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M.G. Devasahayam**

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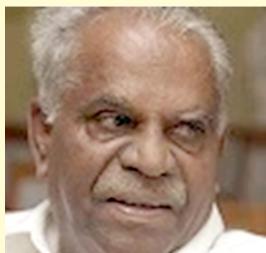
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Articles and Features:

Mahatma Gandhi and Jayaprakash Narayan: A Legacy Discarded



M.G. Devasahayam

On his birth anniversary comes the sobering realisation that if Narayan were to come alive today, he would be vilified as an 'anti-national' and 'patriotic nationalists' would be baying for his blood.

JP tried to persuade to also escape, had this to say:

"JP, I am sorry I cannot make the break with you.... Let me help to cover your getaway. You have got the passion that can make people's spirits soar up. You can inspire them to self-sacrifices, to accept sufferings. You are a great national leader".

The national emergency proclaimed on the night of June 25, 1975, and the terror that

followed proved how prophetic Sinha was about JP. During the 20 months of the Emergency, there was gloom all around as the world's largest democracy was slowly but surely sliding into dictatorship.

But through this all, one single soul, one lonely spirit, continued to stir in anguish and agony, for the first six months in captivity at Chandigarh and later attached to a dialysis machine at Bombay's Jaslok Hospital and a spartan house at Patna. Yet, this defiant, indomitable spirit in JP dared the might of Indira Gandhi's dictatorship and defeated it in less than two years, thereby restoring Indian democracy. He did this despite being in the frailest of health and living on borrowed time. I am a living witness to this.

Former US President, Bill Clinton had once declared: "The story of 20th century is the triumph of freedom. We must never forget the meaning of the 20th century or the gifts of those who worked and marched, who fought and died for the triumph of freedom".

JP was among India's tallest leaders who had 'worked and marched, fought and died' for independence and the triumph of freedom in a country which is home to one-sixth of the human race.



Freedom was at the forefront of Mahatma Gandhi's ideas. For him, hate and fear were the worst enemies of freedom. But today's ruling establishment is governing the country through hatred and fear. Where then is the freedom for which Gandhiji lived, fought and died for?

Jayaprakash Narayan (JP), whose 117th birth anniversary falls on October 11, was among the twelve apostles of the Mahatma and had been a front-soldier during the Indian freedom struggle. In this fight, JP imbibed a combination of ahimsa and aggression.

One sparkling instance shows JP's mettle: On the Diwali night of November 8, 1942, JP escaped from the high-security Hazaribagh Jail and a massive manhunt was launched by the British regime to capture him 'dead or live'. This episode inflamed the fading 'Quit India Movement', launched on August 8 that year by Gandhiji, and eventually lead to the collapse of the colonial empire and India's freedom.

A.P. Sinha, a co-prisoner and friend, whom

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Mahatma Gandhi and Jayaprakash Narayan: A Legacy Discarded

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JP did it not once, but twice – fighting for freedom from foreign rule under Gandhiji's leadership and later winning it back from a native coterie, which brought in 'emergency rule' through the back door, under his own stewardship. With the current trend of events, could the story of the 21st century be the defeat of freedom?

Be that as it may, there is a common belief that post-Independence, the Indian National Congress claimed the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi, captured political power and ruled India for decades. Similarly, there is a belief that the Bharatiya Janata Party claimed JP's legacy, captured political power in 1999 and again in 2014, and is ruling the country now.

It is a fact that both the RSS and its political wing, the BJP, have been laying claim to JP's legacy. Among the tributes paid to him, the most poignant one came from former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, when he said:

"JP was not merely the name of one person; it symbolised humanity. When one remembered Mr Narayan two pictures came to one's mind. One was reminded of Bishmapitamah lying on a bed of arrows. The second picture was one of Christ on the Cross and Mr Narayan's life reminded one of Christ's sacrifices".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi called JP his "guiding beacon" and an icon and had pledged to carry forward his legacy.

The legacy of JP is akin to that of the Mahatma and echoes him on issues that have cropped up in the post-Gandhi era. All of them are topical and in JP's own

words:

Freedom

"Freedom became one of the beacon lights of my life and it has remained so ever since... Above all it meant freedom of the human personality, freedom of the mind, freedom of the spirit. This freedom has become a passion of my life and I shall not see it compromised for food, for security, for prosperity, for the glory of the state or for anything else."

Democracy

"India's democracy is to rise storey by storey from the foundation, consisting of self-governing, self-sufficient, agro-industrial, urbo-rural local communities — gram sabha, panchayat samiti and zilla parishad—that would form the base of Vidhan Sabhas and the Lok Sabha. These politico-economic institutions will regulate the use of natural resources for the good of the community and the nation.

Development

"Idea of development envisages independent India as *sui generis*, a society unlike any other, in a class of its own that would not follow the western pattern of mega industrialisation,



Jawaharlal Nehru with Jayaprakash Narayan.

Photo: <http://www.nehrumemorial.nic.in/>

urbanisation and individuation. India's would be agro-based people's economy that would chart out a distinct course in economic growth, which would be need-based, human-scale and balanced while conserving nature and livelihoods.

Such a 'development' process would be democratic and decentralised. The best development model for India is diversified, democratic decentralised and value-added agriculture as the root, manufacturing small/medium industries as trunk and branches and widespread service sector as a canopy. The almost universal tendency for a centralised political, economic model, and social system that is associated with both of them should be abandoned."

Communalism

"Although almost every religious community had its own brand of communalism, Hindu communalism was more pernicious than the others because Hindu communalism can easily masquerade as Indian nationalism and denounce all opposition to it as being anti-national."

Hindutva

"Those who attempt to equate India with Hindus and Indian history with Hindu history are only detracting from the greatness of India and the glory of Indian history and civilisation. Such person, paradoxical though this may seem, are in reality the enemies of Hinduism itself and the Hindus. Not only do they degrade the noble religion and destroy its catholicity and spirit of tolerance and harmony, but they also weaken and sunder the fabric of the nation, of which Hindus form such a vast majority."

Hindu Rashtra

"In 'the long struggle for national freedom there emerged a clear enough concept of a single, composite, non-sectarian Indian nationhood'. All those who spoke about divisive and sectarian nationalism were therefore outside the pale of this nationalism, evolved during the freedom struggle. The hostile and alienating

nationalism we hear about today is antithetical to the ethos of freedom struggle and against the belief of all those who helped it evolve."

RSS

"When, following Gandhiji's murder, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh was under a shadow, there were many protests made about its being entirely a cultural organisation. But apparently emboldened by the timidity of the secular forces, it has thrown its veil away and has emerged as the real force behind, and controller of, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh. The secular protestations of the Jana Sangh will never be taken seriously unless it cuts the bonds that tie it so firmly to the RSS machine. Nor can the RSS be treated as a cultural organisation as long as it remains the mentor and effective manipulator of a political party. (1968)

RSS identifies the Indian nation with Hindu Rashtra. Such identification is pregnant with national disintegration, because members of other communities can never accept the position of second-class citizens. Such a situation, therefore, has in it the seeds of perpetual conflict and ultimate disruption. RSS should 'give up the concept of Hindu Rashtra and adopt in its place Indian nationhood, which is a secular concept and embraces all communities living in India'." (1977)

Cows

"The Hindu concept that a cow's life is inviolate is the outcome not of any primitive taboo, because beef was a common food of Hindu society at one time, but of the gradual moral and spiritual development of the Indian people in which non-Vedic Hindu religions such as Jainism and Buddhism perhaps took the lead. In the course of time, respect for human life grew and non-violence came to be more and more emphasised in human relations."

Kashmir

"It will be a suicide of the soul of India, if India tried to suppress the Kashmiri people by force. Rather than rely on repression, what the

government of India can do is go back to the time when the state had acceded to India only in three subjects [i.e. defence, foreign affairs, and communications]. This would mean providing for the fullest possible autonomy. If, in Kashmir, ‘we continue to rule by force and suppress these people and crush them or change the racial or religious character of their state by colonisation, or by any other means, then I think that means politically a most obnoxious thing to do’.”

“Kashmir has distorted India’s image for the world as nothing else has done. The only way to get rid of this black mark on Indian democracy was to assure the Kashmiris ‘full internal autonomy, *i.e.*, a return to the original terms of

the accession’. To think that we will eventually wear down the people and force them to accept at least passively the Union is to delude ourselves. That might conceivably have happened had Kashmir not been geographically located where it is. In its present location, and with seething discontent among the people, it would never be left in peace by Pakistan.”

We see today that the Gandhi-JP legacy has not only been turned on its head but mingled in the dust. If JP were to come alive today, he would be vilified and abused as an ‘anti-national’ with ‘patriotic nationalists’ baying for his blood. Is the ‘New India’ on offer?

M.G. Devasahayam is a former IAS officer hailing from Kanyakumari district. 

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Fact check: Did VD Savarkar write mercy petitions on Gandhi's advice, as Rajnath Singh claimed?

There is no literature in the public domain to suggest this.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday claimed that Hindu Mahasabha leader Vinayak Damodar Savarkar filed mercy petitions before the British government following Mahatma Gandhi's advice. Singh was speaking at the launch of a book on Savarkar titled *Veer Savarkar: The Man Who Could Have Prevented Partition*, authored by Uday Mahurkar and Chirayu Pandit.

"Lies were spread about Savarkar," said Singh. "Time and again, it was said he filed mercy petitions before the British government. But the truth is that he did not file mercy petitions for his release [from jail]. A prisoner has the right to file mercy petitions. It was Mahatma Gandhi who asked him to file mercy petitions. He filed a mercy petition after Gandhi's advice. Mahatma Gandhi had appealed that Savarkar ji should be released. He said as we have been peacefully protesting to gain independence, Savarkar ji will also carry forward the protest," claimed the Defence Minister, concluding that the claim – Savarkar had filed a mercy petition and begged for forgiveness – is false and baseless.

Pro-Bharatiya Janata Party website *Swarajya* wrote an article claiming that Singh's assertion was true. "Congress leaders and left-wing activists, including Marxist historians, who have for decades attempted to limit Savarkar's legacy to his mercy petition and deny him the stature of a freedom fighter – a rightful place in history, have claimed that the Defence Minister's statement is false," claims the article.

Swarajya cited Vikram Sampath's book on Savarkar to support its claim. "...In 1920 Gandhiji advised Savarkar brothers to file a

petition & even made a case for his release through an essay in *Young India* 26 May 1920," reads Sampath's tweet. Sampath is a biographer of VD Savarkar.

Did Savarkar indeed file mercy pleas following Gandhi's advice?

After his arrest by the British government on March 13, 1910, Savarkar was brought to the Cellular Jail (Kala Pani) in Andamans on July 4, 1911.

He was arrested following the assassination of AMT Jackson, then district magistrate of Nasik. Savarkar was in London when the assassination was carried out. He was accused of providing the pistol used to kill Jackson, from London. Savarkar and his elder brother Ganesh Damodar Savarkar had founded Mitra Mela (now called "Abhinav Bharat") in Nasik, a secret revolutionary society, linked to the assassination. Ganesh Savarkar was arrested the year before in connection with another assassination of a British official.

Savarkar filed his first mercy petition in 1911.

"The official protocol demanded that all political prisoners submit clemency petitions to the government seeking their release and pardon as part of the Delhi Durbar goodwill gesture. Accordingly, everyone, including Vinayak, submitted their petitions to the jail authorities. Vinayak's petition was received on 30 August 1911. Although no copy of this petition is extant, there remains only a reference to this in his 'Jail History Ticket'."

This is an excerpt from the book *Echoes from a Forgotten Past, 1883-1924* by Vikram Sampath.

Pooja Chaudhuri

Mahatma Gandhi was in South Africa when the clemency plea was made. He only returned to India three years later.

Savarkar filed a second mercy petition on November 14, 1913. This was also before Gandhi returned to India in 1914.

It was not until 1920 that Gandhi advised Savarkar's younger brother Narayan Damodar Savarkar to file a petition stating that VD Savarkar's offence was purely political. This was after Narayan Savarkar wrote to Gandhi for help.

Vikram Sampath, whose book was cited by *Swarajya* to incorrectly claim Rajnath Singh's claim was true, wrote, "From his clinic in Girgaum, Bombay, Narayanrao decided to do the unthinkable. He picked up his pen and wrote a letter to a man who was ideologically opposed to his brother, but nonetheless was fast emerging as a major political voice in the country – Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. In the first of six letters, dated 18 January 1920, he wrote to Gandhi, Narayanrao sought the latter's help and advice in securing the release of his elder brothers in the wake of the royal proclamation."

The letter that Narayan Savarkar wrote to Gandhi in 1920 says, "Yesterday [17 January] I was informed by the Government of India that the Savarkar brothers were not included in those that are to be released . . . It is now clear that the Indian Government have decided not to release them. Please let me hear from you as to how to proceed in such circumstances..." This letter also finds a mention on page 348 of the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* Volume 19.

Gandhi, in his reply on January 25, 1920, advised Narayan Savarkar to "frame a petition setting forth the facts of the case bringing out in clear relief the fact that the offence committed by your brother was purely political." He also wrote that he is "moving in the matter" in his own way. The reply can also be found in Volume 19 of the *Collected Works*

of *Mahatma Gandhi*.

Two months later, Savarkar filed a fresh petition requesting royal clemency. He thanked the British government for releasing hundreds of prisoners and stated that clemency should also extend to the remaining prisoners, including him and his brother. This petition is dated March 30, 1920.

On May 26, 1920, Gandhi wrote in his weekly journal *Young India*, "[sic]...I therefore direct My Viceroy to exercise in My name and on My behalf My Royal clemency to political offenders in the fullest measure which in his judgment is compatible with the public safety. I desire him to extend it on this condition to persons who for offenses against the State or under any special or emergency legislation, are suffering imprisonment or restrictions upon their liberty."

He further added:

"[sic] Thanks to the action of the Government of India and the Provincial Governments, many of those who were undergoing imprisonment at the time have received the benefit of the Royal clemency. But there are some notable 'political offenders' who have not yet been discharged. Among these I count the Savarkar brothers...Both these brothers have declared their political opinions and both have stated that they do not entertain any revolutionary ideas and that if they were set free they would like to work under the Reforms Act, for they consider that the Reforms enable one to work thereunder so as to achieve political responsibility for India.

They both state unequivocally that they do not desire independence from the British connection. On the contrary, they feel that India's destiny can be best worked out in association with the British...I hold therefore that unless there is absolute proof that the discharge of the two brothers who have already suffered long enough terms of imprisonment, who have lost considerably in body-weight and who have declared their political opinions, can be proved

to be a danger to the State, the Viceroy is bound to give them their liberty.”

These excerpts can be accessed in *Mahatma Gandhi's Collected Works Volume 20* (page 368).

Savarkar was released from Cellular Jail in the Andamans and shifted to a prison in Ratnagiri district in May 1921.

Gandhi held a high opinion of the Savarkar brothers during their imprisonment and this is clearly reflected in his writings.

“The Savarkar Brothers’ talent should be utilised for public welfare,” Gandhi wrote in *Young India* in the May 18, 1921 edition. “As it is, India is in danger of losing her two faithful sons, unless she wakes up in time. One of the brothers I know well. I had the pleasure of meeting him in London. He is brave. He is clever. He is a patriot. He was frankly a revolutionary. The evil, in its hideous form, of the present system of Government, he saw much earlier than I did, He is in the Andamans for his having loved India too well.”

But he did not agree with their violent methods. After Savarkar gained prominence as a Hindutva ideologue, Gandhi became clearer in his criticism. “To demand the vivisection of a living organism is to ask for its very life,” Gandhi said at the All Indian Congress Committee meeting in Bombay in 1942. “It is a call to war. The Congress cannot be party to such a fratricidal war. Those Hindus who, like Dr Moonje and Shri Savarkar, believe in the doctrine of the sword may seek to keep the Mussalmans under Hindus domination. I do not represent that section. I represent the

Congress.”

Despite his disagreements with their ideology, Gandhi maintained that they should be released from prison. In 1937, when Shankarrao Deo asked Gandhi about Tatyasaheb Kelkar’s charge made during a speech in 1925 that Gandhi did not sign the memorial for Savarkar’s release from prison, Gandhi replied, “It was wholly unnecessary as Shri Savarkar was bound to be released after the coming into force of the new Act, no matter who the Ministers were. And that is what has happened. The Savarkar Brothers, at least, know that whatever the differences between us as to certain fundamentals, I could never contemplate with equanimity their incarceration.”

Savarkar was released from Ratnagiri jail in 1924 on the condition that “he was to reside in Ratnagiri district; he could not go beyond the district’s limits without the government’s approval; he was not to engage in political activities publicly or privately; these restrictions were for five years, subject to renewal at the expiry of this period”.

There is no publicly available literature that suggests Vinayak Damodar Savarkar only filed mercy petitions with the British government upon Mahatma Gandhi’s insistence. Gandhi was in South Africa when the first two pleas were filed. He later advised Savarkar’s younger brother to file a petition when he wrote to Gandhi for help. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh’s claim, therefore, stands false.

This article first appeared on AltNews.

Courtesy **Scroll.in**, Oct 14, 2021 

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‘The Radical Humanist’ is now available at <http://www.lohiatoday.com/> on Periodicals page, thanks to Manohar Ravela who administers the site on Ram Manohar Lohia, the great socialist leader of India.

– Mahi Pal Singh

Real Motive Behind the Statement of Rajnath Singh, Defence Minister, in Saying that Savarkar Wrote Mercy Petition on the Advice of Gandhi ji.

Prof. Shamsul Islam

....Question arises as to why Rajnath Singh felt it necessary to connect Gandhi ji to the disgraceful mercy petition of Savarkar! His statement is not the result of foolishness or an inadvertent mistake made in hurry. In fact the Hindutva ruling band is afraid of Gandhi ji. In spite of the repeated gruesome attacks on the secular democratic values and inclusive traditions of our social fabric, the people at large are now openly uniting to resist the onslaught of pro-corporate policies and 'Brahmanical supremacist order' of Hindu religion which the Hindutva band is trying to impose on the nation. People are reasserting Gandhian values and ideas which were driven in the background for some time past. Gandhian ideology is working at present as a powerful source of inspiration to the ongoing people's movements.

RSS-BJP combination is perplexed at this scenario. They are facing a situation where they find that in spite of the murder of Gandhiji, the 'Idea of India' is not dead and this is throwing a strong challenge to their sectarian design of 'Hindu Rashtra'. They now plan to place Gandhi ji in the same row where Savarkar and Godse stand. They are trying to dwarf Gandhi ji to the same smaller stature of Savarkar and Godse. The main purpose of RSS preachers like Rajnath Singh is to demolish real image of Gandhi ji by making such irresponsible and baseless statements. They forget that when Gandhi ji's message could not be destroyed by killing Him, it is not possible to kill His ideas and values."

(Excerpts from the article 'SHAMEFUL ATTEMPT OF RAJNATH SINGH, DEFENCE MINISTER AND SENIOR LEADER OF THE RSS TO MALIGN GANDHI JI' written by Prof Shamsul Islam and published in Hindi in SABRANG)

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- **Mahi Pal Singh, Editor, The Radical Humanist**

NO, GANDHI DID NOT ASK SAVARKAR TO SEEK MERCY FROM THE BRITISH:

Quoting a line from a letter Mahatma Gandhi wrote to Savarkar's brother In 1920, to make it appear that he supported his mercy petitions, is misleading and unnecessary.

Vaibhav Purandare

.....“ Moreover Savarkar was not the only one who wrote such petitions. A number of Indian revolutionaries before Savarkar –Satyendra Nath Bose, for example, in 1908, - and many after him, - those involved in Kakori conspiracy case, for instance in the mid 1920s, wrote similar pleas to the Raj asking for release. Neither Savarkar nor any of those political revolutionaries were ‘traitors’, a term the Rahul Gandhi led Congress used for Savarkar.

Savarkar and Gandhi were political adversaries. One believed in armed revolution to throw the Raj, the other swore by non-violence. They were later ideological adversaries as well, as Savarkar advocated Hindutva and Gandhi kept up the Hindu-Muslim ‘bhai-bhai’ slogan.

Savarkar was one of the pioneers of the Indian Freedom Movement and undoubtedly a central figure in the struggle for independence in pre-Gandhi India, and Mahatma Gandhi later went on to be the pre-eminent mass leader of the Indian liberation movement and an apostle of global peace. Both can keep their places in Indian history.”

(Excerpts from the article “NO, GANDHI DID NOT ASK SAVARKAR TO SEEK MERCY FROM THE BRITISH” by Vaibhav Purandare, published in the Times of India dt.16th October 2021)

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Savarkar's Mercy Petition

A.G. Noorani

Mercy petition which V D Savarkar (Convict No. 32778) presented personally to the Home Member of the Governor General's Council, Sir Reginald Craddock, when he came to visit the Andamans (October-November, 1913) on November 14, 1913, reproduced below makes a shocking reading:

"I beg to submit the following points for your kind consideration:

(1) When I came here in 1911 June, I was along with the rest of the convicts of my party taken to the office of the Chief Commissioner. There I was classed as 'D' meaning dangerous prisoner; the rest of the convicts were not classed as "D". Then I had to pass full 6 months in solitary confinement. The other convicts had not. During that time I was put on the coir pounding though my hands were bleeding. Then I was put on the oil-mill — the hardest labour in the jail. Although my conduct during all the time was exceptionally good still at the end of these six months I was not sent out of the jail; though the other convicts who came with me were. From that time to this day I have tried to keep my behaviour as good as possible.

(2) When I petitioned for promotion I was told I was a special class prisoner and so could not be promoted. When any of us asked for better food or any special treatment we were told "You are only ordinary convicts and must eat what the rest do". Thus Sir, Your Honour would see that only for special disadvantages we are classed as special prisoners.

(3) When the majority of the casemen were sent outside I requested for my release. But, although I had been cased (caned?) hardly twice or thrice and some of those who were released, for a dozen and more times, still I was not released with them because I was their caseman [fellow convicts]. But when after all, the order for my release was given and when just then

some of the political prisoners outside were brought into the troubles I was locked in with them because I was their caseman.

(4) If I was in Indian jails I would have by this time earned much remission, could have sent more letters home, got visits. If I was a transportee (sic) pure and simple I would have by this time been released, from this jail and would have been looking forward for ticket-leave etc. But as it is, I have neither the advantages of the Indian jail nor of this convict colony regulation; though had to undergo the disadvantages of both.

(5) Therefore will your honour be pleased to put an end to this anomalous situation in which I have been placed, by either sending me to Indian jails or by treating me as a transportee just like any other prisoner. I am not asking for any preferential treatment, though I believe as a political prisoner even that could have been expected in any civilized administration in the Independent nations of the world; but only for the concessions and favour that are shown even to the most depraved of convicts and habitual criminals? This present plan of shutting me up in this jail permanently makes me quite hopeless of any possibility of sustaining life and hope. For those who are term convicts the thing is different, but Sir, I have 50 years staring me in the face!

How can I pull up moral energy enough to pass them in close confinement when even those concessions which the vilest of convicts can claim to smoothen their life are denied to me? Either please to send me to Indian jail for there I would earn (a) remission; (b) would have a visit from my people come every four months for those who had unfortunately been in jail know what a blessing it is to have a sight of one's nearest and dearest every now and then! (c) and above all a moral - though not a legal - right of being entitled to release in 14 years; (d) also

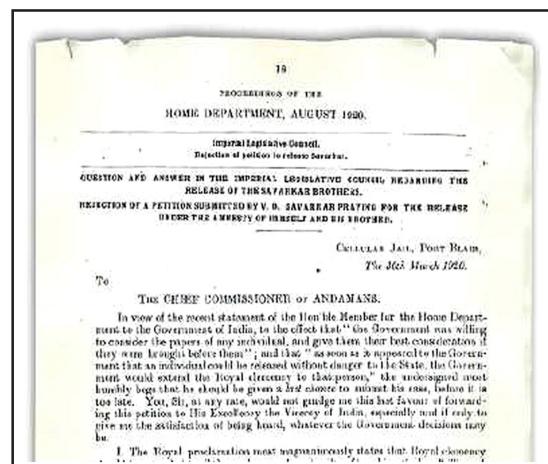
more letters and other little advantages. Or if I cannot be sent to India I should be released and sent outside with a hope, like any other convicts, to visits after 5 years, getting my ticket leave and calling over my family here. If this is granted then only one grievance remains and that is that I should be held responsible only for my own faults and not of others.

It is a pity that I have to ask for this - it is such a fundamental right of every human being! For as there are on the one hand, some 20 political prisoners - young, active and restless, and on the other the regulations of a convict colony, by the very nature of them reducing the liberties of thought and expression to lowest minimum possible; it is but inevitable that every now and then some one of them will be found to have contravened a regulation or two and if all be held responsible for that, as now it is actually done - very little chance of being left outside remains for me.

In the end may I remind your honour to be so good as to go through the petition for clemency, that I had sent in 1911, and to sanction it for being forwarded to the Indian Government? The latest development of the Indian politics and the conciliating policy of the government have thrown open the constitutional line once more. Now no man having the good of India and Humanity at heart will blindly step on the thorny paths which in the excited and hopeless situation of India in 1906-1907 beguiled us from the path of peace and progress. Therefore if the government in their manifold beneficence and mercy release me, I for one cannot but be the staunchest advocate of constitutional progress and loyalty to the English government which is the foremost condition of that progress. As long as we are in jails there cannot be real happiness and joy in hundreds and thousands of homes of His Majesty's loyal subjects in India, for blood is thicker than water; but if we be released the people will instinctively raise a shout of joy and gratitude to the government, who knows how to

forgive and correct, more than how to chastise and avenge. Moreover my conversion to the constitutional line would bring back all those misled young men in India and abroad who were once looking up to me as their guide. I am ready to serve the Government in any capacity they like, for as my conversion is conscientious so I hope my future conduct would be. By keeping me in jail nothing can be got in comparison to what would be otherwise. The Mighty alone can afford to be merciful and therefore where else can the prodigal son return but to the parental doors of the Government? Hoping your Honour will kindly take into notion these points." [Emphasis added]

Savarkar's mercy petition presented to Craddock on November 14, 1913 personally at the cellular Jail was not the only one. He submitted in all five mercy petitions in 1911, 1913, 1914, 1918 and 1920. We find mention of his 1911, 1914 and 1918 mercy petitions. Sadly, the texts of these are not available.



THOUGH every record leap to light, he never shall be shamed, goes an old saying. In V.D. Savarkar's case, every record disclosed exposes his deceit, venom and addiction to murder. He died in 1966. The next year, Gopal Godse, brother of Gandhi's assassin, Nathuram, and his co-conspirator, revealed in his book *Gandhi Hatya Ani Mee* ("Gandhi's murder and I")

the close relationship between Savarkar and Nathuram which both were at pains to conceal at the Gandhi murder trial. Savarkar was acquitted by the Sessions Judge, though the approver Badge's evidence was found to be completely reliable, only because the law required independent corroboration. That came in 1970 in the report of Gandhi's assassination by Justice J. L. Kapur, a former Judge of the Supreme Court. He found a "conspiracy to murder by Savarkar and his group". Savarkar's bodyguard, Appa Ramachandra Kasar, and his secretary, Gajanan Vishnu Damle, did not testify in court. They spilled the beans before Justice Kapur only after Savarkar's death. He had, besides, a mass of other evidence which was not available to the court.

In 1975, the Ministry of Education of the Government of India published a book based on archival material. Entitled *Penal Settlements in Andamans*, it was written by R.C. Majumdar, a historian notorious for his communal bias. He stretched everything he could in Savarkar's favour; but he could not suppress the documents. They exposed Savarkar completely. It was the first revelation of the many abject apologies and undertakings to the government of the day which the Sangh Parivar's icon had made throughout his career. In him it discovered an icon who reflected its values eloquently.

After his conviction for the murder of A.T.M. Jackson, Collector of Nashik district, who was "sympathetic towards Indian aspirations", Savarkar was brought to the Andamans in 1911. This was the only murder he had conspired to commit for which he was punished. He got away with the other three Curzon-Wylie of the India Office in 1909; attempted murder of the Acting Governor of Bombay, Ernest Hotson, in 1931 (he was saved by his bullet-proof vest); and Gandhi's on January 30, 1948. In each case, the trigger was pulled by someone else; the assassin was prodded by Savarkar.

Here is a list of the apologies and undertakings

which Savarkar offered from 1911 to 1950, a heroic record of four decades for which his portrait was put up in Parliament House by his political heirs to face that of the man he had conspired to kill - Gandhi.

1. Savarkar was lodged in the Cellular Jail on July 4, 1911. Within six months, he submitted a petition for mercy.

2. In October 1913, the Home Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, Sir Reginald Craddock, visited the Jail and met Savarkar among others. His note of November 23, 1913, recorded Savarkar's pleas for mercy. Savarkar had submitted his second mercy petition on November 14, 1913: "I am ready to serve the Government in any capacity they like.... Where else can the prodigal son return but to the parental doors of the Government?", the 'revolutionary' and 'nationalist' wrote (emphasis added, throughout). Craddock accurately recorded "Savarkar's petition is one for mercy". That formulation was repeated in the petitions that followed.

3. On March 22, 1920, a Savarkar supporter, G.S. Khoparde, tabled questions in the Imperial Legislative Council, one of which read: "Is it not a fact that Mr. Savarkar and his brother had once in 1915 and at another time in 1918 submitted petitions to Government stating that they would, during the continuance of war, serve the Empire by enlisting in the Army, if released, and would, after the passing of the Reforms Bill, try to make the Act a success and would stand by law and order?" The Home Member Sir William Vincent replied: "Two petitions were received from Vinayak Damodar Savarkar - one in 1914 and another in 1917, through the Superintendent, Port Blair. In the former he offered his services to Government during the war in any capacity and prayed that a general amnesty be granted to all political prisoners. The second petition was confined to the latter proposal." Thus there was one in 1917 besides that of 1913 which is perhaps the one Vincent

referred to as one of 1914; perhaps not because Savarkar referred to two others of 1914 and 1918.

4. The document published here for the first time, dated March 30, 1920, supplied an omission in the writer's book. It is craven. He begged for "a last chance to submit his case before it is too late". Vincent disclosed that Savarkar had recovered from dysentery five months earlier. His life was not in danger. He demeaned himself by citing cases of fellow prisoners, Aurobindo Ghosh's brother Barin and others. "They had even in Port Blair been suspected of a serious plot." He was the loyalist. "So far from believing in the militant school of the type, I do not contribute even to the peaceful and philosophical anarchism of a Kuropatkin [sic.] or a Tolstoy. And as to my revolutionary tendencies in the past - it is not only now for the object of sharing the clemency but years before this have I informed of and written to the Government in my petitions (1918, 1914) about my firm intention to abide by the constitution and stand by it as soon as a beginning was made to frame it by Mr. Montagu. Since that the Reforms and then the Proclamation have only confirmed me in my views and recently I have publicly avowed my faith in and readiness to stand by the side of orderly and constitutional development."

He added for good measure: "I am sincere in expressing my earnest intention of treading the constitutional path and trying my humble best to render the hands of the British dominion a bond of love and respect and a mutual help. Such an Empire as is foreshadowed in the Proclamation wins my hearty adherence." So much for his nationalism.

Savarkar concluded: "I and my brother are perfectly willing to give a pledge of not participating in politics for a definite and reasonable period that the Government would indicate... .This or any pledge, e.g., of remaining in a particular province or reporting our movements to the police for a definite period

after our release - any such reasonable conditions meant genuinely to ensure the safety of the State would be gladly accepted by me and my brother."

5. The pattern of demeaning apologies and abject undertakings is reflected in all undertakings that followed including the one he gave in 1924 which was published in *Frontline* (April 7, 1995).

6. On February 22, 1948, to the Commissioner of Police, Bombay, in order to avert prosecution for Gandhi's murder: "I shall refrain from taking part in any communal or political public activity for any period the Government may require."

7. On July 13, 1950, to Chief Justice M.C. Chagla and Justice P.B. Gajendragadkar of the Bombay High Court: "... would not take any part whatever in political activity and would remain in my house in Bombay" for a year. He resigned as president of the Hindu Mahasabha.

Marzia Casolari reproduced minutes of a meeting between Savarkar and the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow, on October 9, 1939, when the 'nationalist' said "our interests were now the same and we must therefore work together"; against Gandhi and the Congress, no doubt (vide her article "Hindutva's Foreign Tie-up in the 1930s", *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 22, 2000).

Disclosures haunt his heirs also. A.B. Vajpayee's speech on December 5, 1992, on the eve of the demolition of the Babri Masjid was published in *Outlook* (February 28, 2005). Maloy Krishna Dhar's book *Open Secrets*, published almost simultaneously, exposes L.K. Advani's complicity (pages 442-443).

When every record leaps to light, they shall ever be shamed.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOME DEPARTMENT, AUGUST 1920. Imperial Legislative Council. Rejection of petition to release Savarkar.

QUESTION AND ANSWER IN THE IMPERIAL LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

REGARDING THE RELEASE OF THE
SAVARKAR BROTHERS.

REJECTION OF A PETITION
SUBMITTED BY V.D. SAVARKAR
PRAYING FOR THE RELEASE UNDER
THE AMNESTY OF HIMSELF AND HIS
BROTHER.

**CELLULAR JAIL, PORT BLAIR, The
30th March 1920. To The CHIEF
COMMISSIONER OF ANDAMANS**

In view of the recent statement of the Hon'ble Member for the Home Department to the Government of India, to the effect that "the Government was willing to consider the papers of any individual, and give them their best consideration if they were brought before them"; and that "as soon as it appeared to the Government that an individual could be released without danger to the State, the Government would extend the Royal clemency to that person," the undersigned most humbly begs that he should be given a last chance to submit his case, before it is too late. You, Sir, at any rate, would not grudge me this last favour of forwarding this petition to His Excellency the Viceroy of India, especially and if only to give me the satisfaction of being heard, whatever the Government decisions may be.

I. The Royal proclamation most magnanimously states that Royal clemency should be extended to all those who were found guilty of breaking the law "Through their eagerness for Political progress." The cases of me and my brother are pre-eminently of this type. Neither I nor any of my family members had anything to complain against the Government for any personal wrong due to us nor for any personal favour denied. I had a brilliant career open to me and nothing to gain and everything to lose individually by treading such dangerous paths. Suffice it to say, that no less a personage than one of the Hon'ble Members for the Home Department had said, in 1913, to me personally, "... Such education

so much reading,..... you could have held the highest posts under our Government." If in spite of this testimony any doubts as to my motive does lurk in any one, then to him I beg to point out, that there had been no prosecution against any member of my family till this year 1909; while almost all of my activity which constituted the basis for the case, have been in the years preceding that. The prosecution, the Judges and the Rowlatt Report have all admitted that since the year 1899 to the year 1909 had been written the life of Mazzini and other books, as well organised the various societies and even the parcel of arms had been sent before the arrest of any of my brothers or before I had any personal grievance to complain of (vide Rowlatt Report, pages 6 etc.). But does anyone else take the same view of our cases? Well, the monster petition that the Indian public had sent to His Majesty and that had been signed by no less than 5,000 signatures, had made a special mention of me in it. I had been denied a jury in the trial: now the jury of a whole nation has opined that only the eagerness for political progress had been the motive of all my actions and that led me to the regrettable breaking of the laws.

II. Nor can this second case of abetting murder throw me beyond the reach of the Royal clemency. For (a) the Proclamation does not make any distinction of the nature of the offence or of a section or of the Court of Justice, beyond the motive of the offence. It concerns entirely with the Motive and requires that it should be political and not personal. (b) Secondly, the Government too has already interpreted it in the same spirit and has released Barin and Hesu and others. These men had confessed that one of the objects of their conspiracy was "the murders of prominent Government officials" and on their own confessions, had been guilty of sending the boys to murder magistrates, etc. This magistrate had among others prosecuted Barin's brother Arabinda in the first "Bande Mataram" newspaper case. And yet Barin was not looked

upon, and rightly so, as a non-political murderer. In my respect the objection is immensely weaker. For it was justly admitted by the prosecution that I was in England, had no knowledge of the particular plot or idea of murdering Mr. Jackson and had sent the parcels of arms before the arrest of my brother and so could not have the slightest personal grudge against any particular individual officer. But Hem had actually prepared the very bomb that killed the Kennedys and with a full knowledge of its destination. (Rowlatt Report, page 33). Yet Hem had not been thrown out of the scope of the clemency on that ground. If Barin and others were not separately charged for specific abetting, it was only because they had already been sentenced to capital punishment in the Conspiracy case; and I was specifically charged because I was not, and again for the international facilities to have me extradited in case France got me back. Therefore I humbly submit that the Government be pleased to extend the clemency to me as they had done it to Barin and Hem whose complicity in abetting the murders of officers, etc., was confessed and much deeper. For surely a section does not matter more than the crime it contemplates. In the case of my brother this question does not arise as his case has nothing to do with any murders, etc.

III. Thus interpreting the proclamation as the Government had already done in the cases of Barin, Hem, etc. I and my brother are fully entitled to the Royal clemency "in the fullest measure." But is it compatible with public safety? I submit it is entirely so. For (a) I most emphatically declare that we are not amongst "the microlestes of anarchism" referred to by the Home Secretary. So far from believing in the militant school of the type that I do not contribute even to the peaceful and philosophical anarchism of a Kuropatkin or a Tolstoy. And as to my revolutionary tendencies in the past:- it is not only now for the object of sharing the

clemency but years before this have I informed of and written to the Government in my petitions (1918, 1914) about my firm intention to abide by the constitution and stand by it as soon as a beginning was made to frame it by Mr. Montagu. Since that the Reforms and then the Proclamation have only confirmed me in my views and recently I have publicly avowed my faith in and readiness to stand by the side of orderly and constitutional development. The danger that is threatening our country from the north at the hands of the fanatic hordes of Asia who had been the curse of India in the past when they came as foes, and who are more likely to be so in the future now that they want to come as friends, makes me convinced that every intelligent lover of India would heartily and loyally co-operate with the British people in the interests of India herself. That is why I offered myself as a volunteer in 1914 to Government when the war broke out and a German-Turko-Afghan invasion of India became imminent. Whether you believe it or not, I am sincere in expressing my earnest intention of treading the constitutional path and trying my humble best to render the hands of the British dominion a bond of love and respect and of mutual help. Such an Empire as is foreshadowed in the Proclamation, wins my hearty adherence. For verily I hate no race or creed or people simply because they are not Indians!

(b) But if the Government wants a further security from me then I and my brother are perfectly willing to give a pledge of not participating in politics for a definite and reasonable period that the Government would indicate. For even without such a pledge my failing health and the sweet blessings of home that have been denied to me by myself make me so desirous of leading a quiet and retired life for years to come that nothing would induce me to dabble in active politics now.

(c) This or any pledge, e.g., of remaining in a particular province or reporting our movements

to the police for a definite period after our release - any such reasonable conditions meant genuinely to ensure the safety of the State would be gladly accepted by me and my brother. Ultimately, I submit, that the overwhelming majority of the very people who constitute the State which is to be kept safe from us have from Mr. Surendranath, the venerable and veteran moderate leader, to the man in the street, the press and the platform, the Hindus and the Muhammadans - from the Punjab to Madras - been clearly persistently asking for our immediate and complete release, declaring it was compatible with their safety. Nay more, declaring it was a factor in removing the very 'sense of bitterness' which the Proclamation aims to allay.

IV. Therefore the very object of the Proclamation would not be fulfilled and the sense of bitterness removed, I warn the public mind, until we two and those who yet remain have been made to share the magnanimous clemency.

V. Moreover, all the objects of a sentence have been satisfied in our case. For (a) we have put in 10 to 11 years in jail, while Mr. Sanyal, who too was a lifer, was released in 4 years and the riot case lifers within a year; (b) we have done hard work, mills, oil mills and everything else that was given to us in India and here; (c) our prison behaviour is in no way more objectionable than of those already released; they had, even in Port Blair, been suspected of a serious plot and locked up in jail again. We two, on the contrary, have to this day been under extra rigorous discipline and restrain and yet during the last six years or so there is not a single case even on ordinary disciplinary grounds against us.

VI. In the end, I beg to express my gratefulness for the release of hundreds of political prisoners including those who have been released from the Andamans, and for thus partially granting my petitions of 1914 and 1918. It is not therefore too much to hope that His Excellency would release the remaining prisoners too, as they are placed on the same footing,

including me and my brother. Especially so as the political situation in Maharashtra has singularly been free from any outrageous disturbances for so many years in the past. Here, however, I beg to submit that our release should not be made conditional on the behaviour of those released or of anybody else; for it would be preposterous to deny us the clemency and punish us for the fault of someone else.

VII. On all these grounds, I believe that the Government, hearing my readiness to enter into any sensible pledge and the fact that the Reforms, present and promised, joined to common danger from the north of Turko-Afghan fanatics have made me a sincere advocate of loyal co-operation in the interests of both our nations, would release me and win my personal gratitude. The brilliant prospects of my early life all but too soon blighted, have constituted so painful a source of regret to me that a release would be a new birth and would touch my heart, sensitive and submissive, to kindness so deeply as to render me personally attached and politically useful in future. For often magnanimity wins even where might fails.

Hoping that the Chief Commissioner, remembering the personal regard I ever had shown to him throughout his term and how often I had to face keen disappointment throughout that time, will not grudge me this last favour of allowing this most harmless vent to my despair and will be pleased to forward this petition - may I hope with his own recommendations? - to His Excellency the Viceroy of India.

I beg to remain, SIR, Your most obedient servant,

(Sd.) V.D. Savarkar, Convict no. 32778.
National Archives of India

The writer is grateful to the National Archives of India for furnishing him, at his request, with a copy of this revealing document. It fills an omission in his book Savarkar and Hindutva (Left-Word, 2002).

Courtesy **Frontline**, April 08, 2005 

Why Modi did not mention Afghanistan/Taliban in his UN address?

Faraz Ahmed

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his address to the United Nations General Assembly on September 25 was too restrained and cautious about the singular issue concerning India's security—the foisting of Taliban regime forcibly by Pakistani Mullah-military establishment upon the hapless peace-loving people of Afghanistan. He seemed content with joining QUAD group which the Americans have devised merely to confront China in the South China sea.

In his 21-minute brief speech, delivered to virtually an empty house and vacant benches the Prime Minister did not utter the word Taliban or Afghanistan even once as per the English translation of his speech put out on its site by the Ministry of External Affairs. He made a general mention in the prepared Hindi text of the inadequacy and inability of the United Nations to act as an able peace maker to prevent war, strife and terror spreading all over today's world.

Even in the government version as reported by some sections of the media, the Prime Minister touched very lightly on Afghanistan and Taliban, and underlined that the world is facing an "increased threat of regressive thinking and extremism," adding that the comity of nations has to ensure that no country takes advantage of the "delicate situation" in Afghanistan. He is reported to have said that the recent Afghan crisis has raised further questions on the relevance of the United Nations as an effective arbitration body. But the more reliable MEA version does not mention the word Afghanistan or Taliban or Haqqani, anywhere in the text.

The Prime Minister seemed satisfied with the earlier Quad joint statement: "In South Asia we will closely coordinate our diplomatic, economic and human rights policies towards Afghanistan and will deepen our counter-terrorism and

humanitarian cooperation...we denounce the use of terrorist proxies and military support to terrorist groups which could be used to launch or plan terrorist attacks, including cross-border attacks."

So much for combating terror! What security can be guaranteed with two top functionaries of this Taliban-Haqqani proxy regime of Pakistan, having served 14 years in the US' Guantanamo Bay detention camp for their terrorist activity? Mullah Fazel and Abdul Haq Wasiq, are now in charge of intelligence and security to Taliban mullahs in the new setup. How much they care for world reaction is evident from the fact that they have begun their medieval barbaric terror. Under orders of Herat governor Mawlawi Shir Ahmad Mujahir, four persons were publicly hanged for the people at large to come and witness it presumably for some act which the mullah governor pronounced as crime. It was not clear what crime the poor fellows committed, maybe none, except perhaps rubbing the mullah the wrong way.

In fact, earlier this month while addressing the countries of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation meeting held at Dushanbe in Tajikistan through a video conference, Prime Minister Modi was more forthright and outspoken when he had called upon the international community to take a decision on the critical question of the "recognition" of Taliban regime in a "thoughtful and collective manner." Though even here he avoided naming Taliban, he did warn the world community that were this trend of approving the principle of might is right to prevail, it would lead to the rise and spread of terrorist and extremist ideologies all over the world.

Addressing the SCO in the presence of Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan, he said, "The first issue is that the change of power in

Afghanistan is not inclusive, and has taken place without negotiation. This raises questions about the acceptability of the new system,” he said, adding, “representation of all sections of Afghan society, including women and minorities, is also important,” and stressed that “India supports the central role of the UN on this issue.”

“Secondly, if instability and fundamentalism continue in Afghanistan, it will lead to terrorist and extremist ideologies all over the world. Other extremists may also be encouraged to seek power through violence... So together we must ensure that the soil of Afghanistan is not used to spread terrorism in any country... Third, developments in Afghanistan could lead to an uncontrolled flow of drugs, illegal weapons and human trafficking. A large amount of advanced weapons remain in Afghanistan. Due to these, there will be a risk of instability in the entire region,” the Prime Minister surmised at the SCO meeting.

His clear and unambiguous criticism of the Taliban’s forcible and violent occupation of Afghanistan in the SCO meeting, sent alarm bells among the open and surreptitious supporters of this regime. The US created this Frankenstein and unable to tame it down in 20 years because of cohabiting Pakistan which was providing them safe haven, it has let loose those menacing bearded monsters calling themselves Mullah this and Mullah that on the poor Afghans. We were educated by the Sufi saints Bulle Shah, Baba Sheikh Farid and Sant Kabir that Mullah’s place is in the mosque and his jurisdiction does not extend beyond the masjid. The Talibani mullahs have proved that you allow the mullah an inch and he will take the whole country. And I insist that these mullahs wouldn’t have crossed the Pakistani border, where they were fattened all these years, but for the active moral and logistical support of Pakistani Mullah-Army establishment, with current Prime Minister Imran Khan a mere puppet in their hands.

No sooner Modi addressed the SCO conference, Saudi Foreign minister, Prince Faisal

bin Farhan al Saud came rushing to New Delhi to “persuade” India to go soft on Taliban and allow them to consolidate their hold on Kabul. Unlike in the past when it openly encouraged and supported the mullah Taliban regime, this time round the Saudis are more subtle and full of innuendoes. But look deeper and Saudi Arabia too is simply seeking consolidation of the Talibani regime with international recognition, but not a word on why occupation of a territory by violence and terror be provided legitimacy? And therefore, who will stand guarantee that these mullahs will honour the rights of women, ethnic minorities and in effect all citizens of Afghanistan? Who will restrain them from exporting terror in the name of Islam? Saudi had “stressed the Kingdom’s support for the Afghan people and the future choices they make for their country without any external interference,” as put out by Saudi Foreign ministry. What did it imply? That let them fight and settle the issue by the simple might is right principle and no one, India included, should raise a finger at them. Prince Faisal visited Islamabad before coming to New Delhi.

Meanwhile their other backers Qatar and Pakistan have issued a veiled threat to the comity of nations, in particular to sceptics like India not to isolate the Talibani regime, lest they become furious and unmanageable. Pakistani Foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi counselled the world leaders at the UN to be “Realistic, engage and above all don’t isolate them (Taliban), “Try an innovative way of engaging with them.” That’s like telling the world not to rebuke or punish an abrasive, recalcitrant teenager who considers everything he has snatched forcibly from his young cousins as his. The Qatar Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani went one step further and stressed upon world leaders at the UN general assembly “the necessity of continuing dialogue with Taliban because boycott only leads to polarisation and reactions”

(To be Contd....on Page - 22)

'Modi realises his position is shaky at the moment'

Syed Firdaus Ashraf

'There is a sense within the government and Modi that things are not as good as they were in 2019.'

In an unprecedented move, Prime Minister Narendra Damodardas Modi has sacked three chief ministers from the Bharatiya Janata Party in the last three months, anticipating that they had become a liability to the party and, worse, denting his own popularity.

The timing of their exit is very crucial as two of these states — Uttarakhand and Gujarat — will see assembly elections next year, or in 2023 as in the case of Karnataka.

Crucially, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Ajay Mohan Bisht aka Yogi Adityanath, whose state too goes to polls in 2022, has been spared a similar fate.

Bisht not only survived Modi's wrath but has been showing early signs of chafing at the bit against Modi's centralised leadership. Witness the exclusion of the PM's photograph in the advertisements taken out by the UP government lauding the chief minister for the state's development in his four-year rule.

What is behind Modi's large-scale culling of CMs and Union ministers in the July reshuffle of the Union council of ministers?

What makes Bisht untouchable in a party where Modi has demigod status?

Syed Firdaus Ashraf/Rediff.com spoke to **Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay**, author of *Narendra Modi: The Man, The Times and The RSS: Icons of The Indian Right*, to find out more about the BJP's inner politics.

"Modi is aware of the fact if people get another sense of a real alternative, they would start looking for it," says Mukhopadhyay in the first of a multi-part interview:

What is the reason for the BJP to replace three CMs before the state elections next year? What is the message

to the voters and party cadres?

The change in the leadership of CMs in Uttarakhand, Karnataka and Gujarat has to be seen in conjunction with the changes made in the council of ministers.

The backdrop to that is the horrific Covid second wave and the complete mismanagement by the government in terms of managing the health crisis.

Even after a year the government has been unable to revive the personal economies of the people and is keeping them solely dependent on dole and food being distributed.

People do not have money in their hands.

You can see this from the various rating surveys, and Modi understands the pulse of the people better than most politicians in the country.

He would have realised that the fool-proof position he was in is shaky at the moment.

I am not saying that there is a dent in his popularity.

He still is the most popular leader in the country, but the point is that he is aware of the fact if people get another sense of a real alternative, they would start looking for it.

Modi would be aware that while there is greater approval for him, but there is also some disapproval for him in the surveys which we have seen.

So, there is a backdrop of unprecedented crisis and the government has not been able to come up with real solutions in terms of economy, ensuring jobs, restoring businesses and on top of it came the lack of anticipation of the second Covid wave.

A few weeks before the second wave, right from Modi to the lowest BJP workers were gloating that we have defeated Covid without understanding the imminent danger that was coming even though there were signs.

But..

(Continuing) There is a sense within the government and Modi that things are not as good as they were in 2019, so what do you do?

Now you cannot penalise the person who is identified in the centralised system of government that Modi runs as all responsibility should lie at his door, but that is not accepted.

Therefore, he has to find people and (*tell the public*) that these are the people responsible for the misgovernance and lack of proper handling of the Covid situation and therefore they are penalised.

The health minister (*Dr Harsh Vardhan*) was made a scapegoat and that did not make much sense as everybody knows that this department was being micromanaged by the PMO.

Similarly, all the BJP-ruled states are micromanaged by the central leadership.

It is almost like the post-Nehruvian system of selecting chief ministers who are fairly low profile, faceless leaders and do not pose a serious challenge to the central leadership.

You have to make someone the fall guy who would not damage (*the party*).

Vijay Rupani was not a mass leader and did not have huge political support.

The same thing in other states like Karnataka as B S Yediyurappa's cushions were removed by stating he did not handle the Covid crisis well.

Tell people that action has been taken against those who were not able to deliver.

Courtesy **Rediff.com**, September 21, 2021. 

Why Modi did not mention....

Contd. from page - (20)

urging the world leaders not to repeat the past mistakes in Afghanistan "to impose a political system from outside." What was the Sheikh seeking that the world should quietly and meekly give in to the Taliban excesses currently being enforced in Afghanistan today, abandoning any pretence of democracy, as a system devised by the people of Afghanistan? But who decides that and how did the Qatar Emir come to this conclusion? Also, what is his locus standii, unless he has the tacit support of Joe Biden to soften the world to the new Taliban patriarchal, authoritarian order in Afghanistan?

Encouraged by such strong support the Taliban Foreign minister Amir Khan Mutaqqi in a letter to the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres pressed upon the United Nations to recognise them as the legitimate rulers of Afghanistan, while Mullah Nooruddin Turabi of Taliban who enforced the public beheading and chopping of hands in the previous Taliban incarnation, reiterated to the AP correspondent Kathy Gannon that he would resort to the executions and chopping off of hands once again. "Everyone criticised us for the punishments in the stadium, but we have never said anything about their laws and their punishments...No one will tell us what our laws should be."

This is the Taliban usurpers' swagger seeking recognition and acceptance by the comity of nations by sheer use of force and violence! For them India is an enemy territory. Who will stop them from exporting terror to India? None. The world has to put an end to it and it cannot do it but with force and by isolating Pakistan first. For once a slightly sober, saner voice emerged from US Vice President Kamala Harris. But that is insufficient and got drowned in the cacophony? Was it not imperative for our Prime Minister to forcefully present our apprehensions about Taliban to the UN General Assembly? More so when back here in India his BJP party, his Government at the Centre and in numerous states, with the active connivance of his embedded TV channels and other media are spreading the fear of Taliban every day, projecting the entire Indian Muslim community as Taliban?

Courtesy **Mainstream**, VOL LIX No 42, New Delhi, October 2, 2021. 

‘Modi has gone back to the template of caste’

Syed Firdaus Ashraf

‘Modi is now the biggest messiah of OBCs and Dalits as V P Singh once was.’

“There was a time after 2014 where Modi chose chief ministers in states like Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Haryana from non-dominant communities. Now in Gujarat he has gone back to the same dominant (*Patel*) community by getting their chief minister,” **Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay**, journalist and author of *The RSS: Icons of the Indian Right* and *Narendra Modi: The Man, The Times*, tells **Syed Firdaus Ashraf/Rediff.com** in part two of a multi-part interview.

Earlier too, Mr Modi’s popularity had dropped but he bounced back. Do you think he is at the lowest point in terms of popularity as PM?

I am not saying he will not bounce back.

It is part of an elaborate manoeuvre that he is doing to be able to bounce back.

First his popularity dipped in 2016 and he bounced back with the surgical strike and then demonetisation.

In 2017, he introduced GST very hastily and that caused tremendous problems to his popularity.

He was barely able to save the Gujarat government in the 2017 elections.

The BJP’s figure dipped below 100 and they won by a very narrow margin.

In 2018, they lost the elections in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan.

In 2019, when the year started, he was on the backfoot as Rahul Gandhi announced the NYAY (*Nyuntam Aay Yojana*) scheme if the Congress came to power.

Modi replicated Rahul Gandhi’s scheme exactly the same way by launching PM-Kisan in the interim Budget of 2019.

After that came the Pulwama terror attack to be followed by retaliation as the Balakot attack (*on terrorist hideouts*).

All this contributed to the Modi revival.

Modi did not win 2019 because of Balakot, but also because of, what he calls, non-discriminatory social welfare programmes.

He has been saying that we do not check religious identity in welfare programmes before distributing benefits to people.

The idea (*now*) is to rebuild Modi’s image and repackage him by the 2024 general elections by changing the CMs of states.

Even in the central ministry it is not only who he has dropped as ministers, but also who he has inducted into the ministry.

Modi has gone to the template of caste.

He is going back and working with the dominant community in specific states.

There was a time after 2014 where Modi chose chief ministers in states like Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Haryana from non-dominant communities.

Now in Gujarat he has gone back to the same dominant (*Patel*) community by getting their chief minister.

He has gone to the same process of getting the Modi magic back.

What about the OBC (Other Backward Classes) vote which Mr Modi is trying to woo?

Modi has come back to it.

When Modi got elected in 2014 it was said that he has made caste irrelevant in Indian politics.

Now he has gone back to the same template.

During the last ministerial reshuffle in July 2021, it was publicised by the BJP that there were 27 OBC ministers and 12 Dalit ministers.

As someone who was part of the BJP told me, Modi has done OBC-isation of the BJP.

Modi is now the biggest messiah of OBCs and Dalits as V P Singh once was.

This is the second phase of Mandalisation of Indian politics.

Courtesy **Rediff.com**, September 21, 2021. 

Police align with government, then have to pay back with interest: CJI Ramana

“When you (police officer) are too close to the government, a day will come when you will be on the other side and will have to pay for your actions,”

Chief Justice of India NV Ramana observed.

Police officers who do the bidding of a government have to “pay back with interest” when the political regime changes, cautioned the Supreme Court on Monday as it took a grim view of the “growing trend”.

A bench headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI) NV Ramana was emphatic that such police officers should not expect mercy from a court of law if they choose to align themselves with a particular party in power.

“When you (police officer) are too close to the government, a day will come when you will be on the other side and will have to pay for your actions. When you are good with a government, you may extract money, benefits and all...then you have to pay back with interest when the government changes,” remarked the bench, which also comprised justices Surya Kant and Hima Kohli.

The comments came as the court heard a petition by suspended senior Indian Police Service (IPS) officer Gurjinder Pal Singh, who faces arrest in a case of extortion. Singh, who was on August 26 granted protection from arrest by the top court in two separate cases involving sedition and corruption charges in Chhattisgarh, approached the apex court for similar relief in a third case of extortion.

Senior advocate Vikas Singh, appearing for the suspended officer, apprised the bench of the previous order and sought protection from arrest in the new case.

The bench, however, expressed anguish at the state of affairs. “You cannot get protection in every case. You started extracting money

Utkarsh Anand

because you were close with the government. This is what happens if you are close with the government and do such things...you have to pay back one day.”

It added: “This is too much...why should we grant protection to such officers? This is a new and growing trend in the country. Why should we protect someone like you?”

The senior lawyer replied that officers such as his client need the protection of the court because they are targeted out of vendetta. “This court had come across the facts in the previous cases when he (Singh) was protected from arrest earlier.”

To this, the bench said that it would want to hear all the petitions filed by the IPS officer together. The court issued a notice to the Chhattisgarh government and fixed all three petitions for a detailed hearing on October 1. It clarified that Singh will not be arrested till the next date of hearing.

In his first petition before the top court, the 1994-batch IPS officer asked for the quashing of a sedition FIR lodged at Raipur on July 8. This followed the FIR registered by the anti-corruption bureau (ACB) for allegedly amassing assets.

According to the Chhattisgarh Police, when Singh’s house was raided by ACB, the police found some pieces of paper in a drain behind the house which were later reconstructed into some notes and reports against various functionaries of the state government. As per the police, these were intended to tarnish the image of the government and destroy peace and harmony in the state.

(To be Contd....on Page - 26)

The urgent need for reform in India's prison system

Treating the cadre that works within the prison system with the respect and consideration that every agency of the state receives is imperative. Innovative ideas for reform are not possible if the officers are parachuted in and out of a system that, in fact, needs years of training and on-the-ground experience.



Prisoners, 70% of whom are people held inside as undertrials, while the system grinds on, are the victims. (Shutterstock)

Home minister Amit Shah, while addressing the 51st Foundation Day of the Bureau of Police Research and Development — a research and policy think-tank under the ministry of home affairs — highlighted the need to overhaul India's criminal justice system.

A good place to start this shift is prisons, as a lot is wrong with the prison system. Overcrowding — from the national average of 114% occupancy to five times that in many states; poor living conditions; high numbers of undertrials; irregular access to legal counsel — all make prison time a traumatic experience.

Various stakeholders within the system contribute to these appalling conditions, from the judiciary to the police, along with failings within the administration — low budgets, short-staffing, dilapidated infrastructure and heavy workloads. Lawyers also point to laws such as the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO), Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), which make release on bail near impossible.

Vijay Raghavan and Maja Daruwala

Prisoners, 70% of whom are people held inside as undertrials while the system grinds on, are the victims.

From the time that the Justice Mulla Committee recommended reform of the prison system in 1983, many state committees, including Maharashtra's Justice Radhakrishnan Committee, have highlighted an impediment to prison reform: The practice of personnel from the Indian Police Service (IPS) being appointed as heads of prison departments.

The reason: IPS officers being made the heads of prisons or at lower levels is often considered outside the realm of mainstream policing — a side-posting of sorts. This can make the officers complacent as they wait for their transition back to "mainstream policing". This does not help an already understaffed police system. Nationally, vacancies stand at 30% with the officer-to-constable ratios only worsening and mid-level posts being badly affected.

There is something wrong with allowing a service that is intended for the specific purpose of securing public safety — the police — to be drafted into prison administration. Moreover, police training and skill sets are immersed in cultures of security and investigation, while modern prison administration systems are based on creating opportunities for corrections and rehabilitation. Simply put: The former aims to put people behind bars, while the latter should be aiming to ensure that prisoners, once in the system, emerge as better people when their terms are done.

The Uttarakhand High Court reiterated this in a recent case, striking down the appointment of police officers as prison superintendents. This is welcome, as many workers within the prison system are overlooked for these top positions despite their special training and experience in prison administration work.

This leads to a lack of motivation, corruption, and low-quality job skills with little to no avenues for training, promotion, and self-realisation, and where living and working conditions are stifling.

However, the Model Prison 2016 rules are now in circulation with state governments having committed to their implementation. These rules emphasise the ethos of prisons being reformative rather than retributive.

The Justice Radhakrishnan Committee pointed out that “it is important that prison management be seen from the reformation perspective, and hence, the recruitment be seen not as a cadre for controlling prisoners but for rehabilitation of prisoners.”

It further added that the solution lies in

improving working conditions and salaries, organising refresher courses and study tours, increasing promotion avenues, and creating additional posts in the prison departments at senior levels such as deputy inspector general or DIG (Law), DIG (Welfare and Rehabilitation), Additional (Addl) IG (Prisons), and induction into the Indian Administrative Services after serving as Addl IG (Prisons).

Treating the cadre that works within the prison system with the respect and consideration that every agency of the state receives is imperative. Innovative ideas for reform are not possible if the officers are parachuted in and out of a system that, in fact, needs years of training and on-the-ground experience.

Vijay Raghavan is professor, Centre for Criminology and Justice, School of Social Work, Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), and project director, Prayas, a field action project of TISS. **Maja Daruwala** is chief editor, India Justice Report

Courtesy **The Hindustan Times**, 28 September 2021. 

Police align with government, then...

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Subsequently, in addition to a corruption FIR, another FIR invoking the sedition charge was registered against Singh.

The third FIR was lodged on a complaint by Kamal Kumar Sen, who cited an incident in 2015 when Singh allegedly extorted money from him after threatening to implicate him in a false case.

Singh approached the top court after the high court on September 16 did not protect him from arrest.

In his petitions, Singh has claimed that the criminal cases were foisted on him since he did not accede to a demand made by Chhattisgarh chief minister Bhupesh Baghel to frame the previous chief minister of the state in certain cases of illegal gratification. Singh has pleaded that the cases be handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation for an unbiased probe.

During the hearing of the first two petitions on August 26, the Supreme Court urged police officials to conduct themselves in a responsible way so that the rule of law can endure. It pointed out that till the time they keep favouring political parties, such instances will keep happening.

“It is a very disturbing trend...In some way, the police department will have to be held responsible. Rule of law will not exist if police officers do not feel responsible and are made accountable for such behaviour,” the court said then.

Courtesy **The Hindustan Times**, 28 September 2021. 

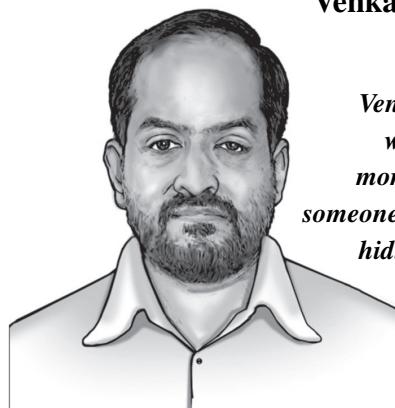
Tainted candidates, unlimited funding, and no need to be transparent

Government records of the decision-making process to float Electoral Bonds are sarkari secrets *Government records of the decision-making process to float Electoral Bonds are sarkari secrets*

Two weeks ago, the Supreme Court imposed penalties, Rs 17 lakh in all, on nine political parties, holding them guilty of contempt. According to the court, two national parties were in total violation of the earlier orders of its Constitution Bench that required them to publicly disclose the reasons for selecting individuals accused of serious crimes as electoral candidates. In the 2020 Bihar Assembly elections, seven other national and regional parties had also not only fielded men wanted in crimes like murder, attempt to murder, rape, rioting, kidnapping, using illegal fire arms and explosives, extortion, theft and cheating but also explained away their choice claiming that those police cases were either “politically motivated” or “not serious in nature”. Perhaps our understanding of “heinous crimes” needs to align now with such “liberal views” of those who seek to represent us as lawmakers.

While penalising these political parties, the court agonised over Parliament’s failure to pass a law to disqualify suspects of serious crimes from contesting elections, despite its repeated recommendations, as well those from the central government’s own Law Commission, to do so.

Not only legislatures, where political parties often look after their self-interests very energetically, to the detriment of the “larger public interest”, but the executive also defers to their desire to be opaque and unaccountable to the people by instituting deceptive measures couched in the language of transparency. For example, in 2017, the central government announced Electoral Bonds (EBs) as a mode of



Venkatesh Nayak

Venkatesh Nayak wakes up every morning thinking someone somewhere is hiding something

ensuring unlimited funding for political parties from individuals, desi corporates and deesi subsidiaries of foreign companies. Donor identity, however, is guarded closely, as if it were a matter of national security. The challenge to the legality of this manner of making political donations — unparalleled anywhere else in the world — is languishing in the Supreme Court since 2018.

That is not all, government records of the decision-making process to float Electoral Bonds are also sarkari secrets. My RTI appeal on this issue has been pending since January 2018. In another case, the SBI with its State-guaranteed monopoly over the sale and redemption of these bonds, is resisting public disclosure of those transactions by claiming customer confidentiality. Next, the Income Tax Department has refused to reveal the income tax returns of political parties claiming — believe it or not — “personal privacy.”

Political parties, it seems, are now entitled to privacy just like individuals, even though the Central Information Commission ruled 13 years ago that these are public documents.

This is not how political party finances are treated in other countries. Take the example of the Pacific island of Fiji. Since 2013, a special law is in place to regulate political parties, their finances and activities. It empowers citizens to walk into the head office or the district office of any political party and demand inspection of their records.

On the other side of the globe, South Africa, earlier this year, brought into force a law to regulate political party funding. Political donations are not only capped, source-wise, but parties are also required to regularly publish their income and expenditure details through the Electoral Commission. Further, South Africa simultaneously amended its RTI law (locally known as PAIA) to require all political parties to proactively disclose their funding sources to the people. Additionally, any person can demand access to their records by submitting a formal PAIA application to them directly. The public scandal involving the controversial Gupta brothers, who are said to have bribed their way into the upper ranks of

the ruling African National Congress, is often cited as a major push factor for these reform measures.

Nepal, which we take seriously only when the government of the day leans towards Beijing, has covered political parties squarely under its RTI Act, since 2007.

I have chosen only these examples, out of several, because there are many amongst us who are acutely allergic to all ideas foreign, unless they are transformed into top-brand mobile phones, laptops, automobiles, TV sets, air-conditioners, refrigerators or bullet trains that can be brandished as symbols of their status. Some 38% of Fiji's population is of Indian origin, as is the very accomplished 2.5% of South Africa's. According to official statistics, more than 80% of Nepal's population is Hindu. If these countries with large Indian populations can take resolute steps toward making political parties transparent and accountable during and between elections, why can't we expect and do the same in India from our 'Vishwaguru' rulers?

Courtesy **Deccan Herald**, Aug 21 2021. 

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The deepening crisis of India's Parliament

Gautam Bhatia



When a Parliament ceases to function, a parliamentary democracy turns, in effect, into an electoral autocracy. In an electoral autocracy, periodic elections are treated not as the beginning of the governance process, but as the end of it. An election accords a blank slate to a small group of people — i.e., the leaders of the ruling party — to effectively rule by decree, free of any continuing requirement of accountability. (Sonu Mehta/HT PHOTO)

During the framing of India's Constitution, multiple models of governance were proposed for the newly independent nation. The framers of the Constitution finally selected the model of "parliamentary democracy". As the term suggests, there are two equally important constituent elements of this model — Parliament and democracy.

Over the years, the meaning of "democracy" — and what it means to be democratic — has been contested and debated. But what has perhaps been discussed in less detail has been the importance of a thriving Parliament towards the sustaining and flourishing of democracy.

In an ideal situation, Parliament is the source of legitimacy for a democracy's laws; it is important to note, however, that this legitimacy is not drawn only from the fact that parliamentarians have been elected. Parliament has, in addition, a number of processes designed

to ensure that the people's elected representatives are allowed to deliberate and discuss, and seek, receive, and impart information about proposed laws, before the final vote and enactment. The legitimacy of laws, therefore, is not simply a function of the fact that they have been passed in Parliament, but also a function of the quality of deliberation that has gone into their passage.

It is trite to say that reality rarely approximates the ideal. From the time of Independence, successive Indian governments have sought to undermine the functioning and authority of Parliament, and shift power to the executive instead. From the very beginning, India's prime ministers took the ordinance-making route to bypass Parliament in case of contentious laws; the number of parliamentary sessions has steadily declined over the years; in the 1960s, frequent floor-crossing further

shook the legitimacy of Parliament, leading to the passage of stringent anti-defection laws, which have arguably demonstrated the truth of the old adage of “operation successful, patient dead”.

This long tradition has continued and accelerated over recent years, to the point where it is not too much of an exaggeration to say that, at present, Parliament is a moribund institution (admittedly, the position of state legislative assemblies is substantially worse).

In recent times, we have seen partisan speakers flagging laws as money bills in order to evade the scrutiny of the Rajya Sabha, where the government may lack a majority. We have seen less and less time being given to deliberation over the substantive content of bills, with highly complex proposed laws being passed in a matter of minutes (or less). We have seen a steep decline in the referral of bills to parliamentary committees, which are crucial sources of data- and research-gathering, something that is essential for Members of Parliament (MPs) to make an informed decision about the bills they are voting on. And, perhaps most egregiously, we have seen subversions of the voting processes within Parliament, with division being refused and controversial bills (such as the farm laws) being passed on the basis of a voice vote — something that allows individual MPs to evade their constituents’ scrutiny by putting their name to their vote. When a Parliament ceases to function, a parliamentary democracy turns, in effect, into an electoral autocracy. In an electoral autocracy, periodic elections are treated not as the beginning of the governance process, but as the end of it. An election accords a blank slate to a small group of people — ie, the leaders of the ruling party — to effectively rule by decree, free of any continuing requirements of accountability.

The question then arises — if we do not want an electoral autocracy, what is to be done? Long-term, of course, there is no solution other

than a public and social movement that goes back to the basics, and places a functioning Parliament at the centre of its demands for change. That, however, is a process that can take many decades.

More short-term, let us remember that our Constitution envisages three wings of State — the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary, with the role of each being, among other things, to check the excesses of the others. In a situation in which the executive’s actions are making Parliament redundant, it falls to the third wing — the judiciary — to intervene, not out of any desire for activism or personal glory, but simply as a requirement to police the boundaries of what makes democratic outcomes legitimate.

In recent times, scholars such as Jahnavi Sindhu and Vikram Narayan, and Dhananjay Dhonchak, have suggested a remedy; when it is demonstrated clearly that Parliament has been treated as a rubber-stamp for law-making — where, for example, laws have been passed without division voting (despite it having been asked for), where there has been no deliberation before passage, or where the government claims that its reasons for passing a law are “X”, but entirely fails, or refuses, to provide any evidence for the existence of “X” — the courts should treat any or all of this as strong reasons for finding the law to be unconstitutional.

This “process-based” unconstitutionality, thus, is the only way in which both the governments and parliamentarians can be held accountable for the undermining of Parliament; and the knowledge that they will be held accountable can act as a spur to improve the quality of law-making currently an offer. It remains to be seen whether — and how — the judiciary will take this up.

Gautam Bhatia is a Delhi-based advocate.

The views expressed are personal
Courtesy **Hindustan Times**, Oct 03, 2021. 

Punjab's message: The eroding authority of the Gandhis



Sonia Gandhi joined politics to preserve the legacy of her husband and his family. The best thing she can do to keep that legacy alive now is, in fact, for the family to get out of the way (PTI)



Barkha Dutt

Once the memes are made and done, and the gobbledegook of Navjot Singh Sidhu's aphorisms chuckled over, the singular truth to emerge from the freefall in Punjab is this—the authority of the Gandhi family stands eroded like never before. This is true not just for how the family, especially the siblings Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, are perceived by the general voter; it is even truer for what is being murmured about them within their party.

This week, the Congress cauldron boiled

over. What used to be said off-the-record in whispers went on record, in stark, voluble assertions. Sidhu — the import from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) who was propped up as the state chief by no less than Priyanka Gandhi, in what was grandly described by pundits as her crafty Ahmed Patel moment — doubled down on his rebellion in a video message.

Captain Amarinder Singh, seething from the humiliation, is clearly positioning himself to mediate an agreement with the Centre on the farm laws and use that as his calling card in the polls, under a newly announced regional party. And Kapil Sibal has used the moment to ramp up the revolt on behalf of the mutinous group of 23.

It takes spectacular incompetence to take decisions in such a clumsy, unthinking way that neither the incumbent nor the interloper is happy with you. And even if the Congress emerges as the single-largest party after all this in the assembly elections, it will not take away from the fact that the Punjab crisis has triggered a churn. When Congress members use phrases like “high command”, unmindful of its antediluvian connotations, they seem to forget that their party still does not have a full-time president.

Congress loyalists argue that the appointment of Charanjit Singh Channi as chief minister (CM) may yet save the day. Sidhu is in a sulk, they say, because Channi did not prostrate himself at the feet of the “super CM” as was expected. The appointment of a Dalit CM who rose from abject poverty will blunt the ascent of Arvind Kejriwal, they say, because Channi is the real “*aam aadmi*”. And it will be interesting to see how caste politics plays out in a state where close to 32% of the population is Dalit, but Jat Sikhs at 25% have always been influential and wealthy.

But let’s not pretend that Channi’s appointment was to pay homage to Dalit aspirations. Nor was it an illustration of deft political instincts. The Congress went through three chief ministerial choices that we know of — Ambika Soni, Sunil Jakhar and Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa — before settling on Channi, as a non-threatening choice. The caste calculus is an afterthought and the credit to craftiness that never was is an *ex-post facto* compliment.

Similarly, there are those who argue that the objections raised by Sidhu are legitimate. The appointment of a law officer who represented Sumedh Singh Saini, a former top cop under investigation for the killing of two Sikh protesters in a case involving the desecration of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, is exactly the sort of hot potato appointment that a party would steer clear of. Likewise for the induction of a leader like Rana

Gurjot who is embroiled in corruption cases. But why blame the new CM alone for these contentious decisions? Not one could have been taken had the Gandhis not signed off on them in Delhi.

The ruthless humiliation of Captain Amarinder Singh — one of two Congressmen who enjoys popularity even among BJP supporters (Shashi Tharoor is the other) — is a manifestation of the denialism and delusion that continues to define the Gandhis. This does not mean that the Captain had not made mistakes or was not diminishing in popularity; but surely there could have been more finesse in how he was treated.

Yes, the BJP, under Narendra Modi and Amit Shah has displayed ruthlessness as well in how it has changed CMs in Uttarakhand, Gujarat and Karnataka. But the absolute authority they command within the cadres means that there is no danger of a public spectacle. The Congress can call it inner-party democracy, but the fact is that there was also a time when no one dared to question the Gandhi family. Punjab has upended that.

In any case, the protests and name-calling outside the house of Kapil Sibal calls out the bluff of this so-called democratic culture.

And one can’t help notice the alacrity with which the party took to the streets to challenge a colleague’s criticism. Where was this enthusiasm and staying power shown with street mobilisations during 16 months of the pandemic?

Sonia Gandhi joined politics to preserve the legacy of her husband and his family. The best thing she can do to keep that legacy alive now is, in fact, for the family to get out of the way.

Barkha Dutt is an award-winning journalist and author. The views expressed are personal.

Courtesy **The Hindustan Times**, 2 October, 2021. 

The Afghans and Afghanistan under Taliban

Bimal Kumar Chatterjee

The advent of Taliban in August, 2021 has caused a tsunami of anxieties and apprehensions followed by sympathies to flood Afghanistan and its native Afghans and more particularly the Afghan women. Barring a few all nations on the global platform have made their respective contribution to the said tsunami over Afghanistan's future in the hands of Taliban who, it is needless to remind, is also the sons of the soil of Afghanistan. Taliban seem to be no different from other Afghans excepting that they were Afghan talibs (students) who had opted for a refresher course and training under Islamic clerics in Madrassas of Pakistan to become more radical in their thought and practice of Islamic culture and implementation of Shariah law. Taliban also is all of recent origin and most certainly not earlier than of 1990s who had their first stint in control and administration of Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001 with covert support of the USA to remove all traces of Russian influence from Afghanistan. The first stint of Taliban could leave only dreaded imprint on other Afghans because of Taliban's brutal behaviour and treatment towards other Afghans and more particularly towards Afghan women. It is common knowledge that in history Afghans are in general known to be kind, gentle and peaceful. It is rather unfortunate that radicalisation of few thousand Afghans, who are now known as Taliban, has left a lasting impact on Afghanistan.

Since 1979 onwards Afghanistan has been passing through a never before experienced turmoil which none could quell. Neither the then USSR between 1979 and 1989 when they had been in occupation of Afghanistan by sheer force, nor by the Taliban between 1996 and 2001 when they had first surfaced to control and administer Afghanistan and lastly by the USA between 2001 and 2021

when they first appeared in Afghanistan after 9/11 on the plea that they would not allow any terrorist outfit like Al-Qaeda to operate from the soil of Afghanistan and even after assassination of Osama bin Laden of Al-Qaeda in 2011 on the pretended plea to help and assist Afghans to form a stable and strong democratic government. Neither the foreign control and occupations, nor indigenous control of Taliban, nor indigenous seeming control of democratic government of which Ashraf Ghani was its last President could improve the lot of Afghans. On the contrary only 75,000 strong Taliban re-emerged as more ominous to have control over the administration of Afghanistan defeating the so called democratic government and its 3,50,000 strong forces. The saddest part of the last episode is that 3,50,000 strong Afghan soldiers with US training and weaponry could not even put up any cognisable resistance to the onslaught of only 75,000 strong Taliban. Taliban could show its real might to vanquish democratic government's forces almost in no time. It was just a walk over for Taliban.

That the days of USA were numbered in Afghanistan became more than clear when USA called Taliban along with the representatives of so-called democratic government of Afghanistan in February, 2018 at a negotiating table for negotiation. The USA in fact surrendered to the Taliban extracting from them only some assurances of good behaviour which Taliban never intended to honour. The said view is now confirmed by the recent activities of Taliban in August, 2021. The assurance then given by the Taliban that the soil of Afghanistan would not be allowed to be used by Al-Qaeda or some such terrorist outfits is belied by the recent experience. Its face saving agreement with Taliban in 2018 has also been proved to be of no consequence and is not

worth the paper it was written on. Taliban also by its overt and covert action have expressed unambiguously that they are no different from Taliban of 1996 – 2001. It is also now more than clear that al-Qaeda, Islamic State and such other terrorists are in complicity with Taliban of 2021. The dreaded Taliban is also now stronger with the funds, military equipments and weaponry left by US. If it is said now that the virtual transfer of US funds, equipments and weaponry was not unintentional, it would be difficult for US to refute the charge.

Afghanistan is now in a mess. It is also utterly chaotic and nobody knows how and when desirable law and order will be restored, if at all. Formation of a Taliban government with thirty three all male ministers including at least five who found place in UN list of terrorists is unlikely show any light in or at the end of the tunnel of darkness. Reports are afloat of ill treatments by Taliban whoever opposes it even after the formation of Taliban government. Even the journalists could not escape from Taliban's barbarism. The ill known terrorist organisation Islamic State is already active to inflict further miseries on Afghans and non Afghans as they have already claimed to be responsible for a violent bomb attack outside Kabul airport killing and injuring hundreds. Members of Al-Qaeda are also said to be again active in Afghanistan. Islamic state, Al-Qaeda and Taliban together can destabilise the tranquillity apparently now prevailing in the region with or without the support of Pakistan.

The left thinkers have been blaming the US for its alleged "imperialism" in Afghanistan. US does not appear to be so blameworthy that way. The charge also does not appear to be well founded. Imperialism for all practical purposes is now a misnomer although the spectre of Nazism and/or Fascism in their wide variations keep resurfacing and more recently China and US have engaged themselves in unhealthy economic competition to capture as

much of world market as possible. What has happened in Afghanistan is indeed all '*Dadagiri*' through blatant exhibition and use of naked financial and military might. It was committed by USSR between 1979 and 1989 and so was by US between 2001 and 2021. The only difference is that US took the help of Taliban to outwit USSR. Further, in the case of US it is better to call it mis-adventurism as the same was repeatedly committed by them in South East Asia, Middle East and Central America. Very recently US tried in vain to commit its '*Dadagiri*' in Venezuela. US painfully refuses to learn any lesson and continues to lose its image inviting adverse remarks from both friends and foes. Mr. Tony Blair, who as Prime Minister of Britain was an associate of US in helping US gain control in Afghanistan has now called US decision followed by its action of withdrawal from Afghanistan an imbecile decision and action. The imbecility is reflected in US not making required preparation for peaceful transition in Afghanistan fairly assessing the capability of Afghanistan's democratic government's forces against radical Taliban.

US had become exasperated to leave Afghanistan because of its colossal waste of funds and human resources without any gainful return. US involvement in Afghanistan was never decried by other nations so loudly or at all since 2001 until its decision to disengage was put into effect in 2021. International Politics is also queer. Russia has recently covertly expressed its support for Taliban. So has China who has gone a step further to ask all to be in contact with Taliban and overtly by Pakistan as all of them have an axe to grind against US. Withdrawal of US army was in any event inevitable as disaffection of US taxpayers against their administration was growing incrementally to pressurise the government to withdraw its army from Afghanistan to save trillions of dollars from sheer waste.

The situation only reminds us of US's misadventurism in Vietnam.

From the hellish realm of uncertainties peace loving Afghans in thousands are deserting their homeland to take refuge in whatever foreign countries possible but such desertion also is not and cannot even be a satisfactory partial solution. 3.8 crores Afghans must stand or fall of and on their own. On humanitarian grounds countries coming forward to accommodate in dribs and drabs Afghan refugees cannot be a temporary balm on the huge injury. More is required to be done on a larger scale under the aegis of UN for a longer period. It is sad to note that Russia, China and Pakistan along with some other Islamic countries in the Middle East have already expressed (may not have conveyed) their good will for Taliban. It must not also be ignored that Taliban are also Afghans who are out and out religious fanatics and determined to enforce Shariah law in stronger doses to deprive other Afghans and more particularly the Afghan women of their bare minimum human rights. Ways and means are required to be devised to neutralise that sinister desires and actions of Taliban to save the situation. Mere diagnosing the disease will also

not do. It is of no use blaming US now either after keeping mum for so long. What is required is a global concerted action and not a blame game to ameliorate the miseries of a nation who are victim of extreme religious fanaticism. Let us also not consider and treat Afghanistan as a minor orphan needing guardian or a conservator to tide over the present crisis. In an all inclusive global effort to ameliorate the situation Taliban need not also be left out. It will all depend upon how the United Nations and its members can be united to persuade and/or pressurise Taliban to be temperate in the changed circumstances. Minimum uniform preconditions needed to be set for compliance by Taliban before any international recognition is granted to them. Their good behaviour and restoration of minimum democratic law and order without use of any kind of repression be made the basic foundation for negotiation towards recognition. No nation need be in a hurry to call Taliban for negotiation till that basic foundation is first laid by Taliban. Reparation of human miseries however needs to be expedited as far as possible with goodwill of all.

Bimal Kumar Chatterjee is senior advocate, Kolkata. 

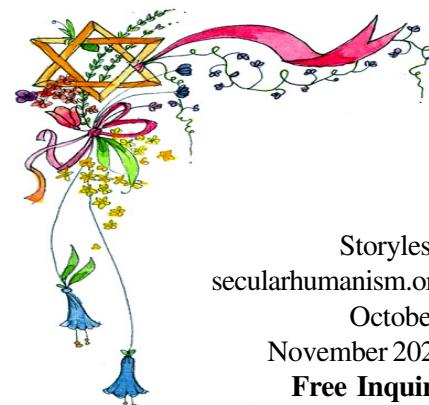
Poem:

Our ancestors Are the Stories We Tell

While we await our Sybil and she denies us entrance
Demanding the bough of a tree which in our youth
Cried out to us – the one of many looked upon –
And when received she shows us in

Anchises lures us with the dream we dream at dawn
Though he was sworn to secrecy, he welcomes us
Without the consent of Venus
And our father tells us nothing

Nothing of Dido – the one of many undone –
And the end of his youth entered into through a horn
Not the portal of ivory we were promised
O Grandfather, you hear our cries and leave us



Sharon Portnoff

Storyless.
secularhumanism.org
October/
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Free Inquiry

The IT Rules fail the test of constitutionality

Apar Gupta writes: There is judicial consensus that they lack statutory backing and harm freedom of speech and expression.

Apar Gupta

Much distance has been covered since February 25, when the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 were notified. The IT Rules were promised as a panacea for the myriad harms caused by social media platforms, digital news media outlets and online video streaming providers. A joint press release issued on the same day by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting stated they are, “a fine blend of liberal touch with gentle self-regulatory framework”. Such claims did not amuse legal experts, policy professionals, industry bodies and even UN Special Rapporteurs as its provisions undermine the rights and freedoms of internet users. In the interest of brevity, an analysis of the IT Rules has been avoided as it has been published earlier (**‘Accountability with a cost’**, IE, February 26).

Many of the concerns expressed have, over the months, found their way to court. Today, there are more than 18 petitions challenging the constitutionality of the IT Rules in various high courts, with interim orders emerging in three cases. These judicial determinations contain a clear acknowledgement of the dangers posed by the IT Rules and merit a closer examination. The first order of significance was issued on March 10, 2021 by the Kerala High Court in a petition filed by LiveLaw Media which is an online publisher of legal news and analysis. It restrained any action against the petitioner. While a modest victory, the order effectively stays a regulation framed by the central government. Such protections by courts are not made ordinarily,

preferred only in instances where a clear injury is evident.

A more extensive determination has been made by the High Court of Bombay in clubbed petitions filed by the entity operating the digital news media platform, The Leaflet, and by journalist Nikhil Wagle. By an order on August 14, 2021, the court has stayed two core provisions of the IT Rules that govern online news media platforms. The order neuters sub-rules (1) and (3) of Rule 9 that required compliance with a “code of ethics” that would be applied by a three-tiered structure presided over by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. The order reads like an objective determination, fairly considering the submissions of the government as well as the doctrine of constitutionality for initially presuming the validity of the IT Rules. However, this is cast aside as the court finds that the provisions for media governance go far beyond the allowance permitted by the principal provisions of the Information Technology Act. The court reasons that the compliances under the “code of ethics” either lack the force of law, or have a distinct statutory framework such as under the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act. Beyond such technicalities, the larger danger of the IT Rules glares through when the court observes that, “people would be starved of the liberty of thought and feel suffocated to exercise their right of freedom of speech and expression, if they are made to live in present times of content regulation on the internet with the Code of Ethics hanging over their head as the Sword of Damocles.”

This decision invited much deserved

commendation not only from the public but also from the High Court of Madras. Passing an order on September 16, 2021 in the clubbed petitions filed by musician T M Krishna and the Digital News Publishers Association, the Madras High Court confirmed the pan-India effect of the earlier decision by the High Court of Bombay. Hence, today the IT Rules are broadly inapplicable to digital news media outlets. However, the scope of the petitions before the High Court of Madras is broader. They urge additional remedies for users of social media platforms which are classified as intermediaries. Here the court notes that, “there is substantial basis to the petitioners’ assertion that Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution may be infringed in how the Rules may be coercively applied to intermediaries.” It further observes, “There is a genuine apprehension, as the petitioners suggest, that a wink or a nod from appropriate quarters may result in the platform being inaccessible to a citizen.”

A collective reading of these three interim orders is an expression of judicial consensus. According to the courts, the IT Rules conflict with our constitutional freedoms in two clear ways. First, they lack statutory backing and second, they substantially harm the freedom of speech and expression of users of the internet. This has resulted in an effective

restraint on the provisions against online news portals and there is a real possibility that a similar finding may emerge with respect to social media platforms. The outcomes which have resulted are particularly significant given that there is common cause between the interests of citizens and the government that requires us to look beyond litigation to rights-led and rights-based policy determinations. But it is unlikely this will happen.

Given the multiple challenges in high courts across India, the Union government has filed a transfer petition before the Supreme Court. This would effectively transfer and bundle all existing challenges without serving “transparency, accountability and rights of users” as claimed in the press release. To be candid, the IT Rules achieve the very opposite of such ostensible goals. Over the next few months, if not years, continuing litigation will be drawn out, taking away resources from the creation of urgently needed governance frameworks. While the best course is for a recall of the IT Rules, a more cynical yet predictable forecast is for lingering indeterminacy and regulatory stasis.

This column first appeared in the print edition on September 30, 2021 under the title ‘Against rules of the game’. The writer is executive director, Internet Freedom Foundation, and an Ashoka Fellow. 

Poem:

Myth and Method

- John Pidgeon

The human heart cannot love;
it is the mind that learns to move.

The Sun does not really set;
we simply turn away from it.

The sky may glaze a deep azure;
but only to one standing here.

We wish upon a falling star;
a piece of dusty meteor.

A child may be invincible;
a man will tell a parable.

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When Gandhi-Jinnah First Met

Mrigank Warrier

No plaque marks the historic meeting place of the fathers of two nations. And no history textbook tells us about that first meeting and their mutual admiration, common ethos and comradeship, reports Mrigank Warrier.

Thirteen long years had passed since the middle-aged man had last seen India.

On January 9, 1915, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was 45 years old and sailing towards Bombay aboard the SS *Arabia*.

That day's *Bombay Chronicle* had reported that Mrs and Mr Gandhi were expected to alight at Apollo Bunder, where the Gateway of India was still being constructed to commemorate the arrival of a British emperor who had already departed.

After two-score-and-more years of activism that dismantled discrimination against Indians in another of the emperor's dominions—South Africa—Gandhi's renown had preceded him.

Satyagraha, his chosen method of protest, was innocuous enough for even the British viceroy of India to give a speech in his support.

Mohandas in the motherland

When he sighted the coast, his eyes filled with tears of joy, wrote Gandhi in a letter written shortly after he disembarked.

Dressed in a *dhoti*, a loose coat reaching his knees, a shoulder scarf and a Kathiawadi turban all made of rough Indian mill cloth, his humble costume was commented upon in the newspapers of the day.

A modest crowd had gathered to welcome



IMAGE: Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi in South Africa.

Photograph: Kind courtesy Wikimedia Commons

him — a token assembly, compared to the throngs he would attract later as the Mahatma.

Why? Perhaps because, when World War I ignited the previous year, Gandhi had started forming an Indian Ambulance Corps in England to help the British war effort

Gandhi had suffered an attack of pleurisy, and his wife Kasturba 'a relapse of an old malady' the need to recover and recuperate had brought them back from London to healthier Indian climes.

In Bombay, rumours spread of government spies following Gandhi from the instant he set foot on Indian soil.

The British governor of Bombay worried about Gandhi's return amongst his countrymen; he specifically asked Gandhi to bring to his notice any specific grievances he might have against the government, before embarking on any agitation!

The city was not the rest-cure Gandhi needed.

Writing to a relative, he complained: 'I don't like Bombay, though. It looks as if it were the scum of London. I see here all the shortcomings of London but find none of its amenities.'

Matters deteriorated further; he was obliged to attend reception after reception in his honour, from then-faraway Ghatkopar (now in north

east Mumbai) to tony Peddar Road (south Mumbai).

‘I feel suffocated by this public honouring,’ he wrote. ‘I have not known a moment’s peace. There is an endless stream of visitors. Neither they nor I gain anything.’

Gandhi before Mahatma

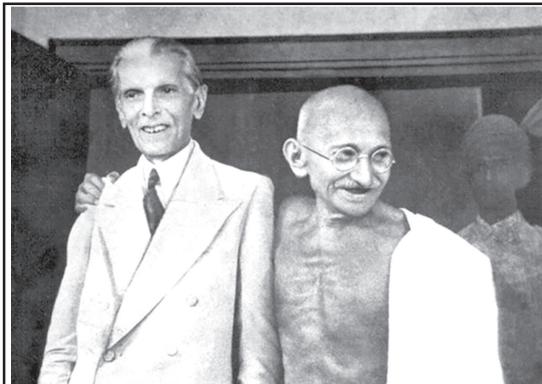


IMAGE: Gandhi and Jinnah.

Photograph: Kind courtesy Wikimedia Commons

It is from one such meeting at Santa Cruz (north west Mumbai), convened soon after he reached Bombay, that we get an eye-witness’s account of Gandhi’s early interactions with his fellow Indians in India.

Indulal Yagnik — then 23, he later became Gandhi’s colleague in the freedom struggle — described the moments before Gandhi began speaking in his book, *Gandhi As I Know Him*: ‘My curiosity and enthusiasm rose to the highest pitch. My heart was thumping within me. He began in a very quiet, low voice — he was, perhaps, not audible to all in the big hall.’

Gandhi thanked the organisers, pleaded that he was not worthy of the compliments showered upon him, promised to try and be worthy of them some day, and said he was afraid such praise would spoil him. That was all.

No moving rhetoric. No call to action. Just a polite thank you, excuse me, bye.

Yagnik was disappointed, shattered, dumbfounded, miserable and ran away, choking with rage and indignation. He had expected that

Gandhi ‘would give the word and India would be launched on the turbulent ocean of a new political movement’.

But nothing happened.

One more celebration



IMAGE: Imperial Cinema, which stands in the Mangaldas House garden where Gandhi and Jinnah first met, is in a dilapidated condition today.

Photograph: Kind courtesy Ashwin Tahiliani

On January 14, 1915, Bombay’s Gujrati Sabha (also known as the Gurjar Sabha, depending upon the source) decided to throw a garden party for Mohandas and Kasturba Gandhi on the grounds of Mangaldas House at Lamington Road (south Mumbai).

Sir Mangaldas Nathubhai, who had passed away a quarter of a century earlier, was one of the first Indians to be knighted. He had also founded one of the earliest Indian-owned mills; fittingly, his home witnessed a momentous meeting that altered the destiny of the subcontinent.

Yagnik happened to be the secretary of the group hosting the party. Since refreshments needed to be arranged, Gandhi was asked what he might like to partake. Fruits and nuts, came the answer.

But who would chair the party—that-was-a-meeting? That responsibility fell on a wildly successful lawyer (which Gandhi was not, by his own admission) whose political star then shone brighter than Gandhi's in India; who had also lately returned from London after representing the Indian National Congress in talks with British officials there — Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

Let the party begin

Speaking in English, freedom-fighter and writer K M Munshi began by calling Gandhi 'the greatest son of modern Gujarat'.*

Jinnah then rose and, continuing in the same language, said that he considered it a great privilege and certainly a very great honour that he should have the opportunity of welcoming Mrs and Mr Gandhi back to their motherland after their most strenuous and hard labour in South Africa, in the cause of the Indians residing there as well as in the cause of Indians in general.

Hindus and Muslims had presented a united political and moral front in South Africa, Jinnah continued; it was that same frame of mind which they had to bring about between the two communities in India.

Most of their problems, he had no doubt, would then be easily solved. 'That is one problem of all the problems of India, namely, how to bring about unanimity and cooperation between the two communities so that the demands of India will be made absolutely unanimously.'

Gandhi surprised the audience by replying in Gujarati.

He spoke of the importance of discarding English in favour of Indian languages for national undertakings. And not much else. Again, no grandstanding, no rousing appeal.

What he left unsaid is this.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale — political mentor to both Jinnah and Gandhi — had advised him that, having been away from India for so long, he should spend some time here as 'an observer and a student' before forming definite conclusions on any matters Indian.

Gandhi did mention that in South Africa, when one spoke of Gujaratis, one only thought of Hindus; Parsis and Muslims were not counted. Therefore, he was glad to see a 'Mohammedan' as member of the Gujurat Sabha and chairman of its meeting.

Then he ate his fruits and nuts and left.

Today, there is no sign of the garden where India's Father of the Nation first met Pakistan's Baba-i-Qaum ('Father of the Nation').

Mangaldas House is in shambles and the statue of a huge elephant — a Mangaldas family motif — is hidden in the shadows of a garage on the property.

The garden is buried under a once-grand theatre — called the Imperial, ironically — now reduced to showing lewd C-grade films.

A handwritten sign warns movie-watchers that those caught doing 'wrong things' will be handed over to the police.

Google Imperial Cinema and you will find message boards describing sexual acts; it is a cruising spot for gay men.

I've watched a movie here; some men tried to pick me up, but, like Gandhi, I did not feel worthy of their attention and politely left.

One century later...



IMAGE: The elephants that marked Mangaldas House.

Photograph: Kind courtesy Ashwin Tahiliani

No plaque marks the historic meeting place of the fathers of two nations. And no history textbook tells us about that first meeting and their mutual admiration, common ethos and comradeship.

*The details of the meeting are mentioned in the book, *Mahatma Gandhi — India Awakened* by Sushila Nayar.

Science and Philosophy by M.N. Roy

Chapter 1

Reality and Appearance

Summarized by **Vinod Jain**

Continued from the September 2021 issue ...

Philosophy has always tried to answer the question: How is knowledge possible? Experience has been generally accepted as the means to all knowledge. But epistemology was confused and vitiated by the distinction between appearance and reality. The contention of philosopher Kant was that we could acquire knowledge only of the world of phenomena; the world of reality is beyond the reach of our cognitive faculty. In the light of relativity physics, the distinction between reality and appearance disappears.

The solution of the problem of perception, in its turn, dispells all doubt about the objective validity of knowledge acquired through experience. This fundamental achievement in the realm of epistemology guarantees philosophy against any idealist deviation. By scientific philosophy I mean a theory of the Universe not based on speculation, but on a progressively exact knowledge of nature. Even positivism is rendered untenable. In short, epistemologically, the philosophical outcome of the twentieth century science is corroboration of Materialism.

Before proceeding, I shall quote the opinion of Professor Hans Reichenbach of the University of Berlin, who apparently takes up a neutral attitude in this connection. He writes: "Philosophy has always distinguished the two fundamental attitudes of Empiricism and Idealism. The natural science of today has given the victory to neither of these points of view...Nowhere is the anti-metaphysical attitude of modern natural science so obvious as in this conception of the problem of validity. We may also define it as the removal of the theistic element from nature. The

metaphysical concepts of time and space, of substance, force and law, all of them of unmistakably anthropomorphic origin, today mean but a pictorial appendage unrelated to the experiences on which physical knowledge is really based. Only these experiences and their integration in a prophetic mathematical theory form the content of modern natural research. Perhaps there has been no greater revolution in the history of mankind than this gradual transition from the nature, full of gods, of primitive peoples, through the metaphysical nature of physics today in which there are only facts and conceptual relations between them." ("Atom and Cosmos").

Science is not all fact, nor is it the product of pure thought, that is, speculation. As Einstein says, "The object of all science is to co-ordinate our experiences and bring them into a logical system." Science thus stands on two legs, so to say: 1. experience, that is, observational data, and 2. their coordination into general laws. The former is derived from the "external world", while the latter is the contribution of the scientist. Unless the mind of the scientist, equipped with previously acquired knowledge, worked up the raw material of observed facts, there could be no new scientific theories. The previously acquired knowledge was derived from experience, and the new theories create the condition for further advance of our knowledge.

But here arises the question: experience of what? If the answer is that it is the experience of objects existing outside the consciousness of the knowing subject, then philosophy becomes straightforward materialism, which by no means

excludes the subjective element of knowledge. Is this the answer of modern science? We shall see.

Experience presupposes a conscious being, differentiated from the rest of the world; but the conscious being itself grows out of the background of physical nature, and, while experiencing the rest of nature, remains a part of nature. As a matter of fact, 'external world' is a misleading term. Because we are all integral parts of the world of our experience. Our bodies, our organs of perception, the entire cognitive apparatus, which are prerequisites for knowledge, are themselves all parts of the world we experience. We do not watch the world as outsiders. Our ego, our mind, our intelligence, our thought — all these are inseparably interwoven with the so-called external world. These subjective constituents of knowledge are parts of the whole complex of the objective nature.

Scientific research becomes meaningless when physical reality of nature is denied. There can be no experience when there is nothing to experience. Inference and induction are parts of experience. They are essential for framing scientific theories. If it is maintained that one cannot claim to have the experience of heavenly bodies, unless he has actually visited them physically, no astronomical theory would be possible. According to "pure" empiricism, optical experience is not a valid source of knowledge. What is seen through the telescope is not a distant star, but simply an image on the retina of the astronomer's eye, caused by light coming from the star. Astronomical theories are all inferential; the only way to the discoveries of the laws of nature is induction — to formulate general principles on the basis of the experience of a sufficiently large number of particular events.

Inference and induction are methods of thought. They represent the subjective contribution of the scientist to the process of cognition. The raw material of experience must be cast in the moulds of concepts to become the

finished product called the knowledge of nature. But these moulds are not a priori categories. They are themselves made up of previous experiences, and consequently change under the impact of new experience.

Two eminent biologists like Haldane and Huxley may be mentioned here. Haldane is of the opinion that a living organism cannot be correctly studied as an object isolated from inanimate nature; that it must be regarded as inseparably interconnected with its environment, constitutes one single unit. He holds: "The conception of life embraces the environment of an organism as well as what is within its body." Huxley is even more explicit. He writes: "The fact that man, a portion of the general stuff of which the universe is made, can think and feel, aspire and plan, is itself full of meaning, but the precise way in which man is made, his physical construction, the kinds of feelings he has, the ways in which he thinks, the things he thinks about, everything which gives his existence form and precision — all this can only be properly understood in relation to his environments. For, he and his environments make one interlocking whole."

Physics, from one end, and biology, from the other, have converged on a place where the term "external world" has lost all meaning. In the light of that great discovery of modern science, the artificial distinction between appearance and reality must disappear

In order to find out for ourselves what solution modern science offers for the problem by abolishing the arbitrary distinction between appearance and reality, we shall have to look at the world of new physics. And in order to see the picture from a correct perspective, it will be necessary to be guided by the fundamental principles of science and philosophy and to have a clear idea about the relation between the two.

Mr. Vinod Jain is a senior Radical Humanist and a member of the Board of Trustees of the Indian Renaissance Institute (IRI). 

Prime Minister Modi at the UN General Assembly on September 25, 2021

UN is an organization of 193 nation states. When India gets a chance to speak, India should get beyond anti-Pakistan propagandist rhetoric. India is a big country, big economy; its leaders should not present themselves as small minded. It's a shame that the Indian leader talks of his often repeated claim of own achievement from a tea seller at railway station to the PM of a great nation. American leaders had to educate Indian PM of the importance of respecting democracy, freedoms and diversity.

Once a visiting PM of a friend country had to remind Indian PM that a world exists beyond Pakistan; learn to look beyond your small neighbour befitting the status of your country.

**Dr. Ramesh Awasthi,
Chairperson, Indian Renaissance Institute (IRI)**

Village decides; no dowry, no expensive weddings, no domestic violence, no divorce.
Dr. Ramesh Awasthi, Chairperson, Indian Renaissance Institute (IRI)



A Kashmiri bride, draped in a red shawl and accompanied by her family and friends, makes her way to the home of the groom for the ceremony to begin. Photograph: Altaf Qadri/EPA

**Dowries, illegal since 1961,
still cause 20 deaths a day in India.
But Babawayil has had no divorces or
violence against women
since it banned them**