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'FREEDOM CAN BE WON ONLY BY SACRIFICE' MAHATMA GANDHI

In the days after his birthday which he had wanted to be observed in a mute manner, Gandhiji attended to plenty of mail. To the letters which were conventional greetings, he replied conventionally. But messages from those close to him, gave him the opportunity in his replies to indicate his weariness of mind and the deep discomfort that was burdening his days while going from 78 into 79. One of the greeting letters was from an old friend, Mr. Rancchoddas Patwari.

In his letter, he had wished Bapu many more years of useful life and service to man. Another friend, a lover of good writing, had sent to Bapu with his greetings for October 2, a set of beautiful lines composed by George Matheson. The quotations were meant to lift Bapu up from the slough of his growing despond. Matheson's lines went,

"It is by my fetters that I can fly;
It is by my sorrows that I can soar;
It is by my reverses that I can run;
It is by my tears that I can travel;
It is by my Cross that I can climb into the heart of humanity;
Let me magnify my Cross, O God!"

Gandhiji read this letter over and over again. The lines appealed to him in their simple beauty and spiritual depth. Instead of handing over the letter to Abha with instructions for a typed reply to be put up for his signature, Bapu kept this letter by his side. Later, he included the verse in a note he published in the "Harijan." He had ever loved his Cross, never grudging it in the least. It was a burden which he had, always, chosen to bear. y's progress: that selfless souls such as he, by destiny, by choice, or a combination of both, should never ever look to rewards from outside for their work. Gandhiji looked into the newspapers that Abha and Manu placed before him lovingly, their eyes shining in great happiness. The glowing tributes carried in the reports made them feel ever so elated. In London, Professor Harold Laski, former Chairman of the British Labour Party, had stated, "Mahatma Gandhi belongs to that rare group of men whose mind and heart have affected the foundations of human thought all over the world. Respect for his achievement and for the unbreakable integrity of his character, are a necessary part of the self-respect of human civilisation."

Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the eminent philosopher- teacher declared, "Mahatma Gandhi realised that freedom could be won only by sacrifice, and not by entreaty. He took hold of ordinary men and women who were an incredible mixture of heroism and conceit, magnificence and meanness, organised them and led an unarmed revolt against British rule; August 15th marked the successful end of that struggle. But all talk of India's freedom is useless so long as men starve and go naked in the country, pining away in voiceless anguish. Gandhiji's charkha is a symbol to warn us that we must redeem the common man from the evils of poverty and ignorance, disease and squalor." In one of those magnificent well- constructed periods he was noted for, Dr. Radhakrishnan concluded, "The price of partition has not yielded the expected communal peace. If the situation is not to worsen, if the two dominions are not to merit the ridicule of the world, if we wish to disappoint Mr. Winston Churchill and his friends, if we are to settle down as good neighbours, we must turn over a new page, remove from our hearts every trace of bitterness and resentment, and shake off that pride which prevents us from confessing our faults and makes us unwilling to open our hearts to one another. Friendship begets friendship. Gandhiji is doing his best to undo the effects of the poison instilled in men's minds in recent years, or he will die in the process of making Hindus and Muslims live in peace. If Gandhiji has been able to rid himself of all rancour and hatred, to develop that flame of love which burns away all impurities, if he fears no evil even though he walks in the valley of the shadow of death, if he represents to us the eternal voice of hope, it is because he believes in the heritage of India, the power of the inward life of the spirit."

The Mahatma said with utmost humility "My life is my message"— bequeathing a legacy of imperishable values to humanity.

(Excerpts from THE HINDU, Saturday, October 4, 1997)

- The Editor

The future depends on what we do in the present.

- Mahatma Gandhi

STEP BACK FROM WATER'S EDGE

India's response to presence of Chinese military vessels in Indian Ocean needs to be more calibrated

India must face the reality that with its 350-warship strong (and growing) battle force having overtaken the US Navy, China has achieved its ambition of becoming a 'maritime Great Power'. China's 2019 Defence White Paper charges the PLA navy with the responsibility of safeguarding Xi Jinping's prized Maritime Silk Road that spans the Indo-Pacific and includes the China Pakistan Economic Corridor. The string of ports, created by China in India's neighborhood, are meant to undergird this endeavour.

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REPORTS ABOUT THE impending visit of a Chinese “spy ship”, Yuan Wang-5, to the Sri Lankan port of Hambantota, created a major flutter in the Indian media. Citing the ship’s “lethal capabilities” and “aerial reach of more than 750 km”, fears have been expressed that “atomic research centres within Indian borders could be snooped upon”. Reflecting concerns at the “highest levels” in New Delhi, social media fired unkind comments about India’s emergency economic assistance to an “ungrateful Sri Lanka”.

Reports that Sri Lanka has asked for a delay in the Chinese ship’s arrival may temporarily calm the waters and provide respite for a dispassionate examination of the issue through legal, military and diplomatic lenses. But before that a quick look at the ship’s provenance is in order. Yuan Wang is the generic name given to a flotilla of seven to eight ships belonging to the Chinese PLA’s Strategic Support Force. These large “survey/research” vessels carry optical, laser, passive-radio and radar devices whose large dish-antennae enable tracking of ballistic missile trajectories, monitoring of satellite and space vehicle launches, and gathering of technical intelligence.

From the legal perspective, the 1982 UN Convention for Law of the Seas permits unfettered freedom of navigation on the high seas and a foreign

warship has as much right to be in the Indian Ocean as a similar Indian vessel would in the South China Sea. Even in the 200-mile exclusive economic zone, there exists the conditional right of “innocent passage” for all vessels, including warships. Entry into foreign ports, especially for warships, has to be with prior consent. But even in wartime, the 1907 Hague Convention permits entry for warships of belligerents into neutral ports for limited durations. Given its cordial diplomatic relations, and its economic dependence on China, there could be no plausible reason for Sri Lanka to deny entry for Yuan Wang 5, especially into Hambantota on which China has a 99-year lease.

Viewed from the security angle, the presence of a research ship like the Yuan Wang 5, bristling with multi-spectral surveillance and eavesdropping devices, in India’s vicinity, certainly calls for vigilance and caution. However in this age of transparency, regular electronic “snooping” by ships, aircraft and satellites - both friendly and hostile – happens all the time. Our armed forces and other agencies are aware of this, and precautionary policies and procedures relating to electronic emissions and missile-firing trials are in place. One can also be sure that the position and movements of Yuan Wang 5, as long as she is in our waters, will be closely followed by the Indian Navy’s maritime domain awareness matrix.

Coming to the diplomatic aspect, observers have harked back to the September 2014 visit of a PLA Navy’s (PLAN) Type-039, a diesel submarine which had docked in Colombo, to be followed a few weeks later by a port-call by a Type-091 nuclear-powered attack submarine. The Sri Lankan government had then brushed aside India’s concerns describing the ship-visits as “usual practice”, while a Chinese communiqué had (with unintended flippancy) stated that the submarines were en route to the Gulf of Aden “for anti-piracy duty”.

Some in India have viewed the forthcoming visit of the Chinese “spy ship” to Hambantota as an infringement of the 1987 Indo-Sri Lankan Accord, which calls upon the two countries not to allow their respective territories to be used for “activities prejudicial to each other’s unity, integrity and security”. However, Colombo has often acknowledged that the

Relationships are based on four principles: respect, understanding, acceptance and appreciation

- Gautam Buddha

security and economic interests of both India and Sri Lanka are inextricably interlinked and any deliberate actions that harm Indian interests will eventually rebound on it.

As we await further developments, there is a need to reflect on Sri Lanka's current political meltdown and dire economic crisis. Given its geographic proximity and ethnic connection, India cannot allow Sri Lanka to sink. New Delhi has already rendered substantial help, but with the best of intentions, India has neither the economic wherewithal nor political capital to pull Sri Lanka out of the abyss. Therefore, apart from the IMF, China will have to lend a hand for Sri Lanka's economic recovery. For this to happen, Colombo will need to kowtow to Beijing, and India

must show diplomatic forbearance. Some other issues, germane to this discussion, need to be noted by India's decision-makers.

First, India must face the reality that with its 350-warship strong (and growing) battle force having overtaken the US Navy, China has achieved its ambition of becoming a "maritime Great Power". China's 2019 Defence White Paper charges the PLA navy with the responsibility of safeguarding Xi Jinping's prized Maritime Silk Road that spans the Indo-Pacific and includes the China Pakistan economic corridor. The string of ports, created by China, in India's neighbourhood, are meant to undergird this endeavour.

Thus, until India can bolster its economic and maritime power and, perhaps, enforce its version of a "Monroe Doctrine," it will have to live with frequent PLAN presence in the Indian Ocean. We must also prepare for the day when the Taiwan situation permits China to station an aircraft-carrier battle-group in our waters.

The second issue that deserves our attention is the intense activity of China's space programme, which has planned 50 space launches for 2022. In mid-April, three Chinese astronauts returned to earth, after spending six months aboard their 11-year-old space station. In early June 2022, another spacecraft took a team of three astronauts to dock with the under-construction Tiangong-3 space station. During such space activity, survey/research ships need to be

positioned for control and tracking as well as rescue tasks in dispersed oceanic locations ranging from mid-Pacific and south Indian Ocean to the coast of Africa. While the actual mission of Yuan Wang 5 is not known, it is just possible that she may be on such a legitimate space related assignment.

Finally, let us remember that ISRO also has an ambitious manned space programme underway and DRDO is, or will be, undertaking test flights of its Agni series of inter-continental ballistic missiles over distant oceanic stretches. India, too, will seek to deploy "research" vessels in distant waters/ports in days ahead.

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NATION OF MARVELS AND MISSTEPS

In 75 years, India has defied prophets of doom to remain a plural, vibrant democracy. But it's the fault lines that need attention now

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Frequent predictions of the demise of its democracy, the disintegration of its polity and a descent into a Malthusian dystopia of galloping population growth and diminishing food supplies. There have been serious setbacks on this journey. Some crises have threatened to sever the threads holding this in credibly diverse nation together. Several strands may have been weak, ready to fray. Each strand may have its distinctive colour and shade. But the fabric which these myriad threads have woven has proved to be remarkably sturdy and resilient and a most pleasing blend of colours and textures. This is a nation to be celebrated, to be cherished because it is like no other. Its story began many centuries ago and continues to unfold. It has been a journey full of surprises and I am certain that more surprises, hopefully pleasant ones, will follow as we head towards 100 years of independence.

Which are the strengths which have stood India in good stead so far and how could they be leveraged going forward? Could one point to what we got right and where we went wrong in our 75-year journey?

The first task of the teacher is the cultivation of virtue in the hearts of the pupils.

- Sathya Sai Baba

And then see what we must get right and avoid in the road towards 2047?

By the book

We got the Constitution of India right. It is a document steeped in the elemental spirit of India, drawing upon what is the most noble in our traditions but putting aside the inherited dross from the past, such as the caste system, patriarchal values and social prejudices. It embraces the universal values of Enlightenment, which are best represented by political democracy and institutions of a modern state. Its anchors are drawn from a shared cultural sensibility and spiritual affinity among its people. It affirms India's immense diversity. Its idea of nationhood rejects homogeneity. Instead of seeking to suppress the innate plurality of the Indian people—plurality of religious beliefs, languages, customs and traditions—the Constitution seeks to transcend these in a shared identity of citizenship, based on individual rights and responsibilities. While recognizing the reality of India's inherited social condition, it sketches, in bold strokes, the aspirations of an ancient culture but a young nation. The Constitution recognizes that an independent India must take its place in the comity of nations, contributing to the wellbeing of a larger humanity. We are citizens of India but we are global citizens too. The Constitution is the source of political legitimacy and sets the boundaries, which no authority must transgress to the detriment of India's citizens.

Since its adoption in 1950, the Constitution has served as a guidepost for India's political evolution. It has enabled relatively smooth and non-violent political transitions. It has enabled the exercise of civil authority over the armed forces. It has presided over social and economic reforms which seek to promote a more egalitarian and inclusive society. It has made an independent judiciary the sentinel of constitutional propriety and this has been an indispensable safeguard against arbitrary power. India remains a vibrant democracy, despite occasional and even serious lapses, thanks to its enlightened Constitution.

The late boom

Since its independence, India experimented with a number of economic strategies of development,

some more state-centred, others more market-oriented. There is no doubt that state intervention led the way towards a successful Green Revolution and an early White Revolution. The state set up several centres of excellence and higher education, like the Indian Institutes of Technology and Indian Institutes of Management. They supplied India and the rest of the world with a steady stream of highly qualified technical and management personnel. State investment also enabled a successful and world-class space programme and a sophisticated nuclear programme. India is today one of the front-rankings pace and nuclear powers. The emphasis on higher education and advanced science and technology has paid off handsomely. India got this right.

India has always had a significant asset in its vibrant entrepreneurial class, backed by a corps of professional managers. In the early years after Independence, we ended up with a highly regulated economy with pervasive state intervention. This was the legacy of a state-controlled economy adopted during the Second World War. The influence of socialist thinking was also evident. It was only in 1991-92, at the end of the Cold War and the near bankruptcy of the Indian economy, that sweeping economic reforms and liberalization measures were adopted. The Indian economy became more open to the rest of the world; economic autarky gave way to a steady globalization. The growth of the economy accelerated, Indian industry became globally competitive and there was a sinfusion of both foreign capital and technology. India is, in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms, the world's third-largest economy and may well become the second largest by 2047. India got this right, though somewhat belatedly.

India got its foreign policy right. As a civilizational state, a major power already at independence and determined to hold its destiny in its own hands, it is not surprising that India opted for a foreign policy based on the principle of strategic autonomy. Strategic autonomy is the ability of the state to take relatively autonomous decisions on matters of vital interest. This found articulation in the policy of nonalignment in the past; today one may describe it as multi-alignment. The label is not important. What is important to note is that the

Satisfaction lies in the effort, not in the attainment.

- Mahatma Gandhi

objective of India's foreign policy has been to create an external environment conducive to achieving the transformation of the country. This has imparted remarkable consistency to India's foreign policy behaviour under governments of different ideological colours. The small corps of professional diplomats has been remarkably successful in safeguarding our vital interests and expanding India's diplomatic space. The successful negotiation of the Civil Nuclear Agreement with the US and the Nuclear Suppliers' Group in 2008 was a landmark in this respect.

Fraternity is the answer

What did we not get right? The Constitution has remained the bulwark of democracy but needs bipartisan political consensus to serve as a guide to political and social behaviour. This consensus has begun to erode in recent years. We have a much more polarised polity and weakened institutions. The management of diversity requires the principle of fraternity—one of the founding principles of the Constitution, along with liberty and equality. Without a sense of fraternity, diversity becomes a source of divisiveness rather than affinity. India has several fault lines which, unaddressed, may overwhelm spirit of nationalism. We are witnessing the rise of communalism and the sometimes violent assertion of caste and regional identities. There is an incipient north south divide, partly exacerbated by divergent economic trajectories but also by linguistic differences. The forth coming delimitation exercise for redrawing parliamentary constituencies may reduce the political salience of less populous southern states. This may bring disruptive tendencies to a tipping point.

Growing inequalities of income and wealth also undermine the Egalitarianism implicit in democracy. These may be traced to the differential availability of education. While prioritizing higher education, we neglected primary and secondary education. We failed to understand that in independent India, access to English language education has remained the passport to better jobs and earning capacity. This has condemned a very large part of our population to low-status, low-income jobs. No effort has been made to ensure advanced and technical education opportunities in local languages. Almost all technical

manuals are in English. So are teaching materials in advanced science and technology. It should come as no surprise that we are witnessing a "revolt of the vernacular" against an English-speaking elite, derided today as the "Lutyen's elite" or the "Khan Market gang." This is the glaring failure of those who profess liberal values. There are no easy answers. Do we universalize English language education from secondary school onwards? Should a massive investment be made in ensuring translations of teaching material and journals into key regional languages, and who would pay for this? Do artificial intelligence and machine learning offer a way out? Other challenges must be addressed. An independent judiciary is the guarantee of constitutional propriety. But sometimes, it is selective and even inconsistent in discharging its role. The law and order and justice system in the country is in need of urgent reform. It needs to be more accessible to the ordinary citizen. The huge backlog of cases pending in the courts must be cleared. Both the Prime Minister and the Chief Justice of India have drawn attention to this.

The state's task

There is a need for the state to return to first principles. The three primary and indispensable responsibilities of a state are providing all citizens with security, education and health. Over the past several years, we have witnessed a progressive retrenchment of these responsibilities by the state. The private sector, with its profit motive, has been moving into occupy this space. Some of the most rapidly growing segments of the Indian economy are private security, private education and private healthcare services. The services they offer are heavily skewed in favour of relatively high-income earners. This is a negative development particularly in a democracy.

What about the economy? The country is facing headwinds, as are many other nations but a few broad points need to be made for the future trajectory of our economic development. India must remain an open and market – oriented economy. It should strive to stay ahead of the globalization curve rather than resist it. Globalization is criticised as having led to economic inequalities. Those are failures of public policy not of globalization, which still offers the best

The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.

-Nelson Mandela

prospects for eliminating poverty and enhancing prosperity. In this context, India should reconsider its decision to stay out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), especially considering the overall shift in policy towards regional trade agreements in general. After all, India has joined the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) and is negotiating trade agreements with Australia, the UK, and European Union, which will have higher standard provisions than the RCEP.

Indian foreign policy has enabled a relatively more benign and conducive external environment for the transformation of the economy and must continue to do so. India has developed close strategic partnerships with the US, Europe and Japan. These may be in economic decline relative to China, but remain the repositories of the most sophisticated technologies, the source of capital and are still the key markets of the world. Faced with an assertive China, these partners have a stake in India's economic success, since it is the only country which has the potential to emerge as a credible counter vailing power. The benign phase may not last. It is time now to revamp our economic policies and regulatory procedures to enable a significant infusion of capital and technology from our strategic partners. This would also help India in confronting the growing security challenge from China.

I believe that, on balance, India may finally begin to deliver on its potential in the next 25 years. There is room for optimism. All the building blocks are in place.

Mint, August 15, 2022 New Delhi

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UN CHARTER IN JEOPARDY

World must heed Guterres' warning that winter of global discontent is on the horizon

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The UN Secretary-General (SG), António Guterres, presented his annual report to the General Assembly in New York on September 20 and issued a dire warning to the assembled global leaders, when

he stated: 'Let's have no illusions. We are in rough seas. A winter of global discontent is on the horizon. A cost-of-living crisis is raging. Trust is crumbling. Our planet is burning. People are hurting – with the most vulnerable suffering the most. The United Nations Charter and the ideals it represents are in jeopardy.'

The warning has acquired a definitive contour with the Russian President raising the N-ante in the Ukraine war.

Listing the major global challenges in a pithy but persuasive and impassioned manner, the SG dwelt on climate change and biodiversity loss, inter-state armed conflicts with the war in Ukraine on top of the list and challenges to securing sustainable development for the more vulnerable demography worldwide. Further, he included the challenges posed by new technologies and rising hate speech and 'out of control' digital surveillance.

Bemoaning the stark reality that while the international community had a 'duty' to act, the SG added: 'We are gridlocked in colossal global dysfunction. The international community is not ready or willing to tackle the big dramatic challenges of our age. These crises threaten the very future of humanity and the fate of our planet.'

Challenges to the future of humanity and the fate of the planet are as big as they come in the security domain and ought to have created some kind of a ripple in the mass media. However, this apocalyptic warning of the SG was met with a near-metaphoric yawn — at least in one cross-section of the print media in India. On September 21, none of the major Delhi dailies had this critically relevant news story on page one; and where it appeared, it was tucked away in the inside pages in a single column. In contrast, the demise of Queen Elizabeth and the extended funeral proceedings received saturation media coverage — thereby reiterating the familiar adage that 'everyone loves spectacle and royalty' and really bad news can be tucked away in an out-of-sight-out-of-mind manner.

But the SG's warning acquired a very definitive contour on Wednesday when Russian President Vladimir Putin, in a televised address, raised the ante in relation to the war in Ukraine. Given the unexpected

The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing.

- Walt Disney

Ukrainian tactical gains on the battlefield and the political setback at the SCO summit in Samarkand (September 16) where Moscow's 'special operations' did not receive the support or endorsement expected from Beijing and Delhi, one may conjecture that the Putin game-plan has become more militarily assertive. For the first time since the end of World War II in 1945, Moscow ordered partial mobilisation of its reserves and announced that referendums would be held in the breakaway regions of Ukraine so that they could be integrated into Russia.

Putin asserted that the US-led West was engaging in 'nuclear blackmail' by discussing the potential use of the dreaded nuclear weapon. He added: 'In its aggressive anti-Russian policy, the West has crossed every line. This is not a bluff. And those who try to blackmail us with nuclear weapons should know that the weathervane can turn and point towards them.'

US President Joe Biden, who spoke later in the day at the UN, rejected the Putin claim that Moscow was being threatened, and chided Russia for transgressing its nuclear non-proliferation commitments. He added: 'A permanent member of the United Nations Security Council invaded its neighbour, attempted to erase a sovereign state from the map. Russia has shamelessly violated the core tenets of the United Nations Charter.'

The calibrated military escalation by Moscow, which also includes a not-so-veiled threat to use the nuclear weapon if its territorial integrity is threatened, is eerily reminiscent of the Cold War years. During that period, the US and its NATO allies invoked the tactical nuclear weapon to thwart a potential Soviet military advance into what was then West Germany.

Luckily for the world, the Reagan-Gorbachev detente enabled a gradual lowering of the superpower nuclear threat and an earnest political commitment made that a nuclear war was an unthinkable proposition for the US and the former USSR. The sanctity of that commitment is now frayed and the irony is that both Biden and Putin were witness to that phase of history.

Can the world ignore this disturbing turn of events and presume that this is all bluff and bluster from

Moscow and that no political leader in 2022 would actually take recourse to nukes? Caution is called for, since Putin has not acted as per conventional wisdom and his February 24 invasion of Ukraine defied the received wisdom of the day.

While the likelihood of a nuclear weapon being used anywhere in the world is catastrophic and should be prevented, the challenge posed by Moscow is complex and tangled in post-Cold War history. Russia accuses the US of perfidy and has made the restoration of territorial consolidation apropos Ukraine a lightning rod issue. If there is no consensual resolution of the Russia-Ukraine impasse and Putin's threat is tacitly accepted – will this set a precedent for Taiwan and other long festering territorial disputes?

Guterres was being accurate when he surveyed the spectrum of security challenges and candidly told the global leadership that 'we don't have the beginning of a global architecture to deal with any of this.' Global security and the well-being of its citizens is being mortgaged, alas, in an emotive and short-sighted manner on the anvil of high octane geopolitical tensions — the leitmotif of this decade.

The Tribune, September 24, 2022

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TWO CULTURES

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

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My research took me often to the University Library. Browsing the books from one end of the library racks to the other end and picking up whatever book came to be my pastime; desultory reading across disciplines became my lifelong habit. A lasting legacy of those days is the Baconian ambition to take all knowledge to be my province. It was, no doubt, hubris but, in retrospect, the ambition ideally suited the profession to which I moved, where one has to be a jack-of-all-trades; it also helped me, in the short term, to scale the Mount Everest of the IAS examinations without any special preparation. During the desultory reading, I hit upon C. P. Snow's *The Two Cultures and Scientific Revolution*, the text of his 1959 Rede Lecture in Cambridge. It was an epiphany, a revelation. I was thrilled. Snow articulated with

Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma – which is living with the results of other people's thinking.

-Steve Jobs

great clarity and sharpness to my own inchoate ideas. I took the main point of Snow's book to be that science and the humanities which represented 'the intellectual life of the whole of western society' had become split into 'two cultures' and that this division was a major handicap in solving the world's problems. Snow offered a sense of purpose to my rambling reading. I imagined myself to be a colossus bestriding the gulf that separated the scientific culture and the humanistic culture. It was not Snow but me who seemed to be startled by the presumptiveness of the literary intellectuals who could not describe the Second Law of Thermodynamics, the scientific equivalent of a work of Shakespeare, and yet deemed that the scientists were illiterate. The superiority of a scientific education seemed self-evident for it appeared easier to cross the gulf from the scientific side than from the other side; so was the imperative of an appropriate place for science in curriculum and administration. It was only much much later that I became aware of the controversy that Snow's Rede lecture evoked, and realised that I read in Snow's work only what I wanted to read, and ignored or missed out quite a few salient propositions made by Snow. Contrary to my surmise, Snow did not value scientific and literary education equally. While he commended knowledge of the Second Law of Thermodynamics to those educated in literature and humanities, he failed to commend knowledge of Shakespeare for those having scientific education. Worse, he made the polemical point that literary tradition is 'naturally Luddite', 'not only politically silly but politically wicked', in contrast to the progressive, egalitarian scientific tradition which has 'the future in its bones'. When I first read *Two Cultures*, I did not notice that point perhaps because that point might have appeared banal given my beliefs at that point of time and the *zeitgeist* that pervaded among many Indians, particularly the youth. I believed then that all tradition was deadening and should be demolished if the nation were to modernise; I still harboured the adolescent belief that religion was part of an undesirable tradition that fostered superstition, blocked the road to reason and progress, and that only science and scientific temper could liberate all human beings from a life of physical and mental degradation. Further I had Pollyanna views about science similar to those of

Snow. With passage of time and transvaluation of my values, I can no longer share Snow's disdain for the literary tradition, and his not-so-implicit belief that science provided sufficient light by which to steer the world. Snow's contention that literature cannot be a force for amelioration of the human condition is at best a rhetorical exaggeration to buttress his contention that there should be greater emphasis on science in general education. In reality, both science and humanities do contribute to the improvement of society, though they use different means. An economist may by the use of statistics, convince the intellect that the condition of a particular social class has deteriorated but a novelist like Dickens, by appealing to the imagination makes the reader feel that it is so. There is no doubt whatsoever that working on feelings is a more powerful way to persuade than mere reasoned argument. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a good example; the anti-slavery novel fuelled the slavery abolition sentiment so strongly that the purported greeting of Stowe by President Lincoln's greeting, 'So this is the little lady who started this great (American Civil) war', is not much of an exaggeration. Whatever, the old Me cannot but agree with the view that through his broad-brush, unnuanced denunciation of literary tradition, Snow brought upon himself the vicious, *ad hominem* criticism of the literary critic F.R. Leavis, and that there is great merit in the criticism of Snow by Leavis. Leavis was unsparing in his attack on Snow. He condemned Snow as the spokesperson of 'technologico-Benthamite' reduction of human experience to the quantifiable, the measurable, the manageable. He 'is intellectually as undistinguished as it is possible to be'; his lecture 'exhibits an utter lack of intellectual distinction and an embarrassing vulgarity of style'. Leavis also attacked Snow's reputation as an intellectual who bridged the divide between the Two Cultures by virtue of being a scientist as well as an author of many novels. Snow thinks of himself as 'a novelist', he wrote, but 'as a novelist he doesn't exist'; he 'can't be said to know what a novel is'. As elegantly articulated by the leading American literary and cultural critic Lionel Trilling, Leavis might be faulted for his manners and style but not for the substance of his argument. The cultural divide between science and humanities was

If life were predictable it would cease to be life, and be without flavor.

-Eleanor Roosevelt

of lifelong interest to me, and I continually grappled with a number of questions: What is the implication of the cultural divide for education? How distinct are science and humanities? Is that divide the only divide or is it a subset of a more complex multidimensional divide?

As I continued to explore the Two Culture controversy, I discovered that the Snow and Leavis only re-enacted similar debates in the past. Thus in 1820-21, Thomas Love Peacock and Shelley debated the utility of poetry. In *The Four Ages of Poetry*, Peacock, though a lover of poetry and friend of Shelley, contended that the Golden Age of poetry was past, and that the decline of poetry was inevitably linked to the progress of mankind. Peacock held that unlike painting, poetry was not one of those arts which require repetition and multiplication. There was a sufficient number of good poems for all readers and they were far superior to contemporary poems. Hence poetry had become obsolete. Peacock articulated in the jargon of literary criticism the contemporaneous views of Utilitarian thinkers such as Jeremy Bentham and James Mill who held that art was completely useless and superfluous, and had no place in a well-organized society, where all effort should be directed to the happiness of the greatest number of people. In *A Defence of Poetry*, Shelley claimed that poetry not only revealed the order and beauty of the universe but also instructed and moved human society, and was a force for social freedom. Reason is merely contemplative and analytical, while imagination synthesizes and creates. Poets have been and would be 'the unacknowledged legislators of the World' as a poet sees the future in the present and understands the spirit of events, sees more profoundly than his contemporaries.

The Utilitarian approach to art and tradition is best captured in a dialogue between Emperor Shajahan and his daughter in Indira Parthasarathy's play, *Aurangzeb* :

Shajahan: Look at that elegy in stone, the Taj Mahal! Another poem, another poem!

Jahanara: Have you thought of the cost of this poem, Your Highness?

Shajahan: Women and shopkeepers can think

only of the price. I did not know that there was a price to beauty!

Jahanara: Do the people have to buy your dreams at such high cost?

Shajahan: I do not care about the people. My dream is my own. No one can interfere with it.

The inability to appreciate beauty is not unusual. I first visited the Taj Mahal after I joined the IAS, during *Bharat Darshan*- a Grand Tour of India organised by the IAS Academy to help the trainees savour the rich diversity of India. I and many of his colleagues were awed by the beauty; K was jolted from his reverie when he a colleague exclaims, *is me kya hai? Pathar ke upar pathar* (What is all this gaga about a pile of stones?)!

About sixty years after the debate between Peacock and Shelley, in 1880-2 , the debate between T. H. Huxley and Matthew Arnold on the relative merit of scientific and classical education reverberated during the Victorian era and its echoes can be heard even today. The widely prevalent view among upper classes who dominated education, society and politics in 19th century Britain was that classical education, comprising study of Greek and Latin history, philosophy and literature, and of the eternal problems of thought and of conduct, was the best system of education, and the best preparation for life and highest positions in society and in government at home and in the Empire. The belief that unexpert intelligence was the best qualification for the higher posts of Government was derived from Plato. When the Parliament discussed in 1864 the report of a parliamentary commission to investigate the condition of the public schools, speaker after speaker, including Gladstone, emphasized the undesirability of science as a school subject as it does not broaden the mind. India, it is said, is the only place in the world where you can meet Victorians. In my early days of service, one heard pleas that engineers and others having a professional education should not be allowed to compete in the Civil Services Examinations. On coming to know of my educational background, an 'IAS spouse', as opinionated as an ICS *memesahib*, declared that IAS officers should be drawn only from history and similar disciplines

If you look at what you have in life, you'll always have more. If you look at what you don't have in life, you'll never have enough.

-Oprah Winfrey

of arts and humanities as persons educated in such disciplines alone are 'strong in ideas'. I told her that Blessed Margaret Thatcher established that a 'stinks'- and -'sums'- graduate (a chemist) could trump her clever rivals from arts and humanities, and ranks among the select prime ministers who transformed Britain. The prejudice against science and technology is a British import. The tradition on the European continent is considerably different from that in Britain. In France, for example, there has grown an intimate connection between some of the leading scientific *grand ecoles* and recruitment to the higher reaches of national administration and public life; many senior civil servants as well as financiers and industrialists are graduates of the immensely prestigious *Ecole polytechnique* with degrees in engineering. Similar was the situation in the erstwhile Soviet Union. Of course, India has caught up with countries like France and the erstwhile Soviet Union as a B. Tech has come to be like a good old B.A. and engineering graduates now dominate the civil service recruits.

By 1959, when Snow delivered his Rede lecture, the prejudice against a scientific education was at the most confined among a few literary intellectuals, and classicists lost their dominance. Compared to the heavy odds that Huxley had to face for securing a legitimate place for science in education and society, Snow's struggle against the literary establishment was more shadow boxing. Huxley challenged the defenders of traditional classical education by asserting that scientific knowledge was the basis of modern life, and formed as much a part of culture as classics are, and further that scientific education offered a more rigorous mental training than a classical education. Arnold's defence of classical education was much nuanced. He contended that the classics of literature included Newton's *Principia* and Darwin's *The Origin of Species*; he acknowledged that both science and literature deserved a better place in a rounded education. However, scientific education alone would not turn out an educated man. Arnold emphasized the value of a humanistic education, an education which was not utilitarian in any vulgar sense but did serve the practical purpose of elevating the spirit above the mundane circumstances of life, enlarging the mind and life itself by putting us 'into relation

with our sense for conduct, our sense for beauty'. He even went on to assert that classical education is not merely for elite but masses also. It is difficult to disagree with Arnold's. In keeping with Arnold's view of literature, Geroge Sarton, the eminent historian of science, treated science as an inextricable part of human civilisation; his history of science in antiquity is essentially a history of civilisation in that era. Seven years before Snow's famous Two Culture lecture, Sarton saw in the division between scientist and humanist, a 'chasm...cutting our culture asunder and threatening to destroy it'. He waged his war on two fronts assailing prejudice among humanists as well as scientists. He admonished humanists who trivialise science as a mere technical occupation and called upon humanists to respect science as one of the most impressive activities of which humanity is capable. At the same time, he implored scientists to immerse themselves in the scholarly traditions of the humanities. Sarton made the significant point that the concept of 'progress' has no definite and unquestionable meaning in fields other than the field of science. Thus, the questions that philosophy addresses are perennial questions for which there can be only awkward answers. Scientific discoveries are cumulative to such an extent that each scientist can so-to-say begin his task where his predecessors left off 'while artists and religious men must always begin *da capo* and their labors are Sisyphean'.

Just a few months before the Snow's Two Culture lecture, Koestler wrote in the preface to *Sleepwalkers*, his novel about Kepler and Galileo, that a state of cold war that existed between the sciences and humanities, and that academic and social barriers that had been erected to keep them apart. What was needed were creative trespassers who could bridge the divide and bring new perspectives to the history of science. Suffice to say that though young Me was thrilled by Snow's lecture, Snow's views on the gap between scientific and humanistic tradition were nothing new, and do not advance the debate any further.

All binary classifications are misleading. The Two Culture classification of human knowledge as literary and scientific is no exception. There are many disciplines like economics which cannot be classified either as science or literature. These disciplines have

Spread love everywhere you go. Let no one ever come to you without leaving happier.

-Mother Teresa

imported mathematical techniques and the scientific method to great advantage. For all that, however, they are not on par with exact sciences, and further in trying to be sciences by jettisoning the humanistic tradition they often lose touch with social and human reality. Whatever, to give another example, like humanities visual art explores human condition, and in contrast to science eschews 'objectivity'. Yet artists, like scientists, work in localized spaces where the tools and materials of their work are kept and tended; studios are to artists what laboratories are to scientists. Art-making is always in part concerned with the evolution of new materials, their limits and capacities. Thus, fresco painting demanded a certain technology in order that the pigments would bond with the surface; developments in lithography, photography, acrylics, and digital technology all changed what was regarded as a 'work of art'. 'Strength of Materials', a staple of engineering, is crucial to changing concepts of sculpture. Contemporary art-making with its increasing reliance upon technology, digitization, and expensive machinery has brought art and science closer than at any time. Conversely, the contrast overly drawn between an objective and rational scientific method and an aesthetic and subjective method of art ignores that there are two distinct stages of scientific discovery- discovery per se and its validation. It is the stage of validation that distinguishes science. Intuition, imagination and imagery play a very important part in scientist discovery. Thus, the distinguished chemist Kekule claimed that he had discovered the ring shape of the benzene molecule after having a reverie or day-dream of a snake seizing its own tail, a common symbol in many ancient cultures known as the *Ouroboros*, while he was riding on the upper deck of a horse-drawn omnibus in London. This vision, he said, came to him after years of studying the nature of carbon-carbon bonds. The central message of Koestler's novel *Sleepwalkers* is that Kepler was barely aware of the importance of his discoveries at first, for he 'sleepwalked' into them. 'The roads by which men arrive at their insights into celestial matters,' Kepler had written, 'seem to be almost as worthy of wonder as these matters in themselves'. Scientists are not devoid of aesthetic sensibility. Many mathematicians and physicist have spoken of beauty, and their work

was influenced by the concept of beauty. G H Hardy, the mathematician's mathematician and discoverer of the mathematical prodigy Srinivasa Ramanujam, claimed that, the mathematician's patterns, like the painter's or the poet's, must be *beautiful*; his ideas, like the colours or the words must fit together in a harmonious way. Beauty is the first test: there is no place in the world for ugly mathematics'. Many eminent physicists like Paul Dirac, S Chandrasekhar, and Hermann Weyl spoke in a similar vein. Thus 'my work always tried to unite the true with the beautiful,' remarked Hermann Weyl, the 'perfecter' of both relativity theory and quantum mechanics, 'but when I had to choose one or the other, I usually chose the beautiful'. Weyl thought he was sacrificing truth to beauty by developing a theory of gravitation based on a whole new concept of symmetry even after he became convinced of its empirical falsity; yet, his choice was vindicated by that concept's surprising fruitfulness over the last couple of decades. Thus, the sentiment expressed by Keats in *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty' is shared by many physicists. However, a scientific theory, however aesthetic, stands the test of time only if it is proved by experimental observation. As my Guru Prof. G.Gopala Rao used to say theory guides while experiment decides. In spite of the commonalities, the distinction drawn by Gambatista Vico, the 18th century Italian philosopher, between Man's study of the external world and his study of himself and the world he creates, is very valid. The method used to secure knowledge of the external world cannot be the exclusive paradigm for the study of self-understanding, or for disciplines like economics where human nature affects the object being studied.

Increasing specialisation is unavoidable with the advancement of knowledge; even within a discipline say Chemistry there are more and more sub-disciplines each with its own vocabulary of discourse. Specialisation has come to mean two things: doing a few things very well, and doing others *not* at all. Consequently, there is no single cultural divide as the disputants of Two Culture debate set forth but multiple cultural divides within and across disciplines. Two implications follow. Educators have to grasp an elusive triangle: 1) ensure that education is not far too narrow, producing people who know more

When you reach the end of your rope, tie a knot in it and hang on.

-Franklin D. Roosevelt

and more of less and less, 2) ensure that education does not thwart specialisation, and 3) the curricular load is not increased beyond tolerable limits. There are no easy answers. Secondly, how does one promote cross-cultural dialogue which has not one but multiple dimensions? How does one ensure that the world of scholarship is not reduced to a Tower of Babel with its inhabitants lost in mutual incomprehension? Is it possible at all to comprehend the entire tree of knowledge, when mastery even in two fields seems impossibility? Is not, as the litterateur-chemist Primo Levi put it, 'being a chemist in world's view, and feeling... a writer's blood in my veins' having 'two souls in one body, one too many'? One recalls the puzzlement of the ever logical and rational Dirac at fellow physicist Oppenheimer reading Dante in the original Italian: 'How can one do both physics and poetry?' In physics 'we try to explain in simple terms something that nobody knew before. In poetry, it is the exact opposite'. Here again there are no easy answers. However, the starting point of any dialogue is the eschewal of any hierarchy of knowledge and of reductionism- the attempt to reduce one discipline to being a branch of another-, and to recognise that there are indeed many forms of irreducible human experience such as religion, science, history, philosophy and aesthetics, each of which requires a different methodical approach, and that 'If you are tone deaf to one of the forms, you are in trouble.' Suffice to say, it is imperative to acknowledge the integrity of securing knowledge through different methods.

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THE TIRU NAMAMULU OF ANDHRA PRADESH

Dr. (Mrs.) Prema Nandakumar

Half a century ago I was drawn into the Bhakti Movement as a researcher. As I went deep into my work to be published in a volume of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research, I realised my monumental ignorance of the subject. Obviously the area to be covered was from Kanyakumari to the Himalayas. I knew the springs of the bhakti movement lay within the hymns of the Alvars of Tamil Nadu (6th century A.D. to 9th century A.D.); but what I had thought of

as devotional poesy was actually a huge movement rivalling the floods of Kaveri, Godavari and Ganga.

The years of gathering material for the 100-page essay were exciting: be it the Gujarati countryside where devotees sang Narsi Mehta with deep involvement or Bhadrachalam where Ramdas requested Mother Janaki to speak to Rama of the devotee's distress, or Rajasthan where Mirabai poured her anguish at not being able to gain darshan of Giridhar, there was no casteist divisions among these poets and singers. I realised that the pull of devotion has brought everyone –Kanakadasa, Narahari Tirtha, Dhyaneswar, TiruppanAlvar – hundreds, thousands of devotees together to sing of the Divine with rapturous abandon. In the course of my travels which turned out to be a pilgrimage, I discovered the fascinating world of Tirunamamulu in the Telugu language.

Among the enduring results of Sri Ramanuja's travels all over India is the charming tradition of Telugu folk songs on the subject of Srivaishnavaculture in Andhra Pradesh. These 'Tirunamamulu' are spontaneous outpourings of lambent devotion for the Acharya and the new pathway shown by him. No need to feel low because you belong to a lower caste! No need to feel bad that you are not rich and so cannot eat sweets! Bhakti is all and so is the camaraderie that grows between people devoted to the Divine and the Acharya who shows the way.

These songs are in simple rhythm which helps even untrained persons to keep time often with 'kar-taal' and the easy words of every day conversation bring before us the entire scenario of worshipping the Supreme as Narayana, the twelve Alvars and the great Acharyas. These outpourings of total surrender, devotion and dedication have also occasionally a streak of fun: for what is bhakti to the Lord if it is not laced with a bit of 'ninda-stuti'? What if the poets have remained anonymous? Their self-effacement is indeed a great lesson in today's world of aggrandising self-advertisement. The 'guru parampara' of Srivaishnavism has gone deep into their psyche. Narayana is their supreme Lord and Teacher. Next comes Sri who is for them Andal all the time. The 'MellanaSevinchithi' song fondly describes her darshan in Srivilliputtur:

Always remember that you are absolutely unique. Just like everyone else.

-Margaret Mead

“I have seen Mother Goda Devi
Seated gracefully on the throne
In the jewel-encrusted hall.
They have applied sampangi oil
To her tresses, combed them smooth
And coiled them into a bun.”

The poets accord top priority to Srirangam for undertaking pilgrimages and do not tire of describing the seven prakaras, the Chandrapushkarini pond, a ‘crore’ of mandapas, the numerous gopuras, the four chariots, and the glory that is Sri Ranganatha on the Adishesha in the sanctum. Next only to Srirangam, Srivilliputtur is very important for these pilgrim-devotees as Andal is the reigning queen in that holy shrine. As they come and spend a few days here during the Margasirsa month, the pilgrims take part in the DhanurMasavrata and sing the Tiruppavai verses. and use Srivaishnava terms like ‘thiruthuzha’ (Tulsi) and ‘Tirumaaliga’ (house).

Many of the poets may have been no more than tillers of the soil or poorly paid village teachers. But no matter. They are happy and if there are wants and pain, they have a refuge in the godly company evoked by these songs which are the backbone of the Bhakti Movement. Srivilliputtur seems to have been a favourite pilgrim spot. And quite in the very heart of Tamil Nadu they found Rajapalayam (about three kilometres from Srivilliputtur) full of Telugu-speaking people. Perhaps they could also interact with local litterateurs like Nandavara Bhaskara Seshachala mathyudu (18th century), author of Nachaaru Parninayam, the Yakshaganath that presents Andal’s life. Repeatedly, these poems get back to Sri Ramanuja. Their gratitude for him is immense. Had he not helped in rejecting caste-born arrogance? He is not just a monk but the Yatiraja, their life-line to achieve social dignity:

“O King! King of renunciates
From Sribhutapuri! One to whom
Come gods and men to surrender!
Pure, Handsome brilliance!
Son of Asuri Kesava!”

In fact, Ramanuja is their lone guardian, “yes,

Udayavar of Sriperumbudur!” Occasionally these poets can have a good laugh like this poem about an irritated wife on her transformed husband. One must read the original telugu which is that of unlettered people. The girl is speaking to her neighbour:

“From where did I get such a husband?
He wants me to keep prostrating all day.
I should not say ‘gruel’ is his command.
Seems I must call it prasadam.
He has brought new kinds of names
Oh dear, I can’t even pronounce them!
If I refuse, he gets ready his whip.
Prattles about Rama’s younger brother
And says he is a slave of God Devaraja.
I should not put kumkum on my forehead.
Murmurs Tirumani, vrata and so on.
Speaks all incomprehensible stuff!”

We would have lost this rich branch of folk culture in the Bhakti Movement but for the heroic efforts of Dr. Kidambi Narasimhacharya about seventy years ago who collected them and published them through his works, Tirunamamulu and Tirunamamulu: Samagra Pariseelana. For they form a poetic-historic record of how the Bhakti Movement was strengthened even by unlettered and poor people of the Andhra area, and has never stopped flowing since the travels of Sri Ramanuja in areas where the Telugu language -- the Italian of the East -- reigns supreme.

* * *

NATIONAL INTEGRATION: A DIALECTIC PROCESS?

*You must belong to the land that belongs to you
that’s what makes nations” – Robert Frost*

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Of the two words in the phrase ‘national integration’ only the latter is clear and precise in its meaning. Integration is achievement of totality or unity. Its opposite is also clear-disintegration or fragmentation. However, the other word ‘nation’ is

Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant.

–Robert Louis Stevenson

as nebulous as any concept in politics like liberty or security. Even its opposite word is not clearly identified. Trying to define what is a nation one of the foremost experts in the field Prof. Rupert Emerson says it is the most extensive community to which men give their effective allegiance.... and with which they most intensely and most unconditionally identify themselves". In this definition the key adjective effective nullifies any precision likely otherwise. Trying it in another way Prof. Carlton J. Hayes, an equally authentic scholar asks the question: "What has given great vogue to nationalism in modern times? and answers it himself with a disarming case; "we really do not know.⁸"

After examining various definitions, all unhelpful, one might adopt a working definition of a nation as a political grouping of men possessing a collective conscience" (knowing what violence it does to the highly individualized concept of conscience). Even then, the question arises:

What is the role and utility of this concept of nation? The protestant theologian Prof. Reinhold Niebuhr suggests that while the individual man is ethical, the collective grouping, is political. "Individual men..... are able to consider interests other than their own in determining the problem of conduct and are capable on occasion, of preferring the advantages of others to their own". In contrast, according to him, societies and groups are less capable of self transcendence. A nation has a feeling that its members have a common interest which is in contrast with the interests of a different nation; and every nation tries to promote and defend its own members' interests. That in fact is the reason why a nation comes into being.

This explanation brings us to the next question: what are the interests which a nation seeks to fulfil? These interests may be described as political in the sense that whatever their nature (economic, military etc) they are pursued through the political (that is, the state) means. The nation thus comes to acquire a three-dimensional manifestation of ideas, interests and institutions.

"National integration obviously refers to a process of consolidation. "Every nation", as Rupert

Emerson notes, is made up of peoples, classes, communities, and groups which have sometimes collaborated, but have also not infrequently warred against and conquered each other or otherwise come into fundamental conflict and opposition." Quoting Renan ("The essence of a nation is that all the individuals have many things in common, and also that all have forgotten a good many things") he says that "national memory, embraces, as well those things which must be forgotten as those which must be remembered".

But whatever people wish to remember (or, forget) determines the character and course of a nation. Whenever survival is at stake or a particular goal is to be achieved, collective efforts are invoked - under such circumstances only factors of unity and solidarity are remembered. But once the eternal pressure is off, or, whenever sectoral benefits are thought of, only those factors which are differentiative and disaffiliative are recalled and played up. The integrative and disintegrative processes are reversible depending upon the exigencies of circumstances and times. History is replete with examples of this syndrome.

Before considering the recent developments in the Indian subcontinent one might well go over the happenings in Europe in the inter-war period and the aftermath, as well as the recent events in the erstwhile USSR and Eastern Europe.

The Ottoman Empire was blown over by the Eastern and Middle European nationalities (The "Balkanization" of the Balkans) between 1874 and 1914 which was followed by the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian empire and the Western portion of the Czarist Russian Empire (the "Balkanization" of "the Central and Eastern Europe) 'from 1914 on words. As professor Hans. J. Morgenthau captures the essence of the catharcis;

"If the peoples of Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia could invoke these (Nationalities) principles" against Turkey, why could not the people of Macedonia 'invoke them against Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia? If it was right for the Czechs and Slovaks to free themselves in the name of nationalism from Austrian-rule, it could not be wrong for the Slovaks and Sudeten Germans to free themselves from Czech rule

There are decades where nothing happens, and there are weeks where decades happen.

- Richard Haass

in the name of the selfsame principle. Poland, the very moment she had recovered her national identity from Austrian, German and Russian rule, felt she had to defend it against the German, Ukranian, and White Russian minorities within her borders, comprising one-third of her total population. Thus yesterday's oppressed cannot help becoming the oppressor's of today because they are afraid lest they be again oppressed tomorrow."

Adopting the same wanton arguments it was not at all difficult for the Nazi Germany to re-draw the map of Europe at its own behest. As the London Times commenting on the Munich settlement noted in its edition of 28 September 1938: "self determination, the professed principle of the Treaty of Versailles, has been invoked by Herr Hitler against its written text, and his appeal has been allowed."

It is equally significant that after half-a-century of fragmentation, the wounds of Europe are being healed by a reversal process of integration. He will love In our own subcontinent, the happenings in Pakistan are not comparable to those in the USSR, but are nevertheless a cause for worry. Born in 1947 as a result of revolt against the nationalist movement in the entirety of India for freedom from the British imperialists, Pakistan thrived on a pseudo-nationalism up to a point. But soon it was broken into halves even as a process of self-assertion within the national structure set in, in 1971. Now it faces further threats of split from within. In India a different process seems to be at work. Neither the Ottomanization process nor the "hoist-with-its own-petard" (Pakistani) process is to be seen here. But the embers of nationalism do seem to be dying. The threats to its unity and integrity appear to emanate from considerations of parochialism, obscurantism and disputes over language, religion and caste. These sources of trouble however are not new to India at all. These were "forgotten" for a time; but are staging a come-back in the country. The disappearance - and - reappearance of these considerations fit into the well-known pattern of nationalism's growth as mentioned earlier. The factors which foster nationalism are receding while those which divide the "National will" are emerging on the scene. This only indicates that if a proper blend of ideas, interests and institutions is developed and

injected into the existing system-on-the decline, the health of the system would be alright once again. On the other hand, if no such invigorating tonic is administered, the system is bound to deteriorate.

It is also possible to view the developments in India from a different perspective. One might contend that here the objectives before the nation are being readjusted. Once the political objective of unifying the people of India and regaining freedom from the imperialist rulers was achieved in 1947, the goals before the nation are being re-set as being economic progress and social justice. As Dr. B.R. Ambedkar piloting the Constitution Draft observed in his last speech to the Constituent Assembly (25 November 1949):

"We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well ... Liberty cannot be divorced from equality. Nor can liberty and equality be divorced from fraternity... On January 26, 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality... We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so labouriously built up".

If Dr. Ambedkar is right as indeed he seems to be, a long drawn-out process of re-adjustment is bound to occur within the framework of national endeavours. The effects of this process are verily the troubles ascribed to language caste, religion, etc. These are not, then, 'the noises of a worn-out engine but the signal sound's of a healthy and working machine. However, if not handled carefully a brand new machinery could still be spoilt by the inert mechanic. It is in this regard that we have to be on guard, The opportunistic political leadership, corrupt bureaucracy, inattentive public-at-large and the bankrupt intelligentsia would spell doom for India." On the contrary, the 3 raising of a new vision, clear and efficient administration, a dedicated political leadership' would reinforce the national resolve to achieve all-round progress, prosperity; justice and happiness.

* * *

It is during our darkest moments that we must focus to see the light.

—Aristotle

THE SPELL OF THE MAHABHARATA

Prof. Manoj Das

Reflections on some of the intriguing situations and characters in the great epic, written for The Indian Express, at a time when a serial on the work was running in the TV, enjoying great popularity.

Many of those born after 1947 wonder how their parents and forefathers were reconciled to a handful of Englishmen governing this vast subcontinent of ours! Indeed, it is not easy to enter the spirit of a bygone era. Yet, consciously or unconsciously, most of us indulge in measuring the strength or weakness of characters belonging to as remote a past as the time of the epics, applying the yardstick of values by which we are accustomed to judge our contemporaries.

However, there are works, very few though, which can withstand such casual treatments. Even if in our eagerness to adjust them to the Procrustean bed of our ideas we stretch a part of them or cut out another, they survive the operation, such is their vitality and such is the strength of their essential truth.

As it has been repeatedly said, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata highlight the ultimate triumph of the good over the evil. Such simplistic observations imply that the moral emerging from these great works is qualitatively not different from that of the fairy tale or the didactic story. Particularly in regard to the Mahabharata, in which the central conflict is not between clear-cut camps of men and demons but between men and demoniac men, the moral lies imbedded in far too complex psychological situations. The “good” the poem stresses is not any puny moralistic virtue; it is the growth of consciousness which takes in its stride all the experiences good and bad; it is the progress the human soul makes through the darkness of ignorance so fondly nurtured by the ego. Hence the victory in the battle or the success in a prolonged endeavor does not throw the victor and the successful into a state where he rests happily everafter, but continues his quest for light as symbolized in the great journey, the Mahaprasthanika, of the Pandavas with which the epic concludes.

Lessons at Two Levels

The lessons, which the Mahabharata imparts to its reader (or listener) in the light of this ideal of our soul’s progress, become helpful even as practical lessons in life for the relatively less enlightened. Take the example of the story of Sharmistha, the princess, and Devyani, the daughter of Shukra, the king’s guru. The two friends, along with a number of maids, go out into the forest and bathe in a lake. Upon their emerging from the water, Devyani, by mistake, puts on her friend’s clothes. Unpredictable is the way of human moods. The princess falls into a tantrum. The two friends quarrel, Sharmistha claiming superiority over Devyani because of her status as a princess and Devyani claiming superiority because she was the daughter of her father’s guru.

But the princess has the last word – at least that is what she believes at the moment – when she orders her maids to throw Devyani into a dry pit – and returns home with her entourage. Apparently, hers is the victory. But situations too can be as unpredictable as human moods. Soon the young king, Yayati, is in the forest. He rescues Devyani and sends her to her father. When the injustice done to Devyani is known, Sharmistha’s father, King Vrisaparva, apologises to her, but nothing less than Sharmistha being reduced to the position of her maid would satisfy the aggrieved lady. Her demand had to be conceded.

Now Devyani emerges victorious. Little could Princess Sharmistha have imagined that in her apparent victory in the forest the other day lay concealed the seed of her future defeat.

Soon Devyani marries her gallant rescuer, King Yayati. Among the maids accompanying her to her husband’s house is Sharmistha. It so happens that the king is enamoured of the latter. They are secretly married. Now Sharmistha is victorious. In other words, in Devyani’s apparent victory had lain in ambush her own future defeat. The lesson is, there is no unmixed victory.

Although the version of the Mahabharata we read is the third-hand narration by Santa Ugrasena Lomaharsini who heard it from Vaisampayan and who in his turn had heard it from Vyasa, it is credited to the last-named who is also the traditional

In the end, it’s not the years in your life that count. It’s the life in your years.

-Abraham Lincoln

compiler of the Vedas. In fact, the Mahabharata is referred to as the fifth Veda. Hence, some traits of the Vedas are bound to be found in this epic. One of them is leaving a lot unsaid. With the passage of time and the loss of the necessary perspective, the unsaid has become a gap, making certain situations vulnerable to moral challenges thrown by a different milieu such as ours.

Ignored Aspect of the Episode of Ekalavya

A glaring example of this is the episode of Ekalavya, often projected today as an instance of discriminatory conduct of the privileged towards the unprivileged. Ekalavya had mustered certain secrets of archery stealthily, through his imitation of and devotion to the illustrious teacher, Dronacharya. When Dronacharya discovered this, he asked the young man, as the teacher's due, for his thumb, thereby reducing Ekalavya's effectiveness as an archer.

No doubt the society of the time believed in the principles of Varna, the division of duty according to the nature and heredity of people, in view of the experience the soul needed during a specific incarnation in its long journey (through many incarnations in different Varnas) towards the full realisation of life's ultimate goal. Needless to say, this concept of Varna has very little to do with the wretched caste system formalized in a later time. The question involved in Ekalavya's case is not Varna as much as the welfare of Ekalavya himself. In his enthusiasm he has got hold of the physical and occult science of archery all right, but he is unaware of the code of conduct that must temper this knowledge.

We generally forget or ignore the bizarre situation in which Drona met him in the forest. Ekalavya had applied his archery on a dog which had the audacity to bark at him. He shut the creature's mouth with seven arrows. Reduced to dumbness, the dog ran to Drona and drew his attention to its plight. We have to remember the role of the guru of yore. His first concern was the consciousness of the disciple; the wrong application of a power one had come to possess could not but demean one's consciousness. Even some of the Kshatriya princes like the Kauravas, well-versed in the laws of Dharma, went crazy with their power. Where would the knowledge of intricate

archery have landed the brilliant Ekalavya - if we were to make a guess from his maiden experiment with his power?

The Enigma that is Draupadi

How much does the mind of today understand even the character of Draupadi is a question. An Indian scholar living in France was required to give an introductory talk on the Mahabharata during the Festival of India in France. The moment she described Draupadi as an ideal wife, her audience burst into laughter, thanks to a much acclaimed production of the Mahabharata story in that country.

But that, after all, was a French audience. What is amazing is, the transcreator of a currently best-selling (by Indian standards) edition of the Mahabharata detects three reasons that obliged Krishna to intervene when Duhshasana tried to disrobe her in the Kaurava court and they are: Draupadi is related to Krishna; she had once "bandaged" Krishna's wound tearing a part of her "expensive dress" and thirdly both Krishna and Draupadi were self-born, the latter being an emanation of Shakti. It would appear as if Krishna owned a godown of cloth and he just needed some arguments to come to the help of a relative in distress. Perhaps in a way it is symptomatic of the so-called intellectual state of India that the transcreator does not go anywhere near the essence of the incident—that it was the Divine's response to a devotee when everything else, all the expected human help, had failed her!)

If the character of Draupadi has been a great source of strength to some, to most it has been merely intriguing, though fascinating. She is the lady with five husbands. This is the aspect of her life that readily comes to the minds of those who have known about her either through one of the numerous versions of the Mahabharata retold, or through a ballad or a folk or a stage play, or through references to her in different works. It is, however, impossible to appreciate the character of Draupadi without trying to dwell in the milieu the epic portrays, without continuously remembering the *raison d'être* of her incarnation.

Draupadi is *tejaevatu kevalam*, the flaming puissance incarnate, as the old king Dhritarashtra describes her. There cannot be a Mahabharata without

Draupadi. The epic grandeur of the work, the élan vital of its dramatic development, would collapse without Draupadi's humiliation and her determination for vengeance; its spiritual significance would be much reduced if it is deprived of the message that emerges from Draupadi's traumatic experience - that the only true protection lies in the Divine's Grace; the human supports are unpredictable; everyone can fail a person in a moment of crisis - and none will lack in some respectable pretext for his failure. But only the Divine does not fail one if one turns to Him entirely.

Most of the episodes in the epics can be viewed at least from two planes, popular and subtle. At the popular plane of looking at matters, Draupadi is won by Arjuna, but she marries all the five brothers because their mother, Kunti, has unwittingly said that whatever prize Arjuna has won must belong to all the five. Evidently, in the age of the Mahabharata, the position of the mother was unique. The character of Gandhari, the unfortunate mother of the Kauravas, and those of Kunti and Satyawati convincingly demonstrate that the institution of motherhood merited the respect it was given. And there were auspicious moments when instructions and words uttered by a father or a mother or a master had to be literally followed. For, however illogical they might sound on the surface, the utterances were believed to have originated from some higher inspiration.

But this is only the surface justification for the unusual marital status imposed on Draupadi. What must be remembered is the genesis of Draupadi. She is no human being, though she dwells in a human form. She is even different from the other two great female characters in our epic lore, Savitri and Sita. Though godly emanations, Savitri and Sita both grew up following the process chalked out for mortals. But Draupadi emerged from a Yajna, already Samadhyama - a maiden - in response to a specific prayer by King Drupad of Panchala. She was born with a certain power and a certain mission, ostensibly to destroy Drona, but really to destroy the Kauravas who were under Drona's protection.

Thus she was no woman to be judged by human standards, nor were the Pandava brothers, her husbands, human beings in any usually prevailing sense. They were emanations of gods, invoked by

their mothers, all different aspects of the king of gods, Indra, one in essence.

In their human incarnation they had assumed different characteristics, though complementary to one another. But in order to constitute a force greater than the evil confronting them as well as humanity, they must be kept united, continuously reminded of their mission. This crucial task fell to Draupadi's lot. The Pandavas were conscious of the extraordinary nature of Draupadi and they owed an unbroken allegiance to her, born out of a spontaneous faith. She used this allegiance to fulfill her mission. At the end of their exile when the Pandavas decide to send Krishna as their emissary to the Kauravas, Yudhishthira, Bhima and Arjuna are all prepared for a compromise. But when Krishna meets Draupadi, her decisive words are: "Damn Arjuna's archery and Bhima's strength, O Krishna, how do they forget that Duryodhana is still alive?"

Duryodhana had been vulgar enough to offer his thigh to Draupadi and Bhima had taken a vow to smash the scandalous offender's thigh. Draupadi was to dip her hair in Duhshasana's blood, for he had tried to disrobe her. While time seemed to have softened the Pandava brothers, it had only strengthened Draupadi's anguish. Her humiliation had not ended with her surviving the barbaric conduct of the Kauravas. She had to meet with Jayadratha's impudence while in the forest; worse still, she had to deal with Kichaka, the bully in Virata's palace. It is as if Providence saw to it that she did not defeat the very purpose of her emergence by developing any mercy for the evil. Her continued anguish was the element that moulded the wills of the five heroes into a single determination. With that alone they could fulfill their mandate.

What would have happened if the Pandavas had reconciled themselves to their fate? That would have meant their compromising with falsehood, their own fall from their Swadharma - the innermost law of their being—and depriving humanity of any hope for the triumph of the just, a hope that has, through the ages, helped sustain men's enthusiasm for taking to the path of truth as they know it.

The Mahabharata war gathered all the Indian kings on one single field, as friends and foes. It put

I am not afraid of an army of lions led by a sheep; I am afraid of an army of sheep led by a lion.

- Alexander the Great

on record the territories that constituted India, after the travels of the Pandavas through many a land had already built an idea of the concept of the nation. The war also destroyed most of the potentates who had turned greedy tyrants, ushering in a new climate of freedom.

In her role as an uncommon wife, Draupadi followed an uncommon discipline. Did the discipline require her to be equally passionate and indulgent towards all the five husbands? Not so, for she was above passion and indulgence. In her answer to a question from Satyabhama whether it was through certain rituals or hymns or magic potions that she pleased her husbands, her reply was: such methods were adopted by ordinary women with dubious motives. Her secret was her conquest of lust and egotism in herself.

This is the clue to her character.

There are Dharmas and Dharmas – different codes of conduct for beings of different levels of consciousness. As long as one is a creature of physical lust or of passionate love at the best, it is imperative that one follows a certain moral rule. This helps one to exercise control over one's ordinarily unruly impulses, a control indispensable for one's inner growth. But this is not the highest Dharma for all. There are beings too evolved for this or beings who do not belong to the evolutionary process at all. Draupadi falls in the rare latter category. Draupadi was a divine instrument for accomplishing a formidable task. That is why she had a special relationship with Krishna. She was his Sakhi, his intimate friend.

Draupadi is exemplary for her wit, her sense of courtesy and her dignity. When she is summoned to the court by Duryodhana after Yudhishthira has forfeited her in a game of dice, she demands to know if Yudhishthira pledged her before losing himself or after. If after, he had no right to pledge her. Her question remained unanswered. She is so courteous that at a moment's respite during Dushasana's outrageous behaviour, she apologises to the elders for not having greeted them as soon as she entered the court. Her sense of dignity becomes evident when a nervous Dhritarashtra, warned of the doom hanging over his dynasty because of Duryodhana's sins, offers

her boon after boon, but she politely refuses them after obtaining the release of Yudhishthira and the other Pandavas.

It is an insult to Draupadi and the monarch of poets, Vyasa, to believe that she burst into a peal of laughter and commented that the son of a blind man was blind, when Duryodhana, while surveying the magical castle of the Pandavas at Indraprastha, mistook a pool to be decorated floor and fell into it. Vyasa's Draupadi cannot and does not do anything like that. The part of the epic recounting this incident may not even be an interpolation - one of many that got into the work in the course of centuries, but a careful reading would show that the poet does not show Draupadi as doing any such thing when the scene is narrated by him. It is Duryodhana who invents the insult while trying to poison Dhritarashtra's mind and he invents it not even during his first report to his father, but during the second report. Had Draupadi done any such thing, we would have been informed of it by the poet himself when she did so.

Draupadi's is perhaps the most daring portrayal of a female character in the literature of the world. It is a tribute to the women of India that they adore her more through their intuitive perception of the character than through a rational or social evaluation of it.

Bhishma's Action and Inaction

Vyasa's Bhishma is not the excited, restless character we see in different plays. He is a Vasu, a demigod, who is only temporarily on earth and who is much less attached to his earthly obligations than generally imagined. Bhishma is one of the few (the others were Rishis) who knew clearly who Krishna was. That is why he proposed Krishna to be given the prime seat of honour at Yudhishthira's Rajasuya Yajna. Why then did he side with the Kauravas?

Contrast Bhishma's conduct with that of his predecessor, Bibhisana of the Ramayana. He was one of the few, even though an Asura prince, who knew the true identity of Rama. He advised his brother Ravana to make peace with the aggrieved prince, but when Ravana, instead of paying heed to his advice insulted him, he quietly came over to Rama's camp. It has been pointed out that while Bhishma

Effective leadership is not about making speeches or being liked;
leadership is defined by results, not attributes.

- Peter F. Drucker

was a Jnanayogi, Bibhisana was a Bhaktiyogi. As a Bhakta, Bibhisana felt impelled to be with his Lord, not caring two hoots for any other obligation, moral or otherwise. As a Jnani, Bhishma knew that with Krishna on the side of the Pandavas, it mattered little even if a hundred Bhishmas were in the opposite camp! In other words, if Bibhisana changed camp because he knew who Rama was, Bhishma did not change camp also precisely because he knew who Krishna was!

The same does not apply to the other elders. Their silence over Draupadi's humiliation can be best explained by the observation: "It is impossible that a gold deer should ever be possible. Yet Rama runs after it. The irony is, at the approach of a moment of crisis, the genius of people gets dim!"

The characters of the Mahabharata or the Ramayana must be seen as Vyasa or Valmiki portrays them – in the context of the total epic, not in isolation, in the perspective of a very different time. We should not focus on any one aspect or one particular action of an epic character and presume to interpret him or her. We must assess the character in the light of the role he or she was designed to play in the whole.

The Mahabharata, as we find it, eight times greater than Homer's Iliad and Odyssey put together, is a much enlarged version of the original text. But the enlargement, being brought about by the addition of significant stories epitomes of the spiritual and mundane experiences of the early twilight of an awakened civilization, dialogues of philosophical import, etc.—has been absorbed by the powerful central plot. Over the centuries such stories—for example those of Dushyanta and Shakuntala, Nala and Damayanti, Savitri and Satyavan - have inspired great works of poetry and drama. The dynamism inherent in such stories is demonstrated in our own time by Sri Aurobindo handling the theme of Savitri and Satyavan and transforming the legend into a most profound symbol in his epic, Savitri.

Some of the dialogues in the Mahabharata are as psychologically sound today as they were at any time in the past. Take for example the series of questions put by Yaksha to Yudhisthira. "What is it by giving up which one endears oneself to all?" The answer is "Pride". "What is it by shedding which one

remains rich?" The answer is "Desire". "What is the most surprising thing in the world? The answer is, "Every moment people around us are dying. Yet those alive conduct themselves as if they were immortals."

The greatest single contribution of the Mahabharata, of course, is the Gita, the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna. But that is a subject apart.

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

* * *

'IT WAS EXCITING, BUT THERE WAS FEAR TOO'

Dr. Uday Balakrishnan

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A journalist recounts how six Catholic nuns from Kentucky set up a hospital in Bihar in 1947

Jyoti Thottam's book, Sisters of Mokama: The Pioneering Women who Brought Hope and Healing to India, is more than just the extraordinary story of six nuns, belonging to the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth in Nelson County Kentucky, who travelled by ship and railway in 1947 at a fraught time to set up Nazareth Hospital in the little-known town of Mokama in Bihar. It's also the story of her mother who left her Kerala home when she was 15 years old to train as a nurse at the hospital. The book doubles up as a historical and social account of America and India right up to the 1960s, taking into its sweep Partition, and the communal riots and migrations that followed. Thottam, Senior Opinion Editor with The New York Times and former South Asia bureau chief for Time spoke to Uday Balakrishnan in a zoom call. Excerpts:

How did this book emerge in your mind?

My mother occasionally talked about her nursing school in Mokama but I wanted to know more. Why did those nuns leave Kentucky? How did they end up in Mokama? And why did all young women like my mother leave their homes to study nursing there? Answering these questions took me

Truth is not with power, but a defense against it.

- Timothy Snyder.

deep into the history of Kentucky, the history of America during and after World War II, the history of India after Partition. I found that threads of all these histories were connected in unexpected ways. The book is a way of placing my family's story in the larger American story. It is the outcome of 20 years of research, accessing archival material and personal papers preserved by the families of some of the sisters. Without these documents, the story of Nazareth Hospital would remain lost to history. For instance, no one would know about the Mokama hospital's care for lepers.

Who were these Sisters who went to Mokama and why?

The six sisters who went to Mokama were a mixed bunch of nurses and teachers. Three were in their twenties, two in their forties, and the team leader, Lawrence Veenaman, was an experienced administrator. In the conservative male-dominated world of Kentucky, becoming a nun was a liberating experience. Going to Mokama was exciting, but records indicate there was apprehension too, as they would be going far away to a strange unknown land. In many ways, the women of Nazareth who left their homes to go to India, and young women like my mother who left their villages to study nursing, were animated by the same impulse. The years after World War II in the U.S. and the years after Partition in India were traumatic. Some women saw it as an opening to create for themselves lives that would never have been possible otherwise.

What kept the team together under challenging circumstances?

The 51-year-old Veenaman kept the independent-minded group together. It helped that she was older. One of the nuns, Sister Ann Cornelius, more conservative than the rest, did not approve of several things, and her discontent was apparent. But others found a balance. The sisters' letters are full of amusing anecdotes. They conversed, wrote letters, read magazines and in later years, watched television. I met Sister Ann Roberta, the last surviving "pioneer" sister as her order called those who founded the mission. She was 86 years old and was in Gaya to spend her last years. She vividly recalled the first

months of setting up the hospital – scrounging for supplies, improvising beds and bandages, planting a garden, and learning to bargain for vegetables in Hindi. I asked her what kind of patients they would get in the early days, and she immediately recalled the orphans. This was in the first years after Partition, and she told me about a toddler who had been brought in, well fed and beautiful.

How involved were Indians in the setting up of the hospital?

Several Indians, including Celine Minj who hailed from the tribal Oraon community, trained as a nurse. An Anglo-Indian, Dr. Eric Lazaro, was the first doctor to be employed by Nazareth Hospital. Dr. Lazaro and Josephine 'Babs' Gillard, who married later, were central to the success of the Mokama mission. Without Celine it would have been difficult to make the mission acceptable to local communities. Sadly, the order had no record of her. I tracked her down through the Indian Oil Corporation, her former employer. Celine spoke to me for hours, thrilled that someone was finally listening to her amazing story.

What made young girls from Kerala go all the way to Mokama to be trained as nurses?

The priests in Kerala gave a lot of confidence to parents in Kerala to send their girls to Mokama. Many, like my mother Elsamma Thottam, had long professional careers in India and America. These trainees from Kerala were a rebellious lot, revolting against the 'English-only' rule the Kentuckian nuns enforced, and they never could adjust to a diet of chapattis.

What's the state of Nazareth Hospital now?

The Sisters of Charity of Nazareth are still very much involved in Mokama, although the hospital itself serves as a primary health clinic now. The sisters do other kinds of work in the area, and provided care for COVID patients. The sisters' most lasting legacy is the example they set of serving people regardless of caste or community.

Courtesy : The Interview appeared in the Sunday Magazine The Hindu 25 September, 2022

* * *

The story of humanity might end before it has truly begun.

- William MacAskill

NUMBERS NUMBERS...

Dr. (Ms) Ahana Lakshmi

Environmental Consultant

Our environment is made up of a variety of living things interacting in complex ways with the non-living component of rocks, minerals, air, water and such to create ecosystems that offer us myriad services, some of which we understand but many of which we do not even realise but just assume it is nature's bounty for us to use.

Today, we are using up resources, nature's bounty, very rapidly. Resources are not limited to coal or oil that is mined or fish that is caught in the sea. They also include the likes of fresh water and even seawater. A few decades ago, as students, we were told that dilution is the solution to pollution – the sea is limitless and can absorb our effluents. The truth today is that the oceans are severely stressed because of the wastes that pour into them from land based sources through rivers and streams, as well as from sea-based sources such as oil from ships and fishing nets. In fact, a September 2022 report in Nature says that the bulk of large plastic bits in the North Pacific garbage patch have been lost or discarded by fishing vessels. The study also suggested that plastic from land travelling towards the sea accumulates mainly in coastal areas.

All this has spurred us to start looking at accounting for services provided by the environment for our economic. Environmental accounting draws on the concept of natural capital first presented by E.E. Schumacher in his 1973 book 'Small is Beautiful'. According to the Natural Capitals coalition "Natural Capital is another term for the stock of renewable and non-renewable resources (e.g. plants, animals, air, water, soils, minerals) that combine to yield a flow of benefits to people". In other words, it is environmental services ranging from pollination to soil enrichment and flood protection, apart from the food that we eat, water we drink and the timber used to build homes.

Sustainable development has three pillars – environment, economy and society. Realization that environment pillar has to be strong for the well-being of economy and society, and considering the

myriad pressures on the environment, it is essential that environment is recognised as an asset that must be maintained and managed and its contributions (services) be better integrated into commonly used frameworks like the System of National Accounts.

The System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) has been accepted internationally as the standard for environmental-economic accounting. It provides the framework linking environment and economy through statistics. There are standard definitions and protocols to be followed. But it is not all that easy because environmental scientists and economists do not speak the same language. Just like a well looked after house, with repairs done regularly, ecosystems too need looking after. Thus, data about assets and how they have changed over time, how much money has gone into maintaining them *vis a vis* how much value we have obtained out of the asset is what goes into the accounting process. In summary, it requires a lot of number crunching which means a lot of data.

Unfortunately, collecting data costs money. Many years ago, sitting through a meeting, I remember one official refusing to allow a budget line for monitoring water quality in a marine biosphere reserve. '*Has it not been measured enough? Why should the data be collected every year?*' It was a marine area after all, and unless you can be sure that the essential water quality parameters are within limits, how can you know that the biodiversity of the area, a prime reason for declaring it as a biosphere reserve, is not under stress?

Numbers properly collected and analysed help us to understand what's happening with the environment and how and where things have to be fixed. It is a slow job and India's Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has started putting together environmental accounts for India. The initial efforts show plenty of empty rows, but it is hoped that once the idea of regular data collection sets in, things will change. After all, numbers help in driving the right policies to a healthy environment, vital for human well-being.

* * *

There are two kinds of forecasters : those who don't know and those who don't know they don't know

- J.K. Galbraith

‘RAMANAMA’ MAHATMA GANDHI’S TALISMAN

The power of Ramanama was narrated by Mahatma Gandhi throughout his life. His daily evening prayer beginning with the invocation Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram was a testament to his Rama bhakti. “I am a servant of Rama. I will do His work as long as He wills. My only prayer is that I may realise non-violence and make others to realise it. You should join me in that prayer,” said Gandhiji at a prayer meeting.

“The Rama whom I adore is God Himself. He always was, is now, and will be forever,” he declared. In his meditation, he used to invoke Rama’s blessings on all people, praying particularly for communal harmony

Whether it was a big issue or a small event or incident, he depended on Rama’s grace. Ramanama was his talisman, a sarvaroga nivarini –panacea for all ills public, private and personal.

He used to refer to his deep ‘inner voice’ speaking quietly and intimately to him. This inner voice was his link to God, the truthful Sri Rama, in whom Bapu possessed a never-failing talisman of protection.

Once when he was running high temperature and the doctors headed by Dr. Sarojini Naidu wanted to give Gandhiji a penicillin injection, which had just become a popular cure for fevers and ailments, he rejected it smilingly telling them, “My penicillin is Ramanama and of its efficacy I know well.”

Religion for Gandhiji was ‘paropakar’, a means of service to people. “Religion makes for peace, love and joy in the world.

But man, as an animal possessing an intellect, goes on committing greater and greater sins. If we look at things in the right way, religion and science are complementary to each other,” he stated.

The greatness of Ramayana lies in the eternal relevance of the values it conveys such as Truth, Dharma and Love. Gandhiji not only preached, but upheld them to perfection throughout his life.

After freedom was won and his mission accomplished, Gandhiji said, “I shall have won in my mission if I am granted a death in which I can demonstrate the strength of Truth and Non-violence.”

A week before his death, there was a bomb explosion when he was on his way to his prayer meeting. Gandhiji’s reaction to it was one of total unconcern and detachment. He coolly said: “If I have been sincere in their pursuit, and acted with God as my witness, I shall certainly be granted that kind of death. I have expressed my wish at prayer that, should someone kill me, I should have no anger to my heart against the killer and that I should die with Ramanama on my lips.”

Fifteen days later he was assassinated. Hey Ram were his last words before he merged in the Lord he adored till his last breath!

The legacy he left behind is the power of truth, love and nonviolence which no ruler can conquer and no weapon can destroy.

“The Rama whom I adore is God Himself. He always was, is now, and will be forever” - Mahatma Gandhi

A. Prasanna Kumar

Courtesy : Tattvaloka, October 2019

* * *

‘SERVANT OF HUMANITY’

‘Servant of Humanity’ “Let me remain what I am - a striving servant of India and through her of humanity,” wrote Gandhiji in his reply when he was likened to rishis by Andhra leader Ayyadevara Kaleswara Rao. “Rishis are made of sterner stuff,” said the Mahatma in his reply to Kaleswara Rao’s letter in 1944. This was among the many lessons in humility and civility that his disciples learnt from Gandhiji’s tours, lectures and letters. Writing to Pattabhi Sitaramayya in 1946 Gandhiji said “Whatever the case we have to be civil in the face of incivility. This is the secret of nonviolence.” It is the lack of civility and humility that leads to violence, be it the home or the society or the world at large.

Despite the world looking at him with awe and veneration, even disbelief, he did not claim to be the mythical Atlas carrying the burden of humanity on his shoulders. Instead he vowed in utmost humility and unwavering faith to remain the servant, a striving servant, of India and of the entire humanity. Rajmohan Gandhi saw in his grandfather the epic hero, Rama, who went into exile when he should have

A genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus but a molder of consensus.

- Martin Luther King Jr.

been crowned! Like the Buddha and Christ centuries before him Gandhi lived and died for the poor.

He never preached what he did not practise. Social and religious equality would be impossible to achieve without gender equality. To deny women equal status is to reject ahimsa and abhaya the two key 121 concepts of Gandhian philosophy. "A woman's intuition has often proved truer than man's arrogant assumption of superior knowledge," he declared and narrated instances of Kastur Ba correcting and guiding him. "Ba was in no way weaker than I," he wrote, "in fact she was stronger. If I had not had her cooperation I would have been sunk. It was that illiterate woman who helped me to observe all my vows with the utmost strictness and kept me ever vigilant. Similarly in politics also she displayed great courage and took part in all the campaigns." (Rajmohan Gandhi Mohandas p619)

History accords exaggerated importance to the exploits of conquerors and rulers and the accumulation of wealth by the rich while poets and writers consume 'oceans of ink and forests of paper' to flatter them in huge volumes. Governments and politicians excel them all by raising statues and memorials all over. But seers, savants, saviours and servants of humanity do

not need memorials and monuments to be reverently remembered by humanity.

Gandhiji's first fast was for Hindu-Muslim unity. His last was also for communal harmony. On his last birthday, October 2, 1947, he said: "With every breath I pray God to give me strength to quench the flames or remove me from this earth. I, who staked my life to gain India's independence, do not wish to be a living witness to its destruction." There seemed to be no end to his agony. On January 12, 1948 he spoke again of the only solution to "the rot that has set in beloved India". "Death for me would be a glorious deliverance rather than that I should be a helpless witness of the destruction of India." Only eighteen days he had to wait for the fulfillment of his wish.

Jawaharlal Nehru saw in Mahatma Gandhi the 'greatest symbol of the India of the past and of the future' and said that the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light, light that illumines the path of India and entire humanity, showing the way out of darkness. As Sri Aurobindo prophesied "the light which led us to freedom, though not yet to unity, will burn on till it conquers."

A. Prasanna Kumar

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