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CHINA'S QUEST FOR HEGEMONY

Is China redefining global geopolitics? Having risen to the status of a superpower is China emerging as the new hegemon of the Eastern hemisphere? People's Republic of China's achievements are of gigantic proportions. China's ambitions are no less. The world is so awestruck by China's amazing progress on several fronts that people from all parts of the world are eagerly visiting Beijing and Shanghai that showcase China's stunning achievements. Recent publications by scholars of repute throw light on the implications of the subtle and intriguing moves being made by China on the chessboard of international politics.

The western world led by the United States of America, the so-called first world of yesteryears, is watching with anxiety and concern Beijing's moves on the global scene. The latest issue of *Foreign Affairs* (May-June 2010) carries an incisive article by Robert D.Kaplan under the title *The Geography of Chinese Power*. The author begins with a reference to the famous 1904 article by the English geographer Sir Halford Mackinder who had predicted that China would eventually guide the world by "building for a quarter of humanity a new civilization, neither quite Eastern nor quite Western." Kaplan shows how China combines western modernity with 'a hydraulic civilization' (societies that exercise centralized control over irrigation) explaining how 'internal dynamism creates external ambitions.' Explaining in detail how China is stretching its influence not only in the Asia-Pacific region but also in Africa, Kaplan predicts "the emergence of a Greater China of truly hemispheric proportions." India which according to Kaplan is "building a great navy" may checkmate China. The US would welcome it. How the US, the hegemon of the Western hemisphere, will prevent China from becoming the hegemon of the Eastern hemisphere could be 'the signal drama of the age', writes Kaplan.

Exactly a year ago Kaplan had written in the same journal, *Foreign Affairs* (March-April 2009) a well researched article titled "Center Stage for the Twenty-first Century — Power Plays in the Indian Ocean" The Indian Ocean, wrote Kaplan, "combines the centrality of Islam with global energy

politics and the rise of India and China to reveal a multilayered multipolar world. India's and China's great power aspirations, as well as their quests for energy security, have compelled the two countries to redirect their gazes from land to the seas." He had forecast an intense rivalry in the Indian ocean between China and India with America, the one great power from outside the Indian Ocean region, acting as 'broker between India and China in their own backyard.'

The Guardian Weekly of March 5-11, 2010 carried an article by Bruno Philip in the leading French daily *Le Monde* which says that China is putting together 'a string of pearls' in India's home waters. The string, writes Bruno, is a part of Chinese strategy 'to trap India into a spider's web reducing its options in the event of a crisis.' Building a port at Gwadar in Pakistan, constructing ports at Sittwe, Mergui and Dawei in Myanmar, developing the port of Hambantota in Sri Lanka, modernizing the Chittagong port in Bangladesh, tightening the boundaries with and security in Tibet and Nepal are among the other major activities in building this 'string of pearls'. *The Chinese Global Times* is quoted as saying "Worry about China competing for dominance of the Indian Ocean runs deep inside India."

Anxiety and concern do run deep inside not only India but every other neighbour of China. Sixty one years of its aggressive and expansionist activities bear testimony to China's quest for global supremacy that began with the occupation of Tibet and ruthless suppression of revolt by the upholders of a great Buddhist tradition and culture. India was invaded and large areas of its territory grabbed. Vietnam was taught a lesson with 'a punitive war.' Hong Kong was embraced into its fold. Taiwan also known as the Republic of China, Formosa and Nationalist China is being 'enveloped.' The pattern is familiar. The process may be different, marginally. The goal is hegemony, regional or global. Modern history is mostly a story about such great powers as UK, France, USA, Germany, Russia, Japan and Italy and now China. Greatness and goodness rarely go together, in individuals or nations.

- The Editor

"In the twenty-first century, China will project hard power abroad primarily through its navy." - Robert Kaplan

A PASSAGE TO LAHORE

- Shri K. Natwar Singh

Former Minister for External Affairs, distinguished author, diplomat and parliamentarian Shri Natwar Singh has kindly sent this article for publication in CPS Bulletin after his recent visit to Pakistan.

The wings of Angels do not flutter over India-Pakistan deliberations. This applies not only to inter governmental exercises but also to non-state players. It is well known that Indo-Pak relations are accident prone. Just when optimism seems in order the Indo-Pak diplomatic train goes off the rails. Cynics in India sometimes say, "Plague on both your houses. Let's get on with life." That is not a route sensible people take.

I have recently returned after a two day stay in the simmering city of Lahore, to an equally simmering New Delhi. I was last in Lahore in 2005 as foreign minister. It was an enticing and seductive place, particularly for us north Indians, for whom nostalgia is a way of life. Today this great city appears under siege. The brio, the élan, gaiety, music, even cricket appear to be on a downward slope. Mullahdom has not triumphant but its progenies, the Taliban and the Jihadis, cast their dark shadows right across the city, which both conceals and reveals its tortured soul. Yet, even more than Karachi & Islamabad it is the epicenter of Pakistan.

Why did I go to Lahore? To participate in a meeting of former foreign minister of India and Pakistan, to deliberate informally but cordially on the current impasse in our bilateral relations. The initiative for this exercise was taken by former Pakistan foreign minister, Khurshid Kasuri, a politician of immense grit and stamina with an engaging personality. M/s Sartaz Aziz, Gohar Ayub and A Sattar, Jaswant Singh, myself and Mani Shankar Aiyer met at the ducal residence of Khurshid Kasuri. Our deliberations were marked by candour and courtesy. Inevitably, on certain issues, e.g water- strong views were expressed by both sides. Not in anger but in an effort to calmly try and understand different perceptions. The atmosphere was relaxed and free of acerbity. We knew each other well. No scoring of points. No finger pointing. No aspect of our devilishly complex relationship was avoided. Should the future of Indo-Pak relations be forever hostage to the past after 63 years? All were of the view that new ground rules were needed. Diplomacy does not ensure salvation. It shows the way. That road

does not go to a destination called conflict. Even modest progress is worthy of respect. Besides, what is the alternative? Each one of us was in favour of resuming the composite India-Pak dialogue. 26/11, we said to our Pakistani colleagues, was a terrible event. It justifiably aroused very strong feelings in India. However, the dastardly event should not for all time to come prevent re-starting of the composite dialogue.

We were acutely aware that our ages naturally did not go un-noticed. "What solution could these exhausted volcanoes come up with?" Age was no bar, provided we did not suffer from Parkinson's disease. We were not lacking in experience. We may or may not possess the wisdom of our critics, but we certainly had vast knowledge of foreign affairs. We had been antagonists, now were meetings as friends. We were not a pressure group. But we all did have a vested interest in good neighbourly and cordial relations between the two countries.

This venture could have ended up in a fiasco. It did not. Our meeting attracted extra-ordinary media attention. The turnout of the press conference held at Khurshid Kasuri's house was astonishingly large. Kasuri, as spokesman did not dodge a single awkward or trap question. One could discern a change in media attitude during the press meet for the better. The next meeting of the group will be held in Delhi before the end of the year. I have several close friends in Lahore. All were worried about the growth of Islamic fundamentalism and the real threat of the Taliban taking Pakistan in the wrong direction. Till I went to Lahore, I was not conscious that Pakistanis were in many parts of the country faced a threat to its existence and stability. Each day dozens of innocent people are being killed- children, women, the old and destitute. Hospitals, schools, mosques, universities were at the mercy of the suicide bombers. The number of madarsas was increasing. These were funded from outside Pakistan. 99% of the people of Pakistan were against these terrorists. There were, however some in the establishment who had a different orientation. The economic situation is far from good- less than 4% growth, I was told. Lahore is without electricity for many hours each day. Price rise is as serious as in India.

An unstable Pakistan is not in India's interest, is not a cliché. It is an absolute necessity. Make no mistake. Did our meet do any good. Yes. In a very modest way it contributed to the reduction of the trust deficit.

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'molten gold of good prose'

The multi-faceted Natwar Singh's articles and books have been widely acclaimed all over the world for over half-a-century. His easy, elegant style of writing, laced with delightful wit and humour, has earned for him the admiration of a large number of people including Presidents, Prime Ministers and celebrities from the world of arts and letters as the page below from his latest book, *Yours Sincerely* (Rupa & Co2010) shows.

Prefatory Note

The post is the consolation of life. Voltaire.

The ubiquitous T.V. has, so far, not killed the book or the newspaper. None can deny that both are under threat. The epistle is in graver danger. The e-mail, the fax machine, the mobile phone are the enemies of the art and craft of letter writing. The SMS has invented a pidgin, linguistic short hand. This is an assault on the refinement of language. Abridgement of thought follows. Has writing letters become a tertiary literary activity?

As a people we are not given to preserving letters. Exceptions there are. Jawaharlal Nehru is a good example. His, 'A Bunch of Old Letters' came out in 1960. It is still in print. Gandhiji wrote thousands of letters. Most have survived. Tolstoy's selected works run into ninety volumes. Thirty-two carry the letters written and received by him. Lord Curzon, as Viceroy of India, wrote a hundred-page letter to his wife in long hand. Actually, he wrote to his wife everyday from Calcutta.

Our indifference to history and the historical process spills over to not preserving letters. I would go so far as to say that our disregard for history is not so much an activity as a whole philosophy. Is it, because so much of our history, is not overtly inspiring.

I had the good sense to preserve these letters. Many of my distinguished correspondents I met in my twenties. I was, both delighted and genuinely grateful. The 'Natwar Singh of these letters was obviously someone who had been transmuted out of the indubitably common metal that he is, to a superior product by the alchemy of the minds of indulgent and warm-hearted individuals of rare distinction and quality.' For some strange reason, I got on exceptionally well with older women-Indira Gandhi, Han Suyin, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Krishna Hutheesing,

Santha Rama Rau. Not that the younger ones were neglected. Far from it. This is not, however, the place to elaborate on my love life. Stature obviously, could not be disregarded. Included also are the less imposing, less famous, but very worthwhile friends who pulled me back from the wastelands of life, which is a journey without maps. In my mind are stored the memories of Indira Gandhi's grace and gravitas, Forster's subtlety of mind, his genuine gift for friendship. His Holiness the Dalai Lama's luminous spirituality, Rajaji's calm self-awareness, Morarji Desai's refrigerated acerbity, P.N.Haksar's equanimity and wit, Mountbatten's cynosural narcissism, Julius Nyerere's Calvinism, J.R.Jayawardhane's composure, Kenneth Kaunda's Africanised Gandhism, Hiren Mukherjee's Marxist prose, Mulk Raj Anand and Ahmed Ali's benign prolixity, Raja Rao's sublime impracticability, Vijayalakshmi Pandit's staggering candour, her sister Krishna Hutheesing's valetudinarianism, Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai's rural charm, Han Suyin's ruffled disquiet, R.K.Narayan's anti-hero stance, Husain's artistic genius, Nirad C Chaudhari's schadenfreude, Nadine Gordimer's literary triumphs...

A near insurmountable hurdle was-who to include and who to leave out? Here, fate intervened. Mademoiselle Nadine Kreisberger, a citizen of France who had made India her second home came to my rescue. She cut out the epistolary fat with magisterial skill.

For this labour of love, I express my sincere gratitude to her.

1 December 2009
New Delhi

- K.Natwar Singh

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WORLD DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS – 14

- Prof. M.N.Sastri

Religions

"When a man is freed of religion, he has better chance to live a normal and wholesome life."

- Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)

"When I do good, I feel good. When I do bad, I feel bad. That is my religion."

- Abraham Linclon (1809-1865)

"The fact that the robed gentlemen are on good terms does not always lead to goodwill among their folks."

- Economist

"Universal peace depends on the peace of the society which in turn depends on the peace of the individual." - Sri Sathya Sai Baba

“Many have quarreled about religion that never practiced it.”

- Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)

Religion is defined in a number of ways. According to one definition, “Religion is any specific system of belief about God, often involving rituals, a code of ethics, a philosophy of life and a world view.” A worldview comprises a set of basic beliefs concerning God, humanity and the rest of universe.

Some religious groups believe in one supreme God or deity. This practice is called *monotheism*. Some believe in a number of Gods or deities, a practice called *polytheism*. Some practice religions in which no specific God or Gods are worshipped. There are also people who practice their own religious beliefs in their own personal way, largely independent of any organized religion. There are people who deny the existence of God or Gods. They are called *atheists*. They believe that it is perfectly possible to lead a moral life without belief in God. There are also people who believe that there can be no proof either that God exists or that God does not exist. They are called *agnostics*.

Anthropologists and historians say that some form of religion has been practiced since man appeared about two million years ago. The earliest recorded evidence of religion however dates back to 60,000 BC. Many scholars believe that animism is the first spiritual concept of humankind. This concept, which underlies all subsequent religious thoughts, represents the belief that nature has soul and that things in nature, such as trees, mountains and the sky have souls of consciousness, that a supernatural force animates and organizes the universe and that people have spirits that do and can exist separately from their bodies. A large number of people still subscribe to this concept.

Currently there are 3,300 different religions, denominations, faith groups, tribes etc. The top religions in the world today are Christianity (2 billion), Islam (1.57 b), Hinduism (900 million), Buddhism (376 m), Animism and Tribal religions (300 m), Sikhism (23.8 m), Judaism (14.5 m), Confucianism (6 m), Jainism (4.9 m), Chinese folk religion (3.9 m), Shintoism (2.7 m) and Taoism (2.7 m). Christianity, Islam (sometimes Baha’i Faith too) and Judaism are grouped together as Abrahamic religions (After Abraham – 1900 BC – founder of Judaism). Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism are classified

as Indian religions while Chinese folk religions, Confucianism, Shintoism and Taoism are classified as East Asian or Chinese religions. Hinduism differs from all other religions in the fact that it does not have a single founder.

Many of the large religious institutions (e.g. Christianity, Hinduism and Islam) have, over periods of time, sub-divided into more than 250 sub-groups or separate religions. The main reasons for these subdivisions are not only due to differences in faith but also due to social, political, cultural and environmental factors. For example, Protestantism was the result of spiritual opposition to the luxurious lifestyles of the Pope in Rome. The fundamental division of Islam into Shia and Sunni sub-sects arose over political disputes with the Caliphate. Buddhism and Jainism were founded due to opposition to the claims of Hindu priesthood to spiritual and social supremacy. “Religions are not born from scratch. They grow from one another.”

Hinduism, the dominant religion in India, Nepal and parts of Sri Lanka, is considered as one of the oldest (ca.1500 BC) world religions. It does not have a single theological system or morality or a guiding single apex organization. It consists of thousands of faith groups that have evolved over centuries. A polytheistic religion, Hinduism is traditionally the world’s most tolerant religion with a secular outlook. Some recent events however are leading to a decrease in the level of religious tolerance in India. According to 2001 figures there are 828 million Hindus in India, comprising 80.4 per cent of the country’s population. Islam accounts for 160 million (about 13 per cent). These are followed by Christianity (2.34 per cent), Sikhism (1.87 per cent), Buddhism (0.77 per cent) and Jainism (0.41 per cent). The balance accounts for Judaism and other faiths. Christianity is said to have arrived in India even before it reached Europe! Indonesia has the largest Muslim population (203 million) followed by Pakistan (174 million).

There have been several situations when religion and state have been closely interlinked. One typical example is the Church of England with the British monarch empowered as “Super Governor”. Several countries in Europe and Latin America adopt the Roman Catholic statues as their state religions (also official religions). Many Islamic countries even impose Sharia Law (Islamic religious law). Some countries have adopted Buddhism

“Parliamentary democracy means tolerance not only of those who agree with us, but of those who do not agree with us.” - Jawaharlal Nehru

as the state religion (e.g. Thailand). At the same time several countries have not given official status to any religion. The Indian Constitution declares India as a secular state that upholds the right of citizens to freely worship and propagate any religion and faith. However a recent report by Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life says that nearly 70 per cent of the world's population lives in countries with 'high' or 'very high' religious restrictions. The countries include even those that have laws of constitution calling for freedom of religion. India, a secular republic, is placed second to Iraq in social hostility and religious bias perpetrated by individuals and groups. In the matter of government imposed restrictions India is placed among the worst 40 countries out of 198 surveyed.

Many religious battles have been fought since 70 AD when the Romans destroyed the Temple of Jews. The causes of these religious conflicts are mostly political rather than ideological. The best known are, the battles of Crusades of the 11th century when the European monarchs fought the Islamic armies of forge a Christian Empire in the Holy Land, the civil wars in France in the concluding parts of the 16th century and the Muslim invasions of India from the 11th century. Currently the Palestinians are at war with Israel.

Christianity and Islam are the major religions which emphasize the desirability of conversions. Buddhism also witnesses moderate levels of conversions. Though forced conversions are forbidden by the scriptures, there have been numerous instances of large scale forced conversions to Islam over centuries, especially in the lands invaded and occupied by Muslim invaders (e.g. Africa and India). Conversions to Christianity also have taken place in parts of Asia and Africa colonized by European powers. "The conquerors bring in their own languages and religions." It is even argued that such civilizational origin of religious pluralism is the cornerstone of India's enduring composite culture rooted in the traditional diversity of religious practices. According to Amartya Sen the greatest danger to this unique religious pluralism comes from "the violence fomented through the imposition of singular and belligerent identities on gullible people by proficient artisans of terror."

Religious conversions have been a hot issue in India since the Muslim invasions in the eleventh century. The activities of the Christian missionaries in the North-East

states and Orissa during the last century have led to an extraordinary transformation of the religious profile of their populations, with entire families embracing the Christian faith. Incentives through education and civic amenities as well as pecuniary and social inducements play a crucial role in these conversions. The growth of Hindu revivalist movements against these conversions is currently a cause for law and order problems.

A ongoing burning issue is the terror of religious fundamentalism, a political ideology calling for the replacement state laws with religious (e.g. Sharia law in the Swat Valley in Pakistan). Religious fundamentalism is "not much of an ideology as it is an attitude – an attitude of intolerance in civility and narrowness." The fundamentalists, to whichever religion they belong, fear change, modernization and loss of influence. They remold their religious world into a regressive domain from which they launch their attacks on every aspect of modernity, both in political and social spheres. They fear a future they cannot control. This fear motivates them to take to violence and terrorism. If a person who happens to be from another religion shows them up, they are much more likely to become aggressive than if a person from their own religion says the same thing.

All religions begin by teaching universal love. Ironically they end up – to some extent or other – preaching and practicing hatred and intolerance of those that belong to other religions. "We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another" (Jonathan Swift, 1667-1745).

In recent years, religion has become woven more deeply into the fabric of partisan politics than ever before with religion becoming more political and politics becoming more religious! With politicians treating religious belief as an issue rather than as a powerful social resource for good behaviour, *Theo politics* has become an important component in the political milieu of our turbulent world.

Currently some religious orders have been rocked by scandals. When individuals join and rise within mighty and venerable religious order, they come to think that as part of the establishment they can resort to any amount of abuse without any risk. In recent months the Catholic Church has been rocked by a series of explosive scandals (child abuse) involving Roman Catholic orders across the world. Yet another matter of concern is the

exploitation-monetary and sexual – by the so-called godmen claiming to possess supernatural powers. Abject poverty, illiteracy and superstition (even among the educated) have transformed India into a breeding ground of fake godmen, some of whom are patronized and protected by politicians. Such scandals are prevalent in other religious orders too.

Dr.S.Radhakrishnan (1888-1975), the great philosopher statesman, in his book “An Idealist’s View of Life” (1932), observed “Nothing is so hostile to religions as other religions.... The world would be a much more religious place if all religions are removed from it.” Benjamin Franklin (1731-1813) mused, “If men are so wicked with religion, what would they be without it?”

“At least to thirds of our miseries spring from human stupidity, human malice and those great motivators and justifiers of stupidity and malice, idealism, dogmatism and proselytizing zeal on behalf of religious or political idols.”

- Aldous Huxley (1894-1963)

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MEMORIES OF A GREAT DAWN

- Prof. Manoj Das

A seer among scholars the venerable Prof Manoj Das who lives in Aurobindo Ashram, Auroville and teachers at Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education has graciously permitted the publication of this essay from his book My Little India.

Sarnath was a charming place with a serene atmosphere when the Buddha decided to camp there, guiding the world’s first five Buddhists along the path of Dharma. The locals viewed him with awe and reverence, but either they did not understand him or they were too conservative to respond favourably to his doctrine which did not project the Vedas as its authority.

But the Buddha’s eyes were keen to recruit eligible spirits and remained alert to locate them.

‘Where are you going?’ one day he asked a young man passing through the park, looking bewildered.

‘That is the question I have been putting to myself, O Sage. Where am I going? Where are all these people I see going? I woke up at midnight and looked around. My and people lay like corpses. In the morning they sprang up and mechanically began their daily chores

without asking themselves why they must go on with them. At night they will revert to their dead-like state. Where does this futile monotony lead us?’

‘Young man, that automatic resignation to the process of alternate sleep and action must be having some illusion of a meaning for all those who had never been tormented by this question. So far as you are concerned, this is my answer to your agony: alas, all this mad – mad drama of life has no meaning at all. Desires propel man to action. The consequences of his action tie him to the wretched, sorrowful cycle of birth and death. The cycle shall end only when you have conquered your desires,’ said the Buddha.

‘Conquering desires? Is that possible?’

‘Possible. But you must follow a certain code of conduct. Are you willing to imparted to you?’

The young man, Yasha, bowed to the Buddha and became his disciple. His father, an affluent merchant, came here searching for his son the next day. The Buddha was giving a discourse to a small audience and near him sat Yasha. But the father, says a legend, could not see the son. The legend attributes it to the Buddha’s miracle. An acceptable interpretation says that the gentleman t once grew so very fond of the Buddha that his vision refused to record anything other than the luminous figure of the Master.

The merchant bowed to the Buddha and became his disciple.

The group that was formed around the Buddha can be said to be the beginning of the Samgha. The inmates went out seeking alms at a certain hour of the day and the Buddha did not exempt himself from the discipline. One day, as he stood before a householder expecting a handful of rice, the man burst into a tirade against him, under the impression that the mendicant was only a disciple of the Buddha. He called the Buddha names, attributed stupidity and vanity to him and went on spitting venom for long. Then, exhausted, he woke up to the fact that the mendicant who stood still like a statue had not uttered a single word either contradicting him or in a bid to silence him.

‘What about all that I said?’ the man demanded impatiently.

The Buddha who had a fruit in his hand, asked,

‘What would happen to this fruit if I offer this to you but you refuse to receive it?’

‘Well, it would remain with you! It’s common sense!’ replied the man.

‘Right. Now, it so happened that I did not receive the abuses you uttered. Your common sense should tell you where they rest!’ calmly stated the Buddha.

The Buddha walked away. But the man, as if under a spell, followed him into the park. A few days later he accepted the Buddha as his Master.

Late one afternoon, while the Buddha was returning to his makeshift hermitage, he saw some young men racing for something invisible. He confronted them and they stopped, hoping that the holy man could be of some help to them.

‘Whom are you chasing?’ the Buddha asked.

‘A dancing girl hired for entertaining us. We were here for a picnic. But, while we enjoyed a nap after our lunch, she decamped with all our valuables’, replied the young men.

‘Your valuables are not stolen!’

‘Aren’t they really? Do you know where they are?’

‘I can clearly see them. They are inside yourselves.’

Was the sage pulling their legs? They looked at one another, rather mystified.

‘Indeed, your valuables are safe within you – none can ever steal them away. Listen, young men. There are now two ways open before you. Either you follow the dancing girl under the delusion of recovering your valuables or follow me for your true valuables,’ said the Buddha and he departed without waiting for their response. The young men stood petrified. Soon one of them took the way of the Buddha. One by one the others followed suit. Probably the first Buddhist Vihara was established here – and it flourished. When Hiuen Tsang visited the place in the A.D.7th century, 1500 Vikshus lived there.

Emperor Ashoka built an impressive Stupa on the spot where the Buddha initiated his first disciples. It bears an intriguing name – Dhamek.

‘Is it a Pali word?’ I asked an official of the museum. ‘It is a deviation from Dharmarajik, a word which was

Sanskrit as well as Pali,’ he explained. The original Ashoka Chakra, which once dominated the holy territory, had found its protection in the museum, broken and disfigured. ‘Who damaged this?’ I asked the official. He gave some answer referring to history. But I had my own answer at another plane, as I surveyed the shrine erected by the Mahabodhi Society. On the walls of the monument containing the Relics of the one who preached the futility of fame and wealth – in fact of life itself – was inscribed the names of people claiming immortality by virtue of their donations to the memorial. I remembered animals and birds being sacrificed before the image of the Buddha in a major shrine, a great tourist attraction, in Thailand. The tragedy of mutilated monuments paled before the tragedy of mutilated ideals. I had three fellow travelers in my compartment on my train to Delhi – two Europeans and their Indian friend.

‘How could Buddhism disappear from the very land of its origin?’ one of the two foreigners asked his Indian companion. His struggle to express himself through English had a charm about it and that caught my attention. However, the explanation put forth by the native gentleman in fluent and flowery English saddened me more than the broken monuments at Sarnath. The essence of his thesis was – the Hindus harassed the Buddhists so much that the latter forgot their Dharma. ‘The Brahmins caught the Buddhist monks by their forelocks and dragged them and dumped them outside the localities,’ was one of the ‘quotable quotes’ emanating from the expert.

My irritation burst into a guffaw – before I could make a bid to contain it. Luckily, our Indian companion took it as an appreciation of his epigram. ‘Am I not right?’ he asked me genially. ‘Your imagery of the Brahmin driving away the Buddhist holding the monk by the hair is so lively that I thought you had been a witness to it in an earlier incarnation of yours!’ I said.

He smiled. ‘I’m not a professor of history; only a lover of it. I’ve read a lot.’ ‘No doubt,’ I said and, lowering my voice so that his companions could not hear, added, ‘But the Brahmins must have found the task quite formidable, for the Buddhist monks were bald – shaven clean – as a rule!’ He was indeed a jolly man. He laughed and shook hands with me.

Half an hour later, the younger of the two Europeans

“The beauty of life in India is no matter how low your rung, there is always someone beneath you.

An Infinite ladder!” - Eric Weiner

asked me, 'I suspect you have a different view on the disappearance of Buddhism from India. Would you mind telling us?' 'I have made no study of the issue. But I believe that Buddhism did not disappear from India. It is as much here as it is in any Buddhist country. It became a part of Hinduism – a faith that accommodated diverse and even mutually contradictory doctrines. Once Shankaracharya highlighted the ideal of Nirvana, Buddhism's special appeal was weakened. The Hindus accepted the Buddha as an Avatar of the Supreme and revered the faith. These are some of the historical reasons behind the so-called disappearance of Buddhism. The other reason is deeper.'

'What is that?'

'The ancient Vedantic doctrine – later loosely called the Hindu faith, traced a secret and sublime force of delight at the origin of life. Buddhism presented life as nothing but a bundle of sorrows. This contradicted the very basis of the original Indian collective faith. After the high tide of the new faith, the Indian psyche found a greater support in its earlier vision of life.'

The two foreigners nodded appreciatively. My native lover of history yawned.

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C. SUBRAMANIAM, B SIVARAMAN & THE GREEN REVOLUTION - II

- Dr. R V Vaidyanatha Ayyar, IAS Retd.
Former Secretary to Government of India

The panel of economists was divided and wanted more time. Sociologists articulated the worry that the policy would discriminate against small farmers and worsen inequalities, more so as land reforms were not completed. CS countered the criticism with the argument whether industrialization should be opposed because it would lead to disparities in emoluments between those employed in modern industry and others who were not. There was also controversy over use of chemical fertilizers; some suggested the use of organic manure instead of imported chemical fertilizers. The Indian Statistical Institute came out with a study showing that the output would be better, if instead of concentrated application of fertilizers, as the new strategy required, the available fertilizers were equitably distributed over a large area. The statisticians forgot to note the difference between

the fertilizer response of the traditional and new varieties! There was also political criticism that the new strategy would increase dependence upon the United States for inputs- fertilizers, pesticides, research and new seeds, and further that CS was acting at the behest of the Americans.

CS sought to mobilize support for the new strategy that was being shaped by convening a conference of chief ministers. The CMs were supportive of the new strategy, while Finance ministry and Planning Commission were not. CS informally sounded his cabinet colleagues; many of them felt that the new strategy was too risky as the farmers may not be well acquainted with the new practices. Before moving a cabinet note, CS discussed with Shastri for a go-ahead clearance. Shastri was non-committal and asked CS to be completely satisfied that he was moving in the right direction rather than rush into adoption of the new strategy. Thereupon, CS decided to postpone field trials to the next agricultural year 1965-66 and use the gap to put forward the new strategy to the various interest groups. He called for a meeting of the National Development Committee (NDC) Subcommittee on Agricultural Production and got their endorsement for the new strategy as the only way to get out of the heavy reliance on imported food and to cope with the enormous drought conditions.

CS put the various views before a joint meeting of the scientist, economist and administrator panels. The question loomed large whether the strategy was too risky and whether the farmers would "fall in line". M S Swaminathan suggested 1000 countrywide demonstration plots being organized; if the results were spectacular as expected the farmers would easily be convinced. An administrator in the panel raised the question, what if a demonstration plot fails and the farmer loses. CS agreed to guarantee the amount the farmer would have realized with the traditional practice, had he not opted to take up the demonstration. CS also said that there was no need to go to finance ministry for providing this guarantee, and that the expenditure could be met from the ministry's budget. Demonstrations in kharif and rabi seasons turned out to be a spectacular success. Farmers in large numbers began to make pilgrimage to these plots and begin demanding the miracle seeds. It was then decided to import 10,000 tons of Mexican wheat, as the 5,000 tons replicated from the

200 tons earlier imported, would no longer meet the demand.

The resistance of the Finance ministry was softened when T T Krishnamachary resigned and was succeeded by Sachin Chaudhuri. The assistance of USAID for import of fertilizers, and of Rockefeller Foundation for import of seeds was timely. The political transition from Shastri to India Gandhi gave further impetus to the policy shift. She was more openly reform minded and CS was part of her “kitchen cabinet.” Another member of the kitchen cabinet, Ashok Mehta, became Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, thereby weakening the resistance of the Planning Commission to the new policy. Till early 1966, the agricultural ministry by-passed Planning Commission. V K R V Rao complained about this to Mrs. Gandhi, who took over as prime minister. She asked CS whether he had the approval of the Planning Commission. CS told her that the policy was not yet at the approval stage as only demonstration was going on and the real launch would be in 1966-67. CS posed the question, what if the Planning Commission does not agree? Mrs. Gandhi smiled and asked him to put the proposals before the commission and if in case it does not approve come to the cabinet. That was it. The program got its approval, and in the reconstitution of the Planning Commission that took place later, CS was inducted as a Member of the Planning Commission. The program set a target of self-sufficiency in five years. For achieving this goal, 10% of the 130 million cropped area, was required to be covered with high yielding varieties. Beginning with a coverage of 2.4 million hectares in 1966-67, in a real sense the very first year for the program, the coverage was to be very rapidly expanded. Areas selected initially were to have progressive farmers and assured irrigation so that technology would be a success. Experts from Ford and Rockefeller Foundation thought that the target was over-ambitious, as even in the U.S., with educated farmers and large holdings, it took a generation for the dissemination of the new varieties.

While the new strategy was to take effect, the transition had to be managed. In order to overcome the food shortages, open market procurement was supplemented by compulsory procurement. Simultaneously efforts were made to persuade President Johnson to resume PL 480 supplies on a regular basis. Johnson was skeptical of reports from the American

embassy in India of the efforts being made to bring about policy changes required for enhancing food production. CS met Orville Freeman, US Food Secretary at a FAO meeting in Rome. Freeman suggested that the best way to persuade Johnson was for the Government to give a commitment for effecting the policy change required for enhanced food production. In a document, which he jocularly labeled the “Treaty of Rome”, CS “outlined the policy changes we had already undertaken and planned to undertake.” That helped to resume the much-needed supplies. The Treaty of Rome remained a secret for a long long time, till CS disclosed it decades later.

The narratives of Green Revolution have their comic interludes. Lest he should be accused of exclusively turning to American advice, CS invited experts from communist countries. While agreeing with the new strategy they strongly advocated collectivization of farms, as in their view, it was an opportune moment to collectivize farming, and further the technology required large farm holdings, even beyond what big Indian farmers possess. In their view it was easier to train twenty to fifty high level agricultural managers than so many farmers.. If that was not possible, they suggested going slow with the strategy. Or to narrate another episode, inadvertently *Krishi Bhavan* sent *Yojana Bhavan* wrong data about the yields of the HYV seeds, that came in handy to the Planning Commission in its policy strife with Agricultural Ministry. At one point, V K R V Rao suggested that he had no time to study the new program and suggested that the program be postponed by a year. CS retorted saying that seasons and events do not wait till the Planning Commission member gets educated!

Not so comic was the episode of having several turnkey fertilizer plans set up by the American firm Bechtel. Happy that indigenous production would reduce the level of imports and thereof of foreign exchange requirements, the Finance ministry extended strong support. But eventually, it was not found possible to arrive at mutually acceptable terms. The collapse of the Bechtel offer did not affect American support for the Green Revolution, perhaps because large scale import of fertilizer would serve American interest as much as foreign direct investment in India for manufacture of fertilizer.

In December 1970, John Lewis, who while in USAID Delhi office, was associated with the launch of Green Revolution, revisited India and called on B Sivaraman,

MEDICAL EDUCATION AT CROSSROADS - I

- Prof. C.V. Rao

Former Principal, Andhra Medical College, Visakhapatnam
and Retd. Additional Director of Medical Services, Govt. of A.P.

‘Where there is a love of humanity, there also is the love for the art of medicine.’ - HIPPOCRATES.

who was by then cabinet secretary. He asked Sivaraman what, in retrospect, he thought was the single most important factor contributing to the Green evolution. He was amazed by the reply he got. Without a moment's hesitation, as though the question was elementary, Mr. Sivaraman responded, smiling, 'LBJ'. For years I suppressed the story for fear of damaging the great agricultural secretary's reputation with his peers. Finally I realized Sivaraman's meaning: LBJ's behaviour had been so abhorrent to Indian politicians and opinion leaders that it built a fire under them for agricultural expansion as nothing else could.

The Prebisch doctrine, which was inspired by the Harrod-Domar model, became very popular during the 1950s and 1960s. It rejected free market as a way of escaping underdevelopment and poverty and preached protectionism, capital controls, infant industry protection, and central economic planning. Viner wrote: All that I write in Prebisch's study and in other literature along similar studies emanating from the United Nations and elsewhere is the dogmatic identification of agriculture with poverty and the explanation of agricultural overtly by inherent natural historical laws by virtue of which agricultural production tend to exchange on ever-deteriorating terms for manufactures, technological progress tends to confine its blessings to manufacturing industry, and agricultural populations do not get the benefit of technological progress in manufactures even as purchasers, because the prices of manufactured goods do not fall with decline in real costs. These natural laws seem to me for the most part **mischievous fantasies, or conjectural or distorted history.**" [Viner, 1952 *International Trade and Economic Development*, Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, p.44]

Harry Johnson's book *Economic Policies Towards Less Developed Countries* (1967) echoed Viner's harsh verdict. His [Gale Johnson] opinion of socialized agriculture was very negative. He described it as having caused more human suffering, hardship, and exploitation than any other human institution except slavery and war. Johnson even argued that "the deaths that can be attributed to socialized agriculture as, for example, in Stalin's Soviet Union and Mao's China, may well equal those of World War II, including Hitler's attempts at extermination of Jews and others." [Interview by author].

(Concluded)

★ ★ ★

Medical education appears to be in a perpetual phase of turbulence as never before with all-round criticism for producing graduates who are reluctant to serve the emerging health needs of the rural community. The criticism is focused on commercialization, profit orientation, below optimum teaching faculty, western oriented curriculum, variable examination system and sub-standard infrastructure facilities, all leading to the production of mediocre medical graduates from a majority of the institutions. When the health system is deficient the criticism is directed at Medical Education, as the medical graduate is the central pillar of the health edifice. The ailing state of medical education is no longer the exclusive concern of the profession, as it determines the quality of community health care. The question lingering in the minds of all concerned and responsible citizens is whether we have reached the dead end of the road or at the crossroads in a confused state of helplessness.

Let us not be in despair and a state of helplessness, but be optimistic and plan for the future. Even the United States of America had experienced a much worse health care system a century ago. The public outcry there was loud and clear which forced the American Medical Association to appoint Abraham Flexner to head a review committee in 1907. He submitted the report in 1910 after inspecting all the 155 medical schools in USA and Canada suggesting wide-ranging reforms in medical education. As a result 60% of the institutions were closed and standards started improving. In Cuba during the revolution and US embargo in 1960 nearly 50% doctors left the country with only 3000 physicians and 16 professors available at Havana University Medical Institute, leaving a chaotic health care system. But today it has one of the best public health care systems as per the WHO yardsticks. When two nations of contradictory ideologies can do it, why not India with a vast reserve of human resources and skilled manpower? The confusion at the cross roads is a myth as the road to success is wide

*“The ubiquitous T.V. has, so far, not killed the book or the newspaper.
None can deny that both are under threat.”* - K.Natwar Singh

open, but what is required is a strong political will, an administrative support, the professional commitment and community participation. The basic requirements for production of a good quality medical graduate are merit for admission, community based curriculum, committed faculty, optimal infrastructure, transparent examination system and good clinical material. An honest attempt to analyze the deficiencies in these areas will give scope for corrective measures.

At the time of independence there were only 19 government medical colleges with 1200 annual admissions. After six decades of postcolonial rule the number of medical colleges rose to 300 with an intake of over 3000 annually. Though a late entry into the arena private colleges have over taken the government ones in numbers (160 and 140 respectively). Still many are knocking at the doors of the sanctioning authorities to start new colleges. This phenomenal growth in quantity is not reflected in quality of the finished end product i.e. a socially committed medical graduate. Lack of proper exposure to the health requirements of the community, poor infrastructure facilities, defective teaching and deficient skills make them diffident and are reluctant to opt for primary health care sector. Any new solution to the problem should be simple, practicable, acceptable, flexible and economically viable for implementation at the basic level.

Committees and Colleges

From 1946 onwards various committees and commissions were constituted for giving suggestions to the improvement of medical education and revitalization of the health care facilities in the country. The *Sir Joseph Bhore Committee*, popularly known as health survey and development committee, in 1946 recommended expansion of primary health centers (PHCs) and integration of preventive, curative, promotive and rehabilitative health at all levels. It recommended three months training in community medicine to prepare a "social physician". It also suggested abolition of Licentiate Medical Practice (LMP) training programme while simultaneously increasing the intake in to MBBS, to achieve uniformity in health care for all the citizens. The *Mudaliar Committee* in 1963 suggested strengthening of existing PHCs before starting new ones. It also suggested starting All India Health Services. The *Shrivastava Committee* in 1975 recommended

establishment of Medical and Health Education Commission on lines of the University Grants Commission. The *Bajaj Committee* in 1986 recommended formation of National Medical and Health Education Policy and starting of Health Sciences Universities at the state level. National Health Policy of 1986 and 2002 again reemphasized the comprehensive primary health concept relevant to the needs of the community at an affordable price. It is either a partial or total failure of implementation of these suggestions and recommendations in a time bound period that led to the present scenario of deterioration of public health services at primary and secondary level and below optimum standards in medical education.

Subsequent to the abolition of LMP training, MBBS remained the sole basic medical qualification in allopathic system of medicine. Because of the social recognition and noble service to the suffering human race there is an intense competition for medical admissions. The seeds for commercialization of health sector were sown!. In the existing pattern a gross regional disparity in location of the institutions and availability of seats is noticeable. A small union territory like Pondicherry is having eight colleges against only five colleges for the entire northeast region. Similarly, of the 3000 seats a little over 2000 seats are available in six states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra and Gujarat. Since health is a state subject the other state administrations should initiate corrective measures either by starting new colleges on their own or encourage private entrepreneurs by offering special incentives.

Though admission is through an entrance test in Government colleges, there is no uniformity in private and autonomous institutions. This calls for corrective measures keeping the economic viability of such institutions in mind. It is a laudable proposal to give weightage for plus 2 performance and to conduct All India Entrance Test from 2012-2013 onwards. An aptitude test for admission is another idea for consideration. It will help to filter disinterested candidates. It is interesting to note that prestigious institutions like AIIMS, CMC, JIPMER and BHU continue to limit their admissions while some institutions with no concomitant infrastructure and teaching faculty are admitting more.

Curriculum, Teaching and Training

Though England has modified the curriculum to suit

"The crisis in India is the result of failure to sustain institutions of good governance and management."

- Justice M.N.Venkatachaliah 11

its requirements we continue to adhere to the British system with a few cosmetic changes here and there. After six decades of its implementation there is growing realization for a change. It requires, not just change but a complete overhaul with more emphasis on the current health needs of our population. Since medicine is vibrant biology, the curriculum should be dynamic and flexible with scope for alterations as and when necessary. The goals to be achieved in our National Health Policy 1986 and 2002 (NHP), National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and Health For ALL (HFA) 1978 Alma Ata Declaration should be incorporated in the curriculum to achieve the desired results at primary and secondary health care levels. During training the vision of the medical student is restricted to either securing good score in finals and secure either a PG seat or travel west for a better quality education and career.. No emphasis is laid on community health responsibility . Good health is not just 'the absence of disease' . Multiple factors like nutrition, sanitation, water and environmental pollution, will all have a bearing on good health. For a healthy society, a multimode approach is essential for which the medical officer should take a lead role for initiating the social change. He should be made to understand this social responsibility while in training. For this, humanities, social sciences, communication and management skills are to be given due share in the curriculum as non-examination subjects. Also, the information about consumer protection act and right to information act needs to be provided. This type of formal training will boost up the morale of our young graduates and make them confident to opt for primary health care service. The goal is to produce a multi competent physician i.e. family physician to work at primary level.

In the present syllabus more emphasis is given to curative aspect of medicine over the health promotive and disease preventive aspects. Too much of theoretical knowledge is imposed upon students with little emphasis on problem solving skills, bedside learning and patient safety, and above all the need for compassion. Practice of evidence-based medicine with available facilities will repose confidence to work in rural settings. In addition to the existing curriculum primary management of poly trauma, geriatric problems, lifestyle diseases, and any epidemic like the recent swine flu should have a place in the curriculum. The regional faculty should be given a choice to include any new subject approved in the

academic council. In brief the curriculum should reflect the health needs of the community. Medical teaching is different from others as it is oriented to the human biology in health and disease. The medical teacher has a dual responsibility of caring for the sick and to act as a role model for the young medicos. He is not only a mentor but can inspire and play an active role in career building and character molding. The student's attitude and capabilities are greatly influenced by the teacher. The personal affinity and attachment between the teacher and student, which was in abundance in the past, is replaced by need based commercial relationship. Clinical discussion is mostly confined to diagnosis, differential diagnosis with a passing reference to the treatment and little on prevention. Though the comprehensive and integrated mode of teaching involving sister departments is incorporated in the curriculum, very few institutions are implementing it. Majority of the times no mention is made of the anatomical structure, physiological function and pathogenesis of the diseased organ. The good old practice of grand rounds and clinico pathological meetings with multidisciplinary approach for problem solving was conveniently forgotten. More stress need to be laid on common problems of the region with simple solutions. Thorough clinical examination and simple tests are preferred over sophisticated and expensive investigations. Problem-based learning and simple methods to solve the problems should be the hallmark of teaching methodology. Ethical practice of medicine with empathy and concern for the sick by the teachers will give realistic opportunity for the student to emulate. Open and transparent floor discussion about the mistakes committed and measures taken for patient safety by the teacher will create interest in the learner. More scientific analytical reasoning should be the focal point of learning.

It is worth considering, the proposal to create an opportunity for the medicos to interact with nurses, pharmacists and paramedics to develop leadership qualities which facilitate a cultural shift in thinking. It will be of immense help at the primary health center level. Reorientation Of Medical Education (ROME) programme enunciated by WHO in 1991 to give rural exposure to young graduates is almost forgotten in majority of the centers for lack of support from the clinical departments. It is considered as the blue-eyed baby of the community medicine department. It is a golden opportunity for the fresh graduates to have a close look at Mahatma's real

“Coalition politics at the centre and in the states has added a new dimension to the functioning of the bureaucracy and its relation to the political executive.” - Abid Hussain

India — rural India. As the present training is at the tertiary level hospital in a protective environment, it is worth considering having at least six months of training at secondary level hospital for a better exposure to the realistic setup. They can be given an opportunity to participate in minor procedures like drawing of blood, dressing a wound, first aid techniques, assisting normal delivery, etc. Finally, what you do is more important than what you know. The central theme of medical education should be transmission of knowledge, imparting of skills and inculcating human, professional and ethical values.

The one-year internship is a golden opportunity in the entire training for practical learning. All the theoretical knowledge acquired is put to use to develop working skills under the guidance and close supervision of senior faculty members. Caring for the sick is a powerful stimulus for learning. It is also an excellent opportunity to develop inter professional relationships. The compulsory residential rural posting of two months at the Rural Health Centre (RHC) is again aimed at exposing students to work and gain practical knowledge in a relatively free and realistic environment. But in most of the centers the staff is inadequate and infrastructure facilities are in deplorable state sowing seeds of aversion to rural postings. As these centers are not in the administrative control of medical education department the Dean or Principal has limited role to play. This needs urgent attention of the administration for creation of healthy environment for training and stay. At most places, the internship period is being used as a preparation period either for PG entrance or for USA qualifying examinations. Some over enthusiastic young students are opting to work as duty doctors in private establishments for extra pocket money ignoring the professional norms and medical ethics.

(to be concluded)

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Book Review:

GEOGRAPHY OF BLISS

Eric Weiner

12 New York, Boston 2008©; pp:329; Price: \$16.00

Page One — Taiwan's largest bookstore

It all began as a small book store in a shopping mall in Singapore in 1983. Since then Page One bookstore

has been set up in Malaysia, Hong Kong, Thailand, Taiwan and China with the aim of becoming Asia's leading book retailer and publisher. The motto is "in every home at least one book from Page One and in every city a Page One bookstore." The larger goal is to bridge the cultural differences between the East and the West through books.

Eric Weiner's **Geography of Bliss** is published by 12 and the following lines speak about the publishers.

"12TWELVE was established in August 2005 with the objective of publishing no more than one book per month. We strive to publish the singular book, by authors who have a unique perspective and compelling authority. Works that explain our culture; that illuminate, inspire, provoke and entertain. We seek to establish communities of conversation surrounding our books. Talented authors deserve attention not only from publishers but from readers as well. To sell the book is only the beginning of our mission. To build avid audiences of readers who are enriched by these works—that is our ultimate purpose."

"One grump's search for the happiest places in the world," begins Eric Weiner, the seasoned radio journalist, introducing his voyage across the world to discover blissful places. No Bible or tourist guide or world map, he carries, except the conviction "One's destination is never a place; but a new way of seeing things." (Henry Miller) Eric Offer's warning that "the search for happiness is one of the chief sources of unhappiness" does not deter him from his pursuit. "I am already unhappy. I have nothing to lose," he says. Defining happiness is as hard as quantifying it. Weiner's tool kit consists of his experience, learning and capacity to withstand strain and boredom. "We journalists" he confesses, "are seducers, except for it's not sex we're after (usually)."

Each of the ten chapters is devoted to a country beginning with The Netherlands and ending with America, followed by epilogue. The subtitle sums up his assessment of the countries he portrays on his 'atlas of bliss.' In The Netherlands Happiness is Number, in Switzerland Happiness is Boredom, in Bhutan- a policy, in Qatar- a winning lottery ticket, in Iceland—Failure, in Moldova—Happiness is Somewhere Else, in Thailand—Not Thinking, in Great Britain—Work in Progress, in India—A Contradiction and in America Happiness is Home.

"With 500 motivated men it will take me 50 years to transform India, with 50 motivated women it may take me only a year" - Swami Vivekananda

The author's canvas is wide though selective; assessment subjective yet profoundly insightful and portrayal delightful throughout. It was in that beautiful country Switzerland that Albert Einstein "had the happiest thought" of his life, leading to his Special Theory of Relativity. The Swiss believe in avoiding envy and promoting trust. Money triggers envy. "The Americans flaunt it; the Swiss hide it" observes Weiner. One might add not only do they hide their own money but also that of foreigners, Indians included! Happiness is "Conjoyment" in Switzerland, contentment plus joy!

Weiner flies into Bhutan overawed by the sight of the Himalayas which "make all other mountains look like bunny hills." Happiness is even the country's national anthem writes Weiner about Bhutan which ranks 13, higher than most countries in the world. The idea of Gross National Happiness was first floated by Bhutan's King Wangchuk in 1973. The idea caught on when a young journalist Michael Elliott wrote an article for Financial Times headlined: "Bhutan King: Gross National Happiness More Important Than Gross National Product" in 1986.

Neighbouring India "captivates, infuriates, and, occasionally contaminates. It never disappoints." The beauty of life in India, writes Weiner, "no matter how low your rung, there is always someone beneath you. An infinite ladder." Contradictions confront him everywhere. "The best and worst of humanity; the ridiculous and the sublime; the profane and the profound" coexist in India. He is annoyed by the traffic and "the symphony of honking horns and tinkling bells" on the roads. Yet the social relationships in the huge country impress him. "No one is really homeless in India. Houseless perhaps, but not homeless," he writes. Time feels expansive in India, writes Weiner, obviously having a dig at the Indian way of life.

Weiner's superb style of writing is at its best in the epilogue. He quotes Bernard Shaw's words in *Man and Superman* : "A lifetime of happiness! No man could bear it: It would be hell on Earth." As Karma Ura, the Bhutanese scholar told him: "There is no such thing as personal happiness. Happiness is one hundred percent relational." Weiner seems to have found, at least partially, the answer to the question that took him to different parts and difficult places of the world. "Our happiness, he sums up, "is completely and utterly intertwined with other

people. Happiness is not a noun or verb. It's a conjunction. Connective tissue." As Tony Horwitz writes 'happiness is reading a book as entertaining as this.'

- A. Prasanna Kumar

(The reviewer obtained this book at Taipei's *Page-One* book store during his visit last month)

★ ★ ★

SRI SUBRAMANIA BHARATI - I

(Dec 11th 1882 - Sept. 12th 1921)

- Sri C.Sivasankaram

It was Subramania who kindled the souls of men and women by the million to a more passionate love of freedom and a richer dedication to the service of the country said - Srimati Sarojini Naidu the nightingale of India as the bells of freedom tolled in 1947 at midnight. Sri Subramania Bharati, the ageless poet patriot of South India, was born ten years after the advent of Sri Aurobindo, three years before the inception of the Indian National Congress and four years before the Mahasamadhi of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa after having transmitted His lifelong achievement of spiritual and esoteric powers in favour of His torch-bearer Swami Vivekananda. His birthplace was Ettayapuram petty principality like Rajkot the birth place of Mohan Das Karamchand Gandhi. The potentate of Ettayapuram was deficient in discipline and wherewithal to keep the people of this principality contented and selfsufficient. The parents of Sri Bharati were pious Brahmins meticulously wedded to the life of caste Brahmin. Hence the family was conventional & conformist. The impact of birth, the piety of the parents and the puritanical hallow of the environment powerfully brought upon Sri Bharati as they did on the character and personality of the timeless German Philosopher Immanuel Kant. The precious boy Bharati was by birth inquisitive and modestly adventurous. Spirit of adventure is the hallmark of purposeful life.

Misrule of the potentate and lack of opportunities to work and earn livelihood forced the villagers to desert their hearth and home in search of means to eke out life free from fear of morrow. The exodus was like the migration of birds from a denuded tree. Prosperity is the fruit of infinite industry.

Circumstances had so shaped that they led Bharati

to try his luck in the wide open world. Favourable fate pointed his gaze towards Benares where he got admission into the famous Hindu college and as fortune smiled upon him he passed the entrance examination of Allahabad University. His studious nature and judicious diligence favoured him to be Master of Sanskrit, Hindi and English in addition to his impeccable proficiency in his mothertongue the ancient Tamil language.

Srimad Bhagavatam which may be termed as a partial dictionary and a fluent commentary of scriptures states that the river Kavery of South India is as sacred as the Ganga of North India. Both are heaven born. Sri Aurobindo whose advent preceded the descent of Bharati by years ten was the eloquent epitome of the divine waters of Ganga. Sri Bharati was the embodiment of the ethereal essence of the waters of Kaveri.

In 1885 the year of Indian National Congress's inception Bankim Chandra Chatterjee composed Vande Mataram a mantra which galvanised the whole nation. Ignited by the universal mantra the nation sprang to action to annul mother land's ignominy. It assumed the role of a mystic force uniting the revolutionaries of all brands. The revolutionaries aggressively determined as they were to force the alien to quit India lock, stock and barrel found a live mouth piece in Sri Aurobindo. Aurobindo edited some nationalist-minded vernaculars and some English papers to feed and invigorate the brain of the terrorist. His pen knew no bounds to enthuse and inspire the rebellious patriots.

Aurobindo was a Kshatriya (warior race). I have authentic recollection of the peerless Mahayogi employing the term Bania, symbol of caste while refering to the efficacy of the tactics of Gandhi to usher in an era of deliverence for the country of all the four castes Bania is singled out as timid and too calculating perhaps this kind of caste stigma instigated the yogi to use Bania to reveal the original (innate trint) quality of the Mahatma (at the time of the yogi used the term Bania Gandhi was not prefixed by Mahatma) Readers may pardon me for bringing in this contentious belief into glare. History vividly disproves the tenability of the popular estimation of caste beliefs such as the Bania of Rajkot (Gandhi) and the 'Komati' of Nellore. Potti Sriramulu stood alone as ageless synonym of peerless prowess.

The yogi Aurobindo was bred and reared in an atmosphere of superlative plenty and emulative philanthropy. Bharati the brahmin toiled in penury. A Brahmin ought not to amass money or any commodity for the morrow. Sri Aurobindo, a red rag in the eyes of the British Bull, drifted towards violence verging on terrorism to coerce the alien pirate to vacate the Gaddi of Delhi. His immediate end and purpose was to see the vaidic subject Bharati independent as soon as humanly and heavenly possible by means which could effect the attainment before long. He was to be awarded a sentence of life imprisonment as a drastic measure to cripple the terrorist upheaval against the perpetuation of bloody British rule. It was the fateful year of 1910.

(to be continued)

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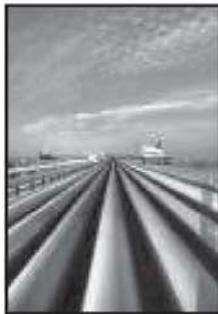


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