

# INDIA FOUNDATION JOURNAL

## Opinions

- From Look East to Act East: Enhancing India-ASEAN Integration
- Defence R&D: A Long Road Ahead
- Recalibrating PPP in Highways Construction
- Geo-Politics and Role of Skill Development in India's Act East Policy

## Reports

- Curtain Raiser of International Conference on "BIMSTEC: An Enabling Architecture for Growth, Prosperity and Partnerships"
- Curtain-Raiser of 2nd Indian Ocean Conference and India -ASEAN Youth Summit
- Seminar on "21st Century Terrorism – Challenges for India"
- Breakfast Briefings

## Book Review

- Wei Qi vs Chess Review of 'Sino-Indian Relations: Contemporary Perspectives'

## Focus: Revisiting India's Independence Movement

- India's Independence Movement: Revisiting its History - Ram Madhav
- Remembering Forgotten Heroes - Alok Bansal
- The Indian Independence Movement as seen by the Revolutionaries - Sanjeev Sanyal
- Periphery in India's Independence Movement: A Re-look from Northeast India - Prof. Nani G. Mahanta
- The Role of Women in the Indian Freedom Movement - Dr. Yuthika Mishra
- The Revolutionary Leader Vinayak Damodar Savarkar - Dr. Vikram Sampath
- Three Men, Their Idea of 'Mother' and the Indian Freedom Movement - Hindol Sengupta

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### **FOCUS: Revisiting India's Independence Movement**

India's Independence Movement: Revisiting its History .....	<b>Ram Madhav</b>	3
Remembering Forgotten Heroes .....	<b>Alok Bansal</b>	8
The Indian Independence Movement as seen by the Revolutionaries .....	<b>Sanjeev Sanyal</b>	13
Periphery in India's Independence Movement: A Re-look from Northeast India .....	<b>Prof. Nani G. Mahanta</b>	17
The Role of Women in the Indian Freedom Movement .....	<b>Dr. Yuthika Mishra</b>	30
The Revolutionary Leader Vinayak Damodar Savarkar .....	<b>Dr. Vikram Sampath</b>	37
Three Men, Their Idea of 'Mother' and the Indian Freedom Movement .....	<b>Hindol Sengupta</b>	43

### **OPINIONS**

From Look East to Act East: Enhancing India-ASEAN Integration .....	<b>Dr. Shristi Pukhrem</b>	46
Defence R&D: A Long Road Ahead .....	<b>Keertivardhan Joshi</b>	49
Recalibrating PPP in Highways Construction .....	<b>Abhinav Prakash</b>	56
Geo-Politics & Role of Skill Development in India's Act East Policy..	<b>Lairenjam Niranjana Singh</b>	59

### **REPORTS**

Curtain Raiser of International Conference on "BIMSTEC: An Enabling Architecture for Growth, Prosperity and Partnerships" .....	<b>Siddharth Singh</b>	62
Curtain-Raiser of 2nd Indian Ocean Conference and India -ASEAN Youth Summit .....	<b>Aaditya Tiwari</b>	64
Seminar on "21st Century Terrorism – Challenges for India" .....	<b>Chalasan Narendra</b>	65
Breakfast Briefings .....		67

### **BOOK REVIEW**

Wei Qi vs Chess Review of 'Sino-Indian Relations: Contemporary Perspectives' .....	<b>K. Raka Sudhakar Rao</b>	68
---	-----------------------------	----

---

**India  
Foundation  
Journal**

Vol. V  
Issue No.4

July-August 2017

Editor  
Maj Gen (Dr) Dhruv C Katoch

Assistant Editors  
Srihari Avuthu  
Shubhrastha

Publisher  
**India Foundation**  
New Delhi

E-mail  
journal@indiafoundation.in

Website  
www.indiafoundation.in

---

for private circulation only

## Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

*The philosopher George Santayana, in his essay 'The Life of Reason,' stated 'Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.' While this quote is an assertion of an everyday truism, its many variants are not necessarily so. One of these variants states 'Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it'. This however would depend on whether history was accurately recorded in the first place, which all too often is not the case. Much too often, history is written with a focus on the viewpoint of the writer, and on the ruling dispensation at the time, bringing with it personal biases and ingrained prejudices. Which is why, with the passage of time, it is always a good idea to revisit our past and gain new insights into the tumultuous events of yesteryears.*

*Indian history, as it pertains to the independence movement, has ignored many of the actors whose contributions while being seminal, did not attract enough attention at that time. The novelist Chinua Achebe very succinctly put the issue in the correct perspective with his quote, 'Until the lions get their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter'. Revisiting Indian history in this issue has thrown new light on the seminal contribution of some of the personalities of that time, whose contribution was not adequately recognised. Of that genre, is the role which women played in the freedom struggle as also the role of the people of Northeast India, and their contribution to the movement. This issue also brings out how the revolutionaries viewed the Independence movement, an aspect often glossed over in our history. The impact of Veer Savarkar on the independence movement is worthy of study but finds little mention in official texts. It has thus been highlighted in this issue as also the role of Mother, as viewed by three great personalities, Vivekananda, Aurobindo and Bankim Chandra and its impact on the movement.*

*A renewed emphasis on the study of history would thus be a fitting tribute to all those who struggled for our freedom*



## India's Independence Movement: Revisiting its History\*

Ram Madhav

Revisiting of history keeps happening all the time. There are a couple of reasons why one revisits history time and again. One reason is of course that we get newer information as time passes. When we chance upon a new document or a new discovery we have to reinterpret a few things in the light of that new document or discovery.

But there is another important reason to revisit history and that is to draw contemporary lessons for the present and for the future. We have to revisit history from hundreds of angles. Napoleon had said, 'What is history after all, it is a fable mutually agreed upon'! History is what the rulers and the ruled have agreed upon; that is how history is written. Somebody has seen history from a perspective and that is validated by the rulers, scholars or the leaders of the time. That becomes history. That is why the attempt to reinterpret history from varying perspectives with changing times should keep happening.

That does not mean one can play with facts. After all what is history, it is essentially the interpretation of certain facts. History is prone to interpretations. This process involves biases and depending on the interpreter, same fact is presented in varying ways; so biases are inherent in history. It is therefore hard to say if anything like 'unbiased history' exists.

But history does not have if-s and but-s. This

must be kept in mind while interpreting history. For example. 'Had Gandhi not existed, what might have happened' - Such if-s don't have any meaning. Today when we describe history and go on to blame certain individuals, it must be pondered upon that in history do you really have the scope of if-s and but-s. 'Had he not done this' etc are all mere imaginations.

Then what is the purpose to revisit history? Jawahar Lal Nehru used to say, 'Those who forget history are condemned to repeat it.' Basically, every time we revisit history we should draw some contemporary lessons from that history.

Did the history of our independence movement have a wider canvas? Did it have multiple main and fringe players? Our independence movement had four or five prominent streams. The tribals, the writers and literary figures et al had their own movements. Similarly there were movements for independence led by saints and revolutionaries. The mainstream movement for independence was led by Congress but that too had various streams. Congress was just a platform and was never a homogeneous movement. Right from the beginning there was division between moderates and hardliners. Many streams merged with the Congress in order to achieve one common objective of Independence. Every such stream was no less important. It is not the question of whose contribution was larger or which was more important!

*\*This article is the summary of valedictory address delivered by Shri Ram Madhav, National General Secretary of BJP and Director of India Foundation, at the national seminar on "Revisiting Indian Independence Movement" organised by India Foundation at New Delhi on 18th March, 2017.*

---

I have seen one such interpretation of history. Clement Attlee, when he became the Prime Minister of Great Britain, had decided to give independence to India. Churchill was staunchly opposed to this idea. Churchill believed that if independence is given there will be anarchy in India. He believed that Indians are incapable of self rule. Attlee on his part thought that India should be given independence and he gave three reasons for the same.

First reason was that in WWII Britain had suffered huge losses and didn't have enough resources to manage their own country. Its condition was best described in the statement: 'Won the war, lost the empire'. It became very difficult for Britain to manage the Colonies.

Second, there were protests across India against the Red Fort Trials of Azad Hind Fauj, which had even crept into the Armed Forces to a point that Sardar Patel had to be brought in to intervene (*this included the Navy mutiny in Mumbai, Army base in Jabalpur, Air Force Base in Rajasthan*).

Third, the loyalty of 2.5 million strong Indian Army was too big to be controlled by the 40,000-strong British force stationed in India at that time. WWII had drained all energy to fight more wars and the British soldiers were not in a mood to go in for another battle.

Now these three reasons given by Attlee are open to interpretation. Someone can say that while talking about the reasons for giving Independence to India, Attlee did not even mention Gandhi! There was a judge based in Kolkata who claimed that Attlee had visited him in 1956 at his residence and he asked him why didn't he even mention the

contributions of Gandhi and Congress as one of the reasons for giving independence to India. Did they have no role worth mentioning? According to that judge, Attlee twisted his lips and said: '*minimal*'. Was the contribution of Gandhiji and Congress really minimal? No. But that is the problem with interpretations. Therefore when we revisit the movement, we should be careful not to jump to any hasty conclusions but to learn lessons from each new fact and finding.

What is it that we can learn from this revisiting of history in contemporary times? One important lesson is what John Kenneth Galbraith had said in an interview in 2001, '*The progress of India didn't depend on the government, as important as it might be, but was enormously dependent on the initiative of the Indian people*'. One leader who understood this lesson during the independence movement was Gandhiji. It was he who had transformed India's independence movement into a popular movement. Gandhiji understood that India's strength lay not in leaders but in its people. For independence movement to succeed, it had to be a popular movement.

Congress in the initial years was an elitist movement. One of the founders of Congress was A O Hume, a British civil servant who came to India in order to perpetuate the British rule here. Among other founders were leaders like Surendranath Banerjee, who were steeped in English education and culture. First 15-20 years of Congress history was that of petitions and applications. It was Gandhiji who transformed this elitist movement into a truly mass movement. People from places far away from Delhi too were prompted to participate. People contributed to the

---

movement in whichever manner they could.

But did our independence came through this popular movement led by Gandhiji alone? Suppose there was no popular movement, would Independence not have come? Where was any popular movement for Pakistan? Pakistan was the product of a bargain. There was no popular movement. Whatever popular support was there for Pakistan came from areas that became India after partition. Those who became the citizens of Pakistan never fought for Pakistan. If you look at the 1946 election results to provincial assemblies in what is Pakistan today, Muslim League lost elections in almost all those provinces. Muslim League, the champion of Pakistan or partition of India, could not secure popular mandate in those very parts which became Pakistan one year later.

There is a probability that the British could have been thrown out without any popular movement. They could have been thrown out by revolutionaries or by the Azad Hind Fauj's armed rebellion. But Gandhiji believed that independence struggle was for its people and not merely for the change of government. That's the reason why when all the important leaders were celebrating independence in Delhi, Gandhiji was away at Noakhali among the suffering people. He could have come for a day, participated in celebrations and then gone back. But he had a conviction that governments in India will come and go but India is about its people.

Here Gandhiji was not alone, there were other similar leaders and groups at that time. We have been branded differently today. I come from the RSS. The RSS leadership believed right from its inception in 1925 that India needs independence

but independence as a product of popular movement. That is why it chose the mission of inculcating patriotism in ordinary Indians. All social reformers too had the same belief that society needs to be prepared first, to become an independent nation. Mere change of government was not what independence meant to them. Unfortunately, such movements have not been accorded due respect and place in history.

At the time of independence, we paid a heavy price in the form of partition. One-third of our motherland became a foreign territory overnight. The Muslim League had passed Pakistan resolution in 1940 at its Lahore session. The reaction of the Indian leadership at that time is worth recollecting. 'Vivisect me before you vivisect India', exhorted Gandhiji. Sardar Patel went one step further to declare: '*Talwar se talwar bhidegi*' - 'Sword will be met with sword', meaning India will fight till end against the partition. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, sitting in jail during the Quit India Movement, went on to write the book 'India Divided' in which he narrated about all the ills of partition and how illogical the thought was. Even before the ink of that book could dry out India was partitioned. Nehru, in his typical romantic way proclaimed that the idea of partition was a 'fantastic nonsense', meaning 'the idea of some mad people'. Tragedy is that it was the same Nehru who went on to sign the partition agreement called the June 3rd plan. Sardar Patel who claimed that sword will be met by sword remained a mute spectator.

Not just the Indian leaders, even the British leaders had not wanted India to be partitioned initially. Viceroy Wavell famously declared his opposition to the idea in 1944 stating that: 'India is

---

a God made triangle, you cannot divide it'. Even Atlee's mandate as the Prime Minister to Mountbatten was not to partition India. 'Keep it united if possible. Save a bit from the wreck. Bring British out in any case' – this was the mandate given by Attlee to Mountbatten.

Nobody wanted partition, still it happened. There is a big lesson to learn from this; that nations can't put all their faith only in their leadership. A Nation has to have its own innate strength.

Let us map the hundred year journey of India from the First War of Independence in 1857 as Savarkar described it to 1956. In 1857 leaders like Tantya Tope, Rani Laxmibai and Nana Saheb had launched a war in order to throw away the British rulers from India. The immediate provocation was the obduracy of the British to impose certain un-Indian cultural practices on the British Indian Army. Then came the revolutionary movement initiated by Vasudev Balwant Phalke in 1880s, followed by the Congress movement leading to independence in 1947. India secured freedom from the British and had its own leaders as rulers.

Now the significance of 1956! In 1956, the then prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru gave an interview to John Kenneth Galbraith in which he was famously quoted to have said : 'You know Galbraith! I am the last Englishman to rule this country'. Look at this journey which started with a resolve to throw away the British rulers and ended up after hundred years in having our own leaders who were more British than probably the British themselves. What did we really fight for? What was the battle all about? Was it just to replace people of one skin colour with another?

Independence meant a great spirit of

quintessential Indianness. We have identified independence with the leadership and not with the spirit. Gandhiji realized this, but it was too late. In 1946, when the Great Kolkata Killings were going on after Jinnah's call for Direct Action, Gandhiji was asked as to whether he would still stand by his statement of 1940? Did he still think that partition could be prevented? Could Hindus and Muslims live together after all this murder and mayhem? Gandhiji's response provided one of the greatest lessons of our independence movement. Gandhiji said that his words in 1940 were a reflection of the popular sentiment of the time. But on seeing the madness all around he realised that the young men of our country were not prepared to stand firm, plunge into the streets and fight it to the last for the unity and integrity of this nation. Therefore there was no option but to agree for partition. This is a very important lesson. When the time came for shedding blood for country's unity, our countrymen were not prepared to pay that price. And the country was partitioned.

Let us go back in history by 40 years. First attempt at partitioning the country on communal lines had happened in 1905. Bengal was partitioned into Hindu and Muslim Bengal. There was a nationwide opposition to this act of the British led by the trio of Lal, Bal, Pal – Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal. The then Viceroy Curzon had pompously declared that the 'partition of Bengal is a settled fact'. But the opposition for partition of Bengal grew so strong and loud that six years later King George V had to rush to India in 1911 and annul the partition of Bengal. The so-called settled fact had been unsettled by the national will. Why then did we

---

become so helpless when in 1947, not one province, but the entire country was being partitioned? This is an important facet of our history to revisit. Did we miss the spirit and identified the entire movement with some individual leaders? When those individuals became helpless the entire movement became helpless? We cannot afford to ignore this important question.

Our independence movement shows that whenever the national will was robust and strong we achieved success. There was a phase in our independence movement, of roughly three decades, between 1915 and 1947, when a lot of confusion had crept in. Several incidents during this 30-year period should be revisited by scholars. It was during this period that M A Jinnah, a follower of Tilak and a volunteer of Congress, goes on to become the founder of Pakistan! How did the independence movement become a bargain between different groups is a topic of research! A slogan was coined by Tilak at the Lucknow Session of the Congress in 1916 - 'Luck Now at Lucknow'. What was the luck in 1916 that Tilak was referring to? Muslim League had come to participate in the Congress session. We started believing that without the League there would be no independence. We started negotiating with them and when they agreed to attend the session we got elated to declare that luck had finally laughed on us. We made

independence movement a bargain from thereon!

Savarkar's famous advise to Gandhiji regarding this bargain was that he should tell those people categorically that: 'If you come, with you. If you do not, without you. If you oppose, in spite of you'. This is called the national will. But the history of 1916 to 1946 was just the opposite. I would urge young scholars to revisit this part of our history. Why did institutions like AITUC, created by Congress, turn leftist organizations? How did the left and anarchist streams enter Congress? Where was the confusion created? Why were compromises made regarding issues like national flag, national anthem and national language etc? How did Jawaharlal Nehru become influenced by socialist ideology after his return from Moscow in 1927? What was the seriousness of differences between Gandhiji and Jawaharlal and how much did they influence the outcome of our independence?

These are some of the things to be revisited. We cannot undo anything in history by revisiting it. But we can always learn lessons from it. There might be lessons that are unpalatable but we have to learn even those lessons. This is important so that we do not repeat the past mistakes. Interpretation of history has no end, there can be and will be many further interpretations. History should be analysed with openness.





## Remembering Forgotten Heroes\*

Alok Bansal

It is often said that those who do not learn the lessons of history are condemned to repeat them. Unfortunately, Indians by and large have lacked a sense of history. When global community looks at ancient India, they look at it from Chinese perspective, because the accounts of such history are primarily available from the writings of Chinese travellers Fa-Hien, Huen-Tsang and I-Tsing. Megasthenes from Greece gave us the account of Mauryan Empire. Subsequent travellers from different part of the world like Al Beruni, Marco Polo, Ibn Battuta, Abdul Razzak, Nicolo Conti, Afanasy Nikitin and many others also enlightened the world about medieval India, its people and its rich culture. This was followed by number of Portuguese visitors starting with Vasco Da Gama, who again wrote about the riches of India. Surprisingly, during this period, with the sole exception of Kalhan's Rajtarangini, no Indian wrote a good historical treatise. Consequently, Indians have got used to looking at Indian history from others perspective. This has created numerous aberrations in the way most Indians look at their own history.

Most Indians formulate their views based on popular perceptions or by reading one book or article. It is essential for a student of history to read the historian, before reading history to understand the perspective from which he had seen the history. It is equally important to

understand from which angle he had approached the history before forming an opinion of your own. It is therefore necessary to read as many books as feasible on a particular subject and only then form an independent opinion of the event. This however, requires extensive reading on the same subject. Indian independence movement was a huge gigantic movement. Millions of people participated in this quest for Home Rule. Unfortunately, it has not been documented that well. Thus, the contribution of many individuals, who sacrificed their lives and time have not been analysed or acknowledged adequately. There is therefore very strong need for revisiting India's Independence Movement.

The first important factor that needs to be considered is that the Indian national moment was not confined to what is India today. It embraced what was India then. So, when we talk of leaders of independence moment, Master Surya Sen or Master Da as he is known was an iconic figure. But how many in India today even know his name? He planned the Chittagong Armoury Raid — undoubtedly one of the most daring attempts at overthrowing the British, and was hanged by the British after being brutally tortured and his body was thrown into the sea. His last letter to his friends is extremely poignant. "Death is knocking at my door. My mind is flying away towards eternity ...At such a pleasant, at such a grave, at such a solemn

---

*\*This article is the summary of the inaugural address delivered by Capt. Alok Bansal, Director, India Foundation, at the national seminar on "Revisiting Indian Independence Movement" organised by India Foundation at New Delhi on 18th March, 2017. Views expressed are his own.*

---

moment, what shall I leave behind you? Only one thing that is my dream, a golden dream – the dream of Free India....Never forget the 18th of April, 1930, the day of the eastern rebellion in Chittagong... Write in red letters in the core of your hearts the names of the patriots who have sacrificed their lives at the altar of India's freedom." Ironically, hardly anyone in India remembers either the date or the freedom fighters. Of late some attempts have been made by Bombay film industry to acknowledge the stellar role played by this great revolutionary, but it is probably too little too late. Consequently, he still remains an unknown individual for most Indians. It appears as if the fact that Surya Sen was born and lived in a part that is no longer part of India has contributed to this collective amnesia. However, it needs to be appreciated, that he did not fight for creation of Bangladesh or creation of Pakistan. In fact, he and many others like him fought for India when the idea of partition had not even germinated.

It is therefore the bounden duty of every Indian to look at these heroes of independence movement, whose theatre of activity was not confined to what is India today. The first provisional government of India set up by Raja Mahendra Pratap had talked of Sindh to Kalinga. Unfortunately, not many Indians are aware of Hemu Kalani from Sukkur (Sindh), who was hanged by the Britishers in Sindh at a tender age of 19. Obviously, there is no monument for him in Sindh. The park named after him in Sukkur has been renamed as Qasim Park. Some Indian cities have started making amends for it by naming roads, parks and institutions after him, but it is primarily driven by Sindhi community. He did not fight for Sindh; he fought for Indian

independence, so it is India, which has to recognise his contribution, not Pakistan. In Pakistan, attempts to rename the chowk where Bhagat Singh was hanged, as Bhagat Singh Chowk, have faced stiff opposition from fundamentalist and conservative elements. Considering the nature of Pakistani State, they are not ready to accept it. It is for the Indian State to recognise them as they fought for Indian independence.

This amnesia is not only restricted to those freedom fighters, who were born in territories that are no longer part of India, but anyone who worked outside India. Most Indians have not even heard of Raja Mahendra Pratap, who was the president of first provisional government of India that he had set up in exile in Kabul on 01 December 1915. Although, he was nominated and shortlisted for Nobel Peace Prize in 1932, he remains unknown in India. He fought for Indian independence outside India. He went across the globe to garner support for the movement. He not only set up a provisional government in Afghanistan, he also met Kaiser Wilhelm II and managed to get a letter of support from him. They tried to seek support from wherever they could in those formative years, when the freedom moment was in its nascent stage. While highlighting the role of Raja Mahendra Pratap, there is also a need to acknowledge the huge contribution of Shyamji Krishna Verma, who died in remote Switzerland working for Indian independence. His immense contribution is virtually unknown in India. Similarly Lala Hardayal's immense contribution to the independence movement has been glossed over. He left a career in the Indian Civil Service to pursue his goal of Indian independence, traversing the globe in days

---

when air travel was scarce. He set up a newspaper by name Vande Mataram, which used to come out from Paris. He set up Bharat Mata Society. Unfortunately the immense contribution of these great intellectuals, who left lucrative avenues, to enhance global awareness about Indian independence, have neither been studied nor analysed by Indian academia.

Similarly, no attention has been paid to Gaddar party, the first organised movement emanating from across the oceans to overthrow British rule in India. People who left comfortable lives in Americas to fight for Indian independence, their huge contribution have never been recognised. Leaders of the movement like Kartar Singh Sarabha, Sohan Singh Bhakna, Bhai Parmanand, V G Pingle etc are still unknown entities for most Indians. Similarly, the role of Ras Bihari Bose, who led the Indian independence moment abroad before the advent of Netaji, has not been acknowledged adequately. Even Netaji and Indian National Army's huge contribution to attainment of Indian Independence has not been acknowledged. There is an immediate necessity to study the role and contribution of Indian National Army. Its operations and organisation have not been studied adequately. There are so many warriors of Indian National Army, who are alive and languishing in complete obscurity and anonymity. India Foundation recently did a programme in Chennai, where it brought one of the members of Rani Jhansi Regiment and felicitated her. Before this generation is wiped off, is it not essential to document that history? It would be a criminal folly, if this history is allowed to die with them.

It is not intended to belittle anybody's

contribution. But the fact is, the Britishers decided to leave India only when they realised that they could no longer bank on the loyalty of the Indian armed forces. It needs to be appreciated that the largest number of soldiers who fought for the allies in the First World War were Indians, not Americans, Britishers or Russians. It is this army which sustained the British Empire and with the creation of Indian National Army, Britishers realised that the Indian independence moment had percolated into the armed forces. They unfurled the tricolour in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, they unfurled it in Imphal and Kohima. Their immense contribution to the Indian independence moment has not been adequately recognised. One odd structure built to commemorate them in Imphal and Kohima does not do justice to their huge contribution.

There are so many sites in Myanmar, which are actually associated with Indian National Army. So many of the soldiers from INA, sacrificed their lives there. Numerous commissions have been established to ascertain what happened to Netaji; however, it would also be worthwhile to know how INA functioned and what were its military contributions. The nation also needs to know as to who all joined INA and what happened to all those who were once part of INA. It is important because the country and its governments have left them in the lurch. There were no pensions for all those who sacrificed everything at the altar of Mother India. In Myanmar, there are still people, who fought for India even though they may not be part of India today. India has unfortunately, not reached out to them. Many Indian soldiers went abroad, even to European countries to try and

---

liberate India. Although, they failed and many of them perished in alien lands, some spent rest of their lives in foreign prisons or in foreign countries; the country owes them a huge debt of gratitude. It is a chapter that has been kept under complete wraps. Obviously, Britishers did not want Indians to know about it, because that would have instigated others in Indian armed forces to follow suit, so Britishers never mentioned it. More regrettably, Indian historians have followed suit.

It has been revealed by many historians that what actually made Britishers leave India, was not Congress or any other independence movement, but it was INA and the Naval mutiny, which has again been overlooked by Indian historians. In 1946, in the naval mutiny, naval ratings took over the ships, and flew tricolour on them. This actually shook the foundations of the British Empire. The organisations that had been sustaining the British Empire had started shaking. This actually convinced the British that they could no longer sustain what had been going on and they had to leave. These have not been documented at all. Some of the mutineers were hanged. Those who took part in that mutiny were not simply mutineers; they were fighting for India's independence. To term it as a naval mutiny is actually a misnomer. It is like calling the first war of India's independence in 1857 as mutiny. It is actually insulting. A time has come, when India, its scholars and its government need to have a relook at all these issues.

Aforesaid reasons make it important for Indian scholars to revisit the Indian independence movement. Even a cursory reading of those phenomenal movements acquaint you with dedicated intellectual geniuses like Lala Hardayal,

a man who went from India to Paris, started Vande Mataram moment, then went to Algeria and from there to some isolated desolate island in Martinique, where he was virtually starving. From there he resurrected, gave ideological thrust to the Gadar party, started the Gadar newspaper, and when arrested by Americans, he fled to Berlin, from there went to Sweden. Acquired his PhD from London and eventually died in US. Most of these freedom fighters died young, in early youth, dedicating their life to this particular movement. There is a couplet in Urdu, "Shahidon ki Chitaoon par lagenge har baras mele, watan par mitne walon ka yehi namon nishan hoga" (There will be fares at the pyres of the martyrs, this is all that will remain of those who die in service of the nation). Unfortunately that has not happened in independent India. India has so many martyrs who are unsung and unheard. Their contributions have been eclipsed by contributions of just a few. It is not intended to belittle the contributions of those, who are attributed with Indian independence movement, they did phenomenal work. However, this by no means should eclipse the contribution of those who have been unsung and unheard till date.

People from different spectrums, from North to South and East to West, played immense role in India's independence movement. It is even more important to realise that this movement, at that stage, in its inception, was a unified moment of people belonging to different communities, religion and castes for India's independence. The movement had Maulavi Barkatullah and Maulavi Abaidullah Sindhi with Raja Mahendra Pratap as his advisor. It had Pandit Kanshi Ram, VG Pingle and Lala Hardayal to support Sohan Singh Bhakna

---

and Kartar Singh Sarabha in Gadar party. There has been an attempt by certain subsequent historians to communalise this particular moment, by terming it as only a Sikh movement. However, a dispassionate analysis of the movement and its initial founders shows that it comprised of people from all communities. There has been an attempt, to denigrate this phenomenal moment, which was for the independence of India, for creation of a unified India.

It is essential that extensive research is undertaken about this movement in various universities and research institutes. It is time that young scholars in India should do PhD on Surya Sen and his movement, on Hemu Kalani, or Shyamji Krishna Verma and his contribution to Indian Independence Movement. Young researchers could look at Lala Hardayal, whose biography, reads

like a novel. In those days, when air travel was scarce, that man travelled across Asia, Europe, Africa and America. Even within India, the role of revolutionaries like Ram Prasad Bismil, Chandra Shekhar Azad and Ashfaqulla Khan have not been acknowledged adequately.

A dispassionate historical research into Indian independence movement and its heroes, would give Indians a better perspective on how a movement for unified India was subverted and tainted by the colonial powers.

This gigantic movement was not only a pan Indian movement, but it spanned across continents. It was sustained not only within India, but outside India, from America to Europe to Africa, to Far East. It should be feasible to find solutions to various problems plaguing India, by analysing this movement.



## The Indian Independence Movement as seen by the Revolutionaries

\*Sanjeev Sanyal

According to the conventional narrative, the British were gently and non-violently requested to leave India and they politely left. This fits the British world-view that after their successful civilizing mission, they almost willingly gave freedom to their most important colony. It also fits the Congress party's version of events as it excludes the contributions of all other groups. The story of India's independence, however, is very different when seen from the perspective of the revolutionaries – those who waged an armed struggle against colonial rule.

There were several armed revolts against the British in the 19th century but here I will focus on the revolutionaries of early 20th century. During this period, a new group of people, often from the emerging, educated middle class, began to question British rule. Many chose the path of armed revolt. In the initial phase, this movement was led particularly out of Bengal by individuals like Aurobindo Ghosh and his brother Barin Ghosh, but individuals from other parts of the country soon joined in such as Veer Savarkar. At this stage the movement involved small groups. However, over time it would develop into a large-scale network that did not only operate in India but also in Europe, North America and the Far East. It involved large numbers of people, had links with foreign governments and movements and had a big impact in the popular thinking of the times.

The scale of the revolutionary movement is important to note because the mainstream narrative deliberately minimizes its contributions. On several occasions when I have made the point about revolutionaries' contribution to the freedom struggle, the mainstream responses were that there may have been some brave (but misguided) individuals like Bhagat Singh but their efforts did not really contribute much to the wider cause or eventual outcomes. Such discourse completely leaves out the fact that this was a long drawn-out movement involving thousands of people organized across the world, with diplomatic links with foreign governments, and sustained through the First World War, through the interwar period, through the Second World War and then ultimately culminating in the Royal Indian Navy revolt of 1946.

In the very initial phase, the movement was made up of individuals trying on their own to instigate armed revolt but then Veer Savarkar made an important intellectual contribution that gave the movement a certain long-term strategic goal. Even though he later drifted away from this movement, he contributed the idea that India's freedom ultimately lay in causing a revolt in the armed forces. He argued that India was held down by virtue of the loyalty of the Indian soldier and undermining this loyalty and instigating a revolt was the key to getting Indian freedom. This had nearly happened in 1857 but he saw it merely as the "great

---

*\*Sanjeev Sanyal is an economist and writer. These are his personal views. This article is a summary of the address made by him at the national seminar on "Revisiting Indian Independence Movement" organised by India Foundation at New Delhi on 18th March, 2017.*

---

rehearsal". The next four decades of revolutionary efforts should be seen from this lens.

The first big opportunity to carry out such a revolt in the Indian armed forces came with the First World War. It is often forgotten that India was one of the largest contributors of soldiers and material to the war effort. Many Congress leaders including Gandhi actively campaigned and worked towards recruiting Indian soldiers into the British Indian Army. The revolutionaries had a different plan. Led by Rash Behari Bose (one of the most important characters in India's freedom struggle but now mostly forgotten), they came up with a plan to use the war to cause a revolt. They began to organize what later would be called the Ghadar movement. Rash Behari had collaborators across the world. For example, Lala Hardayal who started out in England but then moved to California. Along the west coast of North America he began to instigate the Sikhs who had settled there in large numbers.

Back in India, this group began to infiltrate the Indian regiments. They planned to get a major revolt rolling across India from the middle of February, 1915. It was to start in Northwest Frontier Province and Punjab, then roll across India to the Indian regiments fighting in the First World War. Unfortunately, just few days before the revolt was supposed to take effect, a traitor informed the British authorities. Overnight all the Indian soldiers were removed from guarding the armouries and European soldiers were placed in lieu. At this stage Rash Behari Bose and his lieutenant Sachindranath Sanyal escaped to Varanasi and then the former escaped to Japan via Calcutta. There was a major purge in the Indian army. However in Singapore a revolt did take place in February 1915

and for one week the Indian regiments in Singapore held the city. It failed because rest of the revolt did not take place and the mutineers were dragged out to Outram Street in Singapore, lined up against the wall, and shot. That was the end of the Ghadar effort but that didn't end here.

The revolutionaries who remained back in India after Rash Behari Bose left, continued to be in touch with the German authorities and managed to get an embassy running in Berlin with full diplomatic status. Germans even managed to get a small Indian delegation smuggled through British lines to Kabul where they were trying to instigate the Afghans also to revolt. In the midst of all this, the German Embassy in Washington acquired thousands of guns and planned to ship them via the Pacific and Bay of Bengal to land on the coast of Orissa. Here the revolutionaries had already trained large number of young people to use guns. The idea was to infiltrate Calcutta on Christmas Day. A big Christmas dinner used to take place in Calcutta at the Governor-General's house where all the most senior British officials gathered. The plan was to take over the senior management of the colonial administration and then declare independence. Sadly this plan too went awry because a German agent in Singapore, who was a key part of the operation, switched sides and informed the British authorities in return for money and immunity. The guns never reached and many revolutionaries were captured. Sachindranath Sanyal was sent off to the notorious prison in Port Blair, Andamans (Kala Paani). Many others were incarcerated across India or killed.

Although there were two major failures in the First World War, the reason to tell this story is to

---

emphasize the fact that this movement was not some isolated individuals carrying out random acts. This was a major international operation involving thousands of people and, with a bit of luck, may well have succeeded. A similar operation by Lawrence of Arabia instigating the Arabs against the Turks worked and is celebrated in film and literature.

After the First World War, when the Indian troops began to come back home, there were fears that the revolutionaries would again revolt. This is the context in which Jallianwala Bagh massacre happened. After the massacre, many of the key leaders of the revolutionary movement were released in an amnesty in 1920 in order to mollify growing public anger. For a while they participated along with the Congress in the Non-cooperation movement but after Chauri Chaura, when Gandhi unilaterally suspended the movement, the revolutionaries decided to go their own way.

The revolutionaries pointed out that just a few months earlier Gandhi had been recruiting into the British Indian Army, and sending hundreds of thousands of Indians to the front in France and the Middle East. If the use of violence had not been a constraint then, why was it now when India had come so close to becoming free. The revolutionaries withdrew and there was a very acrimonious debate between Sachindranath Sanyal and Gandhi in the pages of *Young India*. At about this time Ireland became free. The revolutionaries argued that when a tiny country right next to Britain can become free why cannot a large country so far away also do so.

They organized themselves again under the umbrella organization called Hindustan Republic Association set up by Sachindranath Sanyal and

others. Under it, the Hindustan Republican Army was formed. The names are important because they are clearly inspired by the Irish Republican Army. The Irish contribution to the Indian freedom struggle has also entirely been forgotten. Through the 1920s this group recruited the likes of Chandra Shekhar Azad, Bhagat Singh and so on. Again one can see that this movement was not a case of individuals doing random acts but an organized group who had a clear agenda which ultimately was to cause a revolt in the Indian Armed Forces. Through the 1920s various operations were carried out, but many revolutionaries were also hunted down and killed. This was also a time incidentally when the British managed to infiltrate this movement with a lot of collaborators. So there was a serious problem with informants from here on. The Hindi writer Yashpal was widely suspected by revolutionaries of being a collaborator. He became a very famous writer after independence and tended to play on his revolutionary credentials but in fact the revolutionaries themselves were very suspicious of him. Through the thirties this movement continued to fester despite the killing of Chandrashekhar Azad, Bhagat Singh and Rajendra Lahiri.

In the late thirties, it began to look that there was going to have another major war. The revolutionaries saw this was yet another opportunity to do what they had failed at the time of First World War. Sachindranath Sanyal contacted Rash Behari Bose who was still in Japan. They began to think about how would they organize themselves in Asia if there was war in Europe. Netaji Subhash Bose met Japanese agents on several occasions in the late 1930s. So it was not



---

just the failure to elicit help from Hitler that made him go to Singapore in 1943 to work with the Japanese during the Second World War. This was always a possibility from the beginning given the links of the revolutionaries, via Rash Behari Bose, to the Japanese. There are still people alive who witnessed Netaji meeting the Japanese in Sachindranath Sanyal's home in the late 1930s.

The critics of Netaji tend to present his escape to Germany via Russia as some new found love for fascism, but that is not the case. If one recalls the history of the First World War, the revolutionaries had establishments in Germany and in Japan for a long time before the rise of fascism. What Netaji was doing was following up on those old leads. Once Japan entered the war and took over Singapore, Rash Behari Bose came to Singapore and organized the Indian National Army. The INA was not founded by Netaji as many people think but was founded by Rash Behari Bose, the old revolutionary who had attempted to do the same thing with the Ghadar movement in the First World War. Netaji famously came by submarine and landed in Singapore and took charge as Rash Behari was very old by now. As is well known, this episode too ended in failure in the military sense that the Japanese lost, but one could argue that it directly led to Indian independence.

From the perspective of revolutionaries, the Second World War was essentially a great battle between two evil Empires. Churchill, for instance, deliberately withdrew all food from Bengal in a scorched earth policy that starved to death three million people in order to defend his empire. So, from the perspective of many Indians there was

little to distinguish the Allied from the Axis. This was seen essentially as a war between two equally evil empires, and Netaji and other revolutionaries felt that they could utilize the situation to free themselves.

Once the Second World War ended, the surrendered soldiers of Indian National Army were brought in chains to Delhi. There were demands for having them all summararily executed but the colonial authorities realized that this would cause a revolt so they were tried in Red Fort. During those trials there were a number of rumblings of unhappiness in the Indian Armed Forces which ultimately culminated in the Royal Indian Navy revolt of 1946 in Bombay where about 20,000 battle-hardened sailors took charge of about 70 warships in the Bombay harbour. These were Navy ships and the battle-hardened sailors knew how to fire the guns. At this point, they were in a position to have declared independence. British authorities repeatedly asked Indian army soldiers to act against the sailors but they refused.

Many argue that this is the key event that led to Indian Independence as it is the point when British realized that they could no longer hold India. British Prime Minister Atlee himself is supposed to have admitted to this point. There is a talk by BR Ambedkar on BBC in which he also makes the same point explicitly. The revolutionaries had finally succeeded!! They had intended all along from before the First World War to try and cause a revolt in the Indian armed forces and, with the Royal Indian Navy Revolt of 1946 in Bombay, they had finally succeeded. For the revolutionaries, the attainment of freedom had little to do with making salt.



## Periphery in India's Independence Movement: A Re-look from Northeast India\*

Prof. Nani G. Mahanta

In Social Science, throughout the world, JSTOR is said to be the most popular search engine for national and international E-journals of various disciplines. I was just trying to locate how many academic articles have been written on Assam's role in India's Independence Movement. Even though there were a lot of results relating to Assam, unfortunately there was not a single write-up on Assam's role in India's Freedom struggle. Next, I tried to locate in Shodhganga, which is a reservoir of Indian theses conducted in all the Universities of India. There we will find a thesis on "Role of Muslims in Indian Freedom Struggle", 'Construction of Assamese identity in 1826-1920, but no systematic, noteworthy academic study on 'Assam's role in India's Freedom Struggle'. So, there is apathy to look into India's freedom struggle from the periphery. The mainstream history discourse hardly takes into account the role of the peripheries like that of the Northeast India. We have looked at India's freedom struggle from below – thanks to subaltern school. But we have not looked at Indian freedom struggle history from the peripheries, like from the perspective of Assam.

The then Assam is now divided into seven North-eastern states. Assam's fight against British imperialism can be broadly divided into two parts – a) The pre-Gandhian phase and b) The Gandhian phase. The pre-Gandhian phase may further be divided into two phases – 1) The Ahom ruling class against the Company from 1828 to 1858, which is

known as the 'thirty years of war launched by the decaying Ahom nobles' and 2) from 1858 to 1900 – this phase was initially marked by a spontaneous variety of farmers and peasant movement that fought against the exorbitant revenue and tax collection of the British administration. Towards the later phase, Assam witnessed the emergence of a literary movement and the emergence of a neo middle class that laid the foundation of Assamese and Indian nationalism.<sup>1</sup> However, for a proper methodical study, Assam's participation in India's freedom struggle can be divided into six phases:

- i) First phase 1828-1858: Revolt by Ahom and Tribal Siems
- ii) Second phase of the revolt of 1857
- iii) Third phase of Agrarian Revolts from 1860-1900
- iv) Fourth phase of Formation National Consciousness (1852-1920)
- v) Fifth phase – Gandhian phase (1920-1944)
- vi) Final phase of resistance against the Congress – 1945—1947

In this analysis, the Gandhian phase has not been included as a lot of information and analyses of this phase is available.

### First Phase 1828-1858:

Immediately after the takeover of Assam by the East India Company in 1826, the Britishers made effort to strike roots in the state. The

*\*This paper was presented by Prof. Nani G. Mahanta, Professor of Political Science, Gauhati University at the national seminar on "Revisiting Indian Independence Movement" organised by India Foundation at New Delhi on 18th March, 2017.*

---

defeated Ahoms and the ruling class found that their estates and paiks were almost taken away in return of petty pension, gratuity and subordinate ranks in the company offices. “This loss of power and privileges which they enjoyed as members of the ruling classes, coupled with the removal of their kith and kins from their offices made it crystal clear that their future was extremely bleak under the new arrangements.”<sup>2</sup> Very soon they organised armed resistance in various forms and capacities.

The first attempt to overthrow the British Raj was made under the leadership of Gomdhar Konwar — a prince of Ahom royal blood and Dhananjay Pealia Borgohain in the year 1828. Meanwhile the Britishers were withdrawing their troops to meet situations in other parts of India. The rebels thought this was the best time to regain Rangpur, the capital of Assam. Along with the Ahom ruling elites, various tribal leaders also made effort to oust the Britishers from Assam. The Khasis under Tirot Singh, the Singphos and the Khantis in the south east and the Bhutias also created considerable troubles for the Britishers. The Khasis had lost the traditional ‘duars’ — which used to provide lot of revenues to the Khasis under the Ahoms. The most determined fighter was the Khasi leader Tirot Singh, the Siem or Raja of Nongkhalo. He organised a comprehensive attack on the Britishers in collaboration with the Ahoms and other Siems. Ultimately the British pacified the Khasis by bringing under subsidiary alliance.

Emboldened with such initiatives, the newly enthroned king made a serious attack on the British, which was however, intercepted by Lieutenant Rutherford. In 1830, there was another attack on the Britishers under the leadership of Dhananjay Borgohain with active assistance from Haranath (his son), Piyoli Borphukan, Jeuram Dulia Baruah,

Jiu Ram Dhingia Deka, Roop Chand Konwar etc. and organised an army of 400 armed soldiers. Captain Neville thwarted the attempt of the rebel to destroy the firehouse of the Britishers. Most of the leaders were arrested and Piyoli Phukan and Jeuram Dulia Baruah were hanged. Thus, long before Mangal Pandey was hanged and officially declared as the first martyr of India, two Ahom nobles were hanged in 1830 in the month of August for raising armed rebellion against the Britishers.

### **Second Phase of the Revolt of 1857:**

Initial phase of British rule in Assam was marked by chaos, lawlessness and tyranny. The old aristocracy and gentry could therefore hardly reconcile themselves to the new Government. Some of them became desperate; they felt that their salvation lay only in the restoration of the old regime, because the hopes of the old aristocracy initially rested on the members of the royalty, who were still acknowledged by many as leaders of the people, most prominent of whom were Chandrakanta Singha and Purandar Singha. Chandrakanta the ex-Raja, after making several attempts to regain his possessions, died with a heavy heart in early 1830s. It was at this critical moment that Maniram Dutta Barbhandar Baruah Dewan, hitherto one of the most loyal and trusted officers of the Company assumed a new role as the leader of the war of liberation.

Maniram was a true representative of the rising middle class in Assam, growing and maturing under direct British Patronage. He remained loyal to the rulers as long as co-operation with them served his interest. Beginning his career as a loyal servant and friend, he held important office of administration and excelled in every new situation. A man of dash and determination, he was the first among

---

his compatriots to find each new avenue of success under the alien rule; yet he was also the first to raise the standard of revolt against it at an early age of 43.

As an administrative officer, he gained intimate knowledge of the miserable conditions of the nobles and the people; as Dewan in Assam Tea Company, he found a window open on the capitalist world outside; and he now looked forward to the dawn of happier days for his fellow countrymen. As he grew conscious of his class interest and his historic mission, he could no longer brook any interference of the British, whose sole objective was to raise and maintain a class of officers subservient to them. Maniram now realised that there was no future for him and his countrymen under the colonial rule which would never allow the growth of any independent enterprise by an Indian. He threw his lot with Kandarpeswar Singha, the Charing Raja, who also like him, had been facing utmost difficulties in maintaining the royal family that was on the verge of penury. Maniram now became the Charing Raja's friend, philosopher and guided and inspired him to action by rousing "sanguinary hopes of getting the country back to his management."

Maniram's second memorandum was also a "balance sheet of the administration of the East India Company for over a quarter of a century." In it, the emphasis was laid mainly upon the grievances of the people, those higher classes in particular. To quote his word: "By the stoppage of such cruel practices as extracting the eyes, cutting off noses and ears, and the forcible abduction of virgins from their homes and by the removal of all wayside transit duties..... the British Government has (earned) for itself inestimable praise and renown but by introduction into the province of

new customs, numerous courts, an unjust system of taxation, an objectionable treatment of the hill tribes.... neither the British Government nor their subjects have gained any benefit."

About this time, there occurred the insurrection of the sepoys at Meerut, Delhi, Lucknow and Kanpur and the news reached him that Bahadur Shah had been proclaimed Emperor of Hindustan at Delhi by the rebels and many princes were regaining their lost possessions. Maniram calculated the possibility of organising a similar insurrection in Assam for overthrowing the British Raj and considered the situation there very favourable. Most of the sepoys of the First Assam Light Infantry stationed at Dibrugarh were from western Bihar, a hotbed of the rebellion of 1857. These sepoys were sure to come forward to drive away the foreigners. There were also 500 Assamese soldiers belonging to the army of the erstwhile king Purandar Singha disbanded by the Company Government after his deposition in 1838. Further, the strength of the European army in Bengal was only 2400, some detachments of which again had to be engaged elsewhere to fight the rebels. There was also an acute transport problem. In the case of a revolt in Assam, therefore, the Government was not in a position to despatch an army from Bengal to meet the situation there. To add to their utter dismay, there was not a single European soldier in Assam. The number of British officers also was small and the European planters were so scattered in different parts of the valley that a safe escape was not easy for them either. The old aristocracy and gentry, the most aggrieved party of British rule, was sure to join Maniram and the hill people, too, were sure to extend their support to the rebels. Not to speak only of the Khasis in the west, there were numerous instances of

---

rebellion of the hill tribes in the east against the British- of the Singphos who surprised the British outpost at Sadiya in 1830; of the Khamtis, who killed Col. White and others in 1839; of the Tagi Raja, the chief of the Kapahchor Akas, who killed a number of British subjects in 1835 and started up commotion among the hill tribes against the imposition of the British rule, and of the Nagas who revolted in 1849.

Maniram wanted to take full advantage of the situation and goaded the young prince Kandarpeswar Singha as well as the member of the erstwhile nobility and gentry, including certain *Satradhikar* like that of Kamalabari, to take up arms against the British. He communicated all the developments in other parts of India to his friends and associates in Assam through messengers in the guise of *fakirs* called *bhats*, who had been regularly visiting Assam. Before Maniram could come to Assam to take the lead, a few of his letters were intercepted by the Principal Assistant of Sibsagar, Captain Charles Holroyd.

The event of 1857-58, however, had certain implication specific to the history of Assam. Unlike in other parts of India, where the leadership was taken by old nobility and the dispossessed classes, the nobility here was so ruined and the traditional gentry so divided that an organised leadership of these classes did not emerge spontaneously. As a result, Maniram, a representative of the rising middle class and the section of the gentry association with him, found themselves completely isolated. Even amongst this class, unity of purpose was not much, attack could not be launched on the British army as all the major moves were intercepted and all major leaders were arrested. Bhikom Singh, king Kandarpeswar Singha, Piyoli Baruah, Madhu Mallick, Dutiram Baruah, Bahadur

Gaon Bura, Madhu Koch etc. were arrested and sent to jails in various parts of India. Maniram Dewan and Piyoli Baruah were hanged publicly on 26<sup>th</sup> February, 1858.

The failed Ahom gentry's mutiny of 1857 in Assam had many characteristics —

1. This was the last resistance put forward by the decaying Ahom ruling class against the Britishers.
2. This rebellion marked the final end of Ahom rule in Assam.
3. This rebellion integrated Assam with the pan-India anti-British agitation – in many occasions the Light Infantry from Bihar regiment came forward to be a part of this drive. Sepoys from the other parts of India posted in Assam sided with the rebel of Assam.

### **Third Phase of Agrarian Revolts (1860-1900):**

The failure of 1857 abundantly made it clear that the conservative aristocratic nobles and feudal lords cannot liberate Assam from the clutches of British colonialism. It also brought to an end the possibility of revival of Ahom conservative aristocratic nobles in Assam. The masses, particularly the peasantry and the labour class were largely apathetic to such mobilisation. The exploitative nature of British ruling class was yet to be realised by the masses as the annexation of Assam by the British was projected as an effort to save Assam from anarchism and misrule of the Burmese and the decaying Ahom ruling class. The advent of British rule was rather initially welcomed in anticipation of order and peace in the society. However, from 1860, we witnessed a new mass upsurge against the British Raj. From that

---

perspective, the agrarian and the peasants' movement from 1860-1900 can be said to be first mass based agitation and rebellion against the British Raj in Assam.

After 1857, the Britishers decided to increase their tax and revenue collection and for the first time the ryots were asked to pay their rent (khajana) in cash which created insurmountable problems for the farmers and artisans. Fear of tax and rent prevented many farmers from going for regular cultivation. Robertson, the commissioner found "its inhabitants emigrating, its villages decaying and its revenue annually declining"<sup>3</sup>. Rutherford observed – "the dreadful extortion had beggared the ryots and rendered a large portion of the country waste in which up to our conquest, such a thing as jungle was hardly to be seen". Concerned only with taxation, the new government was totally indifferent to the improving of economy. In other words, the extortion by then governments was increasing day by day. By 1870, as per the proposal of Commissioner Hopkins, khajana was increased by more than 100%. By 1893, after survey was done throughout the state, the khajana was further increased.<sup>4</sup> The new Assamese zamindari and administrative neo lower middle class played a subservient role to the exploitative mechanism of the British Raj. Gunabhiram Barua gave detailed account of how the Assamese administrative gentry tricked the ryots to collect revenue by all means.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Jayantiya Rebellion (1860-63)**

The first popular rising against the new taxation measures took place in the Jayantiya hills. When a house tax and a stamp duty were imposed on the people of the region in 1860, who till then were not accustomed to paying any kind of money tax, they rose in open rebellion. In its very early stage,

the rising was suppressed with an iron hand, for which it could not attract wide attention. But trouble did not end there. The Khasi people of the region were roused to action once again when a licence tax was introduced shortly afterwards, and some of their tribal customs and usages like the use of ceremonial weapons in their tribal dances were interfered with by the Government. All the Khasis soon organised themselves under their respective chiefs and together they rose in revolt against the British. Though their weapons consisted of bows and arrows, their suppression was not easy and it was not till the end of 1863 that they could be finally quelled.

The first agrarian revolt against the Britishers is known as the Phulagiri Dhawa in 1861, the immediate cause for which was the banning of the opium cultivation. Sensing a progressive tone of the move by the Britishers, various writers and intellectuals of Assam ignored the uprising. For example, the Arunodoi — the first Assamese newspaper published at the initiative of Christian missionaries, caricatured the peasants. However, there is huge sub text to the whole narrative which is ignored by the writings on the uprising.

Such measures of the Government severely tolled the economy of the peasants of Assam, particularly of Nowgong, which was the largest opium-producing district in Assam. Rumours, not entirely baseless, were afloat that soon cultivation of *tamul* (areca nut) and paan (betel vine) would also be made taxable. This led to an agitation, mainly amongst the tribal population (Lalungs) of the Phulaguri area, about 12 kilometres from the present town of Nowgong. In September 1861, some 1500 *ryots* marched to the Sadar Court at Nowgong to protest against the ban on poppy cultivation and the contemplated imposition of tax

---

on *tamul* and *paan* cultivation. Lt. Herbert Sconce, the Deputy Commissioner of Nowgong, dealt with the ryots in a high-handed and provocative manner and refused to hear their complaints.

In the subsequent standoff between the Ryots and the British, 39 farmers were killed, three were hanged, many of them were injured, seven were deported to Koliapani, and sixty were imprisoned for one to ten years.<sup>6</sup> The episode is still remembered by the people of Assam as the *Phulaguri Dhawa* or the battle of Phulaguri. It may be noted here that the incident was not merely a regular battle between an agitating crowd and an armed force of the Government for prohibition of opium cultivation; it was the earliest of the spontaneous popular movements in Assam against the policy of colonial exploitation.

It would be wrong to think that the Britishers had banned opium cultivation thinking about the well-being of people in the state. Assam was identified to be a huge market for opium, which was brought from the opium trade of northern parts of India (1851-1852). The British government sold this opium at exorbitant prices in Assam and any production in the state would have reduced the cost resulting in losses to the British coffer.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Assam Riots (1893-94)**

But it did not stop the enhancement of revenue or the supply of government opium. It had also strengthened the police force to create a sense of fear among the restless *ryots*. In 1868-69, the Government had increased the rates of revenue on *rupit* and non-*rupit* lands in the Assam valley districts from 25 to 50 percent, so that the land revenue which amounted to Rs. 1001,773 in 1864-65 rose to Rs. 2165,157 in 1872-73.

The people, particularly in the district of

Darrang and Kamrup, reacted through their *rarjmels*. The people of Lakhimpur resorted to a novel way of protest. They surrendered so much of their land that only 26 percent of the enhanced assessment could be collected. In every place, the protests of the *ryots* were suppressed by a show of force, so that holding of *raij-mels* had to be given up by them. The people then used to gather in the *Namghars* or *Mosques* to discuss new ways of protesting the enhanced assessment. Yet they were not prepared to launch a struggle; they were only biding time to gain a better understanding of the modes of their adversary. But when they again found the government ruthlessly imposing higher rates of assessment, they rose in rebellion towards the close of the century. Thus broke out a series of protests known as "Assam Riots", beginning with December 1893 when Sir William Ward, the Chief Commissioner of Assam made a new assessment and increased land revenue to 70-80 percent and in some cases even to 100 percent. The people of Rangia and Lachima in Kamrup and Patharughat in Darrang launched thereupon a no-tax campaign declaring excommunication to be the penalty for anyone who disobeyed the *raij* (people). These risings, however, were not merely against the British but also against the Marwari traders, monopolising the internal trade of Assam and exploiting the peasants through usury.

The movement at Rangia started with the looting of the Rangia bazar on the morning of 24 December 1893. *Raij-mels* in Nalbari, Barama, Bajali and other places continued to be as active as before.

On January 21, 1894, a *mouzadar* and a *mandal* were severely assaulted in a village called Kapla near Lachima in the Sarukhetri mouza of the Kamrup district. They went to that place for

---

collection of revenue. The mouzadar died a few days later. Seventy-five people were arrested in this connection but a mob forced their release.

There was a similar movement at Patharughat in the district of Darrang in January 1894. Since the middle of that month, the *ryots* through their *mels* not only protested against the increased rates of revenue but also resisted those who would be paying revenues to the Government. To deal with the situation, J.D. Anderson, the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang, himself arrived at Patharughat on 27<sup>th</sup> January with a party of military police under Lt. Berrington. Next morning, about 2,000 *ryots* assembled in front of the rest-house where Anderson was encamping to lodge their protest against the enhanced rates of assessment. Anderson asked them to disperse but the people would not listen. Instead, they began to throw sticks and clods of earth to Anderson. Berrington then ordered to open fire, which brought death to fifteen and severe injury to many *ryots*.

#### **Fourth Phase of Formation of National Consciousness (1852-1920):**

The Assamese sense of belonging was based on a significant literary movement of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. British colonial officials in 1836, a decade after the takeover of Assam had decided that the language of rule in Assam would be Bengali. The earliest assertions of Assamese cultural pride grew as a reaction to that decision.<sup>8</sup> Reaction to such imposition was twofold. One, the middle-class intelligentsia strongly reacted to such a move by Britishers and two, a renaissance of Assamese society took place, where the literary movement launched by the Assamese elites played the most dominant role. Anandaram Dhekial Phukan petitioned to Moffat Mills in 1852 against

instruction in the “vernacular schools” being imparted in the foreign language i.e. Bengali. According to Prof Amaledu Guha, “His contribution to early nationalist ideology apart, Dhekiyal Phukan also gave vent to Assamese national pride”.<sup>9</sup> Dhekial Phukan reminded the Government that the Assamese were in no way “inferior in their intellectual capacities to any other Indian National”.<sup>10</sup> Through the literary movement, the educated Assamese middle class not only strengthened the Assamese language but also tried to instil new progressive ideas to the people.

It was only after First World War that a distinct national consciousness, backed-up by political organisations began to take shape. Before this, the struggle for legitimate status of the Assamese language, which was replaced by Bengali in 1837 had begun. Anandaram Dhekial Phukan (1829-59) and the American Christian missionaries, who in the meantime were writing grammar and dictionaries of Assamese, played a decisive role in the establishment of the language. According to Prof Maheswar Neog, the Christian missionaries, by publishing Assamese grammar, newspapers, dictionaries, other science and literary books had immensely contributed for the growth Assamese language and literature.<sup>11</sup> By publishing ‘Arunodoi’<sup>12</sup> for a period of thirty seven years, the missionaries had created a new bunch of Assamese nationalist writers and thus instilled confidence in the ambit of sagging morale which was created by the replacement of Assamese by Bengali as the court language.

The Assamese language gained its legitimate status in year 1873. Anandaram Barua along with Gunabhiram and Hemchandra Barua generated a linguistic consciousness and generated love for their own language. The establishment of the Asomiya



---

Bhasha Unnati Sadhani Sabha (ABUSS) or Assamese Language improving society on 25 August, 1888 by a few Assamese students in Calcutta is a landmark in the history of Assamese language and literature.<sup>13</sup>

The Assam Association in 1903 marked a significant step in the growth of Assamese nationalism. The Association served as the mouth piece of the Assamese middle class in articulating their needs, grievances and aspirations. It was instrumental in organising the new generation to fight against the Britishers.<sup>14</sup> The first student organisation of the valley Assam Chatra Sanmilian came into existence in 1916, and L. N. Bezbarua was chosen as the president. Soon after, the Assam Sahitya Sabha was established in 1917, which was considered to be linchpin of nationalism in Assam.<sup>15</sup>

One distinguishing feature during this period was the growing settlement of Muslim population in Assam. Thus, on the one hand the Assamese middle class had to face stiff competition from educated Bengali middle class, patronised by the Britishers and on the other hand, the elites were highly apprehensive about the increasing migrant population. Throughout this period the Bengalis outnumbered the Assamese both in numbers and in representation in Government services, profession and business.<sup>16</sup> Whereas both the groups had fought against the common enemy of British imperialism; they also fought against each other for jobs, land and domination.<sup>17</sup>

The Assamese middle class in the period of 1920s became highly apprehensive about the continuous immigration of East Bengal people to the region. The most worrying fact for the middle class was that 'these immigrants would, in due course, further tilt the provinces' demographic, cultural and political balance in favour of the

Bengalis'.<sup>18</sup> Muslim immigration from Bengal began to be viewed as a calculated move to turn Assam into a Muslim majority province, so that she could qualify herself for inclusion into the erstwhile East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. Prof. Amalendu Guha gives a very detailed account about the problem in his serial work planter Raj to Swaraj— "Landless immigrants from over populated East Bengal – of them, 85% were Muslims – found land in Assam's water logged, jungle infested, riverine belt. Used to an amphibious and industrious mode of living, these immigrants came by rail, steamers and bits up the Brahmaputra to reclaim those malarial areas. All that they wanted was land. From their riverine base, they further pressed themselves forward in all directions in search of living space in the areas held by the autochthons. It was then that an open clash of interests began to take place....".<sup>19</sup>

All these organisations and west educated middle class leaders like Lakshminath Bezbarua, Jananath Bora, Kamalakanta Bhattacharyya, Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury, Chandranath Sharma and others contributed immensely to the growth of Assamese nationalism. Thus, the search for a cohesive Assamese identity went along with Pan Indian nationalism. However, in some cases the regional brand of nationalism overshadowed Pan Indian nationalism.

The formulation of Assam province varied from an independent, separate nation to the autonomous self-reliant state. For example, Kamalakanta Bhattacharyya (1855-1936), editor of the Journal Assam Hitashi advocated for an independent, self-reliant nation. Two important issues that had helped in the Assamese nationalism are the restoration of the language and the sense of insecurity which primarily emanated from unchecked infiltration

---

from West Bengal. “The fear of being inundated and overtaken by “stronger” nationalities was attempted to be confronted by stress on separate identity of Assamese people which could be ensured through economic progresses & cultural advancement”.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile the movement for driving out the Britishers had already started in Assam. The members of Assam Association formed Assam Provincial Congress Committee (APCC) in order to contribute to the national efforts. Ambikagiri Raichoudhury, a notable writer, poet & a nationalist, however did not allow Assamese nationalism to be merged into Indian nationalism. Raichoudhury clearly distinguished ‘Asamiya Swaraj’ from ‘Bharatiya Swaraj’ and argued that the ‘Swaraj’ for India might not bring Swaraj for Assam.<sup>21</sup>

The Assamese elite conceived nationalism not so much in the Indian context as it was in the Assamese context. They talked more aggressively about Assamese nationalism and less of Indian nationalism.<sup>22</sup> The appearance of newspapers and periodicals such as the *Arunoday* (1846), the *Assam Bilashini* (1871), the *Jonaki* (1889), the *Bijulee* (1890), the *Assamiya* (1918), the *Times of Assam* (1923), the *Bonti* (1927), the *Avahan* (1929), the *Assam Tribune* (1937), had made immense contribution in the growth of Asomiya-nationalism.” The rise in the level of political consciousness of the people was reflected in the articulation of regional demands which included rights of “Sons of the soil” and safeguard against unchecked and unlimited immigration from nearby provinces”- says Prof. Mishra.<sup>23</sup>

Assamese press during this period can be divided into two categories - a) nationalist press tilted more towards Indian nationalism and b) Newspapers leaning more towards the cause of

Assam and the Assamese than Indian nationalism. Papers like *Assam Bilasini* (1913-1924), *Weekly Asamiya* (1918-1947), *Bi-weekly Asamiya* (1930-1942), and *Assam Sevak* (1937-1943) would fall into the first category and used to suffer at the hands of the British administration for their support to the Nationalist struggle.

Prof. Sunil Pawan Baruah who had written the pioneering book ‘Press in Assam: Origin and Development’ said in one of his writings — “...it is to be remembered that notion of nationalism of most of the newspapers of Brahmaputra valley was different from the concept of nationalism as understood by the country ....In fact some sort of uneasiness and apprehension of economic and cultural domination by the outsiders influenced to a certain extent, the tone of the Assamese press in the pre-independence period and even after independence, this attitude prevailed...”<sup>24</sup>. *Chetona* (1919-1927), *Deka Asom* (1935) and *Dainik Batori* (1935) were a few papers that would fall into second category (b) that we have mentioned above. The first daily Newspaper of Assam, *Dainik Batori* (1935), didn’t support the Non-cooperation Movement initiated by the Congress.

Intellectuals like Ambikagiri Raichoudhury, Jnananath Bora, Chandra Nath Sharma were under the apprehension that British domination might be replaced by the domination of non-Assamese Indians over the Assamese. Ambika Raichoudhury continuously emphasised on the need of developing national consciousness. It was at the insistence of Raichoudhury that in 1926 the Asom Sangrakhini Sabha, later known as Asom Jatiya Mahasabha was established to protect the interest of the Assamese. Ambikagiri’s idea about India and other smaller nationalities can be grasped from the following excerpts: -

---

“India is not a country; it is a continent – a totality of many countries. According to their own social systems, customs, everyone is a nationality – and as a result of combination of all these nationalities is growing the great Indian Mahajati – therefore India is the Mahadesh of the Indian Mahajati. Though the people of various provinces may be of same ideology yet they have distinct customs, dresses, eating habits, social norms and distinct natures, system of thoughts are different literature and culture are different. None of them want to disappear.”<sup>25</sup>

“He viewed India as not one nation but as a combination of nationalities who aspire to protect their identities within the Indian Mahajati.”<sup>26</sup>

### **Final Phase of Resistance against the Raj & Congress (1945–1947): Cabinet Mission and Grouping System :**

Assam was not only fighting against the British imperialism. The then undivided Assam was also fighting against the insensitive attitude of the central Congress leadership. Assam had continuously fought for keeping its distinctiveness against the divisive plan of making Assam a part of East Pakistan.

A search for a cohesive Assamese identity went along with Pan Indian Nationalism. Following trends of Assamese nationalism were noticeable during the time of nationalist struggle from 1830-1947—

1. Fight against domination by another regional group, i.e. the Bengali. This was done in a subtle manner by persuading the Britishers to accept Assamese as a distinct language.<sup>27</sup> The attempt was to assert Assamese language and literature.
2. The second trend was a Pan-Indian identity

which the Congress leaders were successful to establish with the help of anti-British nationalist struggle that had engulfed the entire nation.

3. The third trend was more inward looking that tried to fiercely protect Assamese identity from the aggression of immigrants from East Bengal. These groups of leaders were highly critical about the insensitive attitude of Congress leaders towards Assam. A few nationalist leaders even tried to establish Assam as an independent sovereign state, if Assam’s interests were not protected within the Indian Union.

Assam’s fight with the Centre remained at the core of her politics even before the attainment of independence. In its early period of formation, the Indian political leaders were in a hurry to form the Indian national state. In the process, feelings and grievances of some of the communities living in the periphery remained unanswered. The Indian ruling elites had shown great insensitivity and nonchalance to some of the fundamental questions of Assam. The upcoming generations, and the regional ruling elites have nurtured these feelings of the Centre and in later period, extremist groups like ULFA & others utilised them for gaining legitimacy to their anti-Indian stand and advocate secessionism.

One of the significant aspect of 1942 Quit India movement was the overwhelming participation of the people and various political groups, cutting across the ideological differences. “The people’s resistance in the face of massive repression proved finally that they were with the Congress and its brand of politics.”

On 16th May 1946, the Cabinet Mission declared its statement, the most important features

---

of which were that it recommended for the unity of India, a three-tier constitution-the Centre, groups and provinces and an interim Government with the support of the major political parties till the constitution was complete. To expedite the composition of the constitution making body, the Mission suggested the inclusion of representatives from the recently elected provincial Legislative Assemblies. Each province was to be allotted a total number of seats proportional to its population, approximating a ratio of one to a million. The population was divided into three major communities - General, Muslim and Sikh, which were to have equal representation. The provinces would be divided into three sections, A, B, and C. Sections B and C comprised of six Muslim dominated provinces. Bengal and Assam were included in section C.

As soon as the statement was declared by the Cabinet Mission, there was a sharp reaction in Assam against the grouping clause which had tagged the province with Bengal in section C to frame the group and provincial constitutions.

Nirode Kr. Barooah in his seminal work says - "The problem with Assam was that since this Hindu- majority province would be together with the Muslim predominated Bengal in one section, the acceptance of the Section would automatically mean opting for the group and thereby getting submerged in Bengal. In fact, there can be no doubt that the grouping provision was especially made to be an essential feature of the Cabinet Mission plan to satisfy the Muslim League."<sup>28</sup>

The imposing nonchalant and insensitive attitude of the central leaders greatly disheartened the Assamese leaders and needless to say, such mental set-up of all India political leaders continued even in the period of sixties and seventies - causing

an unbridgeable gap between the Centre and Assam. Leaders like Gopinath Bardoloi, Bishnuram Medhi, Bimala P. Chaliha and others could not think of initiating drastic steps against the Centre as these leaders had tremendous faith and respect for Nehru and their comrades in freedom struggle, who now happened to be holding important posts in the central ministry. Unfortunately, legacy of freedom struggle was no longer romantically imbibed by the third-generation regional ruling elites and hence developed a strong sceptical view about the centre. Thus, for the Assam Congress leaders, the 16 May (1946) statement became almost like a call for another struggle for independence and this time it was against their own big brothers at the Centre.<sup>29</sup>

Nehru went to the extent of suggesting that the Assam Assembly adopt a resolution refusing to sit in the Group and a clear directive be given to the Assam representatives of the Constituent Assembly in this regard. Sardar Patel too expressed his solidarity in favour of Assam Congress and he fully backed Assam's stand.<sup>30</sup> Finally, when the Assam delegation met Gandhi, he categorically told them to stay out of the Group.<sup>31</sup> The Congress Working Committee headed by Azad expressed its support for Assam's stand and endorsed Nehru's suggestion regarding a resolution by the Assam Assembly. But surprisingly, when Azad and Nehru met for the Cabinet Mission on 10 June, 1946, they did not raise the issue of Assam's objection to the Group.<sup>32</sup>

It was at this moment of grave crisis that Gandhi came to Assam's assistance and told a delegation of Assam Congress leaders - "If Assam keeps quiet, it is finished. No one can force Assam to do what it does not want to do. It must stand independently as an autonomous unit. It is autonomous to a large extent today. It must become

---

fully independent and autonomous..... As soon as the time comes for the Constituent Assembly to go into sections you will say, ‘Gentlemen, Assam retires’.”

Azad and Nehru, however, continued to hold the view that Assam’s stand was helping the Muslim League and also acting as an obstruction to freedom. Nehru is reported to have told a three-member delegation from Bengal, which asked him as to why Assam was being let down after being given such high hopes by him, “Assam could not hold up the progress of the rest of India and support to Assam would mean refusal to accept the British Prime Minister’s statement of December 6 and letting loose forces of chaos and civil war” (*Transfer of power: IX,510*).

## Conclusion

Assam’s contribution to the freedom struggle of India goes back to the period of 1828. In the year 1830 two Assamese were hanged by the Britishers for raising armed rebellion. They may not have been the first ones to have laid lives for the ouster of the British Raj, but their contribution had hardly been recognised. ‘Who’s Who of the Indian Martyrs’ published by the GOI in 1969 mentions only four martyrs from Assam. In another book - “Women in the Indian Freedom Struggle” published by National Archive of India has not

mentioned a single woman rebel from the state. Some of the women rebels who laid their lives were – Mangri Orang (1921- the first woman martyr of Assam), Kanaklata Barua (died in 1942), Kumoli Devi (1942), Tileswari Barua (1942–died at the age of 12 years – perhaps the youngest woman martyr in the history of India), Khouholi Devi (1942), Tileswri Koch, Konika Devi (1942). Freedom struggle in the region was not only a movement against the Britishers, there were also multiple movements utilised by the smaller nationalities to find their place in future, independent India. In the pre-Gandhian phase, the aristocratic nobility fought against the Britishers for losing their domination and class interest. During the agrarian phase, the farmers not only fought against the exploitative British ruling class but also against the cohort of Indian officials of British regime. During Gandhian phase, Assam’s participation in the freedom struggle was comprehensive, nevertheless the Assamese middle class not only fought against the Britishers but also against the hegemony of Bengali middle class who effectively replaced Assamese as the official language. Bengali domination had perennially created a fear psychosis among the natives of the state. Since then, the protection of linguistic identity remains the core of Assamese nationalism, the manifestation of which is felt even today.

## References:

---

- <sup>1</sup> Lakhnath Tamuli—Contribution of Assam towards Indian freedom struggle—P-7 and 8
- <sup>2</sup> SL Baruah, *Comprehensive History of Assam*, p-465
- <sup>3</sup> SL Barua, P-484
- <sup>4</sup> Assam Land Revenue Regulations, 1886, introduction, p-55-70
- <sup>5</sup> Lakhnath Tamuli, p—46 referred above.
- <sup>6</sup> Benudharkalita cited in Tamuli, p—49
- <sup>7</sup> See Amalendu Guha—Planter Raj to Swaraj, p-55-56

- 
- <sup>8</sup> Sanjib Baruah, *India against itself* p-71.
- <sup>9</sup> Amalendu Guha, *Nationalism: Pan –Indian and regional, In a historical Perspective*, in *Nationalist Upsurge in Assam*, ed by Arun Bhuyan, Government of Assam, Guwahati, 2000, August. P-90.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid*-p-90
- <sup>11</sup> Neog, Maheswar “*Potobhumi Unabings hasatika*”, in Homen Borgohain ,ed ‘ *Assamese Literature in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*’ , 1967, Jorhat, p 6.
- <sup>12</sup> Arunodoi is the first Assamese Newspaper established in 1846 in Sibsagar.
- <sup>13</sup> HK Borpujari, *Poltical history of Assam*, vol.1, p-142. Publication Board of Assam.
- <sup>14</sup> KN Dutta, *Landmarks of the freedom Struggle in Assam*, Gauhati, 1969, p-45.
- <sup>15</sup> P. Gohain Barua, *Mor Sowarani*, Guwahati, 1971 -pp-217-218.
- <sup>16</sup> The Assamese were 23% and the Bengalis were 42% as per the census of 1931.
- <sup>17</sup> Amalendu Guha , *Nationalism : Pan –Indian and regional , In a historical Perspective*, in *Nationalist Upsurge in Assam*, ed by Arun Bhuyan, Government of Assam, Guwahati, 2000, August. P-91.
- <sup>18</sup> -*ibid*-p-91.
- <sup>19</sup> Amalendu Guha, *Planter Raj to Swarj, Freedom struggle and Electoral politics in Assam, 1826-1947*, ICAR New Delhi, 1977. p-1701.
- <sup>20</sup> Udyan Mishra, referred above, p-80.
- <sup>21</sup> *Chetana*, An Assamese weekly published from Gauhati, No.2, Vol.III, P.2.
- <sup>22</sup> Amalendu Guha prefers to call this sentiment of the Assamese as ‘little nationalism’. Amalendu Guha, *Planter Raj to Swarj, Freedom struggle and Electoral politics in Assam, 1826-1947*, ICAR New Delhi, 1977.
- <sup>23</sup> See Udyan Mishra, referred above-p-86.
- <sup>24</sup> Sunil Pawan Baruah, *Role of the Press in the Nationalist Upsurge—Brahmaputra Valley* in *Nationalist Upsurge in Assam*,. Ed by Arun Bhuyan, Government of Assam, Guwhati, August, 2000, pp-330-331.
- <sup>25</sup> S N Sharma, *Ambikigiri Rai Chaudhurir Pratibha* in Shrama ed. *Ambikagiri Rai Chadhury Racanavali*, Guwahati, 1986, p-597.
- <sup>26</sup> AK Barua, *Social Tensions in Assam-Middle class politics*, Purbanchal Prakash, p-59, 1991.
- <sup>27</sup> See Dr. Prafulla Kr Mahanta, *A Social history of Assamese Middle Class*, Purvanchal Prakash, Guwahati, 1991, pp-63-68.
- <sup>28</sup> Nirode Kr. Barooah, *Gopinath Bordoloi: Indian constitution and Center Assam relations*, p-25, Publication Board of Assam, Assam, 1990.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid*-25.
- <sup>30</sup> -*ibid*-361.
- <sup>31</sup> -*ibid*—p-361.
- <sup>32</sup> -*ibid*—p-364.



## The Role of Women in the Indian Freedom Movement\*

Dr. Yuthika Mishra

This paper attempts to bring out the role of women in a situation when even the best of efforts failed to bear fruit, in their efforts to raise themselves from a position of neglect and disrepute to which history had relegated them. Indeed between 1750 and 1900, when imperial rule was at its peak in India and the sparks of protest against colonial domination had started smouldering, the role of women has to be documented. In a male dominated socio-political discourse, that women like Rani Laxmibai, Pandita Rama Bai, Savitribai Phule, Tarabai Shinde, Anandibai Joshi, Sarojini Naidu and Annie Besant could become dominant players, is no mean achievement. However the prominence of a few well known figures is a poor index of judgment to show the extent to which even the common women were involved in transcending the barriers to lift the self from the downtrodden state to which posterity had pushed them into.

The research leads us on to changes that were forged on the anvil of socio-religious reform movement that was taking place in the 19th century. While the socio-religious reform movement had wider implications, women specific issues formed the backbone of these efforts marking the onset of a new wave of consciousness that started permeating the society as a whole. Efforts at reform during this period not only yielded immediate results in terms of improving women's position both

socially as well as legally but they also produced long term results in terms of opening up more avenues for greater women role in shaping anti-colonial stance of 19th century. The 19th century phenomenon opened up a whole new world for women in the 20th century ultimately enabling 'Gandhian mobilisation' of women power in the nationalist struggle. Thus, a short narrative of life stories of iconic women helps prove the point how they made a difference to the existing atmosphere and opened up greater possibilities for political mobilisation of women power in the 20th century.

### Political Women

At the outset it is important to differentiate between the phrases 'political women' and 'woman in politics' in order to dispel any doubts as to what is being considered here. The active albeit direct participation of women in the political process in India may be said to have started only around the beginning of the previous century which is generally considered as the period of beginning of political democracy thereby implying the emergence of nation states worldwide. Through their huge participation in the freedom struggle under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi women not only played an important role in all his movements (the Non-cooperation Movement 1922, the Civil Disobedience Movement 1931 and the Quit India Movement of 1942) but they also kept

---

*\*This paper was presented by Dr. Yuthika Mishra, Associate Professor of History, Vivekananda College, University of Delhi at the national seminar on 'Revisiting Indian Independence Movement' organised by India Foundation at New Delhi on 18th March, 2017.*

---

up their struggle for woman's enfranchisement and political representation at all levels even after the attainment of independence in 1947. Women's movements in India have also been struggling to get political empowerment for the Indian womenfolk for nearly seven decades and have only managed to get their demand for reservation in the Indian parliament and state legislatures included in the programme of the political parties.

So what we are essentially discussing is the 'politicalness' of women in the 18th and 19th Centuries. It has often been stated, and has been refuted here, that the personality traits of women (like the lack of self-esteem) and the socio-economic cultural environment along with the political environment is to a great extent responsible for women's insignificant participation in politics. Another point that needs to be clarified at the outset is that there was a marked division in the public and private spheres, the former being the male stronghold and the latter the feminine domain to which the women were confined.

The question now arises as to what we mean by political power. In general terms it is understood as the activity which aims at bringing the government to bear in a particular direction, to secure particular results. According to Harold D. Laswell political process implies the shaping, sharing and exercise of power.<sup>1</sup> Politics helps people to protect their interests and rights through political participation and influence. Conventionally, politics meant political structures but it has now evolved to include expressions of political behaviour like movements, protests and struggles. Primarily considered a male activity it has been challenged by feminist scholars who have argued for a

redefinition of politics to include the private sphere also since its political nature deeply, though in a concealed manner, influences public life too. However, here it would be relevant to understand the various implications of politics for different groups, communities and nations. Frieda Hauswirth, a Westerner settled in India articulated the Indian character thus:

'Underlying all the apparent fatalism of India, so much criticised by the Westerners, there rests this tranquil lake of profound optimism, based on ultimate religious trust and faith this realisation of the imminence of divinity in all life on earth, be its fugitive appearance good or evil. The Indian knows that the wheels of God grind slowly; he also knows that they never cease turning and may not be hurried by the fretting will of man.'<sup>2</sup>

This statement of Frieda Hauswirth, a foreign national married to an Indian, amply illustrates the truth of India and Indians, the values that they hold dear and their resultant lifestyles.

### **A Network of Boundaries**

Much has been said about the condition of women in India since ancient times. It is a well-known fact that during the entire ages - ancient, medieval and modern their position, as that of other marginalised groups in the society kept on changing for the better or worse. However, the period of study is marked by some features typical to the age. The most important aspect was the appearance of changes in the society and economy that were the direct result of the process of colonialism which had started by now. Mid-18th Century saw not only the rise of British imperial storm on the Indian horizon but also the waning of the three hundred



---

year old Mughal rule in India. The latter had infused major socio-cultural changes into the Indian milieu most importantly in the lives of women who were largely confined to their home seldom venturing out into public. Not only were their lives pushed back into the darkness of private realm, not to be seen by the outside world but they were also debarred from all types of socio-political opportunities of progress and development. Basics like education and freedom were denied to them and they were relegated into the background. A change came about in their lives, albeit slowly with the changing socio-religious consciousness that emerged in the 19th century known as the Indian Renaissance. It would suffice here to say that this revival of ancient Indian learning was prodded on by the rising spirit of national consciousness that sprang up under the impact of British rule. It would also be relevant to state here that political nationalism grew in a background of socio-political reforms; in fact they went hand in hand.<sup>3</sup> Thus the inclusion of women's issues was part of the political process which was unfolding during the 19th century and quite naturally the lives of women were not untouched by the developments all around them. Some of these women no doubt understood and grasped the implications of the changes that were taking place and gathered courage to leap forward and uplift themselves and their lot.

### **The Socio-Religious Reform Movement**

The movement for reform in the 19th century and early twentieth century all over India is referred to as the Indian Renaissance. Usually, the credit for the onset of this reforming activity is attributed to Raja Ram Mohan Roy and his

associates in the region of Bengal. However, the reforming zeal soon spread like wild fire and engulfed the whole country. This phenomenon is marked by an intellectual awakening somewhat similar to the 16th century European Renaissance. The main difference in the Indian and European contexts was that the latter did not have to face the onslaught of colonialism by a foreign country, a colonialism that not only perpetrated all sorts of atrocities on the colonised foreign land but also sapped the colony of all its glory and dignity. The Indian Renaissance is quite different from the European one in more ways than one. This term in European history meant 'rebirth' and was used in the context of the revival of the Graeco-Roman learning in the 15th and 16th Centuries after a long spell of the 'dark' Middle Ages. The Indian model was a Renaissance with a difference, deeply inlaid by a revivalist make-up of pristine Hindu or Aryan religious spirit. Raja Ram Mohan Roy's Renaissance aimed at resuscitating the pristine Aryan spirit, 'Unitarianism of God', with the help of modern Western rationalist spirit.

This movement generated a new consciousness amongst the Indians who were looking for an ideological-political outlet to vent suppressed feelings of anger generated by distrust and betrayal. The biggest task of the reformers was to hit out at the conformists and at established customs and practices, especially with respect to women and the low castes. As a result the system of marriage, dowry, sati or wife burning, age of marriage, female infanticide, women's education and confinement all came under the scanner and were questioned by the intellectuals and reformers who gave a call for rationalism in order to achieve internal and

---

external freedom. The Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj, the two key movements of the period, gave a call for simplification of beliefs and ceremonies and laid emphasis on the revival of Aryan-Hindu beliefs as outlined in the ancient Indian scriptures represented by the Vedas.<sup>4</sup> As a final point, it appears that it was not so much the phenomenon of decay as of change that was reflected in these attempts at revamping the social structure that gave the nomenclature of 'Renaissance' to this phenomenon of Indian history.

### **The Politics of Reform**

Reforms have always had a normative appeal in India. In fact, reforms have been central to our civilisation. Indian society has, over the centuries, constantly thrown up reformers; those who questioned, overthrew the old order and forged genuine change. The phenomenon of reform which swept most of the parts of India from mid-19th Century onwards is popularly known as the socio-religious reform movement or the Indian Renaissance. Reforming activity was nothing new to the Indian society although feminism developed much later in the East. Dealing with the various debates that brought out conflicting viewpoints an attempt has been made to bring out the reality of colonialism. While the socio-religious reform movement had wider implications, here women specific issues are the point of focus with the objective to show how efforts at reform during this period not only yielded immediate results in terms of improving women's position both socially as well as legally but they also produced long term results in terms of opening up more avenues for them and broadening their margins. The 19th

Century phenomenon opened up a whole new world for women in the 20th century known as the women's movement.

19th Century symbolises the beginning of 'women's movement' in the West and it saw the emergence of the 'woman question' in the East. The implication being that feminism emerged as an organised force in the West much earlier than in the East where it was still in its infancy during the period under review. But this does not mean that the women in the East were not involved with the changes taking place all around them, more so, in a period when India was undergoing the torment of major upheavals which were socio-religious in appearance but were quite political in essence. This period of Indian history can actually boast of being the trend setter for the future shape of things to come, especially for the women's movement which had started attaining political overtones in the greatly oppressive colonial milieu.

Another reality with which the Indian women were faced with was that by the end of the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century, the issue of reforms for women got inextricably mixed up with the movement for national liberation. Colonialism in fact came to exercise a major influence in shaping not only the issues that were taken up to improve the lot of women, for instance the campaign against sati, polygamy, the quest for women's property rights, stress on women's education and removal of social malpractices affecting women. Reformers also emphasised a need for reform of laws and subsequent codification to improve the status of women and simultaneously bringing in its wake an alteration of indigenous and customary laws. Thus, issues like sati prohibition,

---

raising the age of marriage, widow remarriage, property rights for women and many more came under the ambit of codification and became the major plank of women's movement in the Twentieth Century.

While discussing the various attempts at reform, social, religious or legal, the contestations throw up a very interesting triangular tussle between the conservatives, liberals and the official viewpoint. It is generally believed that after 1857, the British abandoned their previous pro-reformist stance and became a lot more cautious about playing the reformer. Another important point that weakens the claims of reformists was that no one was actually interested in improving the lot of the women or in the issue of their rights or status per se. The major motivating factor was the interpretation of scriptures and traditions which directly affected the personal laws. All these developments had major political implications in the sense of setting the stage for politicisation of women and their issues that was going to help the much larger freedom movement for the independence of the country in the 20th Century.

### **Some Political Women of the Nineteenth Century**

A few case studies like those of Pandita Rama Bai, Savitribai Phule, Tarabai Shinde, Anandibai Joshi and Sarojini Naidu help in understanding the saga of the so called political women and also the related phenomenon of leveraging the self which the present paper tries to unravel.<sup>5</sup> Through the example of a few notable women of this period, it would be easier to understand the 'phenomenon of political women'. It would also be the aim to

make the point of women's participation in politics clear and to highlight their contribution in the political process in India.

Maharani Velu Nachiyar (1730-1796) is the only female queen in Bharat to defeat the British powers and remain undefeated. Perhaps she is the only one in the world to defeat the western powers and remain undefeated. This 18th Century queen from Sivagangain Tamil Nadu, was brought up like a prince and was trained in warfare. Her husband was killed by British soldiers and the son of the Nawab of Arcot. She escaped with her daughter and lived under the protection of Hyder Ali at Virupachi near Dindigul for eight years. During this period she formed an army and sought an alliance with Gopala Nayaker and Hyder Ali with the aim of attacking the British. In 1780 Rani Velu Nachiyar fought the British and won the battle. When Velu Nachiyar found the place where the British stocked their ammunition, she built the first human bomb. A faithful follower, Kuyili douses herself in oil, lights herself and walks into the storehouse. The Rani then formed a woman's army named "udaiyaal" in honour of her adopted daughter — Udaiyaal, who died detonating a British arsenal. This was the first women's army in modern times. Thus she raised a women's army and defeated the British army with her women's army. Nachiar was one of the few rulers who regained her kingdom and ruled it for 10 more years.

Velu Nachiyar is the first queen who fought for freedom against British in India, thus becoming the first revolutionary to oppose British rule, even before the Great Rebellion of 1857, which is considered as the first war of independence. Queen Velu Nachiar granted powers to Marudu brothers

---

to administer the country in 1780. These were the sons of Udayar Servai alias Mookiah Palaniappan Servai and Anandayer alias Ponnathal. On 31st December, 2008 a commemorative postage stamp on her was released.

Gauri Parvati Bai was one of the two queens of Travancore who ruled from 1810 to 1829. Before her, Gauri Lakshmi Bai (1791- 1814) is credited with modernising the administration of Travancore and Parvati Bai, whose reign saw the extension of the frontiers of Travancore, carried out other revenue related reforms. Her government conceded a revenue settlement and the abolition of export duties on gram gave considerable relief to the farmers. She followed a policy of tolerance towards other religions and gave facilities to Christian missions to build churches and schools. She was a very efficient administrator and ably suppressed all tendencies at usurpation. However her main achievement lay in the field of reform. The Rani realised that social amelioration was not possible unless the people were literate. She was the first ruler of Travancore and one of the first among Indian rulers to spend considerable sums on education with a definite plan to bring it within the reach of the common people.

The 19th century in India was an epoch of upheaval in its first phase, and of reconstruction in the second phase. Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi (1835-58) was a remarkable woman leader of the first epoch which witnessed the outbreak of the all-India revolt of 1857. She was married to Subadar Gangadhar Rao, head of the small Maratha state of Jhansi formed by the Peshwas in 1743. After becoming a widow, the task of looking after the Jhansi estate fell on her shoulders. She not only

executed her duties and responsibilities as the head of the state totally but also sacrificed her life while trying to protect her kingdom from the British.

Pandita Rama Bai (1858-1922) is remembered as one of the 'makers of modern India' and the 'greatest woman produced by modern India'. A learned scholar and exponent of Sanskrit she was given the title of 'Pandita' or learned. She travelled widely, nationally and internationally, embraced Christianity and worked incessantly against the social injustice being done to women in the society. She is known for her efforts to provide shelter to widows against all odds and gave them education and vocational training to become self- dependent.

Another outstanding woman who contributed to the emancipation of women in the 19th century was Savitribai Phule (1831-1897) who along with her husband Mahatma Jyotirao Phule played an important role in improving the condition of women through emphasis on women's rights in India. She was the first female teacher of the first women's school in Pune. In 1852 she opened a school for untouchable girls. Both husband and wife worked tirelessly to educate and carry out social struggles for the oppressed.

The Phules got an avid helper in Tarabai Shinde, a feminist activist who protested against patriarchy and caste system and helped Jyotirao and Savitribai in running their organisation the Satyashodhak Samaj for the upliftment of the downtrodden women. She was a prolific writer and is best known for her work, *Stri Purush Tulana* (A Comparison between Women and Men). Published in 1882 it is a critique of upper-caste patriarchy and is considered as the first modern Indian feminist text which challenged the Hindu

---

religious scriptures as the source of women's ills. The list of women achievers is not small but still they may be counted on fingers. This is not to say that the attempts at breaking their shackles by common women were few or far between.<sup>6</sup> In fact just the opposite is true for there are numerous instances of women from all castes and classes joining the ranks of nationalists to fight the political battle for freedom at one level and at another there were tales of daily heroism and struggle to fight the political in the personal.

### Conclusion

The above narrative of women from a cross section of Indian society between 1750 to 1900 reveals a new dimension of not only the quality of women's lives but also the attempts, however sparse but strong, to recover their lost dignity and glory. Unlike their imperial counterparts in Britain,

the Indian women had to struggle harder and had a longer road ahead. As Antoinette Burton points out, 'Historically speaking, arguments for British women's emancipation were produced, made public, and contested during a period in which Britain experienced the confidence born of apparent geo-political supremacy as well as the anxieties brought on by challenges to imperial permanence and stability.' While suggesting that the women's movement and imperialism are rather mismatched, still Burton points out that the former coincided with the apogee of British imperial pre-eminence.<sup>7</sup> This process has also been seen as the tireless efforts of women through ages to retrieve themselves from the dark abyss into which history had relegated them over the years. Organised feminism was a far cry for Indian women but the die had been cast in the form of early efforts at reform and recovery of the condition of women.

### References:

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Sinha, Niroj ed. *Women in Indian Politics: Empowerment of Women Through Political Participation*, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, 2000, p. 15.
- <sup>2</sup> Hauswirth, Frieda, *The Status of Hindu Women*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co. Ltd., London, 1932.
- <sup>3</sup> Heimsath, Charles H., *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform*, Princeton, OUP, 1964, chapter III.
- <sup>4</sup> Natarajan, S., *A Century of Social Reforms in India*, Asia Publishing House, New Delhi, 1959 and Charles H. Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform*, chapter I.
- <sup>5</sup> Most of the details about the female leaders discussed here are taken from, *Great Women of India*, eds. Swami Madhavananda and R.C. Majurndar, Almora Advait Ashram, 1953. Chapter II in Antoinette Burton's, *At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in late Victorian Britain*, Univ. of California Press, Los Angeles, London, 1998, gives a detailed analysis of Pandita Ramabai's life and achievements.
- <sup>6</sup> Many instances of women who struggled to make their voices heard may be found in the works of eg. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, Delhi, OUP, 1994, Chapter vi- *The Nation and its Women* and Tanika Sarkar, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation- Community, religion and Cultural Nationalism*, Permanent Black, Delhi, 2001.
- <sup>7</sup> Burton, Antoinette, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915*, University of North Carolina Press, 1994.



## The Revolutionary Leader Vinayak Damodar Savarkar\*

Dr. Vikram Sampath

**A**s an intellectual fountainhead and founder of what is termed as “Hindu nationalism,” Vinayak Damodar Savarkar has emerged as one of the most controversial Indian political thinkers of the 20th Century. His writings on Hindutva have generated a great deal of attention for long and he has been eulogized and demonized in equal measure for being the ideologue of Hindutva. In this paper, I explore the role and contribution of Savarkar as a revolutionary figure and briefly interpret the impact of his philosophy and writings on India’s revolutionary movement. The interpretations that we have had of Indian revolutionary thought are situated almost always within a Western Marxist lineage. Hence it becomes difficult for historians to accept that Savarkar was both a revolutionary and someone who also contributed to the making of a revolutionary thought. It would not be, in my opinion, an exaggeration to state that any history of revolutionary thought in early twentieth century India must examine the role of Savarkar’s works. Savarkar’s revolutionary inspiration was Italian political theorist Giuseppe Mazzini, rather than Karl Marx and other thinkers of the Marxist ideology. Savarkar used history as a tool and believed in writing about the contributions of past revolutionaries to stir and motivate individuals into armed fight against colonial injustices. He never wielded a weapon himself, but argued instead that

writing histories was a necessary step in overthrowing colonial empires.

The important platform for pan-India anti-colonial voice had been the Indian National Congress, founded in 1885. But by the time of 1905 and the proposed Partition of Bengal, we see a distinct schism develop within the Congress wherein several nationalist leaders were becoming increasingly impatient with the attitude and responses of the Congress to the colonial power.

I argue here that the roots of this division in ideology could be traced back to the 1857 uprising, after which a diverse group comprising intellectuals, poets, mystics, philosophers, novelists, reformers, and spiritual leaders from around the country cultivated a distinctly Hindu anti-colonial nationalist discourse that combined inward spiritual development with external political freedom. This ideology emerged from the angst that despite her ancient culture and civilization, India had allowed herself to be defeated by a foreign country with a far inferior civilization. The spread of western attitudes among the small but growing middle class in urban colonial India only made matters more urgent. Mythological and historical imageries gave inspiration—be it, an exiled ruler like Lord Rama, a teacher of duty like Lord Krishna, the heroic guerilla chieftain Chhatrapati Shivaji who conquered the might of the Mughals; and to this was added the symbolism of the India as a chained

*\*This paper was presented by Dr. Vikram Sampath at the national seminar on ‘Revisiting Indian Independence Movement’ organised by India Foundation at New Delhi on 18th March, 2017.*

*Dr. Vikram Sampath is a Bangalore based author/historian/political commentator, Sahitya Akademi award winner, and Founder-Director of the Archive of Indian Music and the Bangalore Literature Festival.*

---

and captive mother beseeching her young sons to rescue her. These powerful iconographies inspired an entire generation of Indians into action.

The moderates under leaders such as Gopalkrishna Gokhale favoured a regionally restricted peaceful protest and talks, to resolve colonial domination of India. This was stoutly opposed by the 'extremists' such as Lala Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal and Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who denounced the Bengal partition in the strongest terms and spearheaded the nationwide Swadeshi or self-rule movement. Savarkar was a young undergraduate law student then and had come to the attention of the nationalists, especially Bal Gangadhar Tilak who considered Savarkar as his protégé, with his fiery speeches against partition. His affiliation with the extreme wing of nationalists was apparent even from his school days when, after being deeply affected by the execution of the Chapekar Brothers of Poona for assassinating British officials, he organized a secret revolutionary society called Rashtrabhakta Samuha, which later became the 'Mitra Mela' or the society of Friends in 1901 in his home town Nasik. There are few original documents concerning this society because the members destroyed them all to prevent them falling into the hands of the British.

Savarkar believed in turning history and historical words into a tool or political weapon. He insisted that members of the Mitra Mela read works dealing with major historical figures, biographies of Mazzini, Garibaldi, Napoleon Bonaparte. His dream was to produce an Indian nationalist, even among the villagers, who had a historical and revolutionary consciousness that was educated and

inspired by these global revolutionary leaders.

Tilak recommended Savarkar's name to that great colossus for all young Indian nationalists, Shyamji Krishna Varma, who gave scholarships to Indian students involved in revolutionary activities, to come and study in Europe. Shyamji had founded a monthly called the Indian Sociologist in 1905 that produced critical essays on the colonial government of India. He owned a house in Highgate called India House, which became a hostel of sorts for Indian students and turned into the hotbed for young Indian revolutionaries, many of whom were inspired by the movements taking place in Russia, Italy and other parts of Europe. The India House became a confluence of several leaders of the times which included, along with Savarkar, stalwarts such as Bhai Paramananda, Lala Hardayal, Virendranath Chattopadhyay, VVS Aiyar, Gyanchand Varma, Madame Bhikaji Cama, P.M. Bapat (Senapati), PT Acharya, WV Phadke, Madanlal Dhingra, Dr Rajan, KVR Swami, Shukla, Sukhsagar Dutta, Sikandar Hyat Khan, Asaf Ali, Khan of Nabha etc.<sup>1</sup> They held weekly meetings and celebrated anniversaries of great Indian heroes. The Scotland Yard that tracked their every movement within and outside London placed these young students under intense surveillance.<sup>2</sup>

It was in 1906, that Savarkar left for London and immediately got involved in anti-colonial revolutionary activities from there. He worked with Shyamji Krishnavarma and other students to form a secret underground revolutionary society called the 'Abhinav Bharat Society'. All members were required to take an oath declaring their personal commitment to the revolutionary objectives of the

---

Society: I solemnly and sincerely swear that I shall from this moment do everything in my power to fight for independence...convinced that swarajya can never be attained except by the waging of a bloody and relentless war against the foreigner... and with this object, I join the Abhinav Bharat, the revolutionary society for all Hindustan.<sup>3</sup>

Within six months of reaching London, he translated Mazzini's biography to Marathi. Over the next two years from 1908 to 1909, he completed his own monumental and meticulously researched history from the British Library archives of original East India Company documents, on the 1857 uprising terming it as "India's First War of Independence." He dismissed all the colonial arguments about the causes of 1857 of English historians of the greased cartridges, the economic motives of the elite or the doctrine of lapse etc. and instead powerfully argued that a nationalist ideology was what motivated the uprising and that it led to the end of Hindu-Muslim enmity towards achievement of a common cause. "Can any sane man," he asked, "maintain that an all embracing Revolution could have taken place without a principle to move it? Could the vast tidal wave from Peshawar to Calcutta have risen in blood without a fixed intention of throwing something by means of its force?"<sup>4</sup> He writes about revolutions in general, thus:

Every revolution must have a fundamental principle...A revolutionary movement cannot be based on a flimsy and momentary grievance. It is always due to some all – moving principle for which hundreds and thousands of men fight... The moving spirits of revolutions are deemed holy or unholy in

proportion as the principle underlying them is beneficial or wicked...In history, the deeds of an individual or nation are judged by the character of the motive . . . To write a full history of a revolution means necessarily the tracing of all the events of that revolution back to their source– "the motive".<sup>5</sup>

The 'motives' for Savarkar that he describes above, rested on the dual principles of swarajya and swadharma, which he defines as the love of one's country and the love of one's religion, respectively. For him, these were the quintessential guiding principles for all revolutionaries, both in India and outside, and believed that without these principles a true revolution was not possible or feasible. The book did not call for widespread revolution, mayhem, or anarchist violence in India. He was not a reckless revolutionary, but a strategist who advised his followers to strike when the iron is hot. Savarkar, instead, intended to give India a history of her own, to change the subject of history from the colonial state to a national state. In his introduction to the book he made clear that 'history' did important work for a nation and a national community, as he recognized it had done for England. He was going to do the same for India, by challenging the popular English accounts of our history. An informant leaked the manuscript of this book to Scotland Yard, and the work was banned before it was even published. It was perhaps one of the only literary works of the world to have this rare distinction of being proscribed even before it was published!

It was Savarkar's intellectual output on revolutions and his philosophy that scared the British Government a lot more than his actual



---

revolutionary acts, which were significant, but not as much as is made of them. Even as Savarkar was engaged in reading or smuggling bomb-making manuals and guns into India, his literary output and consequent ideological reach were much more dangerous. His associates Madame Bhikaji Cama and Sardar Singh Rana were sent by him to represent India at the International Socialist Congress held on 22 August 1907 at Stuttgart in Germany. They unfurled the Indian flag of independence designed by Savarkar and wanted to move a resolution declaring British rule, as disastrous but could not. But Cama's speech was fiery and she made a passionate case for freeing India.<sup>6</sup> Total freedom is what they postulated and no collaborations negotiations etc as the moderates wanted. Savarkar dispatched members of the Abhinav Bharat from India House to Paris to learn about bomb making, and while he had grandiose plans for sending some members to Belgium, Switzerland and Germany for military training, they never materialized. He did, however, make copies of bomb manuals, which he sent to India, along with a few pistols for political assassinations. These were used by several revolutionaries such as Khudiram Bose, Prafulla Chakravarti, Kanailal Dutt, Satyendra Bose and by a seventeen-year-old Anant Kanhere to assassinate a colonial official in Nasik. When caught, Kanhere implicated, among others, the Savarkar family. As a result, Savakar's older brother and some family friends were arrested and sentenced to transportation for life in the Andaman Islands. Savarkar's younger brother was also arrested in connection with a different conspiracy case in the same year. Back

in England, Savarkar and other members of India House were already under surveillance. Despite this, Savarkar managed to inspire Madanlal Dhingra to assassinate former Viceroy Lord Curzon, Lord Morley and British MP Lord Curzon Wylie. He succeeded in killing Curzon Wylie in 1909 and was put to trial and eventually hanged. In a moving article in *Bande Mataram* that was started by Madame Cama, Lala Hardayal wrote: "In times to come, when the British Empire in India shall have been reduced to dust and ashes, Dhingra's monuments will adorn the squares of our chief towns, recalling to the memory of our children the noble life and noble death of one who laid down his life in a far-off land for the cause he loved so well."<sup>7</sup>

On 13 March 1910, Savarkar was arrested on multiple criminal charges, including 'procuring and distributing arms', 'sedition', and 'waging war against the King Emperor of India'. The unspoken fear in all the surveillance documents is that sedition and its effects were the real threat the colonial police had to contain. In 1911, the government opted to send Savarkar to India for his trial, rather than holding it in Britain. However, when the ship carrying Savarkar temporarily docked at Marseilles, France, Savarkar attempted to escape, jumping off the ship and swimming to shore. Unfortunately he was caught due to the treachery of an insider and was eventually sent back to India, tried and later given the maximum sentence of two transportations for life to the Kala Pani Cellular Jail in Andamans, totaling 50 years! Despite passing the law examination, he was never called by the Bench to practice and his degrees were all

---

withdrawn once he was deported to Andamans. Till his conditional release in 1924, he was put to the greatest human tortures at Kala Pani, which are horrifying to say the least.<sup>8</sup>

C.A. Bayly suggests that intellectuals, like Savarkar, do not really fit into neat classifications of 'Right or Left', which, in any case, were probably 'anachronistic' for this period<sup>9</sup>. In other words, ideas were circulated and received along multiple political trajectories forming complex 'rhizomal networks' on a global scale.<sup>10</sup> And, because these networks generally functioned 'underground' and were classified as 'criminal' by states and empires, fathoming the intricate connections that made up the contemporary intellectual economy is often herculean.<sup>11</sup>

Quite curiously, Savarkar wrote a biography of himself as a revolutionary, written in the pseudonym of Chitragupta, the mythical accountant of Yamaraj the Lord of Death, entitled "Life of Barrister Savarkar". In other words, for Savarkar, just like works such as the history of 1857 or later his seminal work, Hindu Pad Padshahi on Maratha history, writing his own biography was meant to influence and inspire fellow-revolutionaries. Not surprisingly, the British government immediately banned the text, stating it to be a seditious text. But the book did manage to find light of day into the hands of sympathizers across the political spectrum, though in all its multiple reprints no one ever came to know who the author was. Savarkar also chose never to make this public till the time of his death in 1966 and even after India's independence in 1947. It was only in the 1987 edition, in the preface that it was revealed that

Chitragupta was none other than Savarkar and it was the penname he used. Almost every page has a reference to him as a "leader of the revolution."

But interestingly, Vinayak Chaturvedi mentions that in an interview in 1976, Durga Das Khanna, former Chairman of the Punjab Legislative Council and himself a revolutionary, described how when he was interviewed by Bhagat Singh and Sukhdev Thapar for admission into the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA), he was specifically asked by Bhagat Singh if he had read this book 'Life of Barrister Savarkar'. So it almost seemed like an entry criteria for the HSRA recruits! Bhagat Singh is supposed to have been personally influenced immensely by Savarkar's work on the 1857 Revolution as well. Copies of the book were found with almost all the members of the Lahore Conspiracy Case in the 1930s.<sup>12</sup>

In conclusion, Savarkar's own words summarize his philosophy of a revolution and its objectives: Whenever the natural process of national and political evolution is violently suppressed by the forces of wrong, then revolution must step in as a natural reaction and therefore ought to be welcomed as the only effective instrument to re-enthroned Truth and Right. You rule by bayonets and under these circumstances it is a mockery to talk of constitutional agitation when no constitution exists at all. But it would be worse than a mockery, even a crime to talk of revolution when there is a constitution that allows the fullest and freest development of a nation. Only because you deny us a gun, we pick up a pistol. Only because you deny us light, we gather in darkness to compass means to knock out the fetters that hold our Mother down.<sup>13</sup>

---

## References:

---

- Bakhle, Janaki. 'Savarkar (1883-1966), Sediton and Surveillance: The Rule of Law
- Bayly, C.A. *Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire*
- Chaturvedi, Vinayak. (2013) "A Revolutionary's Biography: The Case of V D Savarkar
- Chitragupta, *Life of Barrister Savarkar. Madras: B G Paul & Company Publishers, 1926.*
- Keer, Dhananjay. *Veer Savarkar. Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1988.*
- Savarkar, Vinayak Damodar. *Indian War of Independence (1909). Delhi, 1986, 10th edn.*
- *My Transportation for Life, Selected Works of Veer Savarkar Vol 2, Chandigarh: Abhishek Publishers, 2007.*
- <sup>1</sup> See Dhananjay Keer, *Veer Savarkar*
- <sup>2</sup> Detailed account of the surveillance of Indian revolutionaries is given by Richard Popplewell (1988), *The Surveillance of Indian revolutionaries in Great Britain and on the Continent, 1905–14, Intelligence and National Security*, 3:1, 56–76,
- <sup>3</sup> Vinayak Chaturvedi (2013) *A Revolutionary's Biography: The Case of V D Savarkar, Postcolonial Studies*, 16.2, p 128.
- <sup>4</sup> *Savarkar, The Indian War of Independence (1909)*, p 3.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p 4
- <sup>6</sup> For details of all these revolutionary activities see Dhananjay Keer, *Veer Savarkar*
- <sup>7</sup> Dhananjay Keer, *Veer Savarkar, Chapter 4*
- <sup>8</sup> See Savarkar's *My Transportation for Life* for details of the tortures
- <sup>9</sup> Bayly, *Recovering Liberties*, p 311.
- <sup>10</sup> Anderson, *Under Three Flags*, p 4.
- <sup>11</sup> Maia Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011; and Daniel Bru "ckenhaus, *The ' Transnational Surveillance of Anti-Colonialist Movements in Western Europe, 1905–1945'*, unpublished PhD thesis, Yale University, 201
- <sup>12</sup> Vinayak Chaturvedi (2013) *A revolutionary's biography: the case of V D Savarkar, Postcolonial Studies*, 16:2, 124–139
- <sup>13</sup> Dhananjay Keer, *Veer Savarkar*, p



## Three Men, Their Idea of 'Mother' and the Indian Freedom Movement\*

Hindol Sengupta

What lies at the philosophical core of India's struggle for freedom from British rule? What were Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's, Vivekananda's and Aurobindo's thoughts about the idea of the 'mother'?

These three men and their idea or image of the 'mother' are deeply, indeed irretrievably, intertwined in India's struggle for freedom against British colonial rule. This has rarely ever been spoken about or studied because of the spiritual connotations of their beliefs but it is impossible to really understand the philosophical underpinnings of the Indian independence movement without understanding the subtle interplay of these philosophies which were most profoundly understood by Mahatma Gandhi and which he used to turn a tired, elite petitioning body, the Congress, into a mass movement for India's freedom from colonial rule.

The Indian National Movement is seen as a momentous political campaign which concluded with a grand, if pyrrhic, victory with the division of the land. It is often said that the imagination of the nation called India began in 1947 but it was perhaps in a sense the conclusion (and not the beginning) of the original nation imagined, the Bharat of yore, which ended in 1947, breaking up into today's South Asia.

To understand the spirit of this imagination, then, is to understand the philosophical pillars on which it stood, indeed stands. To contemplate these foundations we could delve into writings of antiquity but for the narrow purpose of this article, I wish to draw a simple, more contemporary straight line connecting the founding philosophies of what a struggle for freedom really means from the publication of Ananda Math to Swami Vivekananda's 1893 appearance in Chicago and his subsequent short life till 1902, and the teachings of Rishi Aurobindo, who, born as he was in 1872, was in a sense the final inheritor of this philosophical tradition.

Ananda Math, the story of forest-dwelling ascetics, by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, holds within it the seminal song of freedom in India, Vande Mataram (the root of the word Vande, that is 'Vand', of course, comes from references in the Rig Veda, and it means 'to pay homage'). In seeing the nation in the form of bounteous mother, it carries within it an ancient liturgical tradition of reverence of the nature, of its munificent gifts, and the worship of sacred geographies. As Harvard's Diana Eck has reminded us, it is through the footsteps of pilgrims, walking from shrine to shrine, that the 'civilisational state' (a term first used by the Chinese scholar Zhang Weiwei in context to

*\*This is the summary of the talk delivered by Hindol Sengupta, Editor-at-large, Fortune India at the national seminar on "Revisiting Indian Independence Moment" organised by India Foundation at New Delhi on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2017.*

---

China, but which is equally, if not more so, applicable to India) of Bharat was first imagined.

It is Vande Mataram that Rabindranath Tagore sang at the 1896 Calcutta session of the Congress. When Bikaji Cama made the first version of the Indian national flag in Stuttgart in Germany in 1907, it had Vande Mataram written in the middle band. Lala Lajpat Rai started a journal called Vande Mataram from Lahore. Hiralal Sen made India's first political film in 1905 which ended with the chant. Matangini Hazra's last words as she was shot to death by the British were Vande Mataram.

All of Vivekananda's references to his country talk about the idea of the mother, taken of course also from the worship of his spiritual master Ramakrishna Paramhansa who sang incessantly to the Mother Goddess Kali. In fact, Vivekananda started the tradition of referring to women as 'mother' which continues in the Ramakrishna Mission even today. In a letter from America, Vivekananda writes that when he began to refer to women as mother in the West, a lot of women were astonished, some even offended! But that idea of depiction remained resonant and true. It was the source for sustenance for revolutionaries of that time, including Vivekananda. In 1946, in Guwahati, Mahatama Gandhi urged that "Jai Hind should not replace Vande Mataram". He reminded everyone present that Vande Mataram was being sung since the inception of the Congress. He supported the Jai Hind greeting, but suggested that this greeting should not be to the exclusion of Vande Mataram.

Vivekananda's youngest brother, Bhupendra-

nath Dutta, who turned to militant nationalism, "regarded Vivekananda as one of the direct sponsors of militant nationalism" against the British Raj. Vivekananda himself is known to have said that Bengal was "in need of bomb and bomb alone". There is also some evidence that Vivekananda wanted to gather and rouse the princely states against the British. He even met 'Sir Hiram Maxim, the bomb-maker' to that end but realised that the country was not ready for such an armed revolt against the colonial rule at that time. He told the revolutionary Jyotindranath Mukherjee, aka Bagha Jatin, "India's political freedom was essential for the spiritual fulfillment of mankind".

Aurobindo is the direct inheritor of this tradition. Not least because his is one of the most famous translations of Vande Mataram to English. Little wonder, then, that it is Aurobindo, who wrote so movingly about the Indian Renaissance, gave India and its independence movement the concept, in June 1907, of "legitimate patriotism".

He said: "If it is patriotic for an Englishman to say, as their greatest poet has said, that this England never did nor shall lie at the proud feet of a conqueror, why should it be unpatriotic and seditious for an Indian to give expression to a similar sentiment? If it is highly patriotic for a Roman "to die in defence of his father's ashes and the temples of his gods", why should it be madness and senseless folly for an Indian to be stirred by a similar impulse? If "self-defence is the bulwark of all rights", as Lord Byron has said, why should an Indian journalist be charged with an attempt to

---

incite violence when he asks his countrymen of East Bengal to defend the honour of their women at any cost? If Campbell is right in saying that virtue is the spouse of liberty, why should an Indian be exposed to the menace of siege-guns when entering on a legitimate and lawful struggle for the recovery of his lost freedom? If each noble aim repressed by long control expires at last or feebly mans the soul, why should not our countrymen benefit by the advice of Goldsmith and begin to chafe at the attempt to prolong this alien control? If Tennyson is justified in taking pride in his country which freemen till, which sober-suited Freedom chose, where girt with friends or foes, a man may

speak the thing he will, where freedom slowly broadens down from precedent to precedent, why should it be criminal on the part of an Indian to imagine a similar future for the land of his birth?"

Aurobindo's spiritual consort, the French ascetic Mirra Alfassa, of course took the name of The Mother. It is, then, my argument that the spirit, indeed the reverberating core, of the Indian National Movement lies in this tale of three mothers as defined by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's Ananda Math, Swami Vivekananda and Rishi Aurobindo. If you will allow me a humorous aside - as every Indian knows, there is no freedom without the mother.



## **From Look East to Act East: Enhancing India-ASEAN Integration**

Dr. Shristi Pukhrem\*

India has turned to South East Asia to accelerate national economic development. Of late, South East Asia has become a pivotal foreign policy priority for the Indian government. It is worth recollecting that India embarked on a historic Policy of Economic Reforms in 1991 and subsequently on its Look East Policy (LEP) – a dynamic foreign policy initiative which sent out a strong and positive signal indicating the country’s genuine interest in forging strategic and economic cooperation with South East Asian countries. The policy, referred to as LEP, aimed to enhance infrastructural development and expansion of transportation network in order to bring better connectivity to the Northeast region, with the twin objectives of a) providing better security and b) facilitating developmental process. However, since the inception of this initiative, there has been no significant and visible forward movement. This stagnation, therefore, has resulted in Prime Minister Narendra Modi giving further impetus by kick-starting the innovative policy of ‘Acting East’, which is complementary to India’s Asia Policy that seeks to galvanise relations with the economically vibrant region.

Within the region, China has become more assertive vis-a-vis its territorial claims in the oil and gas – rich South China Sea which is also a major international maritime trade route. The US President Donald Trump has given mixed signals

about his commitment to the region, thereby creating strategic uncertainties and putting a question mark over the ability of the US to be the leader here.<sup>1</sup> In the face of the political challenges confronting East Asia and the increasing uncertainty in the relations among the major powers, there has been a greater demand for India to play an increased security role in the region. At the same time, India also needs to give a strong signal about its commitment to a long term presence in the Asia Pacific.

The year 2017 marks 50 years of ASEAN’s (Association of South East Asian Nations) existence, 25 years of ASEAN-India Dialogue Partnership, 15 years of India’s Summit Level interaction with ASEAN and 5 years of India-ASEAN Strategic Partnership. The Plan of Action (POA) 2016 - 2020 to sustain the India-ASEAN Partnership for ‘Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity’ focuses on political and security cooperation, economic cooperation and socio-cultural cooperation. India has been actively associated with security cooperation initiatives of the ASEAN nations plus Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia and the United States through the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM) and the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF). India established a Diplomatic Mission to ASEAN (2015) to widen and deepen

---

*\*Author is a Senior Research Fellow at India Foundation.*

---

the India-ASEAN Strategic Partnership. The way India contributes to building a dynamic strategic equilibrium and power equation in the Asia-Pacific region through bilateral and multilateral institutional frameworks stands testimony to its commitment to building a viable ASEAN-centric security architecture.<sup>2</sup>

Enhancing connectivity is crucial to deepening India's diplomatic, economic and cultural ties with the extended neighbourhood. India has advocated fast-tracking a host of connectivity projects that will accelerate regional integration and endorsed the Master Plan on ASEAN Plus Connectivity (MPAC).<sup>3</sup> Geopolitical considerations dictate India to open up the North Eastern Region to South East Asia and capitalise on enhanced connectivity through land, water and air routes. The Act East Policy envisages that North East Region (NER) must be developed with adequate infrastructure and human resource capital in order to facilitate people-to-people contacts on social, cultural, academic and economic platforms. The idea is about physical connectivity to be complemented with soft connectivity. The connectivity projects like the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway shall be complemented by cross-border transport projects, including India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project, linking India and Southeast Asia. Increasing the maritime and air connectivity between India and ASEAN, transforming the connectivity corridors into economic corridors, and extension of India – Myanmar – Thailand trilateral Highway to Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam will facilitate movement of passenger and cargo vehicles across the region. Asian Development

Bank (ADB) is funding the connectivity projects in India's Northeast, including the Imphal-Moreh (NH39) highway. Construction of railway from Jiribam to Imphal via Tupul is expected to be completed by 2017. It would be quite feasible to build an economic zone around Moreh (India) and Tamu (Myanmar) border area which is the junction of the land connectivity corridors. With connectivity advantage and access to markets, such economic zone can convert one of Asia's laggard regions into a versatile growth centre. Development of economic corridors in the region will help attract investment and stimulate economic growth in India's southern and north eastern regions, Myanmar and Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam (CLMV) countries. Strong backend integration through multimodal links between the eastern, north eastern and south eastern parts of India is essential to reap the benefits of India-ASEAN integration. It is important to make the soft side of connectivity, such as harmonisation of the political, legal and regulatory regimes between India and ASEAN, go together with the development of hard connectivity. Prime Minister Narendra Modi displayed a foreign policy master stroke by announcing a "Line of Credit of USD 1 billion to promote projects that support physical and digital connectivity between India and ASEAN and a Project Development Fund with a corpus of INR 500 crore to develop manufacturing hubs in CLMV countries at the 13th ASEAN-India Summit held in Malaysia in November 2015. It is the way forward for regional trade and economic partnership between the two sides.

ASEAN-India trade and investment relations have been growing steadily. ASEAN is India's 4th



---

largest trading partner, accounting for 10.2 percent of India's total trade. India is ASEAN's 7th largest trading partner. As per data maintained by Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows from ASEAN into India between April 2000 and May 2016 was estimated at USD 49.40 billion, while outflows from India to ASEAN countries, from April 2007 to March 2015, was about USD 38.67 billion. The ASEAN-India Agreements on Trade in Service and Investments came into force on 1 July, 2015. Both ASEAN and India are also working on enhancing private sector engagement.<sup>4</sup> India and ASEAN need to develop and implement a comprehensive trade facilitation programme that aim at simplifying, harmonising, and standardising trade and integrating customs processes. The External Affairs Minister while informing the Parliament about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's proactive and innovative policy of 'Act East' stressed that India needs access to capital, technology, energy, markets, a peaceful neighbourhood and a global trading system.<sup>5</sup>

The Act East Policy can significantly factor in ending the geographical isolation of India's North Eastern Region and transforming it into a bridgehead for India to the booming ASEAN markets. Given the economic potential as well as the geo-political importance of the region vis-a-vis a dynamic South East Asia, New Delhi's perception of the North East has changed. The focus is now on economic development and addressing 'trust deficit' rather than seeking military solution to restore stability in the region. The opening up of the landlocked NER economically to ASEAN countries is considered as a potent means of conflict transformation. The fact that there is a growing people-to-people interaction and congruence of strategic interests as well will go a long way in the global effort to enhance regional integration. In essence, India chants the connectivity 'mantra' to galvanise relations with ASEAN. Connectivity is much more than geographical and physical. What sustains India's relations with ASEAN are (soft) 'cultural and spiritual connections, grounded in history and a shared civilizational space'.

### **References:**

<sup>1</sup> Roche, Elizabeth. "Why 2017 is a landmark year for India, ASEAN Ties". *Live Mint*, February 7, 2017. Accessed May 3, 2017. [www.livemint.com/Politics/zahCdddqQwMjQC7X5ykoyO/Why-2017-is-a-landmark-year-for-India-ASEAN-ties.html](http://www.livemint.com/Politics/zahCdddqQwMjQC7X5ykoyO/Why-2017-is-a-landmark-year-for-India-ASEAN-ties.html)

<sup>2</sup> Chheang, Vannarith. "India-ASEAN Going Beyond Delhi Dialogue VI Perspective". *Diplomatist*, April 2014. Accessed May 4, 2017. [www.diplomatist.com/dipom04y2014/article023.html](http://www.diplomatist.com/dipom04y2014/article023.html)

<sup>3</sup> Chand, Manish. "India's Enhanced Look East Policy takes wing". *Ministry of External Affairs, Govt. of India*, August 7, 2014. Accessed May 4, 2017. [www.mea.gov.in/in-focus-article.htm?23855/Indias+Enhanced+Look+East+policy+takes+wing](http://www.mea.gov.in/in-focus-article.htm?23855/Indias+Enhanced+Look+East+policy+takes+wing)

<sup>4</sup> Saran, Preeti. "India and ASEAN- An Overview". *Speech, New Delhi, February 2, 2017. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library*. [www.mea.gov.in/aseanindia/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/22615/Keynote+Address+by+Secretary+East+on+India+and+ASEAN++An+Overview+at+Nehru+Memorial+Museum+and+Library+New+Delhi+February+2+2017](http://www.mea.gov.in/aseanindia/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/22615/Keynote+Address+by+Secretary+East+on+India+and+ASEAN++An+Overview+at+Nehru+Memorial+Museum+and+Library+New+Delhi+February+2+2017)

<sup>5</sup> Raja Mohan, C. "From Looking East to Acting East". *Ministry of External Affairs, Govt. of India*, January 29, 2015. Accessed May 5, 2017. <http://www.mea.gov.in/in-focus-article.htm?24714From+Looking+East+to+Acting+East>



## Defence R&D: A Long Road Ahead

Keertivardhan Joshi\*

### Introduction

In an increasingly flat and unsafe world, defence Research and Development (R&D) delivers technological superiority over the adversaries, reduces import dependencies and augments the capabilities of the forces to fight and deter threats. In India, the scene in defence R&D remains bleak, largely due to low levels of investment, lack of private sector participation, poor work culture in state owned R&D laboratories and absence of an innovation ecosystem. This has led to skepticism on India's ability to be a military super power and a global force in defence technology.

The annual report published by the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission in 2016 highlights Beijing's power projection development and warns that once fully developed, the weapons and forces could contribute to a regional conflict in places like the South China and East China seas.<sup>1</sup> The report also states that, "China will try to strengthen its traditional war-fighting capabilities against weaker neighbours." This is of concern to India as the result of future battles will favour the one which has a technological edge over its adversary and Beijing is way ahead of India in this regard. It is thus important for India to invest in defence R&D and develop a symmetric warfare capabilities to meet possible Chinese aggression.

In India, defence R&D has been largely controlled by state owned enterprises like DRDO and BEL. The sheer number of failures and the cost and time overruns of many crucial projects

have overshadowed few stunning successes that these enterprises have had over the years. Under the guise of security and secrecy, the institutions have escaped answering questions raised on its priorities and inefficiencies. In particular, DRDO has been on the critic's anvil for having, on most occasions, failed to provide timely delivery of crucial systems to the armed forces.<sup>2</sup> A performance audit of India's R&D effort is called for which hopefully would lead to re-assessing and re-aligning R&D activities within the country and re-shaping of R&D institutions. Concurrent efforts are needed in creating an ecosystem that understands the need to innovate and has the capability to do so. This paper looks into the R&D models used by the US and China and attempts to suggest ways in which the best practices can be integrated into our present R&D set up.

### Defence R&D in USA

Research and Engineering (R&E) enterprise of the Department of Defence (DOD) forms the backbone of US forces' technological superiority. It comprises of military departments and their laboratories, all DOD R&D product centers and laboratories, defence agencies like Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), Defence Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) and Missile Development Agency (MDA), Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDC), university affiliations, industry partners and the laboratories of the allied governments.<sup>3</sup>

The federal government owns 42 R&D

\*Author is a Fellow, CSIR-National Aerospace Laboratories, Bangalore

centers called Federally Funded Research and Development Centers or FFRDCs. They are public-private partnerships and conduct research for the US government under its sponsorship. While some are managed by the federal government itself, most of them are contracted to universities, industrial firms or non-profit organisations. FFRDCs are intentionally kept outside the government to avail management flexibility to attract and retain high quality scientists and engineers.

The US DOD also has a Research, Development, Testing and Evaluation program called RDT&E program. It is intended to finance research performed by contractors and government installations. The program aims to develop equipment, material, computer applications and knowledge and technological base that helps build a defence product. The RDT&E financial appropriations are divided separately for the three services and one separate category has been instituted for other defence agencies. The appropriations are available for 2 years' time and have an incremental funding policy. Each RDT&E appropriation is subdivided into seven budget activities (BAs): BA-1 Basic Research, BA-2 Applied Research, BA-3 Advance Technology Development, BA-4 Advance Component Development and Prototype (ACD&P), BA-5 System Development and Demonstration (SDD), BA-6 RDT&E Management Support, and BA-7 Operational System Development.<sup>4</sup>

The priorities of RDT&E programme should also be taken stock here. Table 1 shows the percentage of the appropriations in each of the seven budget activities between 2013 - 2015. The programme spends more than two third of the allotted budget in development and demonstrations

of systems, which is termed Weapons Development Activity (WDA), while only 3 percent is spent on basic research. It is also to be noted here that while the federal government finances RDT&E programmes, the prerogative to award grants solely rests with the subdivided categories.

<b>Budget Activity</b>	<b>% spending of the total RDT&amp;E budget</b>
Basic Research	3.0
Applied Research,	7.1
Advance Technology Development	7.9
Advance Component Development and Prototype (ACD&P)	19.4
System Development and Demonstration	17.4
RDT&E Management Support	6.6
Operational System Development	38.9

**Table 1**

A special program called “Reliance” looks into technologies that serve more than one service agency and thus enhance joint-war fighting capabilities,. “Reliance” has created 17 portfolios called Communities of Interest (CoI).<sup>5</sup> Each such community comprises of eminent academicians, scientists and engineers belonging to a specific technological area. Few examples of CoI portfolios are Advanced Electronics, Materials and Manufacturing processes, Cyber, Counter Weapons of Mass destruction, Electronic warfare, Energy and Power Technologies, Autonomy etc. The CoIs are collecting, coordinating and aligning the technical capabilities, requirements, gaps, opportunities and priorities for their respective portfolios. This information forms the basis for a detailed Technological Roadmap which helps the leadership to identify and understand the under/over investments and avoid duplication of technologies. The structure and brief objectives of each group is highlighted in Fig 1.

The technology resources for scientists and

engineers working across DOD labs is made available by Defence Technology Information Centre (DTIC).<sup>7</sup> DTIC serves the DOD community as the largest central resource for DOD and government funded scientific, technical, engineering, and business related information. It helps to build on previous research, development, and operational experience, and thus reduces duplication. The set up helps build collaborations among the scientific community and leverages on available expertise and experience.

A special mention has to be made about Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). DARPA is mandated to find and fund high pay-off projects that are disruptive and have the potential to create technological surprises.

### The Chinese Model

The Chinese R&D and innovation saw a sudden splurge starting this millennia. China is now second in the list of nations with highest R&D spending and has got direct relation to its pursuance of technological superiority over the United States.<sup>8</sup> It has become successful in changing its reputation from a labour intensive, low-cost manufacturing hub to an indigenous, self-sustaining and innovation driven economy. So how did China change its perception, priorities, and made room for innovation and R&D?

The 1998 Ministerial Reforms and Reorganisations were aimed to reduce enterprises dependency on state funds, make them more efficient, and, eventually, profitable and self-sustaining. The result was that better equipment started emerging from



Fig 1: Structure in a CoI portfolio.<sup>6</sup>

key defence sectors and there were two key parameters, which led to this result. Firstly, the government kept increasing the allocation of defence budget for weapons' acquisitions. Between 1997 and 2003, the increase was as high as 153 percent.<sup>9</sup> Such a steep increase was bound to increase the industrial output. Secondly, the Chinese firms had limited but consistent access to foreign equipment, especially from Russia and Israel. This access assisted few companies to copy-produce military systems and integrate high-end technology into their production lines.

Chinese firms follow two approaches for defence equipment manufacturing. First is the "Good Enough" approach and second, "Gold-plated" approach.<sup>10</sup> The first one follows creating "low-cost-lower tech" versions of their foreign counterparts. The Chinese realise that it would be too costly to attempt to acquire the capability and produce advanced weapon systems in every possible category. Instead, they intend to focus on making breakthroughs only in certain key areas. The equipments produced with this approach, although cheap qualitatively, meet the needs of People's Liberation Army, which has fielded them

---

in high volumes. The second approach involves indigenously designing and developing sophisticated high technology systems to match that of advanced nations. To employ this strategy, the Chinese seek to acquire high end technology from foreign suppliers and simultaneously evolve knowledge base in the same domain through consistent basic and applied research in National S&T institutes and affiliated universities.

China has in place two agencies for regulation. These are the State Administration for Science, Technology and Industry for National Defence (SASTIND) and Civil–Military Integration Promotion Department (CMIPD).<sup>11</sup> CMIPD is mandated to work primarily towards civil-military integration and develops integrated standards for civil and military equipment. SASTIND’s primary responsibilities include drafting guidelines, policies, laws and regulations related to science, technology and industry for national defense.

Like US, China has promulgated few policy directives to boost R&D. The state run enterprises are required to invest at least 3 percent annual revenues in R&D. It has also imposed an upper cap of profits restricting the companies to quote exorbitant prices for defence acquisitions. Like DTIC in USA, China has created Information Analysis and Dissemination (IAD) system. It is specifically tasked to gather all open source information on foreign products for technology assimilation and concept refinement. Recently China also spoke of its intention to create a DARPA like institution for PLA.<sup>12</sup>

### What Should India Do

In the long list of things that have to be changed, a comprehensive Science & Technology Policy, which sets up S&T and defence priorities

in clear terms, would be a good start. Along with the institutional changes, there is a need to create an innovation ecosystem for defence related R&D. The envisaged ecosystem must find synergies with the National Security Strategy and the nation’s S&T policy. Few recommendations to bring about the desired changes are as follows.

- **Aim & Arm:** Identify the most potent threats and evolve strategies to mitigate them. Threat severity must be weighed and the technologies that can help deter these threats must be sought for acquisitions. The technologies that we build must try to close gaps in our security.
- **Defence Inclusive S&T Policy:** Like in US and China, the STI policy must be evolved in conjunction with the defence strategy of the nation. A subcommittee has to be set up for each of the R&D areas that are mentioned in STI policy of 2013, and must be tasked to find critical technologies relevant to that area. Ways must be explored to draw a link between the chosen technologies and the security needs of the nation. Efforts must be coordinated to gain global leadership in these frontiers of science. Technology Information, Forecasting and Assessment Council (TIFAC), Department of Science and Technology, is now working to develop a Technology Vision 2035 document. A quick scan of the website will tell you that Defence is still treated exclusive of the Science and Technology policy of our nation. Department of S&T will have to learn its lessons from the past and seek to develop a coherent and comprehensive S&T policy.
- **Identify “Critical-to-Security” Technologies:** India should seek global leadership in only select areas that are “Critical-to-Security”. Global domination in every category is not

feasible given the baseline at which India has to start. Although DRDO has specified a large number of thrust areas through its Research Boards, there seems to be no clear list of areas with high priority and low priority. Further, the thrust areas are too academic in nature and give an impression that the outcome will be research papers and not actual products. “Critical-to-Security” technologies must be more immediate and macroscopic. Efforts must be then channelised and coordinated to develop the same. (For Israel, “Critical-to-Security” was Missiles and Anti-Missile technology; for China it has been Maritime Surveillance and Security)

- **Communities of Interest:** Based on “Critical-to-Security” technologies, sub-domains or “Communities Of Interest” should be created on the lines of US. A Steering Committee having top scientists, engineers and academicians relevant to that domain must be entrusted to develop plans and proposals to prioritise technologies at a sub-system level and steer the technology towards a realisable product.
- **Civil-Military Integration (CMI) Policy:** In the last decade, both USA and China have relied on the dual use technologies to meet growing needs of its forces in much quicker time. The Dual-use Application Program (DuAP) in US and Civil–Military Integration Promotion Department (CMIPD) in China have become successful models for civil-military integration. Since FDI in defence calls for deeper scrutiny, India can start promoting FDI in non-defence R&D and then leverage on the technologies that emanate from such ventures. For example, Indian mobile companies can be asked to work on radio and satellite communication devices, since they find close overlap with their area of

business. The CMI policy will eventually create an alternative to DRDO, bring competition into play and compel each stake holder to continuously innovate and beat each other in price and sophistication.

- **Directed and Increased R&D investment:** Fig 2 shows spending on R&D by different nations as percentage of their GDP. While countries like South Korea and Japan are making investments in excess of 3 percent of their GDP, India has been spending less than 1 percent of its GDP in R&D. It is imperative for India to increase the investments and do so in

### R&D Spending as % of GDP

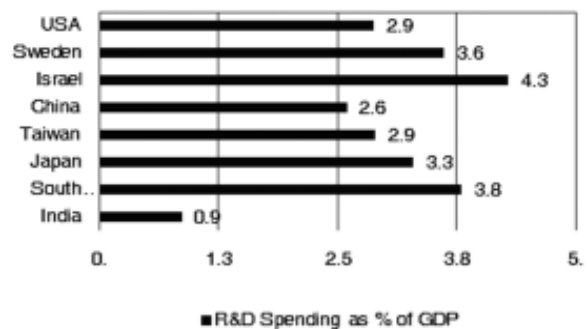


Fig 2: Spending on R&D as % of their GDP [13]

technologies that are ‘critical-to-security’ as identified by the competent authority.

- **Human Resource:** Human capital is an indispensable pillar in building a strong R&D base and must be addressed with full seriousness. Firstly, the role of educational institutions in this effort has to be clearly stated. The thrust areas of the DRDO research boards must be made as optional courses in universities and relevant research must be awarded appropriate credits. A program similar to IRAD can be envisaged to encourage participation in defence programs. Not just educational institutions, but also the industry will have to share the responsibility in creating a

---

good quality human resource. DRDO and industry in general will have to develop the talent on campus and then acquire them. The armed forces must carry out a nation-wide campaign to highlight the conditions and difficulties in a war zone and inspire talented youth to contribute to national security. The Centre of Excellence started by DRDO in various universities should be given more autonomy and made to function on the lines of FFRDCs. Concurrent efforts must also be made to retain the talent while trying to attract the new ones. Government may also seek to make changes to the Recruitment and Assessment Board, since, going by DRDO's own admission, is not being able to recruit quality scientists and engineers.

- **Approach to Design:** Trying to build a Product 'X' of world class sophistication from the word go has its own advantages and disadvantages. For a nation like India, the disadvantage being the high developmental costs and long development cycle, India must follow 'Build-Capitalise-Improvise' doctrine in its R&D endeavours with focus on building medium quality parts to understand the magnitude of design effort, the technology gaps and the scale of productions. In technologies that are not so critical, we must try to emulate the 'Good enough' approach.<sup>14</sup> Indian scientists and engineers must see if the said technology has sufficient benefits, has no critical problems and its benefits sufficiently outweigh the problems. In a globalised world, it is wise to forge strategic collaborations with other nations to not only share the technology but also the development cost. The Russians built the Su-30 with the help of French and Israeli avionics. The Joint Strike Fighter F-35 has as many as 12 partnering nations. So, India, like it

did in the case of Bramhos, must seek foreign partners of both technical and strategic importance. It should simultaneously develop its own capabilities by basic and applied research, technology assimilation and eventually becoming self-reliant. In projects of high stake, the agencies must develop sound knowledge of the product fundamentals and create testing procedures to reduce technology risks.

- **Government Support:** A strong backing from the government is a pre-requisite for R&D success. While the aim of investing in R&D is to bring in new or better products, increase usability, sales, profits and ultimately use the same profits to invest in R&D, and create an innovation driven economy, it also creates many jobs. There are inherent risks associated with R&D activities and failures should not clog the funding, with the government having to differentiate between non-performers and failures of performers.
- **National Defence Research Repository (NDRR):** On the lines of DTIC in US, and IAD in China, we must create an online repository for information dissemination of research related to defence technology. National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NSDAP), hosted by Department of Science & Technology doesn't speak anything exclusively about the Defence Sector. Such a repository will not only help government in tracking and avoid funding for duplication of technologies, but will also help different researchers collaborate seamlessly and build on their individual expertise and experiences. The non-strategic data will also help university students to get a firsthand impression of defence technology, which may well be a source of inspiration.

- **Defence Offset Policy:** Departing from the obligatory nature of the offset policy, India must forge long-term strategic partnerships with foreign firms. Data may move at the speed of light but decisions on technology transfer move at the speed of trust. India will have to shed customer/buyer relation and become more of a business partner. Only then, firms will see Defence R&D as a viable avenue for discharging the offset obligation. Meanwhile, India will have to put in place a robust mechanism for the protection of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR).
- **Structural Changes:** Taking cue from ISRO, which directly reports to PMO, Chairman DRDO must directly report to the Raksha Mantri

to avoid bureaucratic delays. Further, the decision of government in refusing to create a DARPA like entity in India must also be reconsidered.

In the age of rapid technological obsolescence, whether DRDO is working hard or otherwise does not matter. What matters is if the efforts put by DRDO are adequate to beat the global competition. The measures taken up by government are at present inadequate to move a system that has stayed dormant for decades. How this is to change will be the defining challenge in times ahead and is a mammoth task. However, no amount of difficulty should discourage a nation that aspires and has the ability to be the best. As Victor Hugo said, “There is one thing stronger than all the armies in the world, and that is an idea whose time has come.”

### References:

- <sup>1</sup> “Chapter 2: Developments in China’s Military expeditionary and force Projection capabilities”, *US-China Economic and Security Review Commission Report 2016*, available at <https://tinyurl.com/j5yml6d>
- <sup>2</sup> “DRDO came in way of acquiring key radars before Kargil: Malik”, Available at <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/DRDO+came+in+way+of+acquiring+key+radars+before+Kargil:+Malik/1/60397.html>
- <sup>3</sup> DoD: Research & Engineering Enterprise. Available at [www.acq.osd.mil/chieftechologist/](http://www.acq.osd.mil/chieftechologist/)
- <sup>4</sup> <http://www.acqnotes.com/acqnote/careerfields/budget-activity-ba>
- <sup>5</sup> “Communities Of Interest, Collaborating on Technical Challenges” Allan Shaffer, *Acquisition Technology & Logistics Magazine*, March-April 2015. Available at [http://www.defenseinnovationmarketplace.mil/resources/ATLMagazine\\_COIs\\_Shaffer\\_March2015.pdf](http://www.defenseinnovationmarketplace.mil/resources/ATLMagazine_COIs_Shaffer_March2015.pdf)
- <sup>6</sup> DTIC About page, available at <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/about/about.html>
- <sup>7</sup> R&D magazine, *Global Funding Forecast*, Dec 2013. Available at <http://www.rdmag.com/digital-editions/2012/12/2013-rd-magazine-global-funding-forecast>
- <sup>8</sup> *A New Direction for China’s Defense Industry*. Rand Project Air force. Rand Corp. Available at [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2005/RAND\\_MG334.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2005/RAND_MG334.pdf)
- <sup>9</sup> “The Current State of Defence Innovation in China and Future Prospects” IHGC Defence Innovation Brief, Jan 2014. Available at <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/67f7m49c>
- <sup>10</sup> *A New Direction for China’s Defense Industry*. Rand Project Air force. Rand Corp. Available at [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2005/RAND\\_MG334.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2005/RAND_MG334.pdf)
- <sup>11</sup> “China to create its own DARPA”, HaoXin, March 11, 2016. Available at <http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2016/03/china-create-its-own-darpa>
- <sup>12</sup> “India’s Defence Research Development Organisation”, Ranjit Ghosh, IDSA, available at <http://www.idsa.in/taxonomy/term/754>
- <sup>13</sup> *Risk Based Testing and the ‘Good Enough’ Approach*. Gerrard Consulting. Available at <http://www.gerrardconsulting.com/?q=node/481>
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid.





## Recalibrating PPP in Highways Construction

Abhinav Prakash\*

**P**ublic-Private Partnership has been adopted as the main route for implementation of the road projects in the country especially in National Highways Development Programme (NHDP) and is expected to finance the major share of ambitious road construction/upgradations projects in India, both by the Central and State governments.

According to National Highway Act, 1956, National Highways are owned, constructed, maintained and operated by the Central government via National Highways Authority of India (NHAI). This Act was amended in 1995 to allow for private participation. Now a private entity too can construct and operate highways and can also levy user charges on the commuters to cover up their costs and earn profits. The Government of India first laid down basic principles and guidelines for the PPP in a cabinet decision of 1997.<sup>1</sup> In 2000, Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the first phase of NHDP with a major emphasis on promoting PPP. Two models were preferred above all-BOT-Toll and BOT-Annuity. The third alternative was Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), which was to be used in the case where former two models failed to attract private investments. Recently, a hybrid annuity model has been introduced as well. However, there are several pitfalls in this approach which must be avoided.

The growth of PPPs began in the 80s with the advocacy of greater role of the private player and limiting the role of the state to that of a facilitator.

A major emphasis was placed upon cutting the public expenditure to restrict the size of the fiscal deficit. It is argued that higher fiscal deficit lead to destabilising effects for the economy due to higher inflation and higher interest payment due to expanding public debt. Also, that higher public spending ‘crowd outs’ the private investments due to increasing interest rates. Therefore, PPP in infrastructure was seen as the mechanism of not only reducing resource constraint facing the government in bridging the infrastructure gap, but in bringing in innovative financial and management techniques in the sector, which increases efficiency while rationalising the costs.

It also ensures an optimum risk allocation system.<sup>2</sup> The high degree of the economic externality of public infrastructure, and the commercial and socio-economic risks involved in developing and operating them has made it difficult to appropriate returns from infrastructure investments. The long gestation period of infrastructure projects also requires sustainable financial and operational capacity. Therefore, there is some reluctance in both the public and private sectors to absorb all the costs and assume all the risks of building and operating these assets alone. Since the risk of performance of the projects is passed on to the private sector, PPP leads to better risk assessment and cost estimation which is done on the basis of economic considerations alone.<sup>3</sup>

Even though there are arguments for PPP, there are major concerns regarding its viability and

*\*Author is an assistant professor of economics at Zakir Husain Delhi College (E), Delhi University.*

---

effectiveness<sup>4</sup> especially in the road sector, which requires significantly large investment for an extended period. The first problem arises with the issue of financing PPP projects and cost recovery. Who will be in charge of the cost recovery from the projects whose gains due to their public nature are often indivisible? Since investment in a highway project is indivisible and colossal, fixed charges form the major component of the costs of providing the road services. When gains from a highway project are purely economic and accrue only to users with no externality present, the toll rate cannot exceed the marginal benefit from road services with the result that despite tolling, consumer surplus may be substantial. Thus, though the net economic benefits from a road project are positive, it may not be commercially viable.<sup>5</sup>

It leads to a condition where the quantum of the private investment is less than the optimal level. It means that even the criterion of private profitability cannot be the only parameter for judging the investment in the roads sector. The problem becomes even more acute in the case of a developing country like India where there are high positive externalities associated with the road construction.<sup>6</sup> It promotes inter-regional trade, stimulates the local economy, helps in the exploitation of local resources and can aid in the division of labor and specialisation.<sup>7</sup> Since much of such gains cannot be captured through tolls, the gap between the socially optimal and commercially viable levels of investment in highways tend to be lower than required.

Apart from making the scale of capital outlay lower than the socially optimal level, the aforementioned economic and social factors also cause serious distortions in the composition of investment.

Under private commercial considerations, the dice is heavily loaded against projects which a) promote basic social, as against purely economic, objectives, b) result in economic gains which cannot be appropriated through user charges and c) trigger with a time lag a cumulative process of regional or national economic development. Thus, we see that private investors are more than happy to undertake the projects against negative grants for brownfield projects connecting major cities and industrial areas. However, few would like to take up greenfield projects in backward regions or remote regions like the northeast, which have a higher cost-benefit ratio than the former.

The government, thus, is forced to enact policies for neutralising bias in private investment. It bears the pre-construction costs like project feasibility study, land acquisition, environment clearance and other costs. It launches various schemes like viability gap funding, tax exemptions period and duty-free imports of equipment. The tax exemptions are given to financial institutions involved in financing road projects, borrowing abroad is eased, and mostly government also gives upfront grants for specific projects.<sup>8</sup> These concessions negate the basic arguments for PPP i.e. it will reduce the burden on public funds. On the other hand, it becomes difficult to calculate whether the total cost of the road construction has increased due to such concessions to the private sector. Duty rebates on inputs and interest subsidies erode allocative efficiency and give rise to the deadweight loss for the economy.

The solution to this dilemma is to change the approach towards highways construction. There is no reason to make highway construction incumbent upon the inflow of the private sector.

---

The government must be willing to undertake the projects on its own when the private sector shows no interest. It will send a strong signal to the market about the determination of the government to undertake road projects and in the end, will boost investor sentiment. The government should focus on developing a long-term debt market and fixing the health of the financial sector of the country because a major impediment to the participation of the private sector is the lack of access to long-term finance at reasonable rate.

By simplifying rules and regulations in the financial and banking industry and adopting transparency and predictability in the highway sector policy framework, the government will be able to facilitate the private sector inflows more than the often illogical concessions & financial incentives.<sup>9</sup> Also, there are several other major

problems in the PPP projects like unfair concessions in the form of guaranteed rate of return, no competition clauses, manipulative toll fixing.<sup>10,11</sup>

Therefore, proper mechanisms must be evolved to avoid repetition of such mistakes. It calls for a threefold approach: capacity building in the government departments and technical training of the personnel, standardisation of the procedures for the award of contract and concessions, with enough regional flexibility to reduce arbitrariness and lastly a clearly defined penalty for private and government officials engaged in unfair practices. An efficient mechanism for audit and performance appraisal needs to be evolved. It needs to be stressed that the goal of the highway policy should be to provide world-class infrastructure at the lowest possible economic cost rather than following any model or approach as a matter of faith.

### **References:**

---

- <sup>1</sup> Raghuram. G & Ramakrishnan T.S: *Evolution of Model Concession Agreement for National Highway of India.*
- <sup>2</sup> Checherita, Cristina and Gifford, Jonathan, 2007, "Risk Sharing in Public-Private Partnerships: General Considerations and an Evaluation of the U.S. Practice in Road Transportation"
- <sup>3</sup> *Public Private Partnerships: In pursuit of Risk Sharing and Value for Money (Working party of senior budget officials, OECD), April 2008*
- <sup>4</sup> Scribner, Marc, January 2011: "The Limitations of Public-Private Partnerships", *Competitive Enterprise Institute*
- <sup>5</sup> Rakshit, Mihir (2009), 'Issues in Infrastructure Investment: National Highways Development Programme' in *Macroeconomics of Post-reform India, Vol I, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.*
- <sup>6</sup> *Contribution of Highway Capital to Industrial and National Productivity Growth, Mamuneas&Nadiri*
- <sup>7</sup> SaugatoDatta, "The Impact of Improved Highways on Indian Firms", *World Bank Group, Feb 13,2008*
- <sup>8</sup> *Secretariat for the Committee on Infrastructure, Planning Commission "Financial Support to Public Private Partnerships in Infrastructure", Government of India*
- <sup>9</sup> Joshi, Piyush & Anuradha R.V,2009, "Study on Competition Concerns in Concession Agreements in Infrastructure Sectors"
- <sup>10</sup> CAG, 2008, "Public Private Partnership in implementation of Road Project by National Highways Authority of India for the year 2008 (PSU)", *GOI*
- <sup>11</sup> CAG, 2009, "Public Private Partnerships (PPP) in Infrastructure Projects, Public Auditing Guidelines", *GOI*



## Geo-Politics and Role of Skill Development in India's Act East Policy

\*Lairenjam Niranjan Singh

The ancient Holy Puya of Meitei (Holy Book of Meetei) predicted “Nongpok Thong Hangani”, which means “The eastern gate will open”. This prediction in the Holy Puya could not have been truer when the Government of India formulated ‘Look-East Policy’ initiated by Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao (1991-1996) and rigorously pursued by the successive administrations of Atal Behari Vajpayee (1998-2004) and Manmohan Singh (2004-2014). Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the new government of India has made its relations with East Asian neighbors, a foreign policy priority by proposing a new outlook calling it the Act East Policy. India's Look East Policy which started as an economic engagement with its eastern neighbors, turned into a tool for forging strategic partnership and security cooperation by the following governments. The so-called Act East Policy driven through North-East India and Myanmar has now become the centre of geo-economics and geo-politics.

### Strategic Importance of North-East India

North-East India, comprising of eight states, has almost ninety five percent of its boundaries as international borders - surrounded by China, Nepal and Bhutan in the North, Bangladesh in the South-west and Myanmar in the East. In the past history, the mighty Himalayas in the north always kept India physically aloof from China. In the North-east,

treacherous terrain, militia and ethnic tensions made it impossible to cross over and connect with China via Myanmar. On the return of democracy in Myanmar, almost after half a century of military rule and civil war, Myanmar is now set to open up to the world with democratic values and is showing an intent on improving trade and commerce relations.

Interestingly, in the past colonial times, when Burma was part of British India, British Indian government underestimated the strategic importance of Burma before the World War 2. It was when the fascist Imperial Japanese forces swept across China and rest of Asia and reached the borders of Burma, that the British forces realized that the threat is real now with the possibility of infiltration into the Jewel of the British Crown – British India. British-Indian forces retreated from Burma abandoning strategic Mandalay and defended from Imphal Valley and Kohima. In recent times, the British have declared the Battles of Imphal and Kohima as the ‘Fiercest Battles’ fought in the history of World War 2. The lesson that modern India needs to learn from the ‘mistake’ British-India committed is that North-East India should be defended militarily as well as economically with Myanmar as our first line of defense or a level playing field by upholding admirable diplomatic and trade relations.

### Understanding Myanmar – New Cross-road of Asia

Myanmar (name changed in 1989 from

*\*Author is director of JCRE Skill Solutions and working towards skilling the youth & solving unemployment in North-East India.*

---

Burma) is a country with a population of more than 60 million which neighbours North-East India inhabited by 50 million people. Myanmar is the direct land bridge for India to Thailand, Laos and China and indirect link to Cambodia, Vietnam and Malaysia. Modern India needs to recognize that Myanmar is extremely important as a land bridge to reach out to the rest of ASEAN countries and is a level playing field for India and China to exercise their influence. Fascinatingly, many Indian immigrants lived in Myanmar in the 20th century and were later cast out with the onset of civil war and military takeover on 2 March, 1962 by General Ne Win. However, in early 1980s, in spite of the military rule in Burma and the isolation it faced from the world, Chinese businessmen took first mover advantage and started investing in the Northern states of Kachin and Shan, leaving long lasting impression on Myanmar, that will be later seen as economic progress as well as political interference. In the past history, whatever has happened in China spilled over to Myanmar. The increasing Chinese influence and interference has often been met with resistance and backlash by the Burmese. With the onset of democratic reforms between 2011-15 and the win for National League for Democracy in 2015 elections, Myanmar is prepared to open up to the rest of world under the proficient leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi. While Myanmar has always experienced Chinese investment and political interference, the country has always looked up to India for its historical connections like Buddhism, Indian wisdom and its democratic values.

The peace process framed by the BJP-led government in the North-East India is bearing positive results. The diplomatic relations extended to the then military Junta government has also

helped in reducing the insurgency activities around the international borders. The intent of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Act East Policy' can be gauged in the BJP's election win in the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur. History will be made when the Indian Railways reach Imphal and further connection to Myanmar will make Tran-Asian Railway a reality. The India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral highway through Moreh in Manipur will further connect Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, to be known as East-West Economic Corridor. Kaladan-Multi Modal Transit Transport will connect seaport of Kolkata with Sittwe seaport and then through Kaladan river route, from Palethwa (Myanmar) to the North-Eastern state of Mizoram.

### **Role of Skill Development in India's 'Act East Policy'**

In this backdrop of history, politics, economics and connectivity in North-east India and Myanmar, Indian Government must not only focus on geo-economics but also have a clear geo-political strategy to contain neighbouring China and to boost trade and security cooperation with ASEAN countries. By design, it helps India gain a dominant influence in the Indian Ocean Rim. With the future that India is envisioning, it becomes pertinent to factor in relevant functions that support India's 'Act East Policy'. One function that will add great impetus to India's 'Act East Policy' is Skill Development, undertaken by the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Government of India.

With the Trans-Asian Railway and the India-Myanmar- Thailand Trilateral highway through Moreh in Manipur nearing completion, India foresees a colossal boost in trade and commerce making North-East India, the next big economic

---

corridor connecting India to ASEAN countries and China. In the light of this development, NE states need to develop an ambitious yet meaningful Skill Development and Employment Plan for its youth, taking into account what development will take place at its international borders in the next 40 to 50 years.

We must recognize that unemployment is at the core of all issues in North-East India. Three levels of Skill Development and Employment plan can be formulated: - (1) Develop skills among the North-East youth, which are needed across the world specially in service industries like Tourism & Hospitality, Retail and IT & IT-enabled services. Initially, these skills can be exported outside the North-East and later, as the industries develop in the North-East, they can be absorbed into local employment. (2) Nature has gifted rich flora and fauna to the North-East region and the region could become a hub for developing agriculture, horticulture, floriculture, and food processing. There is a huge potential to create local enterprises and local employment around these sectors. (3) As the trade & commerce boom in North-East India through connectivity with ASEAN and China, youth of the region need to get skilled in relevant trades to support the cross-border trade and business. Mammoth skill training initiatives should be taken up in the fields of Logistics and Warehousing, Cold Storage, Railways, Highways, Mining, Oil and Gas, Heavy Vehicle Driving, Business Management and Banking & Finance. These three levels of Skill Development and Employment plan can only be realized by forming an efficient and effective State Skill Mission in

each of the states in North-east India; primarily in the states sharing international 'trade' borders with Myanmar; namely, Manipur and Mizoram. In order to deliver quality training of international standards, state-of-the-art infrastructure in the form of 'Multi-Skill Training Centers' should be built in North East India. The Multi-Skill Training centers need to have 'Language Labs' to deliver training on Burmese and Mandarin, which will be of immense help in penetrating business and maintaining diplomatic relations with Myanmar. 'Skill India' mission can play a vital role in preparing the youth of North-East India for the drastic positive changes that 'Act East India' will bring to the region.

Myanmar is the land bridge for North-east India to the Bay of Bengal, Andaman Sea and the Indian Ocean and is also a country India needs to compete for with China. North-east India is Myanmar's neighbour and will remain so. Therefore, North-East India is logistically best placed for India to consider any activity in Myanmar or other ASEAN countries. Since 1980s, Chinese influence is deeply entrenched in the Burmese society either through business or political interference. Often the dominant influence and Chinese spillover onto Myanmar have been met with backlash by the Burmese from time to time. Myanmar definitely enjoys business investment by China but not at the cost of political interference. On the other hand, Myanmar is keen to counter-balance China's influence by reaching out to India. The wisdom for India is that India needs to understand the 'fears' and 'desires' of Myanmar. This may be the 'key' to the success for India's "Act East Policy".



## **Curtain Raiser of International Conference on “BIMSTEC: An Enabling Architecture for Growth, Prosperity and Partnerships”**

Siddharth Singh



**A**n International conference on BIMSTEC will be organized by India Foundation in collaboration with FICCI in Guwahati from November 2 to 4, 2017, under the overarching theme of ‘BIMSTEC: An Enabling Architecture for Growth, Prosperity and Partnerships’. The conference aims to engage the member states of BIMSTEC on the same platform and collectively streamline a vision for the future. As a prelude to the BIMSTEC conference and on the occasion of 20th Anniversary of BIMSTEC on 6th June 2017, India Foundation and FICCI organised a curtain raiser of the conference. Shri Jayant Sinha, Minister of State, Civil Aviation, Government of

India, was the Guest of Honour at the curtain raiser. He released the official brochure and website of the conference ([www.bimsteconference.in](http://www.bimsteconference.in)).

Addressing the curtain raiser, Mr. Jayant Sinha said, “To make the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean the real power centre of the region, the BIMSTEC countries would have to work together”. He added, “To strengthen trade, connectivity is vital.” Therefore, the focus of India is on developing transport infrastructure, which includes rail and roadways, waterways and aviation. He also highlighted that India is developing its railways and roadways network and is linking the northeast with the rest of India so as to make



it the hub for reaching out to the neighbouring countries. Mr. Sinha also suggested that to encourage high value travelers and to allow free movement for business persons, there should be an open skies policy in BIMSTEC. He said that India is looking to expand the UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik) scheme of its aviation policy to countries of BIMSTEC.

Mr. Prashant Agrawal, Joint Secretary (BIMSTEC & SAARC), MEA, read out the transcript of the message from Shri Narendra Modi, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India.

The event was well-attended and saw participation of many Ambassadors and officials from the embassies of BIMSTEC countries apart from other dignitaries.





## **Curtain-Raiser of 2nd Indian Ocean Conference and India -ASEAN Youth Summit**

Aaditya Tiwari



India Foundation hosted a Heads of Missions Dinner for Indian ambassadors serving abroad as well as foreign heads of missions posted to Delhi as a curtain-raiser to two of its flagship events namely, 2nd Indian Ocean Conference-IOC 2017 and the First India-ASEAN Youth Summit. The event was attended by the Union Minister of Railways, Govt. of India and Director, India Foundation Shri Suresh Prabhu. The Guest of Honour for the event was Shri M J Akbar, Minister of State for External Affairs, Govt. of India and Director, India Foundation. The event was well attended and saw participation of about 50 ambassadors and dignitaries. Foreign mission heads of the IOC and ASEAN region also graced the occasion. The brochures of the Indian Ocean Conference and India-ASEAN Youth Summit were released by Shri M J Akbar and Shri Ram Madhav, National General Secretary, Bharatiya Janata Party and Director, India Foundation.

2nd Indian Ocean Conference- IOC 2017 is a flagship event of India Foundation event which aims to discuss issues related to the Indian Ocean

Region. The theme of the conference this year is 'Peace, Progress & Prosperity'. The conference will be hosted in Colombo from 31st August – 2nd September, 2017. Shri Ranil Wickramasinghe, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka has consented to be the Chair of the Organizing Committee and Smt. Sushma Swaraj, External Affairs Minister, India has agreed to be the Vice-Chair along with Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Government of Singapore & Shri Ravi Karunanayak, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Government of Sri Lanka as Co-Vice Chair.

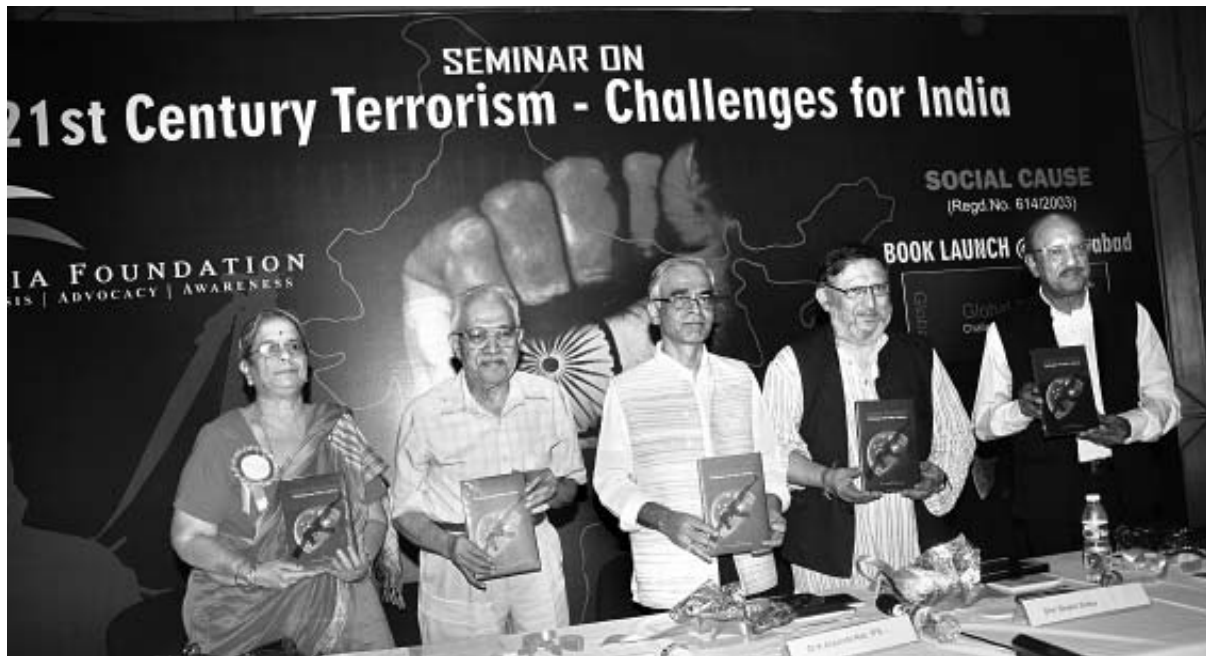
India-ASEAN Youth Summit 2017 will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the ASEAN-India Dialogue Partnership by building on the close cultural and civilisational links of India and its South East Asian neighbours.

The theme of the summit is 'Shared Values, Common Destiny'. The Youth Summit is being hosted by India Foundation and the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. The Summit is scheduled to be held from 14th-19th August in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.



## Seminar on “21st Century Terrorism – Challenges for India”

Chalasanani Narendra



“Terrorism is no more a simple act of violence, but information and cyber security are major challenges to be met with to deal with 21st Century Terrorism”, said Shakti Sinha, Director, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML), New Delhi. Speaking at a seminar on “21st Century Terrorism-Challenges for India”, organised by India Foundation and Social Cause in Hyderabad on 4th June 2017 (Sunday), Sinha said that terrorism is contextual and “it is our battle”.

He said we have to realise that nobody will join us in this battle against terrorism and we have to work out our own strategies. He cautioned that the terror groups have been extensively using social media for radicalisation, recruitment, raising money, gathering intelligence and to create panic. He deplored that India was lagging behind in this

area and we didn’t have any security system to handle it.

He cautioned that India is passing through a dangerous era as we did not follow cyber security systems. He said that the 21st century challenges are not as simple as of inter-state wars, where India has proved to be successful. The present violence is more situational and more criminal, he added. Strongly disputing various definitions of terrorism, Sinha said that terrorism is not based on idealism, but a tactic to achieve political goals. He said that most of the terror groups in the world had originated from the West against communism, but now they have turned to be unmanageable for themselves.

Cautioning that India is moving towards greater problems after China is strongly supporting Pakistan

---

so as to keep India unstable, Sinha said that no more we may expect a 'global war' to tackle this problem and we need to work regionally by cultivating strategic relations with our neighbours by sharing intelligence and resources. He recalled how Bangladesh's Sheikh Hasina regime had helped us in cleaning insurgent movements in Assam.

He pointed out the need to 'name and shame' Pakistan's promotion of terror activities in this region. Strongly dismissing Pakistan's intentions to tackle terror groups, he recalled that NIA had seized over 4 million dollars from separatists groups within a day of raids, whereas Pakistan could seize a mere 3 million dollars in a year by spending over 15 million dollars.

Director of India Foundation Maj Gen (Dr) Dhruv C Katoch stated that India needs to concentrate on conflict resolution measures. While its forces are capable of tackling terror groups in Jammu and Kashmir, insurgent groups in North East and Left Wing violence in various parts of the country, conflict resolution is a political process. He expressed concern that vested political and administrative interests may be sabotaging conflict resolution measures and the same needs to be guarded against.

He also said that India has failed in developing a counter narrative to counter such forces. Though the nation has been a victim of terrorism since the 50s and has also made a pitch in the United Nations for the nations of the world to stand united in the war against terror, its efforts were ignored by the

world. It is only after the West has been attacked, that the world now seeking to get together to fight this menace.

He went on to point out that US and other western nations are selective while dealing with terrorism. They are more concerned with a couple of deaths in their cities than hundreds of deaths in Asian and African countries.

He said Kashmir was known for peaceful co-existence of people till 80s and radicalisation was started in a very systemic way which we had failed to understand. Gen Katoch observed that India can meet these challenges by cultivating a spirit of nationalism and by making the Indian democracy work more effectively.

Former Advisor to J&K Governor Lt. Gen Mohammad Ahmed Zaki speaking as a guest of honour said that Indian army is the best one in the world and is capable of facing any challenge on all fronts. Terrorist groups like Taliban and Al-Qaeda cannot make a dent on our security.

Stating that presently we are facing proxy war perpetrated by Pakistan, he assured that our troops make our country proud at all times. Former DGP K Aravinda Rao presiding over the seminar, said that terrorism has its roots in non-negotiable religious doctrines. On this occasion, a book titled "Global Terrorism: Challenges and Policy Options", which is the outcome of the 2nd Counter Terrorism Conference organised by India Foundation in 2016 at Jaipur, was released in Hyderabad. Senior Journalist Shri K. Raka Sudhakara Rao introduced the book.



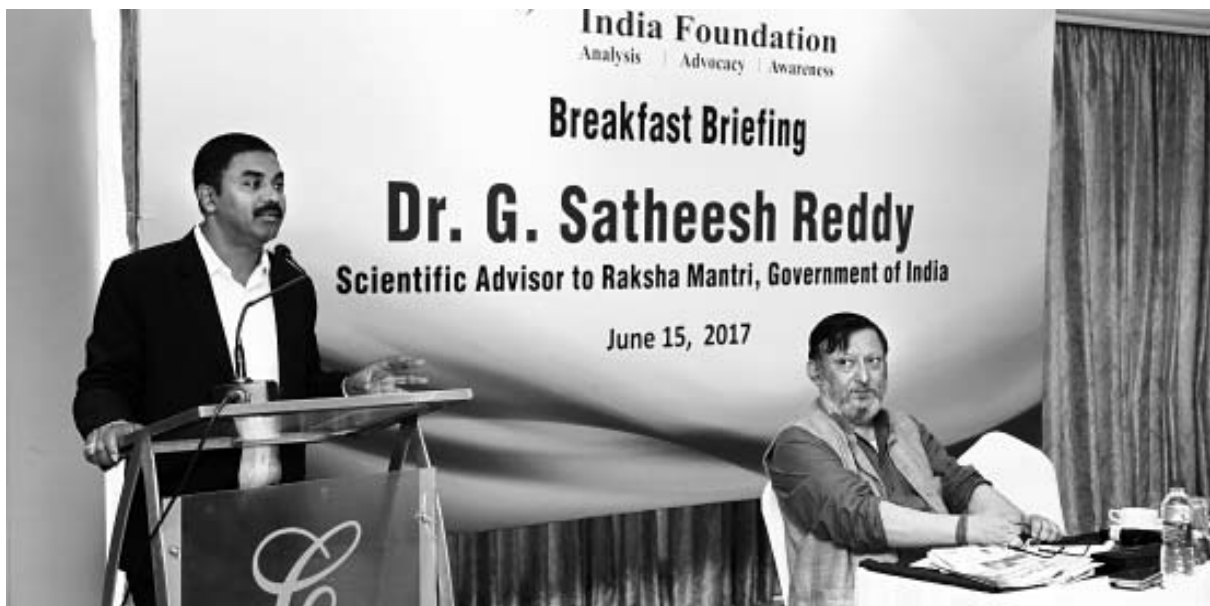
**4th Breakfast Briefing**

Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad, Hon'ble Union Minister of Law & Justice and Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India on the government's position on Triple Talaq and Ram Janmabhoomi Movement.



**5th Breakfast Briefing**

Dr. G Satheesh Reddy, Scientific Advisor to Defence Minister, Government of India on India's new strides in space and defence technology research



*Wei Qi vs Chess***‘Sino-Indian Relations: Contemporary Perspectives’***Edited by:*

Prof R Sidda Goud, Manisha Mookherjee

Allied Publishers, 2016, pp 160,

Price: Rs 750

Book Review by: **K Raka Sudhakar Rao**

China of late has emerged as India's biggest strategic obsession. Coping with China's geo-strategic and economic ambition has been one of the biggest challenges for the Modi Government.

China's historic imperialist ambitions are now finding new expression through a modernistic international narrative that is as ingenious as it is attractive. It is couched in linguistic ambiguity and camouflaged in the lure of low-hanging dividends. Multilateral initiatives like BCIM, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, BRICS Bank and the latest Belt and Road initiative based on various bilateral projects raise several dilemmas for India.

What should be India's policy in context of growing Chinese assertiveness and an effective response? How should it look beyond border irritants and formulate a cogent policy response mechanism to deal with China's growing geostrategic ambitions which have deep implications for India? How to counter China's maritime ambitions, especially in the Indian Ocean Region that have all the trappings of a strategic encirclement of India and limiting its maritime

interests? How to fine-tune Indian response involving both containment of and cooperation with China?

Indian dilemma also includes questions about what should be its role and response in Indo-Pacific in general and Indian Ocean in particular. How to dovetail India's maritime, geostrategic and regional objectives in the larger canvas of Sino-India relations is also an important question.

This book, a collection of the papers presented at a National Symposium on "India-China Relations and Recent Developments" organised by the UGC Centre for Indian Ocean Studies of the Osmania University, Hyderabad in December 2015, seeks to find answers to these questions.

The five dominant themes of the book are: Interplay of economics and politics in OBOR; the role and reach of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, problems and challenges before BRICS, China's geostrategy in Eurasia, Indian dilemma of containment and cooperation.

Interestingly, in the foreword, Prof PV Rao, former director of the Centre for Indian Ocean Studies, sums up India's dilemma in the following

---

*\*Reviewer is a journalist-activist based out of Hyderabad. He can be reached at [krakasudhakarao@gmail.com](mailto:krakasudhakarao@gmail.com)*

---

words: Should India support or stay out of the Chinese regional and globally overarching plans? If India rejects, the world tries to attribute negativism to the Indian foreign policy psyche or at least China will send such messages. Should India chose to join the plans, there is always a lurking skepticism that the Chinese models of cooperation are aimed at curbing the Indian political and strategic objectives in the Indian Ocean, Asia Pacific and the world at large.

China experts like Commodore Seshadri Vasam, Dr M Mayilvaganan, Sylvia Mishra, Amrita Jash, Dr Durga Bhavani, Dr Sukalpa Chakravarthi, Dr Radha Raghuramapatruni, Prof. Sidda Goud, Dr Manisha Mukherjee, Prof GVC Naidu and Prof Yagama Reddy have contributed papers at the symposium. Their papers are presented in the form of this book. In his paper, Commodore Seshadri Vasam terms OBOR as a game-changer in the region and says India has rightful concerns about the possible impact of the OBOR in its neighbourhood. However, he points out that India's response is "half-hearted". He says barring Mausam or Spice Route, India has no concrete proposal on how to respond to Chinese ambitions.

Prof GVC Naidu argues that India needs to qualitatively enhance its role and involvement in East Asian economic vibrancy. He says that economic dynamism which is sweeping East Asia and other sub-regional and multi-lateral frameworks are emerging as key drivers of regional

economic cooperation and integration.

Dr M Mayilvaganan discusses China's attempts to 're-order Asia' so as to bolster its influence and authority in the region and feels that Indian endorsement is key to realising China's Maritime Silk Route geo-strategy.

It's a classic contest of Chinese encirclement game of Wei Qui that calls for India's quick policy response and India's Chess which is thoughtful weakening and isolation of the rival through strategic moves. Modi Government chose to stay out of the OBOR as of now on the plea that the route passes through India's Gilgit-Baltistan, which is currently under Pak occupation and accepting OBOR in the current form is inimical to India's sovereignty claims. But, adopting an insular approach to OBOR could have adverse consequences. India has to use deft diplomacy to wean away regional and global stakeholders from subscribing to Chinese plans. Similarly, it could exert pressure – soft and hard – to make China redefine the terms of engagement in the OBOR to address India's concerns.

India would do well to understand and implement the Chanakyan formulation of Raja Mandala and Shadgunya to contain China and find a common ground with it on terms favourable to it to usher in the Asian Century that the global affairs soothsayers predicted.

The book is a useful addition to the students of China, its geopolitics and diplomacy.



# Upcoming Events

## **India Bangladesh Friendship Dialogue on Bangladesh-India Relations: Into a Brave New World**

**2-4 July, 2017; Guwahati, Assam**

India Foundation in collaboration with Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Kolkata, State Innovation and Transformation Aayog (SITA), Assam and Bangladesh Foundation for Regional Studies, Dhaka is organizing Eighth Round of India Bangladesh Friendship Dialogue themed as **Bangladesh-India Relations: Into a Brave New World** on 2-4 July, 2017 at Guwahati, Assam. This dialogue aims to bring together policy makers, scholars and government leaders involved in crafting and articulating inter-governmental relationship from the two countries.

## **India Foundation Delegation Visit to China**

**11-16 July, 2017**

A 7 member Delegation of India Foundation will visit China from 11th July to 16th July 2017 to attend the bilateral dialogues with Fudan University in Shanghai on "India-China relations in transition". The bilateral dialogues on India-China relations are held every year in India and China as per the MoU signed between India Foundation & Fudan University. This year's discussion will be fourth in that series. The delegation will first visit Fudan University in Shanghai and will hold discussions there. Then the delegation will go to Kunming in China where a day-long seminar will be organised at the Research Institute for Indian Ocean Economics in Yunnan University of Finance and Economics. The bilateral dialogues between two countries have always been important because India and China both are dynamic, growing economic powers of 21st century in the era of economic globalization. Many pages of bilateral relations between India and China are still open to be read and re-read. Re-emergence of constructive cooperation would be new hope of comprehensive cooperation including economic ties, because the dream of Asian century would not come true without the close cooperation between India and China.

## **Young Thinkers Meet**

**30-31 July, 2017; Vadodara, Gujarat**

Young Thinkers Meet is a flagship event of India Foundation. It is a two day conclave of young thinkers who brainstorm over various issues of national significance. There have been five such conferences in the past in different parts of India. The first such meet happened in Coorg, Karnataka, with subsequent Young Thinkers Meets happening in Manesar, Haryana; Pune, Maharashtra; Panchmarhi, Madhya Pradesh and Patnitop, Jammu and Kashmir. This year, it will be the sixth Young Thinkers Meet, scheduled to be held on 30-31 July in Vadodara, Gujarat.

Senior RSS functionaries Shri Dattatreya Hosabale, Shri Krishna Gopal and Shri Ram Madhav, Director, India Foundation and National General Secretary, BJP, have been consistently guiding this effort. We have also had the guidance of Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Chief Minister-Madhya Pradesh, Late Shri Anil Madhav Dave-Union Minister for Forests and Environment, Smt Smriti Irani, Union Minister for Textiles, Shri M J Akbar, Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri Swapan Dasgupta, MP-Rajya Sabha, Shri Sajad Lone, Cabinet Minister-J&K Government, Shri Shakti Sinha, Director-NMML, Shri Shaurya Doval, Director, India Foundation and Shri Milind Kamble, Founder Chariman-DICCI in past Young Thinkers Meets. We have in the past discussed over themes like 'Great Indian Dream' and 'Impacting the National Discourse'. This year the theme for the Young Thinkers Meet will be 'India 2047'.

# Upcoming Events

## **India-ASEAN Youth Summit**

**14 -19 August, 2017; Bhopal**

To celebrate the 25th anniversary of the ASEAN-India Dialogue Partnership in 2017, India Foundation, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India (MEA) and Government of Madhya Pradesh are organising an India-ASEAN Youth Summit on the commemorative year's theme of "Shared Values, Common Destiny." It aptly reflects the close cultural and civilizational links that India and South East Asia have enjoyed over two millennia.

For further details, please write to [youthsummit@indiafoundation.in](mailto:youthsummit@indiafoundation.in)

## **Indian Ocean Conference 2017**

**31 Aug. – 2 Sept, 2017; Colombo**

The Indian Ocean is the world's third largest body of water, covering about one fifth of the world's total ocean area. The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) cuts across a vast span of territory that directly affects both the global economy and some 32 nations in the region. It reposes significant endowments of strategic natural resources, tremendous ecological and human diversity, and resplendent cultural and civilisational traditions, making it arguably a pivotal harbinger to regional and global peace, progress and stability. Equally, it is a potential lodestar, offering a new template for maritime concert, cooperation and management, and societally-beneficent harness, of the vast blue economy. Economic development can pave the way for the countries in the IOR to eradicate poverty. Peace remains a vital condition for **Progress and Economic Development**, which in turn can lead to **Prosperity** for all in the region.

What can the countries of the IOR do to achieve **Peace, Progress and Prosperity**? Delegates from all the countries of the IOR and other concerned nations have been invited to present their views in the **2nd Indian Ocean Conference (IOC 2017)**, being organised by India Foundation in association with Institute of Policy Studies, Colombo and S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore on 31 August – 2 September 2017 at Colombo.

For further details, please write to [indianocean@indiafoundation.in](mailto:indianocean@indiafoundation.in)

## **Workshop on**

### **Jihadi Terrorism in the Pak-Af Region and its Regional Implications**

**11-14 Sept, 2017; Herzliya, Israel**

India Foundation delegation will be hosting a workshop on **Jihadi Terrorism in the Pak-Af Region and its Regional Implications** at the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT)'s World Summit on Counter-Terrorism 2017. The workshop will cover following issues:

1. Causes of Radicalization in the region, factors contributing to the growth of IS & Taliban.
2. Linkages between Al Qaeda, Taliban, IS and other radical Islamic organisations.
3. Inter-dependence of these organizations to meet the theological requirements of 'jihad'.
4. Pakistan's tacit support to Taliban and its impact on international attempts to fight it.
5. Implications of growth of jihadi outfits on the region at large and on India in particular.



# Upcoming Events

## **Conference on 'Smart Border Management'**

**18-19 September, 2017; New Delhi**

India shares 15,106.7 kms of its boundary with seven nations - Pakistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. These land borders run through different terrains, and managing a diverse land border is a complex task but very significant from the view of national security. In addition, India has a coastal boundary of 7,516.6 kms, which includes 5,422.6 kms of coastline in the mainland and 2,094 kms of coastline bordering the islands. The coastline touches 9 states and 2 union territories. Indian Navy and Coast Guard are vested with the responsibility of coastal borders, where the State Marine Police is acting as the second line of defence.

The 2nd edition of the conference 'Smart Border Management', which is jointly hosted by India Foundation and FICCI, aims to address the emerging challenges faced by India post Uri attack in smart border management, by bringing national and international stakeholders together to discuss how India can create smart borders that, on the one hand, allow enhanced trans-border movement of people, goods and ideas, and on the other, minimise potential for cross-border security challenges.

For further details, please write to [mail@indiafoundation.in](mailto:mail@indiafoundation.in)

## **International Conference on "BIMSTEC: An Enabling Architecture for Growth, Prosperity & Partnerships"**

**2 - 4 November 2017; Guwahati**

The seven member states of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) provide unique links between South Asia and Southeast Asia. The region is home to around 1.5 billion people (22% of the global population) with a combined GDP of US\$2.7 trillion. In the last 5 years, BIMSTEC members states have been growing at 6.5% on an average. It is also a large consumer market despite global economic slowdown. Now as their shares in global trade, economy and growth are rising, the sub-region is fast becoming geo-economically significant for global powers. BIMSTEC is also of utmost geostrategic and economic importance for India.

It is in this backdrop that India Foundation in partnership with FICCI, will be organising a BIMSTEC Conference for the generation of debate, discussion and the exchange of ideas on the sub-grouping and its future development. In other words, it would be a track 1.2 dialogue to streamline the future course of BIMSTEC. The conference would provide inputs based on a comprehensive understanding, for charting out the future course of BIMSTEC in the medium and long run and recommend, if required, the necessary improvements in the existing mechanisms. The conference will consist of eminent personalities/stakeholders of diverse background (from the government, academia, think tanks, civil society and the media) including from all BIMSTEC member states.

For further details, please visit [www.bimstecconference.in](http://www.bimstecconference.in)