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UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS 'INTERNATIONAL MAGNA CARTA OR A PIOUS STATEMENT'?

The 73rd anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will be celebrated on December 10, 2021 and pious statements and routine affirmations of faith in UNDHR will be made not only at the 193 member strong United Nations but in countries, big and small across the world. It was at the first session of the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1946 that a resolution was passed to provide for the protection of human rights through a declaration thanks to the vision and dynamism of Eleanor Roosevelt who chaired the 18 member Drafting Committee that led to the making of the Declaration. The inspiration came from the famous four freedoms enunciated by her illustrious husband Franklin Roosevelt on January 6, 1941, at a time when Adolf Hitler and the Axis Powers were on the rampage in the Second World War.

"We stand today at the threshold of a great event both in the life of the United Nations and in the life of the mankind. This Declaration may well become the international Magna Carta for all men everywhere." said Eleanor Roosevelt, in memorable words presenting the Declaration to the General Assembly. She was hailed as the 'First Lady.' Assisted by René Cassin, John Peters Humphrey and others, Eleanor Roosevelt played a stellar role in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which was unanimously adopted by the General Assembly on December 10, 1948, with eight abstentions, six from the Soviet bloc besides South Africa and Saudi Arabia. Eleanor Roosevelt became the first United States Representative to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and remained in that position until 1953, 'even after stepping down as chair of the Commission.' A grateful United Nations posthumously honoured Eleanor Roosevelt with the first Human Rights prize. The Drafting Committee made it clear that it was the responsibility of the member countries to protect the human rights though 'it was not binding in international law.' Two international covenants, and some national conventions, were made to strengthen the process of protection of Human Rights. The Human Rights Committee set up in 1977 has power to hear complaints from individuals under certain circumstances about alleged violations of civil and political rights.

In spite of declarations, covenants and inquiry reports on the problems that afflict the world, the credibility of the United Nations as a body for the promotion of world peace and security continues to remain low. What can it do without a peacekeeping force of its own and lack of financial resources? Its annual budget of a little over 3 billion is said to be much less than the money spent in the United States on cat and dog food while the member nations spend nearly a thousand million dollars on purchase and manufacture of military weapons. The motto of the UN is 'confidence always' and conference as often as possible. Referring to the long speeches made at the UN General Assembly meetings it was famously said that 'Life for the UN ambassador is a combination of protocol, alcohol and geritol.' Dr Belaunde of Peru described interestingly the helplessness of the UN thus : "UN is a body where there is something that always disappears; when two small powers have a dispute, the dispute disappears; when a great power and a small power are in conflict the small power disappears; when two great powers have a dispute the UN disappears." The failure of the UN is also attributed to the 'callousness' of the big powers and 'irresponsibility' of small countries. Still, the world needs the United Nations as there is no alternative to it since it came into being seventy six years ago. As James Reston succinctly summed up 'the more the United Nations fails the more it is needed.' The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is, without doubt, a testament of faith in the dignity and self-respect of humanity.

- The Editor

To deny people their rights is to challenge their very humanity.

- Nelson Mandela

THE NEW AUKUS ALLIANCE HOLDS SOME LESSONS FOR INDIA

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If realpolitik so demands, it must break old shibboleths and strike new partnerships — wherever there is convergence of interests.

Joe Biden participates in a videoconference with Morrison and Johnson, from the White House in Washington (Doug Mills/The New York Times)

In a surprise, virtual statement on September 15, the heads of government of Australia, the UK and US announced the formation of a trilateral security pact, to be known by the acronym, AUKUS. Without naming China, US President Joe Biden announced, in a press conference, that “in order to deal with rapidly evolving threats,” the US and Britain would share, with Australia, intelligence and advanced technologies in areas like artificial intelligence, cyber-warfare, quantum computing and nuclear submarine construction.

The surprise at the formation of AUKUS is for a number of reasons. Firstly, the three nations are already allied to each other, in more ways than one — the US and UK are NATO allies, and Australia, New Zealand and the US are linked by the ANZUS pact. All three are also members of the “Five Eyes” intelligence alliance. Secondly, this announcement, coming just days before the first in-person summit meeting of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), places a question mark over the continuing relevance of this forum and its long-overdue actualisation. Finally, the inclusion of a much-diminished, post-Brexit UK in such a long-range alliance is bound to raise a few eyebrows.

China has made no secret of its neurosis about the Quad as well as the naval exercise, “Malabar,” both of which, now, have a common membership, comprising the US, India, Australia and Japan. Beijing’s apprehensions arise from the suspicion that this concatenation could be a precursor to

“containment” — the Cold War strategy which eventually brought the USSR to its knees.

While frequently heaping scorn on their attempts at synergy and coordination, China loses no opportunity to send intimidatory messages to the Quad nations. This has led to palpable trepidation amongst members of this grouping, who have remained over-cautious in their utterances and tended to “tip-toe” around the “dragon” in their midst. The Quad has neither created a charter nor invested itself with any substance; fearing that it would be dubbed an “Asian NATO.” China, on its part, has dismissed the Quad as a “headline-grabbing idea which will dissipate like sea-foam”.

So far, China has had its way in the geopolitical arena without hindrance from any quarter. In the South China Sea, having staked outrageous territorial claims, and contemptuously dismissed the adverse verdict of the UN Court of Arbitration, China has proceeded to create artificial islands, and to convert them into fortified air bases. Regular “freedom of navigation operations” by the US and allied navies have neither deterred, nor daunted China.

Even more belligerent has been China’s conduct along the Sino-Indian border, where it has used massive military deployments to stake claims to large tracts of Indian territory, leading to a sanguinary conflict in mid-June 2020. India, having counter-mobilised, at considerable economic cost, has stood its ground. Given our limited options, this dangerous confrontation is likely to continue.

Against this backdrop, it is possible that creation of the AUKUS could well be an attempt to send a stronger message to China. However, China’s description of this alliance as an “exclusionary bloc,” should be food for thought for two members of the Quad/Malabar forums — India and Japan — who have been excluded from the new grouping.

While uncharitable comments about “Anglo-Saxon solidarity” must be ignored, there may be substance in the belief that the “Anglosphere nations” — which share common cultural and historical ties to the UK — do inspire more confidence in each other. Whether the Quad and AUKUS will reinforce each

The World needs an entirely new paradigm for global development.
The United States can lead the world in its recovery from the present crisis.

- Rajiv J. Shah

other, or remain mutually exclusive, will, no doubt, become clear in the forthcoming Quad summit.

An issue that should give cause for reflection in New Delhi, arises from Biden's promise to transfer advanced technology, including submarine nuclear-propulsion to Australia. It brings into stark relief India's failure to acquire any significant high technology from the US, in spite of bilateral ties, which have steadily grown in warmth and closeness over the past decade and a half.

Some major milestones in the Indo-US security relationship have been: Signing of the pathbreaking Indo-US Civil Nuclear Agreement, in 2008; launching of the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative in 2012; accord of the status of "Major Defence Partner" by the US Congress in 2016; grant of Tier 1 status to India, enabling export of high-technology items; and institution of "2+2 talks" in 2018. Signing of the fourth and last of the key "foundational agreements" in 2020, was supposed to have eliminated the final impediment to closer defence cooperation.

"Our strategic partnership with India, a fellow democracy...is reaching new heights," says a 2019 US State Department document. While the warming of the Indo-US relationship brings comfort to Indians, we must beware of hyperbole, obscuring reality, in the bilateral discourse. American offers of help "to make India a great power" and overzealous declarations (at the apex level in November 2017) that that "two of the world's great democracies should also have the world's two greatest militaries," must be taken with a generous pinch of salt.

China, it is said, owes its pole position to the advanced technology it was given, or it purloined from the US over a 30-year period. All that India has to show for its "strategic partnership," is approximately \$22 billion worth of military hardware purchased from US companies — a distinctly retrograde step when we seek atmanirbharta and freedom from external reliance. We need all the technologies being offered to Australia, in addition to "know-how" and "know-why" of much else, including stealth fighters, jet engines, advanced radars and, of course, nuclear propulsion for submarines as well as aircraft-carriers.

For India to attain its full potential, it will need insurance against hegemony, and a breathing space to restore its economy to its earlier buoyant trajectory. This respite will enable it to catch up with technology and boost its military muscle. While preparing to fight its own battles, India will need to seek external balancing. If realpolitik so demands, it must break old shibboleths and strike new partnerships — wherever there is convergence of interests.

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A BLEAK AND CONTESTED NEW WORLD ORDER

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Intro: A contradictory trade versus security compulsion animates inter-State engagement, with issue-based mini-polarity emerging as the predominant feature

The phrase "new world order" has been doing the rounds episodically in global political discourse since the early 20th century. Rising like the phoenix from the embers of war and tectonic disruption, the idea of a new world order embodied an idealistic aspiration — a world that would be free of violence and bloodshed. But, like many ideals, it has remained nascent and tentative. Very often, the new that followed the old world was characterised more by disorder than order.

In its semantic trajectory over the last century, it was the then United States (US) President Woodrow Wilson who first used a variant of the phrase in September 1919, when he dwelt on the concept of a "new order of the world", a year after World War I ended. But the new global order envisioned by Wilson was as short-lived as the League of Nations that he championed. Instead, the steady trot into World War II and the Hiroshima tragedy bookmarked the end of one world order in the first half of the 20th century. The end of World War II in August 1945 marked a major

The world's prosperity or otherwise is based upon the character of its youth.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

global techno-strategic punctuation – the arrival of the apocalyptic atomic age.

This acquisition of macro-destructive potential by the ideologically opposed superpowers defined the world order that followed, namely the Cold War. This phase ended in 1991, but the Cold War decades marked the heady aspirational journey that saw the resolute defeat of fascism and the messy end of colonialism. Normative principles such as democracy, pluralism and liberalism were seen as objectives to be realised as the older exploitative structures of an earlier world order were being dismantled.

The high point was the end of the Cold War in late 1991, evocatively captured by the image of a defiant Boris Yeltsin atop a Soviet tank in August that ostensibly heralded the birth of a new world order. This was formally unveiled by a triumphant US which sensed the arrival of the extended unipolar moment and unchallenged American hegemony. Strikingly, it was on September 11, 1991, when then US President George Bush senior delivered his “Towards a New World Order” speech to a joint session of Congress and the post-Cold War order was born.

However, this optimism was short-lived for, within a decade, a shell-shocked US had to face the enormity of another September 11 in 2001, when the Twin Towers in New York were brought down with the diabolically audacious use of technology. From that detritus emerged the uneasy and sullen post-9/11 new world (dis)order — one in which the non-State entity posed the first of many challenges to the primacy of the State in the global sociopolitical template. Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda became the symbol of terrorism, but also the symbol that stoked global Islamophobia.

At the same time, a more pernicious non-State entity emerged — the techno-commercial corporate giant. While the early advent of technology, such as the printing press, enabled the dissemination of information and the spread of the normative value system in State and society, and principles of freedom and fraternity were venerated, the obverse now prevails. The revolution in communication technology has

now spawned a techno-commercial ecosystem that peddles fake news and mistrust, even as fraternity has been replaced by an insidious stoking of revulsion for the “other”.

In the transition from 1945 to 2020, what is stark is the manner in which the values and principles once upheld as being the gold standard for State and society have now become objects of derision. Equitable, participative democracy is one casualty. And the contours of the dominant political framework for governance globally has veered towards the rise of the strong, often authoritarian, leader – and the abetment of narrow and prickly majoritarian nationalism.

The current decade is one of the relative decline in US influence and credibility, and may be termed a post-Kabul flux in global affairs. While the rise of an assertive China is a reality that some nations experience more acutely than others — India being a case in point — it is unlikely that there will be a transition to the kind of bipolarity that characterised the Cold War decades. Major conventional wars similar to those of the 20th century are a low probability exigency, but it merits recall that Sarajevo triggered World War I in an unexpected manner and it is moot if the current tension over Taiwan will follow a similar path.

The post-2020 world order may be more contested and discordant than any of its previous variants. A contradictory trade versus security compulsion animates inter-State engagement, and issue-based mini-polarity could be the predominant feature of the next few decades.

This decade has revealed in an irrefutable manner that planet earth is stressed and polluted. While such adversity ought to have impelled urgent consensus and unity of global effort, the global political leadership has abdicated. Pious platitudes and earnest falsehoods swirl around even as empathetic societal concern is deviously replaced by petty bigotry. Bleakness alas is the leitmotif of the new world order that beckons.

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All the religions of the world are good, for they preach righteousness and friendship;
those that preach enmity between man and man are not religions at all.

- Mahatma Gandhi

GANDHIJI'S THOUGHTS - MORE RELEVANT NOW, THAN EVER “WE MAY IGNORE HIM AT OUR OWN RISK” - II

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Gandhiji's view on sustainable development:

Gandhiji had a long-term view on the process of economic development in relation to what the planet Earth can sustain, perhaps based on the saying in the Atharva Veda, “*do not take from Nature, more than what Nature gives*”. The concept put forward by him, “*Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed.*” was amazingly simple in language but extraordinarily powerful in terms of its far reaching implications. This concept of his was truly prophetic at a time when the idea of “sustainable development” was yet to take shape. Even today, when scientists have done enough research work to substantiate it, not many political leaders have been able to grasp its implications fully.

It was the British who started exploiting the vast forest resources of India and enacted laws to permit the introduction of teak plantations on a large scale to meet their domestic needs, at the cost of valuable biodiversity that characterised the Indian forest wealth. Gandhiji had expressed his concern at this, when he observed, “*what we are doing to the forests of the world is but a mirror reflection of what we are doing to ourselves and to one another.*”

His idea of “public trusteeship” of the natural resources was equally visionary; “*we do not possess anything. When something comes to us, we hold it in trust.*” The doctrine of public trust has since been recognised globally as the core principle of environmental jurisprudence. When the successive governments in India have tried to ignore this concept of trusteeship and the need for public accountability, it is the judiciary, especially the apex court, that has time and again reminded the political executive of its obligation under Article 48 of the Constitution.

The industrial Revolution of the 18th and the

19th centuries that ushered in the modern paradigm of “development”, based on indiscriminate exploitation of the natural resources, not only contributed to the direct depletion of the resources such as minerals, forests etc. but also contributed to the emission of greenhouse gases that caused global warming, which in turn set in motion a snowballing impact on the global environment. It was Jean-Baptiste Joseph Fourier, the French mathematician and physicist, who first cautioned the world through his scientific findings in the first half of the 19th century that the planet's outer atmosphere, which maintains a delicate balance of the thermal conditions necessary for sustaining life, had itself come under a serious threat as a result of emission of the so-called “greenhouse gases” released by industrial processes and several other anthropogenic forces. About hundred and fifty years later, a group of intellectuals including some Nobel Laureates, gathered together under the banner, the “Club of Rome” and commissioned elaborate scientific studies to understand the adverse implications of rapid depletion of the natural resources as a result of the unleashing of the industrial revolution and its aftermath. Those studies encapsulated in the book published with the title, “Limits to Growth”, for the first time showed that the rate at which the planet's natural resources were being exploited would seriously limit the process of economic growth within the foreseeable future, a finding that gave a rude shock to the development economists across the globe, who assumed economic growth to be an indefinitely continuing process. Later, the UN set up the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1982, which commissioned elaborate scientific studies on the impact of the greenhouse gases on the atmosphere and the planet's ecology. The IPCC studies established beyond doubt that the process of global warming was gathering momentum and had indeed become life-threatening. Close on IPCC's findings came the scientific revelations about the equally life-threatening impact of the loss of biodiversity of the planet.

The findings emerging from all these scientific studies put together would be nothing but corollaries to what Gandhiji had said decades ago in a language that could be understood and appreciated by the

The future of India is taking shape in the present,
and the future is going to be what millions of young men and women want it to be.

- Jawaharlal Nehru

ordinary citizen. The collective effort of the global community today should be to curtail the human “greed” and restrict consumption levels to the “need” of the society. In a way, these prophetic words of Gandhiji also suggest that income inequalities within the society have given rise to such greed and such inequalities will limit the society’s capacity to develop in a sustainable manner.

Gandhiji as a leader:

The idea of having a “strong” leader seems to be gaining public acceptance these days. A strong leader can play to the gallery, mesmerise the masses and take disruptive decisions that may look convincing in the short-term, though not so beneficial in the long-run. It is such a strong leader who can swing the electorate in his or her favour. If such were to be the qualities to be attributed to a leader of the nation, Gandhiji would certainly not qualify to be one such leader. After all, he was not the one who could readily obfuscate the facts at the cost of the truth. He was a patient consensus builder, ever eager to motivate the masses to do what is right. At times, in his passion for arriving at the truth, he would not even mind being in the minority. For him, morality and ethical values should take precedence over everything else. He viewed the society as a harmoniously integrated entity, not as a fragmented one to suit the electoral politics of the day. Authoritarianism was an idea alien to him. Retributive justice seems to guide the present day leaders, whereas Gandhiji firmly believed in forgiveness. In his words, “*the weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong*”. An authoritarian leader does not allow leadership to grow under him, as he feels constantly threatened by his colleagues assuming leadership. However, Gandhiji’s freedom movement generated leadership all around. For him, such multiple leadership was needed to spread the movement far and wide.

Gandhiji may not qualify to be a strong leader in today’s parlance, but he was successful in mobilising the nation into one entity and bringing down the mighty British empire, as he finally did. If a nation is to develop in a sustained manner socio-economically and in terms of development of its human resources, it needs a leader like Gandhiji. Authoritarianism can

last for a while but it cannot survive for long, but during its short tenure, it is sure to hurt its human resources, as well as its natural resources. There is a clear lesson to be learnt from this.

Gandhian philosophy & its relevance today:

As described above, Gandhiji’s ideas have long-term relevance and they provide lasting solutions to many problems we face today as a nation. We need leaders who nurture moral leadership at every level, who unite the society rather than divide it and who care for the posterity as much as for the present generation. We need leaders who can breathe life into the democratic processes that the Constitution has given us and who have an unwavering commitment to empowering the individuals and the villages as self-governing units of democracy and who care for strengthening the moral fibre of the society. These are the ideas which are central to the philosophy of Gandhiji. What else can be more relevant to us than this?

In the words of Martin Luther King, Jr.

“If humanity is to progress, Gandhi is inescapable. He lived, thought, and acted, inspired by the vision of humanity evolving toward a world of peace and harmony. We may ignore him at our own risk”

(Concluded)

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Remembrance of Things Past - III

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On the University Campus, the important student organisations were the Student Federation of India (SFI) affiliated to the Communist Party and the Democratic Students Union (DSU) affiliated to the Socialist Party. P. V. G. Raju, Maharaja of Vizianagaram was then in the Socialist Party, and this lent strength to DSU. I had no idea of the activities of DSU and its worldview till I read *1953-55 lo Andhra University Anubhavalu* B.Prasada Rao published in Souvenir of the Andhra University Annual Alumni Meet, 2017. Till the formation of the National

For the first time after centuries, India’s defence has to concentrate itself on two fronts simultaneously. In our calculations we shall now have to reckon (apart from Pakistan) with the Communist China in the north and the north east.

- Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

Students Union of India in 1969, the Congress Party did not have a formal student front organisation as such but there was on the campus a group called Student Congress. The *Rashtriya Swayamsevaka Sangh* (RSS) had no presence, though I knew two who were its members. I had an argument once with one of the two RSS acolytes who had a lurid image of the Soviet regime. That acolyte expressed disgust with the ‘nationalization of women in USSR’ oblivious of the facts that purported nationalisation was ‘a malicious misinformation about Soviet conditions which continuously reached high society in the West’, and that Stalin’s Russia was Victorian in its sexual morality. Rajmohan Gandhi visited the University once and spoke of the Moral Re-Armament Movement (MRA) which was regularly attacked by Moscow Radio those days; MRA did not strike any roots. *It takes many things to make world; for a change there was also a contemporary of mine who admired Hitler and kept an ornately framed photo of the Fuehrer on his writing desk in his Hostel room. Later in life, he joined politics, was a member of the Telugu Desam Party, and was Member of the Andhra Pradesh legislature for several terms.*

There was much that was common between the political ferment on the University campus and the zeitgeist (the spirit of the times). Except in a few countries like the United States, Adenauer’s Germany, Franco’s Spain and Salazar’s Portugal, to be Left was to be right; the credo that there could be no enemy on the Left captured the predominant belief in most Third World Countries. Historical events like the Great Depression, the contribution of the Soviet Union Allied countries to victory in the Second World War, and the ascendancy of Keynesian economics contributed to the near-universal belief that State was God walking on earth, omniscient and omnipresent, and that if it did not intervene decisively to promote the national interest or ameliorate the living conditions of the poor, it was due to lack of political will or surrender to vested interests. ‘Yes, we can change’, was not empty rhetoric as in the American presidential election of 2008, but a tenet of a widely held secular faith. Britain, particularly the Labour Party, was still a major source of influence for most Indian intelligentsia and for politicians educated in

Britain like Nehru. The Labour Party might have lost office, but its legacy of a Welfare State remained and was a shining example to follow. In Britain, it continued to be sustained by a political consensus that spanned the party divide, till the economic crises of 1970 shattered that consensus. Similarly, in the war ravaged countries of the Europe, the State was playing a vital role in build a Welfare State along with rejuvenation of the economy. In countries newly liberated from colonial rule, the expectations from the State were more demanding: undoing the colonial legacy of economic backwardness, and simultaneously building a modern Nation-State, a modern economy, a modern society and a Welfare State. It is difficult to imagine the degree of uniformity in public opinion of those days about the direction in which the country should be headed or what should be done. Milton Friedman, who visited India at the invitation of the Government of India during 1955 and again 1962-63, noted that on both occasions that ‘there was a deadening uniformity of opinion about economic policy in India, particularly among economists... In talks to and with students and teachers of economics at a number of universities, personnel of the Planning Commission, economists in the Civil Service, financial journalists, and businessmen, I encountered again and again the same stereotyped responses expressed in precisely the same words. It was as if they were repeating a catechism, learned by rote and believed as a matter of faith’.

Non-alignment in external relations, the goal of a socialistic pattern of society, planned economic development, the building of a public sector that would occupy commanding heights, building new temples of modern India like the Bhakra Nangal Dam and Nagarjunasagar, a belief in the benevolent omnipotence of Science, adoption of a scientific temper and elimination of superstition and bigotry- all these were unquestioned articles of faith, and Nehru was the apostle who preached that faith. A few had different views. In 1955, when the second five-year plan was in preparation, the government appointed an advisory committee of 21 professional economists to critique the draft framework. A minority report by B R Shenoy criticised the fundamental structure of the proposed plan and pointed out in detail where

Rights, in fact, are those conditions of social life without which no man can seek,
in general, to be himself at his best.

- Harold J.Laski

difficulties would arise and what their character would be. P.R. Brahmananda 'feared that the Second Five-Year Plan with the Mahalanobis model was an implicit endorsement of Preobrazhensky's 'primitive socialist accumulation' thesis and would most likely replicate the horrors of the Stalinist collectivist drive in our country'. Among politicians, M.R. Masani, a former socialist, established the Forum for Free Enterprise to educate public opinion in India on free enterprise and its close relationship with the democratic way of life. Rajaji continuously denounced the license-permit-control raj. All these were mavericks with little following. In those halcyon days of the First and Second Five Year Plans when India seemed to be firmly set on a path of economic development, views that ran contrary to the conventional wisdom of the day seemed outlandish.

In a world 'where we are all socialists now', the difference between socialists and communists was a matter of degree and not of kind. On the one side were 'progressives' that included socialists and communists, and all on the other side were reactionaries. Apart from a few exceptions like Ernest Bevin of the British Labour Party, Ashok Mehta and Jayaprakash Narain in the later phases of their political career, for most socialists Communists were siblings who shared the same goals, had a similar world-view, and were only a little wayward in that they were overzealous and did not mind adoption of violent means to achieve the same end that they desired. In fact, there was reportedly even a phase in the life of Regan, who as President dubbed Soviet Union as evil empire, when he was a liberal and believed that Communists 'were liberals who were temporarily off the track, and whatever they were, they didn't pose much of threat'. And as to Nehru, he never had any doubt that RSS was a greater threat than communists. For most of the 'progressives', the Soviet Union had an iconic significance; it was a country untainted by colonialism and imperialism, proclaimed the equality of mankind, sided with Third World and the wretched of the earth, and one in which the 'future works'. Unlike the United States which tilted towards Pakistan, the Soviet Union consistently supported India on Kashmir, and assisted India to build the steel plant in the public sector at Bhilai

when the United States would not. For 'progressives', communism and capitalism were not morally equal, and therefore the same actions by countries of the communist and capitalist bloc were to be judged differently, lest one should give a leg-up to detested capitalism. A good example is Sartre's response to Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* becoming a best seller in France. Sartre distanced himself from its author, on the ground that Koestler, by publicising the crimes of the repressive Soviet regime, was putting himself at the service of American imperialism and blocking the progress of the Left. Sartre knew about the horrors Koestler described—the prisons, the torture, and the labour camps of the Soviet Union—but he did not find it politically convenient to talk or write about them. Condemning them would give too much encouragement to the bourgeoisie. What was true of Sartre was true of many, many others, and not only those on the far left. No wonder that India failed to condemn Soviet suppression of the Hungarian uprising in 1956 but was a vociferous critic of the Anglo-French-Israeli invasion of the Suez Canal, which occurred at about the same time. Krishna Menon and Nehru were not alone in adopting different standards in judging the actions of the two blocks during the Cold War.

The most vivid manifestation in the University of the contemporary socio-political-cultural ferment was the *Andhra Varotsavaalu*, more accurately a fortnight of celebrations in December every year. The celebrations were the highlight of the academic year; day after day, they offered every evening a scintillating seminar followed by theatre. The seminars covered a wide variety of topics drawn from literature, art and politics; they were designed to be lively and polemical, to be a battle of Titans purposively chosen from warring camps. Nagi Reddy, the veteran communist leader was pitted against Sanjeeva Reddy, his brother-in-law and Congress Party leader whom he defeated once in an election to the State Assembly. Viswanatha was pitted against a 'progressive' writer. The seminars were, to use contemporary TV jargon, a *Big Fight*. However, in contrast to the cacophony of these electronic big fights, the seminars were more cerebral and educative, and acquainted young formative minds with the contested terrain of ideas

The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.

- Eleanor Roosevelt

in different fields of art, culture and politics. The inter-collegiate drama competitions synchronized with the *Andhra Varotsavaalu*, thereby expanding the range and variety of the cultural offerings. If the seminars were feasts for the mind, the plays were feasts for the senses. Minds, it is said, are differently moulded; some are charged by feelings and some by ideas. It must be as hard for Hegel to understand Beethoven as for Beethoven, or most for that matter most, to understand Hegel. The seminars moulded the impressionable young minds to the contests of ideas and the plays that followed the seminars to feelings and aesthetic sensibility. Under the leadership of Sri K. V. Gopalaswamy, Registrar of the University, theatre flourished in the university for about two decades. The open-air experimental theatre in the Erskine College he designed and lorded over was the venue for several technical and artistic innovations in theatre. The vast stage, the sets, and the surrealistic lighting and dazzling special effects transposed the spectator to an ethereal world. In keeping with the predominant political ambience of the campus, the plays staged in the University were mainly social plays which challenged Brahminical orthodoxy, social injustice and cant. The plays did not address the great problems of human condition. A couple of plays still linger in my memory. *Hiranyakasipu* turns the *Pralhalda* legend of *Bhagavatha Purana* on its head; Hiranyakasipu is not a tyrant who persecutes his son for believing in Hari but a martyr who loses his life because of the challenge he mounted against Brahminical dogmas and superstition. *Alli muthais* woven round a Robin Hood-like band of robbers in a forest who are morally superior to respected personages in the society who exploit the poor. Athreya's *NGO* portrays the sorry tale of a low paid clerk struggling to make both ends meet; those were days when Government was a poor pay master. On the campus, Gopalaswamy and E M Sastry, the University Doctor, were *sui generis*. Nattily dressed in a suit or a jacket and tied with an aristocratic gait, lordly mien and Western mannerisms, Gopalaswamy offered a stark contrast to the rest of the faculty who were predominantly Brahminical and dressed simply. The contrast is explained by his upbringing and his English education; his father was Sir K V Reddy Naidu,

leader of the anti-Brahminical and pro-British Justice Party, and Prime Minister for a while of the Madras Presidency. The portly school-masterish Registrar who ferociously sought to enforce discipline and decorum in the theatre was a popular figure among students. Though I developed a lifelong passion for theatre, to my lasting regret, my involvement in theatre was only vicarious, limited to being a viewer. It was only after reading Jaya Prabha's *NalugoGoda: TeluguloAdhunikaNatakam 1940-1990*, nearly four decades after I left the university, could I come to know of manner in which Gopalaswamy developed and managed the University Experimental Theatre. For all those who wish to know about the University Theatre in its halcyon days or relive the theatre experience of those student days, there is no better book than that of Jaya Prada. Her assessment that the University Experimental Theatre had no impact on the Andhra theatre at large and that even in the Andhra University it did not make last long contribution is absolutely right as unfortunately neither Gopalaswamy nor his associates published anything about the artistic innovations that were tried out, and located as it was in the ivory-tower-like university the Experimental Theatre was sequestered from the theatre outside the University.

The University used to invite many eminent persons to address the students. The lecture which is deeply etched in my memory is Dewan Lal's Hindu America because of the astounding thesis it expounded, and the very many slides used to buttress his thesis. The lecture offered a gist of his book, *Hindu America- Revealing the Romance of the Surya Vansh Hindus* and depicting the Imprints of Hindu Culture on the Two Americas. Dewan Lal boldly asserted that America was not discovered by Columbus as history textbooks claimed. Long before the Christian era, suryavansh (solar lineage to which Lord Rama reportedly belongs) Hindus migrated to the American continent. Aztecs, Incas and Mayas were their descendants, and their religious and social customs were similar to those of the Hindus. The image of a Ganesha in ancient Mexico cannot fail to impress a young impressionable mind, all the more so as the greatness of India extolled by the freedom struggle still loomed large in the nation's imagination. The very

Be humble, but bold in sharing what you believe in and what rings true to your heart.

- Satsuki Shibuya

morning after the lecture I rushed to the University Library to get the book and read it. The book had messages from Mahatma Gandhi and Sarojini Naidu and a foreword by S.Radhakrishnan. The title of Sarojini's message 'flattering to our national pride' aptly captured my feelings. In such a mood I missed out the outright scepticism of the Mahatma and the philosophical doubts of Radhakrishnan about the Chaman Lal Thesis. Even while opining that the Chaman Lal thesis deserves consideration because of the evidence marshalled with great learning and discrimination, Radhakrishnan explained why alternate views could not be ruled out: 'It is difficult to be certain about direct influence on borrowing by one culture from another. After all, there is not one type of civilisation among American Indians and the ancient Hindu civilisation is avast and complex one with different articulations in it and to detect parallelisms between some aspects of the former and certain sides of the latter is not difficult...similarities in tenets and practices are due to the oneness of the human mind (emphasis added)'. The point made by Radhakrishnan about the consequences of the oneness of the human mind was elaborated by George Sarton the eminent historian of science in his classical work on science in ancient Greece. It was only decades later when I chanced to read Sartondid I appreciate and internalise the seminal truth about the human mind. Given the the essential identity of human mindand given definite problems that admit only of a few solutions, it is not surprising that wise men in different civilisations hit independently upon the same solution. That explains why great discoveries in human civilisation like that of farming, language and metallurgy occurred in many places which might have been geographically isolated at the time of discovery.

(To be continued)

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SUDRAKA'S MRICHCHAKATIKA

Dr. (Mrs.) Prema Nandakumar

Royal authors of Indian classics are a rare breed. King Sudraka belongs to this choice community, though his life too is no stranger to the uncertainties of the early Classical Age in Sanskrit. Suffice it to

say that Sudraka could have been a king and was so charmed by Bhasa's unfinished play, Charudatta that he chose to revamp it to complete the theme as Mrichchakatika. Most of the dramatis personae of Sudraka's play are descendents from Charudatta and even the humourous interludes seem to have had a Bhasan inspiration. Just a witty soliloquy of the Vidhushaka and we are told of the hero's riches and generosity at one time:

"I used to pass my days in Charudatta's house chewing the end of savoury sweetmeats, like a bull at the cross-ways stuffed upto the gullet. I used to sit like a painter amid his numerous pans of paint, surrounded by countless dishes of various kinds, ready throughout the twenty-four hours, seasoned with asafoetida, and in between whiles there were drinks, fragrant for gargling, produced at the lift of an eyebrow. And now that same I, because the noble Charudatta is poor, must live like the pigeons, running elsewhere for my food before I come to his house."

King Sudraka found in the theme all ingredients that make for popularity. A Brahmin hero (for the audience must have had enough of kings as heroes till then), a courtesan as heroine, and the lispings of a child: that is Mrichchakatika.

The story wanders through ten acts. Charudatta, an impoverished merchant, believes in the good things of life. He gives refuge to the courtesan Vasantasena from lust-mad Samasthanaka who has royal connections. Vasanthasena leaves her jewels in the custody of Charudatta but the thief Sharvilaka steals them. The noble-hearted wife of Charudatta replaces them with her own necklace through her husband's friend, Maitreya. Vasanthasena who learns of it goes to Charudatta's house to return it. Caught in a storm, she spends the night there and Charudatta and Vasanthasena are attracted to one another deeply. She leaves the house after placing her own jewels in the little claycart, a plaything belonging to Charudatta's son.

An action-packed play which has even political insurgency as a thematic ingredient. Looks like contemporary Indian anyway, where everything seems to happen together! When Vasanthasena refuses to submit to Samasthanaka, he strangles her

Revolutions may put down the mighty from their seats but they do not exalt the humble and the meek.

- Robert Moore

and lodges a complaint against Charudatta, accusing him of the murder of the courtesan. According to Krishna Chaitanya, the description of the court by Sudraka reminds one of Rouault's painting of a seat of justice:

"The prospect is little pleasing. The court looks like a sea. Its tossing waves are wrangling advocates. Its brood of monsters are these death's ministers. Attorneys skim like wily snakes the surface. Spies are the shell-fish cowering amidst its weeds. Vile informers, like birds of prey, hover and then pounce upon their victims. The beach, that should be justice, is unsafe, rough, rude and broken by oppression's storms."

The jewels placed by Vasanthasena in the claycart of little Rohasena to comfort him as he was crying for a golden one instead of his clay cart becomes a damning evidence against Charudatta. He is condemned to death. But all ends well when Vasanthasena who had been buried by Samasthanaka under a pile of dried leaves is brought out and found to be alive. Fortunately the executioners have not been in a hurry. In fact, one of the executioners asks the other why he was unnecessarily delaying the hanging. The other replies: "It is possible some good samaritan may free the condemned by paying money for the release. Or the prince's birthday might enthuse the king to free condemned criminals. Or an elephant may run around berserk and create havoc and in the melee the condemned fellow will get release. Or, there may be a change in the throne that could help the condemned." Charudatta is released and Samasthanaka forgiven. Vasanthasena is pronounced a lawfully wedded wife of Charudatta, thus improving her societal status to the very heights.

Romance is aligned to rainbow humour in a seamless manner by Sudraka. He is never coarse and always has a piece of social criticism tagged on to his witty statements. Sudraka has a way with words, not merely for producing audience-laughter, but to teach a lesson to erring members of the society. As drama is the best genre to appeal to all strata of the society by its visual presentation, Mricchakatika must have been very popular. Sudraka openly indicates the need for revolution against unjust rule. With King Palaka

killed by the revolutionaries led by Sharvilaka, Aryaka is installed as the King. There is a clear message on the wall. Beware, those of you who sit on the throne!

While a lot of material regarding virtue can be made of Mricchakatika, there is definitely one passage which speaks of the need for possessing a sterling character. When Sarvilaka asks Charudatta at the end as to what is dearest to him he says it is his integrity. For integrity had brought him all the good:

"My unblemished character

Has brought me all that is good:

That made my worst enemy

Fall at my feet and gain a new life;

My friend Aryaka over came his foes

And lifted the royal scepter;

My beloved Vasanthasena became mine;

Made you my guardian friend.

What else needs one except good character?"

Neither poverty nor the hangman's noose disturb his poise. Sudraka's gifts to Sanskrit literature through this one play are numerous but the best of them all is the portrayal of the child Rohana, son of Charudatta and Duta. We see him first playing with the gold cart of the child of his rich neighbour and when he has to be satisfied with a clay cart he cries piteously. When Vasanthasena tries to divert him saying he should not weep for he can get a gold cart with her jewels, Rohasena asks his ayah: "Who is this woman?" Vasanthasena speaks of herself as a servant maid who has been bought by Charudatta's qualities while Rohasena's ayah Radhanika says: "My child, she is your mother." We get a charming reply from the little boy: "You are lying for if she is my mother how is she having so many ornaments?" In this manner we recognize the impoverished state of Charudatta's household and Duta's Himayalan patience and wifely loyalty.

We meet Rohasena again in the last act. Charudatta has been brought to the gallows on the order of King Pala. He is to be executed for murdering Vasanthasena. Rohasena is brought to him

Our hearts must know the world of reason and reason must be guided by an improved heart.

- W.L. Webb

at this juncture for a last glimpse and Charudatta is very sad. He places on Rohasena's necklace his own sacred thread, saying he has nothing else to give as a parting gift to his son:

"I give this gift to you which is the ornament of Brahmins. It is not an ornament made with pearl or gold. This is the ornament with which you give the offerings to gods and your own ancestors!"

It is a very poignant situation for he is himself going to become an ancestor now! And the artless child asks one of the executioners where they are taking his father. When he is told they are taking Charudatta to kill him, the child says in heart rending innocence: "Kill me. Let my father go", as though killing and death were child's play. As the reader-audience sits with wet cheeks, Charudatta hugs the little Rohasena and speaks out:

"This is the wealth of affection, wealth alike of the rich and poor; this is the unction of the heart made neither of sandal nor of other things."

Golden words from a king. "Love is the hoop of the Gods, hearts to combine." (Sri Aurobindo)

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FROM HEARTS OF MEN AND WOMEN'S HONIED LOOKS... THE LESS-KNOWN VISION OF SUBHASH CHANDRA BOSE AND THE ISSUE OF INTOLERANCE – 1

Prof. Manoj Das

This is the transcribed version of the 10th Netaji Subhash Memorial Lecture 2016, which the author delivered extempore on the 24th of January 2016, under the auspices of Netaji Subhash Bose-INA Trust, at the FICCI Auditorium, New Delhi. Passages from the works of Subhash Chandra Bose and others which the speaker referred to during his talk are reproduced here in full. English rendering of passages from Subhash Chandra's essays in Bengali, Gorar Katha and Taruner Swapna, is made by the speaker. Focus on the issue of Intolerance had been decided upon by the Trust for this year's Memorial Lecture.

I understand from my friends that for almost a decade, on this memorable occasion, qualified scholars and distinguished thinkers have, on this dignified platform of Netaji Subhash Bose-INA Trust, spoken on Netaji's political philosophy, political activities and the daring adventure he launched abroad, the INA.

Theirs must have been inspiring talks; the speakers must have shed light on several aspects of the history of our recent past. I will not dare into those areas. Taking a break from the turbulent moments of the past, I will briefly focus on that splendid vision of Subhash Chandra that concerns the future. International situation changed suddenly making it impossible for him to translate that vision into reality. Overwhelmed by the saga of his sensational escape and subsequent actions, we too have neglected reviewing his mystic vision of life, of India as well as of humanity. By the way, I had also the privilege to publish in the magazine I edited, The Heritage, the first-hand account of his Great Escape, narrated by none other than his nephew Dr. Sisir Kumar Bose, the brave young man who safely drove him to the frontiers giving a clean slip to a hundred alert eyes scanning their mansion and all the roads leading to it.

As you all know, Subhash Chandra was born in the old city of Cuttack, then the capital of Odisha, which happens to be my home state. He studied there till he passed his matriculation examination. Though I came to the same city, many years later as a student, I had the occasion to know a few proud classmates of his and later I had the chance to know the distinguished freedom-fighter and long-time Parliamentarian, Surendra Mohan Ghose, who was not only Netaji's political colleague and friend, but also was his ideological compatriot in the twenties and thirties of the 20th century. However, I am not going to reflect on Netaji's vision based on their oral evidence, though they were interesting and valuable, but from his own writings and statements.

Indeed, one who is endowed with receptive eyes, can receive lessons from situations that appear ordinary to the ordinary eyes. Cuttack is flanked by two rivers. Once Subhash Chandra reminisced before his close friend, Dilip Kumar Roy, that as a boy observing the river in spate and how the tides

Common sense in an uncommon degree is what the world calls wisdom.

- S. T. Coleridge

receded “only to surge back again, especially in the rains, with mounting force” he would feel convinced that a temporary retreat in any mission should not discourage one.

If such an outlook of his speaks of a fighting spirit inherent in him, before long it found a healthy direction as, at the age of fifteen, he came across the works of Swami Vivekananda. We must remember that Swamiji was the first mystic, the first Yogi, whose prime concern was India’s resurgence. What a place the country occupied in his consciousness should be clear from one single incident. When one of his Western disciples, Miss Macleod arrived in India and asked Swamiji how she could serve him best, he instantly answered in two Mantrik words: “Love India”. An India true to its Swadharma was his dream, his ideal, his mission.

Swamiji’s impact was evident in one of Subhas Chandra’s earliest essays in Bengali entitled *Godar Katha* (About the Primary Issue) where he says; “The genius of India has kept the lamp of wisdom alight even through ages of darkness. We the children of those geniuses must not die before contributing to the fulfilment of that dream.”

And in yet another essay in the same series entitled *Taruner Swapna* (Dream of the Young) we find the evidence of a deep questing mind developing a serene conviction: “We are born upon this earth in order to achieve a certain goal – to spread a certain message. If the sun rises to illumine the earth, if the flowers bloom in order to spread their fragrance, if the rivers, while giving us their nectareous water run to meet the ocean, we too have descended upon the earth with full joy and full vitality of youth in order to establish a truth. We have to discover the unknown mysterious purpose that justifies our existence, through meditation and experience gathered through work.”

His mystic optimism becomes clearer in the statement that follows: “We have come floating on the waves of youth to give everybody the taste of Ananda (delight), for we are the self of Ananda. We will wander over the earth as the embodiment of Ananda. We will laugh with our Ananda and at the same time inspire the earth with that Ananda.”

Don’t we feel almost an Upanishadic touch in this outlook?

However, as he began exploring the spiritual lore, a formidable question began to bother him. Most of the mystics and saints looked upon this material world as Maya, a massive illusion. Wisdom, according to them, lay in staging an escape from life. Why then was this material world created? Doesn’t it have any truth in it?

It was at this phase of his quest that he was exposed to the vision of Sri Aurobindo. At first it was the awe and admiration Sri Aurobindo’s name inspired that attracted the young Subhash Chandra to him. He wrote:

“When I came to Calcutta in 1913, Aurobindo was already a legendary figure. Rarely have I seen people speak of a leader with such rapturous enthusiasm and many were the anecdotes of this great man some of them probably true, which travelled from mouth to mouth.” (An Indian Pilgrim)

Elsewhere in his autobiography he wrote that even though Sri Aurobindo had left the British India since four years, “he was easily the most popular leader in Bengal...His was a name to conjure with... On the Congress platform he had stood up as the champion of left-wing thought and a fearless advocate of independence at a time when most of the leaders, with their tongues in their cheeks, would talk only of colonial self-government. He had undergone incarceration with perfect equanimity.”

Once in a while someone would receive a letter from Sri Aurobindo. “Such letters,” records Subhash Chandra, “would pass rapidly from hand to hand, especially in circles interested in spirituality-cum-politics. In our circle usually somebody would read the letter aloud and the rest of us would enthuse over it. In one such letter Aurobindo wrote, “We must be dynamos of the divine electricity so that when each of us stands up, thousands around may be full of light – full of bliss and Ananda.’ We felt convinced that spiritual enlightenment was necessary for effective national service.”

No wonder that he would be keen to read Sri Aurobindo’s works. He began reading *The Synthesis*

of Yoga, serialised in the “Arya”, the monthly magazine Sri Aurobindo edited from Pondicherry. By and by his great dilemma regarding spirituality versus humanity, or the material world versus the Divine life got resolved. He writes, Sri Aurobindo “worked out reconciliation between Spirit and Matter, between God and creation, on the metaphysical side and supplemented it with a synthesis of the methods of attaining the truth - a synthesis of Yoga as he called it.”

At the end of his student career in India and Literature and Education, when he emerged as one of the toppers in the I.C.S. Exams, it was again Sri Aurobindo’s example that motivated him to reject the coveted career. He writes, “The illustrious example of Aurobindo Ghose looms large before my vision. I felt that I am ready to make the sacrifice which that example demands of me.”

After this began his turbulent political life. As is wellknown, like Sri Aurobindo he tried his best to give a radical turn to the attitude of the Indian National Congress towards freedom. There was no scope for compromise on that front: the British must yield to India’s demand for unconditional independence. The intolerant colonial administration put him behind bars a full dozen times within a period of twenty years of his political career in India. But those brief intervals which were allowed to him outside jail were enough for him to create a revolutionary fervour among the masses, despite Gandhiji’s open intolerance of his stand.

During the first half-decade of his dynamic political life he found in Deshbandhu Chitta Ranjan Das his inspiring mentor. He has applied for the Deshbandhu such epithets as Mahatma, Mahapurush and Mahapran. Their combination snatched from British control, for the first time, the Corporation of Calcutta (now Kolkata) and the city saw a glorious period in its civic administration with the Deshbandhu as the Mayor and Subhash Chandra as its Chief Executive Officer. I am sure this audience does not require to be reminded of the fact that the Deshbandhu, the great legal luminary, came into prominence with his successful defence of Sri Aurobindo in the sensational Alipore Conspiracy Case,

1908 - 1909. The concluding passage of his speech on the significance of Sri Aurobindo that has assumed a legendary fame with the passing of time, was quoted by Subhas Chandra in one of his letters: “That long after this controversy is hushed in silence, long after this turmoil, this agitation ceases, long after he is dead and gone, he will be looked upon as the Poet of Patriotism, as the Prophet of Nationalism and the Lover of Humanity. Long after he is dead and gone, his words will be echoed and re-echoed not only in India, but across distant seas and lands.”

The Deshbandhu remained in touch with Sri Aurobindo and visited Pondicherry shortly before his death in June 1925.

The Deshbandhu died while Subhas Chandra was in Mandalay Jail. He was shocked. Probably under the impression that the time was ripe to inspire Subhash Chandra with a new idealism, a leading Marxist, Jibanalal Chatterjee, tried his best to do so. But his arguments were ably contradicted by Surendra Mohan Ghose. According to Surendra Mohan’s biographer, “This was going on daily, Jibanalal trying to convert Subhash Chandra and Surendra Mohan advocating the Indian way of life and philosophy, they reached a stage when Jibanalal remarked that Surendra Mohan was wrong. Surendra Mohan told him that he could not be wrong as he himself was not saying or doing anything. He was saying and doing what Sri Aurobindo was asking him to say or do.” (Great Revolutionary Leader Surendra Mohan Ghose by AdhirBhattacharjee)

The debate ended there, leaving Subhash Chandra only more determined to pursue his friend-philosopher-guide C.R. Das’s ideals and his own convictions.

All through these trials and tribulations Subhash Chandra and his friend Dilip Kumar Roy kept up their correspondence. On the 15th of August 1932 Roy, who was in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry, sent a flower from Sri Aurobindo as a token of his Blessings, to Subhash Chandra who was in detention at Madras (now Chennai). Subhash Chandra wrote in reply, “In what you have done for me you have acted like a true friend and you could not have done better...

Doubt is a pain too lonely to know that faith is his twin brother.

- Khalil Gibran

I am grateful to Sri Aurobindo.” (The Subhas I knew by Dilip Kumar Roy)

(From: Manoj Das Of Mystics and Miracles and other Essays Edited by Suprioy Bhattacharya 2018)

(to be continued)

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PROF. SWAMI JNANANANDA - II THE SAINT AND THE SCIENTIST

Prof. B. Mallikarjuna Rao

Former Rector and
Head of the Department of Nuclear Physics
Andhra University

In 1942, he heard about Mahatma Gandhi leading the Freedom Movement, and how the British suppressed the Non-violent Quit India movement by arresting the Indian Leaders and killing thousands of people. Swamiji strongly condemned these ghastly acts of the British Empire and issued a statement in the press. The British Government was not pleased and vindictively started to cut off the funds that he used to receive from the Maharaja of Tehri. Even Prof. Chadwick denied the laboratory facilities for his research. Swamiji then decided to leave England and go to America in the fall of 1944. He was accepted by Prof. Lindsay of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He continued his work in the field of Beta-ray Spectroscopy and investigated the characteristics Beta spectra in several Isotopes and published the results in Physical Review. He decided to return to India towards the end of 1947, having come to know about Indian Independence.

He landed in Bombay and from there proceeded to Ahmadabad at the request of his devotees. While at Ahmadabad, he met Sri Mavalankar, a friend of Pandit Nehru. He introduced Swamiji to Panditji. It so happened that the Government was establishing the National Physical Laboratory (NPL) and Panditji requested Swamiji to join the NPL and establish Nuclear Physics Research in India. Swamiji joined the NPL on the 1st of March 1948 and started guiding young Scientists in the field of Nuclear Physics.

In 1954, while on a visit to Goraganamudi, his native place, he fell down and injured

himself. He was shifted to King George Hospital, Visakhapatnam for treatment. Dr. V. S. Krishna, the Vice-chancellor of Andhra University paid a visit and requested Swamiji to join the University and Head the Department of Nuclear Physics, that he was proposing to establish with the aid of the University Grant Commission(UGC). Swamiji readily accepted the proposal and commenced to establish a Nuclear Physics Department in the later part of 1954. The special committee formed by the UGC granted funds for a separate Building along with the purchase of the necessary equipment from abroad. An amount of Rs. 1,20,000/- was released by the UGC to meet the initial costs. Six students joined the department to do their Doctoral Degrees under Prof. Swamiji in the month of August, 1958.

The Foundation stone for the building was laid by Dr. C. D. Deshmukh, Chairman, University Grants Commission, on the 10th of December, 1958 and the building was inaugurated by Dr. Homi J. Bhabha, F.R.S., Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, on the 13th of December 1964. Swamiji used his good-will and influence to get funds from the various funding agencies like the UGC, Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) to purchase equipment and also to provide scholarships for his Research Scholars. Soon a two-year M.Sc. course was initiated. Swamiji encouraged students to conduct research in various specializations such as Interaction of Gamma Rays with Matter, Nuclear Structure Studies and Neutron Absorption and Scattering studies. The department was recognized as one of the Premier Institutions in Nuclear Research in the Country. In the year 1962, Swamiji wrote the book entitled “*Elements of Nuclear Physics*”, keeping in view the M.Sc., Students and the book was published by the Andhra University.

In the year 1965, Swamiji retired from service, as per the rules of Andhra University. The University made him a life-time Emeritus Professor. Swamiji continued his research in Nuclear Physics and kept himself busy guiding disciples on the path of God Realization. He wrote the book entitled “*Nuclear Models*” in 1967. Swamiji, during his stay at the

The UNESCO, in my opinion, has done more creditable work than the other wings of the
UNO in cementing human unity

- Swami Ranganathananda

Andhra University, from 1954-1964, produced 20 D.SC and Ph.Ds and published well over 100 articles in national and international Journals of repute.

Eminent people, young and old alike, used to come and meet Swamiji to receive his blessings and seek his guidance in the practice of Yoga and Spiritual studies. Prominent among them was Maharaja Saheb Pusapati Vijayarama Gajapathi Raju of Vizianagaram. He heard about Swamiji from his uncle, Lt. Col. His Highness Shri Maharaja Sir Narendra Shaw Bahadur of Tehri- Garhwal. He became a devotee and started practicing Yoga under Swamiji's guidance. Inspired and blessed by Swamiji, he decided to establish a Trust by the name of "Mansas" in October 1958, with a view to promote Education and Fine Arts in the North Andhra Districts.

Swamiji visited Goraganamudi, his native place at the request of his younger brother, Sri Padamanabha Raju and resided in Rama Jnana Mandir, that was specially built for him. He casually told his brother that this could be his last visit to his native place and that the body of a Sanyasi should not be cremated but be buried or disposed in a River. He expressed his desire to be buried in the Mandir built for him. Swamiji merged into the Eternal Brahman on the 20th of September, 1969, at 7:45 am, leaving a host of disciples and admirers and a rich legacy of knowledge in the realms of Spirituality and Science.

The usual question put to Swamiji by many was about his involvement in seemingly opposing aspects of his work – Spiritual and Materialistic. He used to say that his life would have been incomplete otherwise and he treated these two aspects as "two arms to embrace the Divine." Prof. V. Lakshmi Narayana, Swamiji's first Research student, adds that His intuition, advice and guidance were responsible for the Development of the full-fledged Laboratories, which are now named after him as "*Swami Jnanananda Laboratories of Nuclear Research.*"

Swamiji left behind rich material of his thoughts and experiences in Yoga and Philosophy in the form of several books, notably: *Purna Sutras*, *Darshanika Maha Pravachana*, *Transcendence*, *Glimpses (Poems)*, *The essence of Indian Philosophy*,

Science and Religion, *Philosophical Religion - I*, *Philosophical Religion – II*, *The Philosophy of Yoga*, *Concept of Space and Empiricism*, *Rationalism and Transcendentalism*.

(Concluded)

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THE IMPOSSIBLE INDIAN BUREAUCRACY

Dr. Uday Balakrishnan

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Chairman, Investment Board

Open the newspaper on any day and you'll see examples of the mess the bureaucracy causes. Speaking on the Bengal famine in the House of Lords, Lord Strabolg observed that nothing contributed more to the occurrence of the disaster than "the greatest, the most hidebound, indeed ironbound bureaucracy in the world, that of the Government of India, suffering that fatal disease of bureaucracy, procrastination. They consider too long, they set up too many Committees, they talk too long about what they are going to do, and in the meanwhile this terrible famine was galloping towards them."

It doesn't matter where you turn, you can see India's bureaucracy underperforms in every area it is engaged, from the railways and postal services, to education, social welfare and health programmes among several others. A few examples should make my point. I will start with India's postal service, to which I had once belonged - the world's most extensive with a presence in nearly every village in India.

With such a presence, it ought to have been reaching out with services that are now rendered by multiple agencies. Unlike its German counterpart, Deutsche Post, so ubiquitous even in India, it has failed to create a business arm. In a market saturated by private collection and delivery services it has yet to offer specialized products, especially aimed at linking rural artisans to urban markets - a role it is eminently suited for. The railways lavishes too much on 'VIP' Projects, the latest example being the former Habibganj railway station on which Rs 450 crores

No ocean is in need of strategic stability more than the Indian ocean,
which is arguably the most unclearized of the seven seas.

- Thomas P.M. Barnett

has been lavished, the kind of money that would have made travellers less uncomfortable in 100 smaller stations in Madhya Pradesh.

Far from having a demographic dividend, India has a demographic disaster on its hands. Now, the wooden response to the extended Covid induced lockdown has robbed millions of children of two years of learning with no meaningful alternative to turn to. This is as good as spelling the end of formal education for millions of young people across the country.

The dramatic failure of primary and secondary education in the country has left India with the largest number of undereducated, undertrained youth in the world. The scheme to universalize primary education Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, running since the start of this millennium, is pathetic. Successive reports have brought out that the learning levels of those in higher classes is about that of children in much lower classes and the dropout rates of children from primary education is so abysmal as evidenced by the fact that the country has much fewer secondary schools than primary ones.

Instead of improving government hospitals and primary health centres serving rural areas, the Government of India has introduced the insurance based Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY, touted as the biggest of its kind in the world. The coverage it offers is designed to benefit the private hospitals more than anyone else since the coverage will never be enough to cover serious illness or prolonged treatment, and families of those availing it are likely to be indebted in the long run.

Higher bureaucracy which is tasked with designing and implementing the schemes and programmes are so poor at getting them off the ground in ways that make the lot of ordinary people easier. One reason is this is a self-serving higher bureaucracy that self evaluates and self congratulates itself.

Officers rarely stay in one job to see any project through. The short life of a Secretary to the Indian government ensures a culture of short-termism that gets little done that has a long term impact. One just has to see how this compromises even our defence where the procurement of armaments take decades and more to finalize. Then there is the matter of un-

derspending on training bureaucracies lower formations while ensuring that members of the higher civil services are sent abroad to the best of places for training with money not being a constraint.

Our unhurried justice system complements bureaucracy in delays. The former railway minister LN Mishra was assassinated in 1975 and his killers were convicted nearly 40 years later in 2014. Thousands of undertrials languish in our jails for years. Influential murders are out on parole of one kind or the other so often that jail seems to be a mere home to return to on and off.

If India is to progress it needs to carry out a deep overhaul of its bureaucratic set up when support the state gives to its citizens is made to appear as a favour. I will close this short piece with an extended quote from an article I wrote in 2018 in the Hindu Businessline, titled The Canary in the Coalmine:

“Since it is doubtful that the civil service will voluntarily undertake such a reform, Modi will do well to set up a National Civil Service Commission with a mandate to recommend as well as implement the kind of changes that will make it much more accountable and actually deliver.

For a start, such a Commission could put an immediate end to different wings of the civil service undermining each other while giving equal opportunity for the best in each to move up the ladder regardless of which service he or she belongs to.

Next, all current post retirement positions — members of the many central administrative tribunals, chairmanships of various regulatory agencies and so on — must be offered to run within one’s service life, ending in normal retirement, and selection to each must be through a much more transparent process than the current practice.

This should put an end to the continuous jockeying for post retirement assignments that senior bureaucrats queue up to get. The present system is loaded against the honest silent class in bureaucracy that is either unwilling or unable to lobby and extend its official life with significantly added benefits thrown in.

* * *

China is an example not of democracy allied to liberty but of centralization allied to authoritarianism.

- The Economist August 11, 2018

PLACE OF WOMEN

Dr. R. Sampath

Former Chief of Bureau
The Hindu, Visakhapatnam

Westerners and followers of non-Hindu faiths accuse Sanaatana Dharma of suppressing women and treating them as inferior to men. My Guru, Sri Sri Hanumat Kali Vara Prasada Babuji Maharaj would pooh-pooh such a statement by saying, “Little do these detractors realise that Sanaatana Dharma has crowned womanhood with the highest honour by personifying her with the Supreme Energy (‘Paraashakti’). Go to any part of the country, you will find the popularity of the Shakti cult. This is also exemplified by the Divine Trinity themselves: Brahma has placed His consort Saraswati on His tongue; Vishnu’s consort Mahalakshmi takes Her seat in His ‘Vakshastala’ (right chest); and Siva, as Ardhanareeswara, has bestowed the entire left portion of His body to Parvati Devi.”

It is stated in our ‘puraanaas’ that Lord Vishnu told divine sage Narada that He bowed to six persons in the world and in that He included virtuous woman (‘pativrata’). What more testimony is needed to highlight the highest place accorded to women in society?” [The other five whom the Lord reveres are: one who feeds the poor and needy daily; youth who performs the daily ‘agnihotram’ ritual; one who fasts once a month; one who has understood the inner significance of the Vedas (‘Vedantavit’); and one who has witnessed one thousand Full Moons (‘Chandra sahasra jeevi’)].

Unlike in other faiths wherein women are treated as a property rather than as an equal partner, in Sanaatana Dharma the woman has been given her rightful place. Here are some snippets from the Vedas and related literature (culled out from an article by T.A. Venkateswaran, ‘Saluting Indian Womanhood’, forming part of a publication, ‘Education, Development and Culture’, by the Centre for Policy Studies, Visakhapatnam):

-Wife is the only friend of her husband;

-She never claims superiority over her husband and she is never treated as inferior by him;

-It is the duty of a wife to correct the mistake of her husband. (Sterling examples are Lopamudra, the ‘rishi patni’ of sage Agastya, and in recent history Kasturba, wife of Mahatma Gandhi);

-Woman is more intelligent than man. She is ‘Purandhi’ which means she is of superior intelligence;

-Woman is a ‘karma yogi’. She does duty for duty’s sake. She sacrifices her individual pleasure and serves the family;

-A passage from ‘Satapatha Brahmana’ states that only woman fulfills the purpose of human life. It highlights the divine aspect of women and declares them to be the embodiment of Sri Devi; and

-One Vedic mantra declares that woman is the rock of the house on which the family rests. Her integrity is the basis of all auspiciousness and it also thwarts the enemies.

An interesting anecdote from the life of a couple, dedicated to austere living, will vouchsafe how the female partner is superior in wisdom, even while keeping a low profile. Once, the couple visited Sri Subrahmanya temple in Tiruchendur, Tamil Nadu. After worshipping the deity, the couple was walking on the beach beside the temple. While doing so, the husband noticed a diamond ring on the sands and felt that the costly find might tempt his wife. So he just heaped some sand with his right foot on the ring to hide it from her. Thereafter, they returned to the lodge for rest. Caressing the feet of the husband for relieving the pain of a long walk, the wife told him: “My lord, I have a doubt. Can you clear it?” The husband said: “Yes my darling.” Thereupon, she asked “Can sand conceal diamond?” Piqued by the query, the husband literally prostrated at her feet and remarked, with tears welling up in his eyes, “My darling, you have conquered me. You are superior to me in renunciation and wisdom.”

If there are increasing domestic crimes against women in our modern society, they are due to the violation of the scriptural tenets. Such crimes need to be dealt with by law and criminals deserve to be punished. In our Dharma the marital bond is sacrosanct, whereas in western and other societies, it is not so. The “women’s lib” (liberation of women)

Which land other than India, which nation other than the Indian people could be better prepared to carry the struggle for mankind--which is also man’s personal struggle? This land and people have borne the message of fulfillment through a continually renewed battle against hate and violence. - Francis Dore

movement has only aggravated their agony in the name of divorce or legal separation, leaving their progeny in a dazed condition. The concept of live-in relationship of men and women under one roof wherein they are not married is also practised all over the globe. Unfortunately, in our country also this easy-to-separate culture is spreading, with all its attendant evil results.

Manu, the great law giver, is criticised for conferring on women a lower status: a woman has to be subservient to man all her life. As per Manu's law, say these critics, she has to depend upon her father till marriage whereafter she has to play only a second fiddle to her husband and as a widow should be under the control of her sons. It should be remembered that Manu is the progenitor of humanity. The word 'Manav' or 'Man' is a derivative of the word 'Manu', indicating that Manu is humanity's root. [There are fourteen Manus, according to our scriptures, and Swayambhuva Manu was the first. The other Manus are: Svaarochisa, Uttama, Taamasa, Raivata, Chaksusha, Vaivasvata, Saavarni, Daksha-Saavarni, Brahma-Saavarni, Dharma-Saavarni, Rudra-Saavarni, Deva-Saavarni and Indra-Saavarni. We are under the dispensation of the seventh Manu, Vaivasvata, and this segment of Time is called Vaivasvata Manvantara.]

Biologically speaking, woman does not have the same strength as man, and so she is said to belong to the weaker sex. All over the world woman has been assigned the soft role of nurturing the family. Even the 'Old Testament' of Christians mentions that Eve, the first female, was created by God out of one of the ribs of Adam, the first male. In the West, woman is derisively referred to as Adam's rib!

As a child, woman has necessarily to depend on her father, who ensures her desirable upbringing and welfare; in return, she makes her parents happy by the way she grows up under their protective umbrella, conducts herself in society and acquires the needed skills to run a family. When she gets married, she generally prefers to play the role of a homemaker - what a nice description as compared to the cliché housewife! - taking care of the domestic chores and not only of the requirements of her husband

but that of the other family members, namely her children and kith and kin. While performing this role she may appear subservient to her husband, but she is actually his 'sahadharmini' (an aide for her husband in performing his duties as a householder), as our scriptures address her. In fact, she is revered as 'Gruhalakshmi' (Mahalakshmi of the house). In old age, invariably because of widowhood, she has to be under the care of her grateful sons who reciprocate her gesture of raising them in an admirable manner sacrificing at times her own needs and preferences. It can be noticed here that the woman's role is not at all subservient to man's. In effect, woman complements man in all respects, nay, she even surpasses him in certain matters.

In reality, the homemaker is the most sought after person in a household. She is an expert manager of the household with a readymade solution for any domestic problem that crops up; she understands every requirement of each member of the house and attends to them with empathy; her knowledge of several subjects is thorough, be they pertain to vegetables, groceries, dress material, jewellery or utensils; she has a vast collection of recipes for preparing delectable culinary specialities to humour the taste buds of everybody in the house; she is adept in home remedies for various ailments, so that the family members need not rush to doctors for cure of minor health problems; she is also a good nurse who attends to the sick in the household with motherly care. Above all, she knows something of everything and everything of something! She may not be well educated in the modern sense, but her robust common sense and understanding of various issues would be amazing. This understanding is the offspring of her vast experience in domestic matters. The elderly woman in the household is known as dowager mother, whose advice is sought on all matters concerning the welfare of the family. Even the average modern career woman in our country, despite being tired after a day's hard work in office, continues to serve the family with the same vigour of a homemaker. Woman in our society is thus a 'goddess' to be adored.

The admonition of Manu by the so-called rationalists is largely due to the misunderstanding

Tranquility is not the natural state of the world. Peace and security are not the laws of nature.

- Henry Kissinger

of the basic tenets of his law. This is because of the mistranslation of 'Manu Smriti' from its original Sanskrit text by Western scholars. In Chapter 9 of 'Manu Smriti', it is said, "Her father protects (her) in childhood, her husband protects (her) in youth, and her sons protect (her) in old age." Manu is quite clear about the woman's protection. He has enjoined it as the highest duty of all castes. "Even weak husbands must strive to guard their wives. Reprehensible is the father who gives not his daughter in marriage at the proper time; reprehensible is the husband who approaches not his wife in due season; and reprehensible is the son who does not protect his widowed mother."

Manu also states that women have the right to choose their grooms. "Three years let a damsel wait, though she is marriageable; but after that time let her choose for herself a bridegroom (of) equal rank. If, being not given in marriage, she herself seeks a husband, she incurs no guilt, nor (does) he whom she weds."

Pinpointing that if the husband is noble, his wife automatically becomes noble, Manu says, "Let he (husband) employ his (wife) in the collection and expenditure of his wealth, in keeping (everything) clean, in (the fulfilment of) religious duties, in the preparation of his food, and in looking after the household utensils." An average Hindu woman is virtually the queen of the household. As the wife, she tends to the personal needs of her husband; as the daughter-in-law she takes care of the welfare of the elderly parents-in-law. Her role as a mother is the most exhilarating one. In short everybody seeks her help in all domestic chores. An embodiment of sacrifice, she keeps a low profile in respect of her own requirements as a person. Our 'Neeti Shastra' says, "Arthaanaam aarjanechaiva vyaye chaiva niyojayeth", which means a man must entrust his inherited wealth and earnings with his wife so that she can spend it usefully for the well being of the family. The wife is thus capable of careful husbanding of resources! It is stated in the 'Mahabharata' epic that Draupathi, the queen of the Panadavas, handled the finances of the Indraprastha kingdom very well. A woman is by nature frugal, and so she would not waste money. By insisting on the woman controlling the finances of the household, is

she not elevated to a high pedestal? Such is the place that has been accorded to women in our society. This is the significant truth that has been acknowledged by our scriptures.

On the need for women to maintain a sterling character, Manu asserts that they must particularly be guarded against evil inclinations, however trifling (they may appear); for, if they are not guarded, they will bring sorrow on two families. He lists six causes for the ruin of a woman, namely, drinking (of liquor), associating with wicked people, separation from husband, rambling abroad, sleeping indiscriminately and dwelling in other men's houses, and declares that women should shun these qualities.

Manu goes a step further. He asserts: "Yatra naaryaastu poojyante, ramanthe thathra Devataah" [In which household women are treated honourably, there only the gods are pleased and all the worship ('poojaas' and 'vratas') would yield beneficial results]. Can there be a more rational law giver than Manu and a defender of women's rights?

Another point of criticism against our Sanaatana Dharma is the practice of 'Sati' whereby the widow is forced to die on the pyre of her husband. (Social reformer Rajaram Mohan Roy took the initiative to end this practice). It should be noted that the Hindu scriptures do not prescribe this practice. In the Ramayana, none of the consorts of king Dasaratha performed 'Sati' after his death. The only instance of 'Sati' that is available in the Mahabharata is that of Madri, the second wife of Hastinapuram king Pandu, who preferred to be burnt along with her dead husband. Here, too, it was a voluntary act of hers. When we analyse this episode, clarity will dawn on us. Pandu, the younger brother of Dhritarashtra, ascended the throne since the latter was blind and thus unfit for rulership. King Pandu, while on a 'shikaar' (game), accidentally killed two mating deer. Actually the deer were an ascetic couple. While dying, the 'rishi' cursed Pandu that he would die if he indulged in sex. A repentant Pandu renounced his royalty and shifted to a nearby forest to lead the life of a celibate, though his wives Kunti and Madri also accompanied him. One day, when Pandu saw Madri bathing in a river, he was tempted, and for a moment both forgot

The wise man keeps the desired and the desirable separate.

- Rabindranath Tagore.

the sage's curse, as a consequence of which he died on the spot. Madri felt guilty and decreed that she should also be cremated along with Pandu. But for this solitary episode, there is no recorded evidence of a widow being burnt alive, in the 'Puraanaas'.

The practice of 'Sati' came into vogue in the land of Rajputs, that too in the last millennium only. In those days, when a king was defeated in war, the conqueror would lay a siege on the capital city and even raid the harem of the dead king. Because of such frequent wars and consequent harassment of the 'rajapatnis', the latter would burn themselves to avoid the ignominy of their chastity being violated. An example of this practice was that of Rani Padmini of Chitorgarh in the Mewar region, who committed 'sati' once she heard the news of her husband Bhimsingh having been killed in a treacherous manner by the Delhi sultan. Unfortunately, this medieval royal practice gradually entered the lives of ordinary people. This is an aberration and emphasises the then prevalent male superiority complex. Sanaatana Dharma cannot be blamed for this unjust practice. Similarly, the practice of tonsuring the head and related rituals when a woman becomes widow reflects man's cruelty to woman in a male dominated society, and scriptures do not prescribe any of these obnoxious practices. Our scriptures only emphasise that widows should lead a saintly life.

Child marriage system that was prevalent in our country during the 19th and early 20th century is drawing flak even today – after it was banned by the Sarada Act of 1929 (The Child Marriages Prevention Act was named Sarada Act because it was sponsored by a social reformer Rai Saheb Harbilas Sarada of those days). The Act stipulates no girl below 14 years and boy below 18 years can marry. This has since been raised to 18 years for girls and 21 years for boys. To blame Hinduism for this system is unfair, since our scriptures do not stipulate age of consent for marriages, though it has been the practice to get the girls married before they attain puberty. This system got evolved over centuries due to the prevailing economic conditions of our society. The negative impact of child marriage was that girls became widows at an early age. Likewise, the dowry system

came into vogue because of the economic conditions stalking society. It should be noted that dowry is prevalent even in non-Hindu faiths.

One great thing about our Sanaaatana Dharma is that any aberration that gets into its body politic gets corrected by social reformers. In fact, social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Veeresalingam Pantulu and Muthulakshmi Reddy were God's chosen messengers to make midcourse corrections in the progress of our religion.

* * *

COPPED OUT

- Dr. (Ms) Ahana Lakshmi

Environmental Consultant

Climate Change, they say, is a slow phenomenon and cannot really be felt easily. But for those who have been experiencing the vagaries of the weather for the last many decades, it seems pretty obvious. Days are hotter and so are nights (the use of air conditioners which was limited to midsummer has rapidly increased to at least nine months of the year, perhaps through the year in some places); and when it rains, it pours and floods areas that never flooded before (this, even after accounting for poor or careless settlement design). And that is what the climate change models said – an increase in the day temperature and the night temperature, and while the number of rainy days would go down, the total rainfall may remain the same – in other words, rain is more intense. Also, unless something develops in December, this year, 2021, would be the first time in sixty years that there would be no cyclone in the post-monsoon season (October to December) in India. Low pressure systems and depressions (generally bringing copious rain), yes; but no cyclonic storm. All this despite the fact that we are in the La Nina phase which generally favours cyclone formation.

So what? In fact, one would feel that less cyclones we have, the better, because cyclones are destructive. But weather watchers are intrigued and concerned. What do we have in store for us in the future?

Man is like a fountain, always the same but never the same water.

- Heraclitus.

On November 13th, the Glasgow Climate Change Conference(COP 26) formally came to an end. This was the meeting of the parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), originally adopted during the Earth Summit in 1992 to avoid “dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.” In other words, the world had recognized that escalating use of fossil fuel such as coal and petroleum had resulted in so much carbon being pumped into the atmosphere that the earth was heating up rapidly. And now, decades later, we find that the oceans we thought of as so vast and limitless are heating up too. All this is driving changes in climate in ways that are so intricate and interwoven like a spider’s web. The scientific evidence as presented by the first part of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)’s Sixth Assessment Report that was released in August 2021 emphasised the irreversible impacts of climate change, and made it clear that carbon dioxide is the main driver of climate change and multiple climate change drivers operating in tandem were maximizing disaster impacts in India and elsewhere.

The hope of environmentalists and many people was that the world leaders at the COP 26 would agree to a strict plan of action to ensure that the increase in global temperature was limited to 1.5°C by reducing fossil fuel usage, switching over to renewable energy and so on. After days of intense deliberation, parties adopted the Glasgow Climate Pact. Indeed, there was progress, but not sufficient. Finally, the term used was “‘phasing down’ unabated coal power and phasing out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies”. It was originally hoped that coal power would be phased ‘out’, not merely ‘down’. It is only when we read such decisions that we realise the power of the word and the implications of ‘phased down’ rather than ‘phased out’! Now, it will make it all the more difficult to ban usage of coal as a fossil fuel.

What does it represent for us? India has agreed to a net zero year of 2070 and that at least half of the energy needs will be met through renewable energy by 2030. Yes, this will impose a steep cost, but do we have a choice? But it is not merely shifting to renewables to power our life, it is also really planting

more and more forests; and not cutting down existing forests for the sake of a new seaport or airport. Because of our large population and developing status, the average per capita emission of carbon dioxide is much lower than prosperous developing countries that have the wherewithal to shift to more expensive energy sources. We are also in the top ten nations vulnerable to disaster – and we are experiencing that on a regular basis. Hence we also need to invest more in disaster risk reduction and adaptation measures because intense cyclones and rainfall are going to become the norm. What was referred to as the hundred year event is now posited to happen even once in a few years.

The path ahead seems difficult but perhaps collective will can overcome obstacles. Maybe we will have to think up new solutions – we do have plenty of talent in our country to ‘jugaad’. Definitely we need to think of ways to cut down consumerism, ways to prolong life of every object used, ways to reduce waste. Every single small activity may help to ensure planet earth supports us for longer. Looks like global political will is not likely to help humanity at least in matters of climate change. Local action must and surely will.

* * *

Book Review:

INDIA’S POWER ELITE CLASS, CASTE AND A CULTURAL REVOLUTION

SANJAYA BARU

(PENGUIN--VIKING 2021, New Delhi, pp 243 Rs. 699)

The inspiration for Sanjaya Baru writing the book on India’s power elite came from the work of the well known sociologist and an authority on conflict theory Prof C.Wright Mills of Columbia University. This book of 243 pages is dedicated to his father, the late B.P.R. Vithal, a veteran economist and 1950 batch IAS officer and father-in-law the late Prof A. Vaidyanathan, former member of the Planning Commission. They were ‘two important influences’ and their demise in June 2020 left a deep void in the author’s life. Sanjaya Baru also expresses

Nothing is so much to be feared as fear.

- Thoreau

at the end his profound gratitude to his mother Seshu and mother –in-law Shanta.

The book comprises twelve chapters that are presented in three parts under the titles A Cultural Revolution, Digression Into Concepts and the Wielders of Power. The first part A Cultural Revolution has two chapters which deal with the rise of Narendra Modi into prominence as Chief Minister of Gujarat for fourteen years from 2001 to 2014 focusing on ‘private enterprise led industrial development’ heading a business friendly government.’ Sanjaya Baru narrates how ‘Modi married his pro-poor welfarism and anti-rich populism to the BJP’s traditional Hindutva nationalism.’ Encouraged by the 2019 electoral triumph Narendra Modi and the party president Amit Shah embarked upon a more aggressive campaign of Hindutva introducing several new measures and schemes, climaxing in the abrogation of Article 370, terminating special status for Jammu and Kashmir. The author states how it became a defining moment in Indian politics when the mix of Hindu nationalism and anti elitism became the foundation for what Narendra Modi called a New India.’ The towering personality of Atal Bihari Vajpayee gets special mention for the benign way in which he managed the elite groups in ‘Lutyens’ Delhi, himself being a member of one such elite group. Of particular interest is the difference between the Modi-led cultural revolution and Mao’s Cultural Revolution in China. “If there is a parallel,” writes Baru “it lies in the nature of the beast—the combination of anti-elitism, cultural nationalism”. He states that the Indian version of cultural revolution is also ant-elitist as the elites are now conceptualized as ‘an urban, westernized class that is Nehruvian in outlook.’

The idea of ‘elite’ is complicated in India as it is influenced by a mix of class, caste and language,’ writes Baru adding that in a country of over 130 billion people there are national elites and provincial elites. The chapter on Modi’s Metaphors, the second one in part I of the book, refers to the pro-Hindutva and anti- Nehru and Indira Gandhi measures initiated by Narendra Modi. Chapters 3 and 4 that follow deal

with concepts like power and elites, caste and class in which reputed authorities in their chosen fields of study are quoted. Marx and Engels along with Gramsci, Pareto, Mosca and, of course, Wright Mills figure prominently while dealing with power, elitism and social dominance. Baru defines the ‘elite’ in India as those who wield power either through the modern institutions of the state or through traditional institutions of civil society, or through both.’ Crony capitalism is described as the accumulation of capital through the use of political influence. Baru gives the example of the Nehru dynasty, from Motilal Nehru to Indira Gandhi while writing ‘on accretion of political capital over time’, adding that ‘since Indira there has only been depletion.’ He concludes the chapter titled *Social Dominance and Political Power* and the second part of the book Digression Into Concepts stating that “With the exception of the two ideological political formations---BJP and the communists---in most other political parties too, political power is more often than not inherited.”

It is in the third and final part of the unputdownable book that Sanjaya Baru exposes the acts of omission and commission of leaders, institutions and elite groups at various levels. The political masters beginning with the prime minister down to the government employee figure in his charge-sheet. Journalists are known for their fearlessness and resolve in exposing human frailties, institutional inefficiency and systemic failures. Sanjaya Baru has not only vast experience as a writer and editor but also insightful knowledge of the styles of functioning of several top leaders, having worked as media adviser to a former prime minister.

A well known political scientist described power as ‘a value chasing other values.’ Baru narrates how “politicians build business and ensure wealth for several generations going beyond a single term in office.” The number of billionaires has been steadily rising and even during the year when the economy was badly hit by the pandemic 38 billionaires have been added to the list raising the number to 140. No less hard hitting he is at the bureaucracy, the military

Non-violence is one of the oldest principles of the Hindu religion, particularly asserted by Mahavira, founder of Jainism, by Buddha, and by the champions of the cult of Vishnu, which had much influence upon Gandhi.

- Romain Rolland

and even the judiciary. At Delhi's cocktail parties the affluent businessmen and top officials mix freely though according to a friend of Sanjaya Baru "Modi has taken the excitement out of Delhi's party life." In a dig at the judiciary Baru writes "But then few billionaires waste their time pursuing officials and ministers when they can so easily get work done by judges." At the top of the administrative pyramid is, of course, the magisterial Indian Administrative Service. The military also comes under the scanner while *Celebrities and Opinion Makers* take a full chapter. So do the landed and feudal classes. Quoting Narendra Modi who said "One thing that has done great harm to the democratic system of our country is to give priority to ideology over national interest," Baru points out the BJP's drawbacks because of the 'party's bigoted ideologues'.

In the concluding chapter titled *A Changing Balance of Power* Baru writes "The success of the democratic experiment has been that it has managed to ensure political and social stability despite economic inequality." The elite have been frustrated by the gradual change of pace and those who feel alienated have successfully seceded, either by leaving the country or retreating into enclaves that have been created to prevent the 'dualism of a 'Bharat and India' from destabilizing the republic. *This is gradualism of change* that has not just ensured political and social

stability, but also "the perpetuation of the social and economic foundations on which the elite have constructed their powers and privileges." India, according to Baru need not envy China's high growth rate or its rapid transformation under Xi Jinping. This is a timely and necessary advice. History tells us how envy and jealousy between nations led to wars and avoidable rivalries. England suffered from made in Germany complex whenever goods or gadgets carried 'made in Germany labels'! And that was one of the causes of the First World War. It is time India, a great civilization and an emerging big power, stopped comparing herself all the time with China and worrying too much about the latter's sabre rattling.

Stoutly defending India's framework Sanjaya Baru writes: "Gradualness of change and empowerment has the advantage of not drawing attention to the extremes of inequality and the concentration of wealth and power that rapid growth entails as it has in so many fast-growing economies." In a subtle but emphatic manner the author explains the nature and pace of the change and development of the seventy three year old Indian democracy of over 1.3 billion. He concludes the eminently readable book stating that the acquiescence of the vast majority of the people in this 'gradualness of change to the resilience of the power elite.'

A. Prasanna Kumar

* * *

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