journal carries an essay called 'The Problem of World Religions', written as part of a serial by Kulamani Dash. The essay is a thinly veiled account of anthropocentrism. It attempts to prove that practically everything outside India can be traced back to Indian sources! This includes Indian religions, culture, and philosophy and even geographical land masses. For instance, Dash claims that the 'Harayu' river of Persia is the 'Sarayu' of India (122), the name 'Euphrates' is similarly drawn from the term 'Bharat'. The name 'Bharat' is turned into 'Pharat' and subsequently becomes 'Euphrates' in Persia. He surmises that 'Babylon', the capital city of Persia, on the bank of 'Pharat', is associated with 'Bhupalan', and possibly comes from 'Bhupal' ('Bhopal') of India. Likewise, the 'Kousi' community that lives on the bank of the river 'Tigavu' of Persia arguably went from 'Kasi' or 'Varanasi' or 'Benares' in India. Quoting several European thinkers like Max Mueller and Sir William Jones, Kulamani Dash concludes triumphantly:

In our earlier essays we have tried to prove that belief in God and the Almighty went from the Vedas to Zenda Avasta, and subsequently to the Bible in a

distorted and degraded form. Those who advocate the theory of evolution, what arguments can they show to counteract against this view? The proof and the evidence that we have furnished earlier, do they not defeat the claims of evolution? (126)

Dash concludes his argument of the Vedas as the source of all religions in the following words:

We have travelled along the banks of the river of Dharma (Religion) and travelled to the source of the river. Koran and Bible have taken us to Zenda Avasta, and Zenda Avasta to the Vedas. We have not been able to travel further. Once there, we notice that the stream of Religion that flows from heaven is lost amidst a mound of ice. Are we therefore not correct in our belief that the Vedas are a source of all Religions?

While one can legitimately have respect for one's own religion and cultural traditions, clearly Kulamani Dash seems to go overboard in his sweeping claims and assertions. To believe in a comparative study of religions is one thing, but to argue that world religions have only one source namely the Vedas, and that the rivers and places in Persia are invariably named after Indian names, is clearly farfetched. The fact that this article was part of a series in *Utkal Sahitya* seems to enjoy an editorial approval unless the editor himself was trying to cater to different sides without endorsing any particular view point or argument.

Conclusion

It would thus be seen that the new historiography that was attempted in the public domain by the authors and the reading public in Odisha during the Raj, was largely marshaled for the sake of ethnic self-esteem and community building exercises. Historiography of the Western kind was at times mimicked, as in the hands of Fakir Mohan, for resisting the cultural hegemony of the colonial State. Others such as Birupaksha Kar, enormously popular in his own time, used the new 'historiography' for constructing a maritime tradition for the sake of a new linguistic community.

(Concluded)

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Religious countries tend to be more corrupt than secular ones.

Ronald F. Inglehart

Celebrating Silver Jubilee

A. Prasanna Kumar

Centre for Policy Studies completes twenty five years today, October 2, 2020 and the best way of celebrating the Silver Jubilee is by offering grateful thanks to all those who have helped it in reaching the milestone. In 1995, the last year of my service in my *alma mater* the Andhra University, the then Vice- Chancellor and my good friend Dr M. Gopalakrishna Reddy persuaded me to assume charge as Rector of the university for six months till my superannuation. It was an amusing coincidence that I took charge of the vague and innocuous office on April 1. The office of the Rector is like the American Vice-President, often derisively described as 'a political superfluity.' During that time Mr A.Sankara Rao, a businessman who established Sankar Foundation, approached me with a request to start an organization to serve the society. He accepted my suggestion to start a forum for healthy public discourse through regular meetings, focusing on issues and policies of contemporary relevance. He liked the idea and secured accommodation for the proposed body in a private apartment near his house. On Gandhi Jayanthi, October 2, 1995, in the presence of spiritual leader and well known auditor and chartered accountant Dr K.Parvathi Kumar, then Chairman of Sankar Foundation, Shri Sankara Rao, Vice Chancellor Dr M. Gopalakrishna Reddy, philanthropist, Sri P.V. Ramanaiah Raja, Centre for Policy Studies was formally inaugurated with me as the Director. Exactly a year later, on October 2, 1996 was launched a bimonthly Bulletin which has today completed twenty four years, without an interruption. A year later CPS was shifted to 'Soudamani' the office- building of Dr. K.Parvathi Kumar and after six years Centre for Policy Studies was on the verge of closure as Mr. Sankara Rao diverted attention to his other projects like an eye hospital. When Prof K.C. Reddy, my former colleague and valued friend who later rose to occupy high positions at the state level, brought this matter to the notice of Prof. B. Sarveswara Rao, an eminent economist and former vice chancellor, who was then the Chairman of Gayatri Vidya Parishad, desired that CPS should work under the GVP umbrella. Prof. P. Somaraju, founder secretary of Gayatri Vidya Parishad accommodated CPS in the GVP fold. Mr D.V. Subba Rao the legal luminary and former Mayor who succeeded Prof. Sarveswara Rao as the Chairman of GVP took keen interest in CPS's activities. After Mr. Subba Rao's demise, CPS disentangled itself and in 2016 thanks to the able guidance of retired auditor and educationist of repute Shri V.Seetaramaiah, Centre for Policy Studies was registered as a society with a new governing body. Able educational administrator Dr G. Madhukumar as Secretary and Treasurer Shri D.S. Varma known for his administrative skill lent stability to CPS during the crucial period. Centre for Policy Studies was founded to promote healthy public discourse involving the expert, the scholar, scientist, administrator and the common man, focusing on issues and policies of contemporary relevance. Till date, 230 meetings/seminars have been conducted by CPS and in tandem with Visakhapatnam Public Library, CPS has also been helping career aspirants with necessary information and guidance at meetings being organized at the Public Library. CPS has not received any financial support or grant from the government or any private agency. Shri V.Seetaramaiah with his moral support, Mr D.S.Varma, the dynamic Secretary and my family, have kept CPS afloat. My grateful thanks to them, the Members of the Governing Body and the large number of its well wishers. Mr M. Manga Raju who joined CPS as an office boy has remained the backbone of the small office, working 24/7 without ever taking leave, even for a day. This is the 145th issue of the bimonthly Bulletin and since its birth twenty four years ago it has received the support of its readers thanks to the invaluable articles contributed by eminent persons. I cannot thank them adequately for their gracious and unflinching support. Centre for Policy Studies was started with no particular goal to achieve or destination to reach but had as its motto the famous words of Mahatma Gandhi that 'satisfaction lies in the effort, not in the attainment. Full effort is full victory.' CPS is committed to it in thought, word and work.

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