

Epilogue

1st May 1997

It was a small family gathering for worshipping Lord Ganesh, the loveable Hindu God with the face of an elephant, in the new house that we had just rented. Shifting from one rented accommodation to another, having none of our own, was something we had become used to. This was the eighth place that we were moving into within twelve years of our marriage.

As we got into the place, a small forlorn nameplate struck the eye. It said in peculiar Marathi characters - Savarkar Sadan. The name rang a bell. Forgotten memories began to stir. But for the moment there was much to do. No sooner was the Puja over than the entire process of shifting the house-hold goods kept us occupied for the next fortnight. When everything was unpacked and our new house began to look like a home, I searched for the book I was gifted twenty two years ago for passing the XI class exam, a mile stone in one's life. 'Freedom At Midnight' the book that had created a sensation in 1975. As I reread this, I was startled to notice Savarkar Sadan, the place where our new small rented flat was located, had featured prominently in the book. The place where the Crime of the Century was planned - the murder of Mahatma Gandhi, if the authors were to be believed. As they wrote:

'The Bombay Watchers' Branch continued its vigilance at the gates of the *Savarkar Sadan*, but the Machiavellian leader inside was too clever to reveal his hand. And yet some malignant radiation seemed to radiate from that house. Something in the constant flow of Savarkar's followers in and out of its premises spoke to Nagarvalla's policeman's instincts.

'Don't ask me why' he told Sanjevi, 'but I just know another attempt is coming. It's something I can feel in the atmosphere here.'

Was this the same place, I wondered. The quiet place nestling amongst the trees, the peaceful atmosphere that had so enchanted my wife and daughters, was it really so sinister, fifty years ago? I soon discovered that not only were Lapierre and Collins referring to the same place but our own flat was once the living quarters of Savarkar himself. Our neighbour, a friendly but reticent elder was his sole surviving heir.

With this came flooding memories of the disquiet that my mind had once felt on reading the demonic portrayal of Savarkar in the book. After all Savarkar was a leading figure in the annals of the Freedom Struggle. His exploits of challenging the Empire from his base in London, his thrilling escape, from the ship that was carrying him to India, at Marseilles, his long inhuman imprisonment in the cells of the Andaman Islands, were the stuff that had made him a legend in his lifetime itself. Was this really the man who had planned the Mahatma's murder?

Like so many other Indians, I had felt deeply disturbed by what seemed a grossly unfair treatment of this freedom struggle hero. In vain I looked for a reasoned rebuttal of the arguments advanced by the authors of Freedom At Midnight. None was or is yet available. It is also unfair to blame the authors of one book, however popular, for the ambivalence with which Savarkar is treated today. The question of his alleged involvement in the murder of the Mahatma has haunted generations of Indians since 1948. The wound is too deep. This book had merely reopened the old sore that had never healed completely. Neither the continuous insinuations of his opponents without offering a shred of a better proof than the discarded testimony of a small time crook nor the misguided attempts of his later day followers to demonstrate his blessings for the act have hardly helped the matter.

Now my long dormant curiosity was really awakened. What were the secrets that the walls of my new home were once privy to? Had they really heard the evil plans to assassinate one of the tallest human beings who has ever lived on earth? And I started reading the complete works of Savarkar, most of which, I realized with a sense of shock, had remained banned till the dying moments of the Raj. Soon, I was buffeted by a feeling of shame on focusing entirely on the Gandhi Murder Case aspect of Savarkar and knowing so little about his other works.

The question of his alleged involvement in the murder of the Mahatma has already been decided upon by the Law which proclaimed him innocent of the crime that the Congress Government had accused him of, on strength of the testimony of a small time crook. After all how come the so called visit of Godse and Apte to Savarkar Sadan in the second half of January 1948, which formed the core of the Prosecution story, was not corroborated by the entries in Police diaries? Was Savarkar Sadan not under a constant police vigil at this time?. Why can the matter not rest where the Courts have left them?

It is a pity that the figment of fertile imagination of Nagarvalla has been allowed to obscure the Great Works of this revolutionary hero. Particularly since they contain thoughts that continue to remain relevant today. At the same time, the more I became familiar with his thoughts, the distant demi God image of a revolutionary faded. In its place rose the image of 'Tataya', a respected elder of the family.

Many riddles and puzzles that had defied solution for long, soon became clear under the loving gaze of Tataya, aided by his clear stream of reasoning, which we have, for far too long allowed to be lost in the dreary desert of prejudice. For instance, the significance of 15th August itself, which is not clear to most of us even as we celebrated the Golden Jubilee of Independence.

Bibliography

1. Freedom at Midnight, Dominique Lapierre and Larry Collins, Vikas Publication House Ltd, 1997

Chapter I-1

Golden Jubilee of Indian Independence (?)

15th August 1997

As the clock ticked towards the magic midnight hour, a palpable sense of excitement ran through the multitude of people who thronged in front of the Shiv Sena citadel in Dadar, a central suburb of Mumbai - the commercial capital of India. They were there to witness, what seemed unthinkable to the Self Styled Progressive Brigade - SSPB, the Sena Supremo - Balasaheb Thackeray administering a secular oath of allegiance to the country, to his followers. Something that would have been inconceivable from a man who according to the SSPB, had engineered the worst ever communal riots in the same city barely five years back.

In countless homes across the country, TV sets were switched on waiting to see Melody queen - Lata Mangeshkar and Maestro Pandit Bhimsen Joshi enthral the cynical, hard boiled, much reviled politicians in the central hall of Parliament. The scene of musical notes rafting through the hallowed precincts of the building, where the future was regularly made, or as the cynics would say “more unmade than made” was indeed something not to be missed.

At the stroke of midnight with the dawn of 15th August 1997, the Indian tricolour flag fluttered everywhere even as the noise of bursting crackers rent the skies and a general bedlam prevailed everywhere. For once every one was too happy to bother about the minor inconveniences.

To an outsider, there may not be many obvious reasons for this sense of jubilation. The first sight that greets an international traveler as he sets his foot on Indian soil is the incredible dirt and grime that surrounds open spaces around the airports. In Mumbai, the sight of the rows of people answering the call of nature by the roadside is enough to make even the most sympathetic foreigner want to throw up in disgust. The seemingly beautiful countryside hides ugly sores of social inequality, that periodically throws up news of rape and murder that is the lot of the depressed classes trying to fight the centuries old discriminations. So much so that a resource rich state like Bihar has become a byword for rule of the jungle even to most Indians themselves. The famine deaths are a history but malnutrition continues to stalk the people. Clean drinking water remains a mirage even on the eve of the twenty first century. More than 60 million children are forced to mortgage their future by working as semi slaves rather than study in schools. Even more alarming is the lot of the girl child in a society that craves for a son, who gets the lions share of the meagre family resources. Education for her remains the last priority of the family, if ever considered, resulting in persistence of entirely avoidable infant deaths by diseases like Diarrhea. The onset of Monsoon which brings relief from the tropical heat is also the season that the commercial members of the medical fraternity look forward to. There is money to be made in the periodic outbreaks of epidemics like Malaria and Cholera arising out of no other reason than existence of a hollow social infrastructure.

By any standard of measurement, Per Capita Income, Human Development Index, even the illusory Purchasing Power Parity, India remains at the bottom of heap amongst the League of Nations. This in an era when nations, whom nobody gave a serious thought in 1947 when the British quit India, have marched miles ahead. The gains made by the Indian nation in the last 50 years are considerable but compared to the record of its South East Asian neighbours; India appears to be almost standing still.

What went wrong? After all India in 1947 was blessed by a galaxy of leadership headed by none other than Mahatma Gandhi that inspired awe. The decades old struggle by Congress against the British had produced a cadre of dedicated volunteers that could carry the message of the front line leaders to remote corners of the country. The famous steel frame of British rule, Indian Civil Service was intact. Young intelligent Indians fired by the dream of building a new nation were more than willing to join the Services. The colonial exploitation had ended. India's march to progress was just a matter of time. If any of the 1947 leaders had come across a prophecy of India's state in 1997 as it actually is, they would have dismissed it as the imagination of a lunatic. That the dream has soured despite the unbroken rule of Congress or its minor variants since 1947 is a bitter truth that can not now be wished away.

The nineteenth century belonged to the British. The twentieth century undoubtedly belongs to the Americans. That the twenty first century would belong to the Asia - Pacific is the prediction of the pundits. Will it include or exclude India is the question? This is an odyssey being undertaken on the threshold of the new millennium to see if we can learn the right lessons from the history of the last fifty years and give a positive answer to this question.

The Congress made many mistakes. Yet, even its most bitter critics cannot deny it the credit for one achievement that all Indians are justifiably proud of. India may not have achieved its economic potential but it achieved something that seemed so improbable to its most ardent well wishers in 1947. It remains firmly one. Preservation of political unity and integrity of the country remains an issue that cuts across the bewildering multitude of parties, castes, religions and regions of the country and touches a very sensitive chord in the Indian mind.

Time and again the Indian state has seemed to be in imminent danger of imploding. The sixties saw North and the South face each other, daggers drawn over the emotive issue of language. The eighties saw a growing chasm between traditional brothers, Hindus and the Sikhs. The crisis reached grave proportions on the assassination of Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards. The resulting Hindu backlash was savage. Thousands of Sikhs all over the country were butchered mercilessly. The country was in flames. Barely had the passions subsided that the Inter Hindu conflict came to fore in 1989. Hundreds of students committed immolation in despair over the affirmative action programme of the government that was pulled out of the hat by a desperate Prime Minister, which denied them educational and employment opportunities. In 1990, even as the world's attention was riveted on the growing crisis in Kuwait, Indians on the other hand, were focused on an old dilapidated structure in Ayodhya that had become the bone

of contention between the Hindus and the Muslims. The crisis led to the fall of the Central Government and temporary peace prevailed. The issue returned to center stage in December 1992 when the Hindus finally managed to destroy the structure. A veritable civil war erupted and by the time peace returned, the fragility of the Indian social structure was visible to all. In this background, to have maintained the unity of the country has been no mean achievement.

Ask any Indian, its date of independence. Rare would be someone who would take even a second to answer. Now try rephrasing the question a bit and ask the date or even the period when India lost its independence. One is likely to meet incomprehension. The answers would range from fixing it to sometime in 1192 when Shabab-ud-Din Ghuri defeated Hindu Delhi king Prithvi Raj Chauhan or dating it to 23rd June 1757, the day when Robert Clive won the battle of Plassey. Some would even toe the British line, that the Indian nation is essentially a twentieth century phenomenon. Such an entity never existed in the past and therefore no date for loss of its independence can be given. So what do the Indians celebrate on the 15th August, the birth of a new nation which never existed in the past or independence from a foreign ruler? And if it marks independence from a foreign ruler, which - The British and Muslim or the British alone !!!

For Indians, this is no ordinary confusion. Passions let loose on this inquiry have potential to deeply divide the society even today. That can however be no excuse from shying away from an unbiased critical examination of our own past. The task needs to be done as confusion over the issue has been one principle reason for the state that India finds itself in today.

Take for instance the partition of the country. Jinnah's demand for a separate nation for the Muslims was based on the premise that Hindus under Congress were seeking to escape from the centuries old slavery under Muslims and the British. If Muslim domination could not be ensured, they at least needed a state of their own where they could be their own masters and thus prevent Hindus from repaying the compliment of religious domination. The demand made no sense to the Congress. However, in their anxiety to please the Muslims, they chose to reinvent history and sought to downplay countless incidents of Muslim excesses on the Hindus. They have hovered between considering 15th August as a day of deliverance from the British and the birth of a new nation. The new nation theory has been acceptable to the Communists and Socialists as religion anyway is 'Opium of the masses' for them.

In its anxiety to reinvent history, the Congress particularly under Nehru consciously pushed India away from its cultural moorings. Glamour of the west has been too strong for it to resist. Thus fifty years after the last British soldier left Indian shores, India remains divided between what Sharad Joshi, a farmer leader of repute calls Bharat and India. Bharat being the traditional India with its roots firmly anchored in cultural heritage of the local soil while India is the land which aspires to be a pale carbon copy of the West. The words Bharatiyas and Indians will henceforth be used to denote the respective ideologies.

The odyssey that we plan to now embark upon will seek to prove India has paid a very heavy price for neglecting its own heritage. Japan did not rise to its present day prominence by being ashamed of being Japanese. The emerging Chinese dragon is proudly Chinese. Unless India learns to be proud of being a Bharatiya nation, its aspiration of leading the world are doomed to remain what they have been so far - mere pipe dreams.

Congress today does not tire of monopolizing the entire credit for winning the freedom back from British. It would rather not be reminded that it was only in 1927 that it formally demanded complete independence. Strangely enough this resolution of complete independence was termed as childish by none other than Gandhiji. There is a long list of revolutionaries who had fought for this and been sentenced to inhuman imprisonment, much before this. The name of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar would certainly rank high in the call of honour. By the time Congress came around to demanding Independence, Savarkar had served 14 years of rigorous imprisonment in British prisons at Andaman Islands and Ratnagiri for daring to dream of Independence in the Imperial capital - London. He was to suffer confinement to the remote district of Maharashtra, Ratnagiri even after his release from Jail up to 1937. Savarkar is a unique personality whose contribution to the cause of independence is second to none. It may be surprising but is only too true that when Savarkar was sentenced to fifty years of rigorous imprisonment in 1910 for daring to try and free his country of British rule, even the word Swaraj was an anathema to Mahatma Gandhi.

An advocate of revolution to grab independence was bound to run foul of Gandhian philosophy of Non Violence but in the process the nation has paid a heavy price for the Congress inspired attempts to forget this outstanding intellectual giant. He not only fought for Independence but also has made available an interpretation of the history that needs to be studied even today, to take us to our cultural roots. The journey to rediscover the cultural roots is essential if Bharat is to live up to its potential in the new millennium and hence the relevance of Savarkar to the Bharat of the twenty first century.

However, before we turn to Savarkar, let us first try and understand our history. The quest to understand the significance of 15th August is a good starting point in this odyssey. Let us examine if India became Independent, when did it lose its Independence? Each of the three views prevalent in India shall be subjected to critical analysis. The three widely held views being that India lost its Independence:

- In 1192, when the Hindu King of Delhi, Prithvi Raj Chauhan was finally defeated by the Muslim invader.
- In 1757, when the British forces won the Battle of Plassey in 1757.
- India is a new state, which took birth on 15th August 1947; so the talk of losing Independence has no relevance.

This analysis, it is hoped will lead to uncovering the Truth. Once the truth is known, it is hoped that the Indian society will come to terms with its own past and thereby face future with no divisive differences.

Chapter I-2

Defeat of Prithvi Raj Chauvan

The story of this brave Rajput king is the stuff legends are made of. The young dashing ruler of Delhi in the closing years of the 12th century fell in love with the beautiful daughter - Sayogita, of Banaras king Jaichand who was then the most powerful Indian king. The proud father of this lovely lady held a *Swayamvar*, the ceremony where princes from all over the country were invited and the princess was free to choose her own husband. As was the practice of the day, Prithvi Raj Chauvan carried the princess away from *Swayamvar* in front of all those present including Jaichand, who were unable to prevent this. The subsequent marriage between the lovers did nothing to diminish the flame of revenge that now burned in the heart of Jaichand. He is said to have invited Shabab-ud-Din Ghuri, Muslim Sultan from the mountainous region of Afghanistan to defeat his own Son in Law. For the record, it must be kept in mind that no formal letter of invitation has ever been discovered. However, the fact that Jaichand kept away from the battle of Prithvi Raj Chauvan with the Muslim Sultan is now well accepted.

The first battle between the Hindu King and the invading Sultan took place in 1191 near Panipat resulting in utter rout of the invader. The Sultan himself is said to have been captured alive. In the best of naive traditions of the Rajputs, the lion hearted King forgave the Sultan on the promise of never again casting his evil eyes on the Delhi throne. Shabab-ud-Din Ghauri was not reared in the noble Rajput traditions. The concept of keeping promises, however solemn was alien to him. He took full advantage of the Rajput chivalry and regrouped his forces. Barely a year later, he was back again at the gates of Delhi. The 1192 battle marked a turning point in the Bharatiya history with Lady Luck turning her back on the hapless king who was wounded and captured alive. The Sultan repaid his generosity by duly blinding him.

The grief stricken Sayogita committed suicide on hearing the news of defeat rather than allow herself to be dishonoured by the advancing victorious army of the Sultan. The word mercy did not exist in the dictionary of Shabab-ud-Din Ghauri who proceeded to subject Delhi to a rapacious plunder in the name of Islam. Delhi was now lost to the Hindu rule. It was not until 1947 that is seven hundred fifty five years later that a Hindu was ever to gain power at Delhi. Jawahar Lal Nehru, the man who achieved this feat would rather not be reminded of this historical truth.

The tragic story of this romance does not end with the death of Sayogita in the Rajput ballads. The wounded and blinded King was kept like an animal in a small cell along with Chand Bhat, his follower. The story has Chand Bhat pleasing the Sultan by composing a poem in honour of his victory. He then let out the secret of Prithvi Raj Chauvan, who is reputed to have acquired the skill of hitting an arrow at the bull's eye even while blindfolded if only someone would guide him by sound. The amazed Sultan ordered for a demonstration. The King agreed upon the condition of Chand Bhat guiding him. In a packed Court, the fallen king was brought in chains. Chand Bhat, the poet started singing and directing his King towards the earmarked targets. The King's skills

were put to test twenty one times before a disbelieving audience. At last a hush fell over the audience which was engulfed in an awed silence with only Chand Bhat's poetry reverberating in the court room. Even the cynical Sultan, who had surrounded himself with bodyguards was forced to stand up and praise his foe. This was the opportunity Chand Bhat was waiting for. Without breaking rhythm of the poetry, he now sang out location of the Sultan. Prithvi Raj Chauhan put his unfailing arrow on the bow and within twinkling of the eyelid dispatched it towards the arrogant head of his enemy. Before the stunned soldiers of the Sultan could react to his death, Chand Bhat beheaded his King, who had avenged his defeat and with the same sword killed himself.

Today, when the ballad is sung in lyrical Rajasthani, it cannot but bring a tear to one's eyes. The story of Prithvi Raj Chauhan, Sayogita and their faithful follower Chand Bhat lives on in the memories of millions. Eight hundred years later, the word Jaichand means only one thing to all Bharatiyas 'A Traitor'.

Our SSPB is acutely embarrassed about this. Their pathetic attempts run from portraying it as yet another battle in which loser lost the throne to a more aggressive invader to ridiculing the Rajput ballads. Little do they realize that living memories of a society are not subject to changes at the dictates of armchair critics.

Nehru has referred to this incident. He writes "The conquest of Delhi did not mean subjugation of the rest of India. The Cholas were still powerful in the South, and there were other independent states. It took another century and a half for the Afghan rule to spread over the greater part of the South. But" even he admits, "Delhi was significant and symbolic of the new order". In prevarication so typical of the Congress, he fights shy of informing his readers the exact significance of this 'new order'.

It is left to the noted historian G.S.Sardesai to enlighten us "There had been foreign conquerors in India before ; and they have all been quickly absorbed and assimilated in the body of Hindu society . But these new Turkish fanatics were of an entirely different type. They were not content with the acquisition of mere political power. They descended upon the plains of Hindustan not as mere conquerors and plunderers, but as those out to redeem the land of the infidels. When they overthrew the Hindu kingdoms of the north and established themselves in the land, they set about systematically to force their religion upon the people, to desecrate the Hindu temples and their magnificent edifices, to break down the idols, mutilate statues and works of art, disfigure stone inscriptions beyond recognition. Out of the material obtained by such wanton destruction, they erected prayer-houses for the use of the Faithful. In order to stamp out heathenism and gather the Indian people within the fold of Islam, these ruthless vandals prohibited the public exercise of the Hindu religion and subjected its devotees to disabilities and penal laws. The Hindus were not allowed to dress well, live well or appear prosperous. Vexatious taxes were imposed upon them and their seats of learning like Nalanda were deliberately destroyed."

To get back to our narration, all attempts by the descendants of Prithvi Raj Chauhan to recover their rule proved to be unsuccessful. The might of Islam was unstoppable. The

most powerful emperor proved to be Alauddin Khilji. The first Muslim ruler to cross over the Vindhyas, the mountain range dividing the North and the South, in 1294. By the time he died in 1316, he had built the greatest ever Muslim Empire in Bharat. A feat that was not emulated by even the later day Moghul rulers. The treatment that this lord paramount of the country gave to Hindu women is illustrative.

The queen of Chittor, Padmini was said to have been the most beautiful woman in the country. Since no beauty contests were held in those days, it is difficult to establish the veracity of this claim. Nevertheless, she is certainly known to have caught the fancy of the Delhi Emperor. He openly demanded that her husband give her up. The Rajputs were not known to take such insults lying down. They rebuffed the Sultan and prepared for inevitable war that was to follow. By 1302, the Sultan had laid siege to the fort. In an attempt to buy peace, the Sultan was offered a glimpse of the Queen's face in a mirror. Even today in Chittor, tourist guides demonstrate the ingenious manner in which the mirrors were placed. The Queen could be seen in the mirror but was physically shielded from lustful eyes of Alauddin Khilji who had to return empty handed. The all too brief glimpse of the famed beauty of Padmini only served to fan his lust. In 1303, he returned with a greater force and once again besieged Chittor.

The Muslim force was far too superior for Rajputs to resist. The honour of their women was however, not to be compromised. Muslim *Jihad* was answered by the Rajput *Jowhar*. The Queen Padmini along with countless other women and children threw themselves in a specially lit pyre. As the flames devoured their beloved, the last ties of Rajput warriors with the world snapped. They had nothing more to live for. In a battle reminiscent of the "Charge of the Light Brigade" immortalized by Lord Tennyson, the small band of the Rajput warriors, wearing Saffron dress swept down on the enemy, fighting to the last drop of their blood. The only thing that the Emperor was able to win was an empty fort smeared with the ashes of Padmini and other brave Rajput women.

Even the SSPB dare not question the veracity of this tale so deeply is it imprinted in the Hindu psyche. They therefore resort to maintaining complete silence over the incident. It is not for nothing that Padmini does not find even a small mention in Nehru's "Discovery of India". When one starts to read history selectively, one faces countless puzzles that even the most intelligent selective reader is unable to solve. Such was Nehru's fate. In all his naive honesty he wondered over the growth of Purdah or seclusion of women in this period. "Somehow it did result from the interaction of the new on the old. Nor was it a Muslim custom that the Hindus began to adopt. The Afghans had no strict Purdah...the Turkish and Afghan princesses and ladies of the court often went riding, hunting and paying visits...it is odd that Purdah has not been very strict in Punjab and in the Frontier Province, which are predominantly Muslim" observed Nehru. The riddle that defied Nehru's intellect was something that would not have taken a second for even an illiterate Hindu mother to solve. Any mother would prefer to keep her daughter wrapped in Purdah than have her suffer the fate of Padmini. Muslim women, who faced no similar harassment could have felt no particular need to wrap themselves up.

The Purdah was not the only social evil that crept into Hindu society. The string of defeats extinguished the very spirit of adventure that had made Bharat a great nation. It was only in 1740, that the present day Afghanistan was broken away from Bharat. For thousands of years, the country stretched beyond the Hind Kush mountains. People traveled for trade and other matters to Central Asia and beyond. With loss of Delhi and Sindh, these areas became out of bounds as travel to these areas began to be associated with risk of forced conversion. Attock city near present day Islamabad became the border beyond which travel was not permitted. Thus the border for travel became limited to the banks of river Sindhu (Indus). This has been referred to as the Sindhu ban. People who had set up naval empires that stretched into South East Asia and Africa and which are known to have lasted for thirteen hundred years, now began to consider that crossing Seas was a sin that could not be washed away by any penance. Even people like Tilak and Gandhi had to face ostracism from their communities for daring to travel overseas less than a hundred years ago.

Savarkar has identified seven bans which a defeated Hindu mind had imposed on itself. The ban on travel to unfamiliar territories, Sindhu Ban, was one which he reminded the Hindu society had originated not in Hindu scriptures but came only with the advent of Islamic victory. If this had a religious sanctity, how come, he asked, the epic Mahabharata depicts queen Gandhari, the mother of Kauravas as being from the present day city of Kandhar. He criticized this self imposed ban harshly holding it responsible for the steady decline of Hindu power since 1192.

The one glorious exception in the all encompassing Muslim rule for Hindus, was the Vijaynagar Empire which glowed as a bright ray of hope to them. Founded in 1336, it resisted Muslim might for two hundred twenty nine years before it was smashed in 1565 by the combined power of the five southern Muslim Sultans. Nehru has this to say about this empire "South India was better off and the largest and most powerful of the southern kingdom was Vijaynagar. *This state attracted many of the Hindu refugees from the North.* From contemporary accounts, it appears that the city was rich and very beautiful. 'The city is such that eye has not seen nor ear heard of any place resembling it upon the earth' says Abdur-Razzak from central Asia. There were arcades and magnificent galleries for the bazaars and rising above them all was the palace of the King, surrounded by 'many rivulets and streams flowing through channels of cut stone, polished and even'. The city was full of gardens and because of them, as an Italian visitor in 1420, Nicolo Conti, writes, the circumference of the city was sixty miles. A later visitor was Paes, a Portuguese who came in 1522 after having visited the Italian cities of Renaissance. 'The city of Vijaynagar' he says 'is as large as Rome and very beautiful to the sight; it is full of charm and wonder with its innumerable lakes and waterways and fruit gardens. It is the best provided city in the world and everything abounds'. The chambers of the palace were a mass of ivory, with roses and lotuses carved in ivory at the top. 'It is so rich and beautiful that you would hardly find anywhere another such'. Of the ruler, Krishna Deva Raya, Paes writes : 'He is the most feared and perfect king that could possibly be, cheerful of disposition and very merry; he is one that seeks to honour foreigners, and receive them kindly asking about all their affairs whatever their condition be.'

Pray then what became of this wonderful place that lies in ruins today. Once again, as in case of Padmini, Nehru is hit with amnesia. One has to refer other historians to know. By 1565, Vijaynagar empire was at the zenith of its power and was far the strongest of all kingdoms in the South. The existence of this sole Hindu ruler was a constant reminder of their inferiority to the five Muslim sultanates of the South. They formed an alliance, cemented by ties of marriage and proceeded to launch 'Jihad', the holy war against the Infidels. The allied Deccan Sultans met the Vijaynagar army on 23rd January 1565 at Talikota. The battle resulted in defeat of the huge Vijaynagar army with immense losses. The magnificent city of Vijaynagar was ransacked and deprived of its splendour by the invading army in a manner which has been described by Sewell as follows " The third day saw the beginning of the end. The victorious Muslims had halted on the field of battle for rest and refreshment but now they reached the capital, from that time for a space of five months Vijaynagar knew no rest. The enemy had come to destroy and they carried out their objectives relentlessly ...Nothing seemed to escape them. They broke up the pavilions standing on the huge platform from which the kings used to watch the festivals, and overthrew all the carved work. They lit huge fires in the magnificently decorated buildings forming the temple of Vitthalswami near the river, and smashed its exquisite stone sculptures. With fire and sword, with crowbars and axes, they carried on day after day their work of destruction. Never perhaps in the history of the world has such havoc been wrought and wrought so suddenly, on so splendid a city, teeming with a wealthy and industrious population in the full plenitude of prosperity one day, and on the next seized, pillaged and reduced to ruins, amid scenes of savage massacre and horrors beggaring description.'

The sad tale of this destruction would make any civilized human being hang his head in shame at the outrage that one human being can perpetuate on another in the name of religion. In the omission of this story, Mr. Nehru is guilty of more than naive honesty. He has portrayed this period as a time when a synthesis was supposed to be taking place in this nation giving rise to a unique culture. The destruction of Vijaynagar makes his theory sound hollow.

As if this was not enough Hindus were subjected to religious persecution. The ruins of Hindu temples on which Mosques have been constructed dotting the Indian landscape today offer mute testimony to this fact. Kashi, Mathura and Ayodhya being the most infamous instances. The destruction of temples at Kashi and Mathura in 1669 is a historically proven fact that even the SSPB cannot deny. Ayodhya issue which toppled two Prime Ministers in late twentieth century is left open for debate. With the SSPB going great lengths to deny that a temple ever existed at this place. They would do well to read the second paragraph on Page 307 of "The Mughul Empire" by R.C.Majumdar, 1974 Edition published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. It reads " Babar exempted Muslims from the payment of stamp duties which the Hindus alone paid. His officers demolished Hindu temples and constructed mosques in their places at Sambhal, Chanderi **and Ayodhya**, and broke to pieces Jain idols at Urva near Gwalior." Lest anyone forgets the current agitation over Ayodhya was a non issue in 1974. It is immaterial if the historical significance of these places is really same as the religious. Who knows if Ram was really born at Ayodhya or Krishna at Mathura ?? The important thing is Hindus believe

so and that is precisely why Muslim rulers choose to build Mosques at these places; to really rub the fact of their being rulers in the Hindu psyche. Finally there was the hated Jizia Tax which was levied on the Hindu unbelievers serving as a daily reminder of their subjugation.

No wonder in this period Muslim population grew by leaps and bounds. No doubt, the evils like Untouchability that had crept into Hinduism must have played no small role in enticing the lower caste Hindus to a more egalitarian religion like Islam. It will however take a brave man to assert that the Islamic growth was purely on account of voluntary conversions. Every Hindu defeat was accompanied by a fresh bout of conversion at the tip of the sword. In an Islamic state, being a Hindu brought practical day to day disadvantages. For instance, they were systematically kept out of positions of real power for centuries. It was only in 1786, that Mahadji Shinde secured the title of *Wakil - e - Mutlakhi* for the young Peshwa at Pune and for himself the title of *Mir Bakshi* from the hapless Moghul ruler Shah Alam. It was the first time in hundreds of years that a Hindu had acquired a position as exalted as this. It is then not a wonder that the Muslim population grew so much. The real cause for amazement is that the country managed to retain its Hindu character despite overwhelming odds and professed goal of the Muslim rulers from time to time, to wipe Infidels from the face of the earth.

The rule of Moghuls since 1526 has been with some justification treated as wholly indigenous. For one, unlike their Afghan predecessors, they refused to acknowledge the Sovereignty of the Caliph of Baghdad. The other being the fact that there was no drain of country's wealth to destinations beyond its borders. For Hindus however, it brought little relief. The Mosque built by Babar at Ayodhya, the founder of Moghul rule continues to hurt Hindu sentiments. So also the acts of the last great Moghul Aurangzeb in defiling the holy Hindu places of Mathura and Kashi. Akbar has been held up as the example of religious tolerance. So his rule needs to be studied in a little more depth.

The rule of Akbar started with his victory in the second battle of Panipat in 1556. The Hindu chieftain Hemu who had made a bid for the imperial throne was defeated. He was beheaded as he lay wounded on the battlefield by none other than Akbar himself. Soon Akbar was at war with Rajput kings in a bid to extend his empire. The Rajputs offered strong resistance to the imperial policy of annexation. The fort of Chittor once again witnessed *Jowhar* as Akbar laid a siege to it in 1568 and the women preferred death to dishonour. Nor were their fears unfounded as became evident from the massacre that Akbar ordered on storming the fort, resulting in killing of 30,000 people. The wailing sound of the survivors echoed against the walls of the fort which had been silent witness to a similar scene 250 years ago at the hands of Alauddin Khilji. SSPB is however willing to condone this act of savagery by Akbar, if only to keep up his image as the tolerant ruler. For the ordinary denizen of Chittor, there is little to choose between the inhuman acts of the two Muslim Sultans. Akbar then proceeded to other Rajput kingdom, demanded and obtained Rajput princess in marriage, so reminiscent of the Padmini incident.

The most valiant opposition to Akbar was offered by Rana Pratap of Mewar. He carried on the fight started by his father against the Moghul invader. The loss of his capital, surrender of his fellow Rajput Kings and meagre resources at his command did nothing to diminish his uncompromising resistance. The inevitable imperial invasion into his territories took place in April 1576. The rival armies met at Haldighati. Pratap was defeated and barely managed to escape with his life on his horse Chetak, now a byword for loyalty and aided by faithful followers. Rana Pratap now took to hills and carried on the fight for his independence. He had the satisfaction of recovering some of his land before his death in 1597.

The stories of Prithvi Raj Chauhan and Sayogita, Padmini and Rana Pratap have been immortalised in countless Rajput ballads and are sung in villages across the country to serve as an inspiration to the young. Efforts of the SSPB to make people forget their memories have, unsurprisingly, been in vain. For years, Congress fought shy of accepting Rana Pratap as a genuine Indian hero. It took fifty years after Independence and an Italian born President for Congress to finally accept him in the pantheon of national heroes.

Evidence of bitter antagonism in the medieval history, between the Hindus and Muslims bordering on what could be called Open War; seems very strong. The word War is not used in the sense that Hindus and Muslims started fighting with each other every time they saw each other. Nothing would be more ludicrous than this notion. The fact remains that after the defeat of Prithvi Raj Chauhan in 1192 with the exception of Vijaynagar empire, to be a Hindu was decidedly to be at a disadvantage in this ancient country.

Nevertheless, it is worth recalling now the source of our inquiry. Did the Open War between the Hindus and Muslims continue unabated till the advance of the British imperialism or had it ended much earlier ? Can the Hindus really treat 15th August as a day of deliverance from the Muslim and British slavery? Little do they realise that in doing so they would be doing a great injustice to history of eighteenth century Bharat, which remains cloaked in anarchy to most of us. For instance, the widely prevalent impression is that there was complete breakdown of governance in the country after the death of the last great Moghul emperor - Aurangzeb in 1707 till British took over reins of power and saved us from anarchy. So insidious is this propaganda that generations of Indians have fallen prey to it.

We shall therefore return to this after we examine other two claims of the significance of 15th August.

Chapter I-3

The Battle of Plassey

It would merit some consideration to see if the notion of treating the battle of Plassey as being synonymous with loss of Independence has any present day implications. So let us move forward in time.

6th December 1992

By evening, the news of the demolition of Babri Masjid, the structure erected by Babar on the ruins of an ancient temple where Ram, incarnation of Lord Vishnu in Hindu mythology is believed to have been born, became known in remote parts of the country. The Police forces were put on alert fearing wide spread conflagration. The fears were soon found to be too real. In what seemed a bizarre replay of medieval savagery, the two communities set upon each other in city after city. Murder and mayhem were order of the day for over a week that followed. Order was restored only by calling in the Army. The fragile peace was once again shattered in January as Mumbai witnessed second and more fierce round of people indulging in animal passions. The communal cauldron continued to simmer only to erupt in a series of bomb blasts in March 1993 in Mumbai. By this time, over 2000 people had died in the city of Mumbai itself by official records, the unofficial toll was much higher. The country wide loss of life is better left to imagination God alone knows the total cost in terms of life lost, property damaged, indelible scars that marred many innocent minds. India had once again drawn itself to the brink of precipice and pulled back. Would it be lucky next time around ??

What ever the merits or demerits of historical rights or wrongs, that India is today a multi cultural, multi religious, multi lingual, multi racial country, is an undeniable fact. There is a very strong current of opinion mainly supported by Congress that would therefore like to erase the historical fact of Hindus and Muslims being at war for centuries. They legitimately feel that acts and omissions of Babar or any other historical figure cannot be used for holding the country to ransom today. If these inconvenient historical facts have a way of inciting the passions of emotional Indians even today; they are best forgotten.

And if history cannot be forgotten, why not change the interpretation seems to be their argument. This school of opinion therefore chooses to date the loss of independence to the battle of Plassey in 1757, when the East India Company got its first real chance to meddle in Indian affairs of the state of Bengal. For them, the war between Hindus and Muslims never happened.

The rule of Akbar to them is god sent as it gives them the opportunity of painting a reasonably tolerant Muslim ruler at peace with the Hindu population, which does seem to be the case after he won the war with Rajputs. They produce evidence of even a bigoted Moghul Emperor like Aurangzeb giving grants to Hindu places of worship without mentioning his act of demolishing the holy Kashi temple. For the same reason they gloss

over forcible conversions and slaughter of Hindus by Tipu Sultan in late eighteenth century and choose to concentrate on his fight against the British.

For the contemporary Bharatiyas, it is doubtful if the battle of Plassey merited much attention. Since however, so much is made of it today, it is perhaps worth recapitulating those events.

The origins of this battle lie shrouded in mystery even to those who passionately advocate this battle as marking the beginning of Bharat's colonization. Let us therefore travel back in time once again now to the middle of eighteenth century Bharat. The Moghul Empire had lost its cohesion. Bengal Subhedar now owed only nominal allegiance to the Delhi ruler. Imperial Firman still carried weight but its implementation however depended on the local conditions. In this twilight zone when the power of Delhi was on the decline and the new seat of authority in Bengal had not yet consolidated itself, intrigue and conspiracy filled the atmosphere. Bengal was at this time the richest Indian province and therefore much money was available to be made. Not only this, there was a compelling reason for East India Company to choose Bengal as its major area of activity in preference to other areas of the country. It is an interesting story of protection demanded and obtained by the British Industry against imports of Manufactured goods from India. The principles of *Free Trade and Sound Commerce*, which were used to deny similar protection to the Indian industry in the nineteenth century against British exports; were obviously unknown in the isle of England at this time.

In the seventeenth century, Dutch and British textile imports consisted mostly of colourful printed cotton piece-goods, for which Gujarat and Coromandel coast were the best centers of production. These imports were resisted by the British industry as being harmful to their interests, resulting in an embargo on the import of printed cotton textiles. Only white cotton material, which could be processed further at home, could be imported in the eighteenth century, and for this kind of material, Bengal was an ideal center of production, as the fine white cotton textiles of Bengal were well known. The trade with Bengal grew by leaps and bounds.

Trouble started when, Siraj-ud-daula ascended to the throne after the death of Alivardi on the 9th April 1756. As any new ruler, he started to consolidate his position. This necessarily involved that the traders and other monied people were forced to “render unto Caesar what was due to him”, which immediately made him run foul of British traders of East India Company. This company was carrying out its trade in Bengal under the terms of Imperial Firman of 1717 which granted it substantial privileges. The most coveted being the one relating to importing goods from England duty free for sale in the local market. The local Indian merchants and all others were required to pay 40% duty, making this concession quite lucrative. The privilege was naturally available only to the official trade of the company. The local officers of the company saw in this, an opportunity to make a fast buck for themselves. They started importing goods duty free for their **personal** trade taking undue advantage of the prevailing uncertainties. Thus the new Nawab was perfectly in his rights to curb this illegal practice and stop the leakage of the state revenue. The legitimate demand of the Nawab was resented by the corrupt, for

there cannot be any other word to describe their practice, British officers. This led to the march of Siraj-ud-daula to Calcutta to enforce law. The British Governor fled leaving his Garrison to its fate. A junior British officer, Holwell prolonged the inevitable. Finally British surrendered on the 20th June 1756. Then followed the search of the Garrison and the infamous Black Hole of Calcutta incident.

The traditional story of the Black Hole has the Nawab confining 146 British prisoners in a small cell, where 123 died of suffocation. Only 23 survived to tell the tale. As Spear admits the story rests on the 'descriptive powers of Holwell ... a none too reliable man. For 50 years little notice was taken of the incident .. the emphasis grew so great that it became.. one of the three things... (other two being Battle of Plassey and the Mutiny) ... which every English schoolboy knew about India.'

The epic proportion to which this story, based on the testimony of an unreliable person, was blown is not surprising. It was a skillful way of diverting the attention of the world from the real reason that brought the Bengal Nawab to Calcutta in the first place. The need to check the corrupt practices of the British. A more serious incident of similar nature took place on 1st August 1857 at Ajnala under the orders of the British army officer Cooper; has been condoned by the British historians and is virtually unknown. More of this later.

The defeat served to only anger British. It is not easy to accept the loss of personal income however illegitimate it may be. The pay of the East India Company officers was too meagre to sustain the loss of this illegal income. Robert Clive was sent from Madras on 16th October 1756 for the succour of the ill paid Company servants. The incompetence of the Nawab in dealing with the wily Clive is too well documented to bear reproduction. It must be kept in mind that Clive was also helped by the capture of Delhi by Ahmed Shah Abdali in January 1757. The Nawab was confronted with the spectre of an Afghan invasion and therefore thought it prudent to conclude a treaty with British on 9th February 1757, virtually conceding all their demands.

What the Nawab did not reckon with was that Clive was too clever to be so easily dissuaded. The Nawab who could threaten their personal fortunes was not to be tolerated. The web of conspiracies surrounding the Nawab helped Clive's cause. He struck a deal with Mir Jafar. The British were to help Mir Jafar depose Siraj-ud-daula. In return he was to not only pay an official compensation to East India Company but also a bribe, for what else can one call this transaction, to Clive and other members of the Council. The battle was joined on 23rd June 1757 at Plassey. It is well known that had Mir Jafar fought loyally, the Nawab would have won easily. This was not to be and he was routed.

With Mir Jafar on Bengal throne, gains of Clive were substantial. In all he received a bribe of £ 234,000 besides a Jagir of £ 30,000 per year for maintenance. The other Council members share in the bribe ranged between £ 50,000 - 80,000 each. The harsh truth therefore is that **the foundation of the British rule in India was laid after a battle in defense of corruption financed by payment of large bribes.**

Within next ten years, Bengal became the first province to be lost to Bharatiya rule. Sir Alfred Lyall has described these years as ‘period which throws grave and unpardonable discredit to the English Government’. Clive himself was later more forthright, “I will only say that such a scene of anarchy, confusion, bribery, corruption and extortion was never seen or heard of in any country but Bengal nor such and so many fortunes acquired in so unjust and rapacious a manner.”

It cannot be a coincidence that by the time the British left, Bengal – the richest province of the country in 1757; had been pauperized and ravaged by famine in which millions lost their lives. No wonder that the name of Mir Jafar even today, well after the lapse of two centuries vies with Jaichand in Hall of Infamy where portraits of Traitors are kept.

Painting British as villains is not only acceptable to all sections of the society but also historically correct. Yet to go on and try and live in the make belief world of forgetting the Hindu - Muslim animosity has created many problems.

To portray Akbar as a tolerant Indian ruler is perhaps by itself harmless. However, when this reinterpretation of history demands painting Rana Pratap as a misguided patriot, who disturbed the imperial tranquil of the Moghuls, they hit against an emotional wall which cannot be breached. It is then that they have to retract, as even Gandhiji and Nehru also had to do, leaving their bewildered followers to reconcile this part of the history themselves.

Driven with the need to erase the historical fact of Hindu - Muslim war, Hindu leaders of the Indian National Congress have been compelled to bend backwards to accommodate any and every demand of the vocal section of Muslim Fundamentalists. This pro Muslim tilt, no doubt driven by noble motives, has been most pronounced since Gandhiji took over the reins in 1920. Driven by the need to accommodate Muslims, he launched the First Civil Disobedience Movement on the plank of Khilafat. Why should Indians worry about the fate of the Turkish ruler, even if he styled himself as the leader of Muslims all over the world was not clear to many of Gandhiji’s own followers. Particularly, when Bharatiya Muslims, since the days of the Moghuls, had themselves long ceased to accept the writ of this Caliph in their affairs. EMS Nambudriabad, the veteran communist leader, has rightly held this move of the Congress to be responsible for the partition of the country in 1947.

Jawaharlal Nehru was no less influenced by this theory. As a Hindu and the Prime Minister, he had no hesitation in pushing through much needed reforms in the Hindu society by enacting the Hindu Code Bill. This was bitterly resented by the orthodox sections. No less a person than Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the President of India was opposed to this bill as is evident from the fact that he sent it back to the Parliament for reconsideration. He consented to the bill only when the Parliament at the urging of Nehru passed it again leaving the President no other choice. If Nehru could be so firm in case of Hindus what but an erroneous view of the history made him shy away from reforming the Muslim society. This omission has been rightly criticized by many, prominent among

them being the noted Jurist M.C.Chagla, who had also served in Nehru's Cabinet. He writes in his autobiography "Roses in December"

" Consider the attitude of the Government to the question of a uniform civil code. Although the directive Principles of the state enjoins such a code, Government has refused to do anything about it on the plea that the minorities will resent such an imposition. Unless they are agreeable it would not be fair and proper to make the law applicable to them. I wholly and emphatically disagree with this view. The constitution is binding on everyone, majority and minority; and if the constitution contains a directive, that directive must be accepted and implemented. Jawaharlal showed great strength and courage in getting the Hindu Reform Bill passed, but he accepted the policy of *laissez-faire* where the Muslims and other minorities were concerned. I am horrified to find that in my country, while monogamy has been made the law for the Hindus, Muslims can still indulge in the luxury of polygamy. It is an insult to womanhood; and Muslim woman I know, resent this discrimination between Muslim women and Hindu women"

Chagla wrote this in 1973. Twenty five years later, even today, none of the Congress leaders make any attempt in this direction. The rise of revivalist tendencies amongst Hindus which resulted in the incidents of 6th December 1992, have been traced by many observers to appeasement of the orthodox Muslim in 1986 by Nehru's grandson Rajiv Gandhi.

The now famous Shah Banu case bears some brushing of memory. It was a simple case of an elderly Muslim wife divorced by her husband of over two decades claiming measly maintenance of a few hundred Rupees. All over the world, it is well known that the income of the husband goes down dramatically with the onset of divorce proceedings. Shah Banu's husband was no less anxious to part with his money. The defense he took is however not available to most people of his tribe even if they share his religion but happen to live outside India. His argument did not relate to his capacity to pay, rather he claimed his religion prevented him to do so. The case went from one court to another. Finally the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the hapless divorcee. Not only did it throw out the ingenious defense but also asked the Union Government to implement the Directive Principles of the Indian constitution and enact a suitable Common Civil Code. It is widely accepted that such a code would greatly enhance the standing of Muslim women who are forced to not only accept Polygamy but are also liable to be divorced without maintenance by simple act of uttering the hated word "Talak" thrice by the husband. Most Muslim communities including Pakistan do not allow such obnoxious state of affairs. The orthodox Indian Muslim community was up in arms against the decision of the highest court of law. The Congress Government that in the past under Nehru had refused to yield to the Hindu reactionaries; now meekly surrendered to the fundamentalist Muslim pressure. Ironically, the man responsible for this was Nehru's own grandson, Rajiv Gandhi. A special law was enacted by the Parliament without heeding saner councils. Rajiv used his brute majority, holding his flock together by the whip of Anti Defection law, discarded his own Muslim colleague, Arif Mohammad Khan who spoke eloquently against the proposal and forced overturning of a reasoned judgment of the Court.

This act of an inexperienced young Prime Minister emboldened Hindu fundamentalists. “If Hindus believe that Ayodhya is the birth place of Ram, it is so and since Muslims do not accept even the Supreme Court in the matters of faith, so we will not either”; was now their irrefutable argument. The resulting competitive fundamentalism ended in the tragedy of the 6th December 1992. Matters are quiet since the Bombay Bomb blast in 1993. The peace is fragile and any small wrong move has the potential to cause volcanic disruption all over again. Luck has been on India’s side so far. How far it will hold is anybody’s guess.

Clearly the Congress interpretation of history has done incalculable damage.

Chapter I-4

The Birth of a New Nation

“The burden of the past, the burden of both good and ill is overpowering and sometimes suffocating, more especially for those of us who belong to very ancient civilizations like those of India and China.” As Nietzsche says: ‘Not only the wisdom of centuries - also their madness breaketh out in us. Dangerous is it to be an heir’ wrote Nehru. Tired of all the ghosts that come to haunt the present from time to time, some well meaning Indians are even prepared to accept the colonial myth of India being a new nation - a twentieth century product. Let us have nothing to do with the past, the sins and acts of omission and commission of our ancestors seems to be their refrain. Just as the European nations are now getting together to form a Union, let us accept that we are a federation of nations that came into being on the 15th August 1947. Each Indian state, whether it is Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Bengal, Kashmir or any other state has its own culture, language, history and folk lore. The Punjabi Indian has after all more in common with his neighbour across the border in Pakistan than with a Keralite. It is only since 1947 that the destiny of Punjab and Kerala has become interwoven. so let us make a new beginning with a clean slate. *One must admit it is a very tempting argument. The only problem is it is not real.*

27th December 1992

The crystal clear blue waters of the Bay of Bengal off the coast of Puri in Orissa were a soothing sight to the eye. The small canoe in which we were sitting nearly tilled over when I asked my wife and daughters to join me as I let go of the ashes that were the last mortal remains of my grandmother, in the sea. In this I was fulfilling her wish that she had expressed before her death in 1980. Immersion of her ashes at Puri. It was a deeply religious wish. A Hindu is supposed to do a Yatra of the four Dhams or centers of pilgrimage. Puri in the East, Rameshwaram in the South, Dwarka in the West and Badrinath in the North. My grandmother had been to the three before her physical condition prevented her from traveling to Puri. She had hoped to travel to the last Dham, if only after death.

There is nothing novel about this. Countless Hindus share this religious desire. This goes back at least to the days of the Shankaracharya in the eighth century and even before. Born in Malabar in the far South of Bharat, Shankaracharya looked upon Kanyakumari to the Himalayas as his field of action, which to him was one indivisible entity, infused with the same Hindu spirit. His mission in life was to propagate the cause of Hinduism which was then in decline, faced with the rising influence of Buddhism. Deeply conscious of his mission, he traveled incessantly all over Bharat, meeting innumerable people, arguing, debating, reasoning, convincing people about the glory of Hinduism, sense of national unity, common consciousness and outlook. A mixture of a philosopher and a scholar, an agnostic and a mystic, a poet and a saint and in addition to all this, a practical reformer and an able organiser; by the time he died at a young age of 32 at Badrinath on the snow-covered reaches of the Himalayas, he had done the work of many long lives and left such

an impress of his powerful mind and rich personality on Bharat that it is evident to-day and continues to touch the lives of common people in many ways. My own journey to Puri was the outcome of the tradition that this great man, who could simultaneously function on the intellectual, philosophical, religious and popular planes; had reinforced in this country twelve hundred years ago. In his short but eventful life, he had established four great Maths or monasteries, locating them far away from each other at four corners of Bharat. Shringeri in Mysore, Puri in the East, Dwarka in the West and Badrinath in the heart of the Himalayas. National integration was emphasized by the tradition of having Southern Priests in the Northern Math and vice versa. The common people of all castes and classes were encouraged to travel to these places, so that during their long and difficult journeys they would be exposed to a cross section of the people of Bharat in all their great variety of custom, dress, language and be conscious of their underlying unity despite the apparent diversity. At the Maths themselves, they could be a party to the intellectual discourse on a great variety of topics resulting in flowering of a common intellectual and cultural life. Indeed the very conception of such long journeys at a time when travel was very slow and primitive 'brings out the essential unity of Bharat even in those far off days' points out Nehru. Nor has this sense of unity ever disappeared as is brought out so vividly by the living tradition of continuing the journeys to the corners of the country.

The unity of Bharat has not been confined merely to the cultural sphere. The obsession to impose Islam on Hindus has obscured, Aurangzeb's greatest contribution to the nation. Its political unification much before British came on the scene. Once the Islamic zeal was stripped away by the Marathas, edifice of the Moghul empire, the legal base it provided came to be accepted by all. From 1707, that is the year when Aurangzeb died to 1857, the year of the Great War for Independence; for a period of 150 years, the Moghul Emperor was universally acknowledged as the country's sovereign, in whose name even the British were forced to rule, though actual area ruled by the Moghul Emperor shrank to the by lanes of Jama Masjid in Delhi.

Kabul was stripped away by Nadir Shah in 1740. For a short time, towards the end of eighteenth century, Tipu Sultan proclaimed an independent Kingdom. The brave Sikhs under Ranjit Singh founded the independent Khalsa Raj which lasted for the better part of half a century, till it was overwhelmed by the British. As a matter of interest, neither the Tipu nor the Sikh claim of Independence was recognized by the British. Indeed, they defeated them in the name of the Moghul emperor.

The legal base for rule over the country remained the person of the Moghul Emperor - the national sovereign accepted by all, including the unbending foes of Aurangzeb; the Marathas.

In 1792, Marathas were the preeminent power in the country. The Emperor was completely dependent on them. Yet there was no mistaking the fact that the Emperor was the sovereign. Take for instance, reverence with which the Marathas came to treat the Imperial Firmans. Sardesai has described the manner in which the Imperial Firman issued

by the blind hapless Emperor was received by Peshwa, the head of Marathas. He writes “About 12 noon Sindia proceeded to the farman-bady and after drawing up his infantry to advantage in its neighbourhood and placing the farmans, the dresses, and articles intended for the Peshwa on the *empty musand supposed to be the King’s throne*, the Peshwa’s approach on an elephant was announced. Sindia advanced to meet him and received him at the commencement of the carpets of the tents. On Peshwa reaching the Salamgah, he *made three low bows to the musand* and advancing, placed 101 gold Mohrs on it as a nazzar, repeated this obeisance and took his seat on the left of the musand.

The Durbar being arranged Sindia’s munshi delivered into the Peshwa’s hands the royal letter; after lifting it respectfully to his head the Peshwa delivered it to his own Munshi... one..*contained a prohibition to slay Cows throughout the Timurian Empire*”

By 1803, East India Company had replaced Marathas as the country’s preeminent power. It was not until 1858 that the British Monarch assumed direct control over the country. For these 55 years, who then ruled the country under the British laws themselves? Certainly not East India Company, which as a commercial organization was not permitted under British laws to govern any territory on its own and had to act on behalf of someone. The answer is fairly straight forward. The East India Company ruled in the name of the Moghul Emperor under the grant of Imperial Sanads. The legal basis for actions of East India Company in governing India was the Diwani it held on behalf of the Delhi Emperor. British historians go to extreme lengths to avoid acknowledging this fact. Spear admits that the Pitts India Bill passed in 1784 rejected outright taking over of the company’s territorial possessions by the crown but amazingly goes on to state that it left the issue of sovereignty over Indian territories of the Company open. Can anyone really believe that a state of vacuum existed in the issue of sovereignty for better part of a century, in respect of a possession that was as important as India undoubtedly was; for the British ??

Unpalatable as it may well be to the British, the fact remains that they were forced to rule in the name of the Moghul Emperor. Nor was this an act of charity to the Moghuls. The British tried their best to undermine moral authority of the Moghul Emperor, for that is all that was left with the Emperor after 1803. This is clear from what Spear has written about the British efforts in this regard. “...it revealed the nervousness and perplexity of the British in dealing with the Moghul Emperor. Wellesley had carefully avoided either recognizing Moghul suzerainty in 1803 or repudiating it.” In plain simple English, he accepted it, for unless an established fact is specifically repudiated, it stands accepted. “In fact he signed no treaty with Shah Alam, but promised him liberty and maintenance. To the Emperor, the company was still officially a favored son; by the company the emperor was beginning to be regarded as a nuisance. In 1816 the presentation of nazars on behalf of the government, a symbol of inferior status, was stopped. But the issue of the company’s coinage stamped with Shah Alam’s title continued until 1835. At the same time Hastings encouraged the Nawab Wazir of Oudh, as a reward for the loans during the wars, to assume the title of King of Oudh. It was thought thus to divide the Muslim allegiance, the Nawab Wazir being the political head of the Shias and the Emperor being

a Sunni. *In fact this action brought little credit to the Nawab Wazir, being widely regarded as an act of rebellion. The Nizam pointedly refused to follow his example.*”

The British King and the Parliament detested the fact that to rule India, in theory at least, they had to be vassals of a foreign Emperor. The British ingenuity soon found a way out. The Governor General of East India Company in India, being a private person could well be a vassal of the Moghul Emperor. An elaborate mechanism was set up under the 1784 Act, which remained substantially unchanged till 1858, to make sure that practical actions of the Governor General were subject to the approval of the British Parliament. It is no accident that the British Crown took over the direct reins of the Government of India only after the last Moghul Emperor was formally deposed and exiled.

Such was the awe that the Delhi throne inspired even as late as in 1857, that when the Bharatiya forces drove British out of Delhi and proclaimed Bahadur Shah Jafar as the Emperor, the event was rightly recognised as of great danger by the British. Kaye’s and Malleon’s History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857 –58 records “The tremendous political significance of this *revolution* (italics mine, note the use of word *revolution* and not *mutiny* - truth has a way of slipping through pen of even the most unabashed imperialists) could not be misunderstood by the most obtuse, or glossed over by the most sanguine”. It is to this issue that we will turn to in greater detail later. For the time being it is enough to note that considerable political instability prevailed between 1795 the death of Peshwa Madhav Rao II to 1803, the year when the British launched war to assume imperial powers. The absurdity of taking advantage of a short period of less than ten years to deny the very existence of a five thousand year old nation leaves one gasping for the sheer audacity of the attempt. That so many of our own countrymen have swallowed this lie cannot but bring forth tears of frustration.

To offer more proof to demonstrate the hollowness of the notion that Bharat is a twentieth century product, is to insult the intelligence of the readers.

Nehru was an intellectual giant in his own right. Not all the Congressmen are so blessed. In their anxiety to grab power in the name of the Mahatma, who always forswore power himself, they thrust upon him the title of “Rashtra Pita” or Father of the Nation. Little do they realize that even the great Shankracharya who reinforced national unity twelve hundred years ago was not Father or creator of the nation, as he reinforced and did not create the national unity. How could Mahatma Gandhi be then called Father of a Nation that was already in existence for 5000 years before he was born? The monumental work of this truly outstanding person will always remain worthy of our respect. It would be historically more accurate to call him “Rashtra Bandhu” or Brother of the Nation. A title, he himself would have liked better. It shows the intellectual bankruptcy of the SSPB that the moment anyone suggests an alternative title for Mahatma Gandhi, he is immediately accused of being in league with his assassins.

Chapter 1-5

Loss of Independence on 16th September 1803

The three conventional theories in respect of the significance of 15th August seems to present us with a Jigsaw puzzle that has no answer. Our past may be messy but is too real to be ignored. It is plainly baseless, as we have seen, to call this 5000-year-old nation a twentieth century phenomenon. An assertion that ours is a new nation did not find favour with Nehru either. It is another matter that the conventional Congressmen have encouraged this false notion by insisting on calling Mahatma Gandhi, Father of the Nation.

On the other hand the traditional history seems to tell us that the Hindus and Muslims were at War with each other for hundreds of years. So that the hero to one community is a villain to the other. Countless riots have erupted on trivial matters. Hindus have taken out processions with loud music being played in front of the Mosques as if they were the troops on their way to the fields of Haldighati. In the same vein, Muslims have taken to attacking such processions as if they were the soldiers of Akbar charged with routing the Rajputs. Thus the resultant animosity and mayhem which had nothing to do with religion, is better left undescribed. The battle between Akbar and Rana Pratap is four hundred years old but the passions that it continues to excite are too real, too painful, too capable of turning ordinary people into animals capable of unbelievable savagery. During the British rule there was at least a fig leaf of their policy of Divide and Rule as being responsible for this. With what face can we explain these all too frequent displays of medieval cruelty to our children, so many years after Independence? No wonder then that Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru took to trying to erase the fact of the Hindu-Muslim war from the pages of history. The experiment was, no doubt driven by noble considerations but we now know that it has not succeeded. Indeed, without exaggeration one can even say that the cure has been worse than the disease.

Only when one looks at this dilemma that has been confronting the nation for the last so many decades, that one realizes the incredible price that we have paid for ignoring the works of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. It was in 1909, nearly 90 years ago that he wrote his revolutionary book “The Indian War of Independence 1857” that was proscribed even before it was published by the imperial powers. It was found so dangerous that the British government did not dare lift this ban till the dying moments of the Raj. Pray what was so seditious about this work ? One has to only look at his introduction in the first edition of the book in the year 1909 to realize. He wrote “ The nation that has no consciousness of its past has no future. Equally true it is that a nation must develop its capacity not only of claiming a past but also knowing how to use it for the furtherance of its future. The nation ought to be the master and not slave of its own history. For, it is absolutely unwise to try and do certain things now irrespective of special considerations, simply because they had been once acted upon in the past. The **feeling of hatred against the Mahomedans** was just and necessary in the times of Shivaji-but such a feeling **would be unjust and foolish if nursed now**, simply because it was the dominant feeling of the Hindus then.” He went to prove the fact that the Hindu-Muslim war ended on 11th May 1857 when the Bharatiya

soldiers took over Delhi from the British and liberated Bahadur Shah Zafar, the country's ruling sovereign from the clutches of his Firangi Diwan. Not only did the war end but a new era in the Hindu - Muslim relationship began as they joined together to lay down their lives on the battlefield defending their Emperor against the common British enemy, developing ties cemented by the blood which flowed in the countless battles that they fought together. All would be lost, to the Raj if the wretched people of Bharat were ever to realize that their ancestors had long ago made peace with each other and it was foolish for the post 1857 generations of the Hindus and Muslims to keep on fighting and ignoring historical realities. The Hindustan Gadhar Party which was formed in 1913 took great inspiration from this work and attempted to ferment a revolution in Punjab, the state that had stood solidly behind the British in 1857. No wonder then that Savarkar was sent away to Andaman to serve a 50-year penal term and the Gadhar Party was ruthlessly crushed by the imperial powers. The actions of colonial power were in line with their interests and are therefore understandable. They could not have behaved otherwise. What defies understanding is that the post Gohkale Congress led by none other than Mahatma Gandhi completely ignored this glorious heritage and chose alien symbols of the Turkey Caliph to promote Hindu-Muslim unity. The attempt was foredoomed to miserable failure. Fail it did with communal holocaust of the Partition in 1947 leaving wounds that continue to fester on the body polity. Looking back, one can say the failure was because of an honest difference of opinions between the titans of the Independence struggle, Savarkar and Gandhi.

What is completely unpardonable is the neglect of this revolutionary work about the real significance of 1857 in post independence Bharat by the successive Congress Governments. The history of 1857 that needs to be taught to school children is gathering dust on the forgotten shelves of a few libraries.

Considerable literature is now available to us, which was not the case when Savarkar wrote this epic. It is now possible to conclusively establish that the Hindu-Muslim war had ended in 1707 with the death of Aurangzeb. The embers continued to smoulder to periodically burst into flames as they did at Panipat in 1761 but the trend towards genuine synthesis was irreversible. Without this, there is no way that Bahadur Shah would have been accepted as the Emperor by Hindu soldiers in 1857.

One can therefore safely conclude that 15th August is the day we won back our independence from the British that we had lost on 16th September 1803, when Shah Alam, the nation's sovereign accepted the protection of this alien power. With this, the Marathas who had extended this protection to the Delhi throne for the better part of the eighteenth century, were comprehensively defeated and the national freedom was lost.

One is aware of the look of incomprehension that greets this assertion. This date – 16th September 1803 has no significance to generations of Indians. That is a real pity. Conventional history portrays a very different picture from the real story.

From 1707, when Aurangzeb died to the time the British assumed power in India, a century later; is always shown as a period of terminal decline of a once proud civilization. This is contrary to facts.

In the forgotten and unlearnt history of the Eighteenth century lie solutions to our problems even in the Twenty First Century. The seemingly unbridgeable divide between the Hindus & Muslims. We have forgotten the fact that this period represented a period of true synthesis between the Hindus and Muslims who were at war with each other since 1192. A synthesis that came about not because the Hindus surrendered to the Muslims. It was the sword of Shivaji that made Muslims sue for peace.

The oft overlooked role of the Marathas in creating synthesis between Hindus and Muslims is what we shall now take up for a study to prove that dating the loss of Independence to 16th September 1803 is not a flight of fancy but a historical reality. We must reread the story of Shivaji. For this alone will explain how the fight of this Great Maratha leader taught a lesson to the Muslims in the Seventeenth century. A lesson that led to the synthesis that developed in the Eighteenth century between Hindus & Muslims, once the rabidly fanatic Moghul Emperor Aurangzeb died in 1707.

Chapter I-6

The End of Hindu - Muslim War in 1707 Historical Role of Shivaji

“History must from time to time be re-written, not because many new facts have been discovered, but because new aspects come into view, because the participant in the progress of an age is led to the standpoints from which the past can be reviewed and judged in a novel manner.”, wrote Goethe. The Marathas have long been misjudged by their rivals and adversaries and painted in blackest colours both during and after the period of their downfall as if they had no single good deed to their credit. Their historical role in creating a true synthesis between the two antagonistic communities- the Hindus and the Muslims has been completely overlooked. It is to this aspect that we would now devote our attention.

The word Maratha itself needs an explanation. It is not being used in the sense of denoting a particular caste but rather refers to an entire set of people who trace their origin to the land between the Narmada and the upper Krishna and who speak Marathi or its sister languages like Konkni. The history of these people is very ancient. Marathi itself is derived from Sanskrit and later Prakrit came to be the language of the court and learned writers from about 800 -1000 AD. The celebrated Marathi saint Jnaneshwar completed his commentary on the Bhagawat Gita in 1290 AD during the reign of King Ramchandra Yadav of Devagiri, only four years before his kingdom was destroyed by the Muslim conqueror Alauddin Khilji.

One of the earliest example of the valour of this race comes from the times of Mohammed Tughlak, who rose to the Delhi throne in 1325. He is widely known as the Sultan who dreamt of impossibly mad ventures. His act of shifting the capital from Delhi to Devagiri in 1327 is today synonymous with madness. That is however being completely unaware of historical realities. This is what R.C.Majumdar has to say in “An Advanced History of India” about shifting of the capital. “ ..the idea behind it was originally sound. The new capital occupied a central and strategic situation....Barni writes : ‘This place held a central situation; Delhi, Gujarat, Lakhnauti, Satgaon, Sonargaon, Telang, Malbar, Dorasamudra, and Kampila were about equidistant from thence.’ Further, the new capital was safe from the Mongol invasions, which constantly threatened the old one (Delhi). The Sultan also did his best to make the new capital a suitable abode for his officers, and the people, by providing it with beautiful buildings...All facilities were provided to the intending immigrants. A spacious road was constructed for their convenience, shady trees being planted on both the sides of it and a regular post being established between Delhi and Devagiri or Daulatabad as it was rechristened....the Sultan was bounteous in his liberality and favours to the emigrants both on their journey and on their arrival.” Geographically also it is worth understanding the importance of Daulatabad. The river Narmada has formed the main boundary between the northern and southern halves of the Indian sub-continent. The first important post in South after crossing the river is Burhanpur on the river Tapti. Next advance is the region of Daulatabad around 100 miles south of Burhanpur. Some 75 miles south lies Ahmednagar.

Burhanpur, Daulatabad and Ahmednagar thus form the principle chain of posts that determine control of the South.

So why did the Sultan move back to Delhi ? The conventional history has a very strange explanation to offer. It records that “The Sultan having at last recognized the folly and inequity of his policy, reshifted the court to Delhi and ordered a return march of his people.” In this assessment the historians are being unfair to the late Sultan.

One has to read Savarkar in order to get a more reasonable picture of the Sultan’s actions. Southern India was attacked in 1294 by the Muslims and had been finally subjugated only around 1308. Disturbances continued even thereafter. In 1320 something strange had happened in Delhi of which no authentic record is available. Khusrav Khan, an erstwhile Hindu rose to the throne putting an end to the Khilji dynasty. Majumdar admits “Khusrav favoured the Hindus and his brief reign was marked by the ascendancy of the Hindus.” It is quite likely the Khusrav Khan had established relationships with the Hindu kings of the South whom he had been sent to conquer and received substantial help from them. We need not subscribe to Savarkar’s view that Khusrav Khan proclaimed the end of the Muslim rule but he does appear to have seriously wounded the Muslim sentiments. This is evident from the fact the Ghazi Malik who defeated Khusrav Khan was welcomed to the throne of Delhi by other nobles without jealousy despite being otherwise equal in rank to him.

Thus 1325 act of Mohammed Tughlak in shifting his capital to the South, which had been the nerve center of disturbance barely five years ago, seems perfectly reasonable move to permanently put down the rebels. In this the Sultan proved to be luckless. The Hindu feelings were bitter which is evident from the conspicuous and leading role that the Shankaraycharya of Shringeri Math played in getting Harihar and Bukka to renounce the Muslim religion, which they had embraced at the tip of the sword. It was their resistance that forced Tughlak to shift the capital back to Delhi.

It is these heroes who went on to found the famous Vijaynagar Empire on 18th April 1336. Tughlak had mortification to lose the southern provinces for good. This lends credence to the belief that shifting of the Capital back to Delhi around 1330 was necessitated by his failure to contain Hindus in the South, who were beginning to become too powerful.

Shifting of the capital is then no act of a mad Sultan but a move in tune with the Realpolitik of the times and which demonstrates the valour of the Maratha race.

The story of the rise and the fall of the Vijaynagar Empire is now well known. Let us now move forward to the aftermath of the battle of Talikot in 1565, which laid the empire low. In its place now rose the kingdoms of Bijapur, Ahmednagar and Golkonda which survived in the South as independent entities along with scattered remains of the Vijaynagar rulers, even as Moghuls ruled the rest of the country. Southern Muslim rulers were virtually controlled both in Civil and Military departments by Maratha Statesmen and Maratha warriors. The hill forest near the Ghats and the country thereabouts, were in

the hands of Maratha captains, who were nominally dependent on these Muslim sovereigns. Sardesai has even gone to the extent of recording that “if Muhammad Adilshah of Bijapur, who came to the throne in 1627 and who completely reversed the tolerant policy of his father Ibrahim Adilshah, a ruler of exceptional impartiality who had been revered as Jagat Guru by the Hindus themselves, *had not resumed the old practice of desecrating the Hindu temples and plundering their wealth, it is probable that Shivaji would not have undertaken to found an independent Maratha kingdom.*”

Shivaji was born on 6th April 1627 to Jijabai, the wife of Shahaji, who was a renowned Maratha captain. Shahaji’s valour had landed him several offers to join one or the other Deccan Sultans, as they struggled to keep their independence from the jealous Moghul raiders. For a short two-year period Shahaji had even accepted services of the Moghuls. His attempts to set up a independent kingdom using a child as the puppet ruler of Ahmednagar was foiled by Shah Jahan in 1636, following which he remained in the services of the Bijapur Sultan till his death in 1664. The notable work that he did for the Sultan was the final conquest of successors of the survivors of the Talikot battle in 1565; the remnants of the Hindu Vijaynagar empire.

The bravery of Shahaji provided little succour to the Hindus, who continued to suffer wanton cruelties even in the Bijapur campaigns led by Shahaji. As an old paper records, “Complete darkness prevails under the Muslim rule. There is no inquiry, no justice, the officials do what they please. Violation of woman’s honour and conversions of the Hindus, demolition of their shrines, cow slaughter and similar despicable atrocities prevail.” His contribution to the Hindu cause came through the efforts of Shivaji, who had been provided an independent charge of his father’s jagir at Pune for maintenance of his mother; practically deserted by her husband. The wanton cruelties of Alauddin Khilji, the Jowhar of Padmini, her own confinement at the fort of Kondha by Mahaldar Khan; ever rankled in Jijabai’s heart. The examples of Harihar and Bukka, of personal valour joined to the spiritual power of Shankaracharya were cited to the young Shivaji by way of providing inspiration. The small jagir was the place where all kinds of experiments could be quickly tried out in the art of government under meticulous training of Shivaji’s guardian Dadaji Kondadev and valuable experience gained which could later be utilised on a wider scale. Soon, Shivaji started dreaming of a new Swarajya outside the original jagir but based upon it.

From this humble beginning rose the Maratha hurricane that not only caused the Muslims to eventually sue for peace and thereby bring the centuries old Hindu-Muslim war to its conclusion but also laid the foundation of a secular democratic Bharat, delayed by the British, well up to the middle of the twentieth century.

Shivaji’s small jagir was surrounded at first by three powerful Muslim states of Bijapur, Ahmednagar and Golkonda besides the Subhas of the Moghul emperor, each maintaining a hundred thousand troops. There were besides these Siddis, the French, the English, the Dutch several small kings and local chieftains, each a power in his own right. All these he encompassed with the extraordinary power of his own ingenuity *without expecting anyone to provide him with a level playing field.* He overcame every enemy, some he

openly attacked, some he compelled to accept a fight at a place of his choosing, some he surprised by means of ingenious contrivance, others he weakened by involving them in mutual dissension, sometimes secretly fermenting troubles; others he confounded by sudden raids upon their camps and habitations. Some he won over through tempting offers, some he boldly went over to visit personally. With him, gone was the trusting naiveté of the Rajput kings. Here was a Hindu king who could not only match the Muslims but also teach them new tricks of Realpolitik. The battle of Haldighati no doubt inspired him but also taught him a few lessons. The principal being the folly of taking head on the might of the imperial army. Thus was born the famed Guerrilla technique for which the slow lumbering imperial armies had no answer. Shrewdly he realised that the short stature of the Maratha people put them at a disadvantage against the well built Pathans and therefore equipped them with the long lances. Wiry Marathas mounted on ponies armed with long lances became scourges of the Muslim armies with their rapid mobility. They attacked at will to suddenly disappear in the mountains if the enemy appeared too strong, leaving him bewildered and helpless against a foe as elusive as the wind.

The most brilliant of his achievements was not the extent of the area he controlled but the national spirit that he awakened in his people, the wielding together of the Maratha race scattered like atoms through many Deccani kingdoms in the teeth of opposition from the Muslim powers. By the time he died in 1680, he had invigorated the Hindus particularly the Marathas in a manner that had no parallel in history and had established the first independent Hindu Kingdom since the fall of the Vijaynagar empire a hundred years back. His avowed goal was to uphold the cause of Hindu religion and fight the Muslim tyranny without causing injury to their religious sentiments in any manner. The avoidance of wanton cruelty and dishonour to the women of the enemy, which was practice of the day were other notable features of his rein. The crowning glory was the administrative welfare that won the gratitude of his citizens that has not dimmed to this day. This is clear from the very fact that the present government in Maharashtra, three hundred years after his death, is proud to characterize its rule as Shiv Shahi or the rule conforming to the ideals of Shivaji.

The well-known story bears repetition, if only for the lessons that it continues to offer in formulation of strategy and its successful execution.

In 1640, Shivaji paid a visit to his father at Bangalore, where he wandered among the ruins of the Vijaynagar Empire that were strewn around in the countryside. The two-year stay only served to fire Shivaji with the inspirational tales of Hindu valour; then barely a hundred years old. He soon became obsessed with zeal to fight tyranny of the Muslim rule which was so much in evidence after the accession of the new Sultan on the Bijapur throne in 1626. It soon became evident that the father and the son had different goals in life. Shahaji had become cynical with the failure of his attempt to prop up Ahmednagar kingdom while the young Shivaji had dreams of independence from the Muslim yoke. By 1643, Shivaji was back in Pune after paying a visit to the Bijapur Durbar. Once in his jagir again, he employed his persuasive tongue to gather like-minded followers from all strata of the society. The prestigious fort of Sinhadgad was captured in 1644. From

Sinhagad to coronation in Raigarh in 1674, the thirty-year period can be very conveniently broken in three decades.

The first decade saw setting up of a small compact independent kingdom being carved out of the territories of the Bijapur rule; starting in 1645 with Shivaji and his followers taking a solemn oath to set up Swaraj at Rareshwar. The sanctity of the oath was to be preserved by the then ragtag army through out many vicissitudes of fortunes in the decades that followed. “Soon after return from Bangalore, the twelve valleys of Mavals were captured” records a cryptic comment in a Persian Firman.” Shahaji fell out of favour of the Bijapur court in 1644 on suspicion of helping Hindu kings in the South, leading to his arrest in 1648. It was the surrender of the prized possession of Sinhagad by Shivaji that led to Shahaji being freed. Nevertheless, by 1653 independent existence of Shivaji’s kingdom had won support of the people due to its administrative efficiency and the stark contrast it presented to confusion and disorder in the neighbouring states; becoming an eyesore to the Muslim powers.

The second decade of his struggle saw him convert into a full- fledged hero. First few years of the decade were spent in subduing the Maratha chieftains, who tried to block his way. Morays of the neighbouring Javli were dealt with in a deceitful manner for which “the history will certainly pronounce an adverse judgment upon Shivaji” writes Sardesai. As Chankya knew very well, art of the statecraft is not for the weak hearted. What distinguishes a Good ruler from an Evil is the goal for which a particular action is taken, not its absolute morality or otherwise. It is pathetically amusing to see Indian writers accusing British of immorality in their conduct with Indian princes during eighteenth and the nineteenth century. In righteous indignation, they charge the British with committing fraud to secure Indian Empire. Little do they realise, it could not be otherwise. Moreover, however evil it may have been for Bharat, British rule over this country was immensely beneficial to their nation. Thus every lie, every deceit that the individual British officer indulged in, was morally sound from British national view point.

We have already seen the real motives behind the battle of Plassey. Nor was it an isolated incident at the very beginning of the British power. Take for instance, the way the province of Sindh was annexed by the British in 1838.. This is what Spear has to say on the episode in “The Oxford History of Modern India 1740-1975”. He writes “The whole Sind incident is one of the least creditable episodes in British history during the nineteenth century. There was unblushing violation of the 1832 treaty; there were the dictated terms .. under a naked show of force. In more recent times these actions would have been labeled as ‘Fascist’..” Sir Charles Napier .. at least had the honesty to avow it. ‘We have no right to seize Sind, he wrote in his diary, ‘yet we shall do so and a very advantageous, useful, humane piece of rascality it will be’. With all this plain evidence, Spear goes on to argue “..an appreciation of this public injustice should not blind us to the larger issues. Sind, like rest of India was fated by the current of the time to come under the transforming influence of the west. *Sind could not for ever remain isolated from the world, and that it was not in her own best interests that she should do so.*” *Need one say more!!*

The biggest folly of the Gandhi led Congress freedom struggle, was its insistence on fighting the empire founded on complete immorality, from Bharatiya viewpoint, on moral grounds of non-violence alone to the exclusion of all other means. Thus every revolutionary fighting for the cause of Independence, whether it was Savarkar, Bhagat Singh or Subhas Chandra Bose became a pariah for it. Nehru has squarely laid the entire blame for the millions of the famine deaths in Bengal during 1943-44 on the British misrule. Yet, not for a moment did he stop to consider the impact of excluding revolutionary activities and depending only on the non violent methods to get independence; thereby prolonging British rule to this period and thus contributing to these deaths !!

More of it later. For the time being let us get back to the second decade of Shivaji's struggle, who had a noble dream to realise. He could not have allowed himself to be encumbered by Gandhian sense of morality, had it been prevalent then; thereby run the risk of foiling his mission.

In 1656, the ruling Sultan of Bijapur died. Aurangzeb, who was serving his second tenure (1653-1658) as the Moghul Subhedar of Deccan, launched an attack on the decaying Kingdom. Shivaji joined hands with him and seized the chance to enlarge his territories. It is during this conquest, a unique aspect of his personality came to light. His captains had captured Kalyan from Muslim Bijapur chieftain and in the process his beautiful Daughter in Law became Maratha captive. She was sent as a war trophy to Shivaji following the practice of the times. Shivaji rebuked his people and set her free with honour. An incident that fills the Marathas with pride even today. By 1657, his activities had begun to seriously alarm the Portuguese. Now, Shivaji became bold to attack even the Moghul territories arousing the wrath of Aurangzeb. This forced Shivaji to offer profuse apologies, which did not deceive Aurangzeb. The ill health of his father, Shah Jahan forced him to return to Delhi to grab power. 'The mountain rat' as he called Shivaji was to be dealt with on another day. For the time being, other Deccan Muslim rulers could take care of this Hindu menace. So before departing for the north, Aurangzeb issued a stern warning to the Bijapur government to restrain Shivaji with all their might. It appears that the shrewd Aurangzeb had a better measure of the nature of challenge that Shivaji posed to the Muslim rule than anyone else. In Delhi, Aurangzeb duly followed the time honoured Moghul practice of murdering his brothers and grabbing the power without even waiting for Shah Jahan to die. The deposed Emperor was put in the prison at Agra to die in misery eight years later.

Meanwhile, Bijapur hardly needed the Moghul prompting. Shivaji's gains had come at their direct cost. Shahaji, who continued in their service disowned the rebellious activities of his son. The reputation that Shivaji now commanded in Deccan made Bijapur Nobles wary of taking him on. In this hour of the crisis rose Afzal Khan, who swore upon Allah to bring the infidel bound in chains to the Bijapur court. He started on his mission in September 1659 with a select army of 12,000. His march to the newly founded Maratha Kingdom was full of atrocities against the Hindus as he stopped to demolish the famous temples of Tulzapur and Pandharpur. Shivaji's military might was too meagre to take on this Muslim challenge. Wisely he stayed put at an inaccessible fort at Pratapgarrh, near the

present day hill resort of Mahabaleshwar. The wily Maratha then lured the mighty Pathan to his grave. Giving an appearance of being scared of the Bijapur army, he asked for a personal meeting to clear the misunderstanding. As the unsuspecting Pathan embraced the Maratha, he found his guts torn out by the sharp weapons worn by Shivaji on his fingers. This was a preplanned cold-blooded murder during what was supposed to be a friendly meeting. Later day Maratha writers accuse Afzal Khan of taking out a dagger to stab Shivaji in the back, even as he hugged him. This is unlikely and even if true there is no way that Shivaji, having no eyes in the back, could have known of the Khan's actions. On the other hand Shivaji's very action in wearing the weapons on fingers, well in advance of the meeting show his unfriendly intentions.

Shivaji's actions need no justification. In war there is no room for foolish morality as Prithvi Raj Chauhan had learnt at the cost of his nation. Individual sense of morality cannot be allowed to take precedence over the national interests. To do so is egoism of the worst kind.

Today, visit of any Maratha family to the hill station of Mahabaleshwar, some 200 kms away from Mumbai, is not complete without a visit to this site of the famed Shivaji and Afzal Khan meet. The grave of the late Khan is preserved in splendor. One cannot help, but feel pity for the gory end that this undoubtedly brave soldier met. This sense of pity would seem out of place to the descendants of Kasturirang Nayak, who was similarly put to death in cold blood by the Afzal Khan in 1638. In Shivaji, he had only met his match.

With the death of Afzal Khan on 10th November 1659, the Bijapur army was routed and the victorious Maratha army reached fort of Panhala, in eyesight of the Bijapur capital. It soon became evident that Shivaji had underestimated the power of Bijapur to retaliate. He soon found himself trapped at Panhala, to which new general of Bijapur Siddi Jauhar laid siege. While the Maratha King was virtually under arrest at this fort, a serious danger arose from North in the form of Shaista Khan, the new Deccan Subhedar dispatched by Aurangzeb to smash the rising Hindu power. The genius of Shivaji was severely taxed but not found wanting. He sought to befriend Shaista Khan while seeking to escape from his imprisonment at Panhala. The memory of his trickery with Afzal Khan was too fresh in every one's mind for him to succeed easily.

Days passed by, monsoon started but Siddi Jauhar would not relax his vigil. The night of 13th July 1660 saw Shivaji make a desperate dash for freedom under the cover of heavy rains. Bijapur troops followed in hot pursuit. All seemed lost. The day was saved by loyal companion of Shivaji, Baji Prabhu Deshpande, who blocked the Bijapur troops laying down his life for the sake of his master. Were it not for his sacrifice, imprisonment of Shivaji, the dream of Afzal Khan, would have been posthumously successful. The nearby fort, which was more inaccessible provided safe refuge. Danger to the Kingdom was far from over. As a true statesman, Shivaji eschewed his pride and made peace with Bijapur by giving up the Panhala fort on 22nd September 1660. The Moghuls under Shaista Khan presented the more serious danger.

Try as he might, the Moghuls were far too powerful to be dislodged, leaving Shivaji nonplussed. The Khan occupied Shivaji's palace in Pune and from this secure base, slowly but surely, wove his coil around Shivaji's Swaraj; completely overrunning it. The Marathas could only watch helplessly from their impregnable forts. It was as if the Marathas were a beast of prey who were to be beaten out of their hidings by the Moghul hunters.

Once more, Shivaji resorted to something his enemies could not even dream of. On 5th April 1663, Shaista Khan was to be a personal victim of the Maratha retribution. They descended from their forts, under the leadership of their King himself, posing as Moghul soldiers made entry into house of the Khan under the cover of darkness. Once inside they massacred everything that moved. In ensuing confusion the raiders safely reached home leaving behind a badly shaken Khan, who had saved his head but lost a few fingers. The raid was not material in military terms but the psychological impact was overwhelming. The Moghuls now lived in perpetual dread of the Marathas. The hunter had become the hunted. The Khan who lost his face was transferred to Bengal by a furious Emperor.

Shaista Khan's aggression had cost the Maratha Kingdom dearly. The loss of revenue had to be made up. The prosperous Moghul city of Surat beckoned Shivaji. His spies came back with the news that though the local Governor drew cash allowance for maintaining troops, it went to his pocket. The city was defenseless. In January 1664, Shivaji made daring raid to this city and came back with much needed revenue for his administration.

Thus at the end of the second decade of Shivaji's struggle, his fame had spread through out the land. The small jagirdar of Pune had become a power for the mighty Moghul Empire to take serious note of.

The third decade started on an ominous note. With the Surat raid, Marathas now invited the full wrath of the Emperor, already smarting under the humiliation that Shaista Khan was made to suffer. On 30th September 1664, Jay Singh received formal orders for crushing the Deccan rebel. By 3rd March 1665, Jay Singh had made camp in Pune, the city which had seen the scene of Shaista Khan's narrow escape from death, a year back. Within the next three months, the Rajput warrior brought Shivaji to his knees and forced him to sign a humiliating treaty at Purendar by which he agreed to be a vassal of the Moghul Emperor giving up all claims to independence.

Meanwhile, the deposed Emperor Shah Jahan died in confinement at Agra on 22nd January 1666. Aurangzeb could now sit on the famous Peacock throne at Agra without any hindrance. A grand celebration was planned in May 1666. Shivaji was summoned to see the Emperor and kneel before him in a mark of his respect as any other vassal. Left with no other choice and bound by the treaty of Purendar, Shivaji left for Agra on the 3rd March 1666 under the protection of Jay Singh's oath to safeguard his life at any cost. With this visit, his aura reached a new high. Shivaji came face to face with the Emperor for the first and last time on 12th May 1666. Taking slight at a protocol lapse in the Imperial Durbar, he left it in a rude manner. The snub was far too grave to be ignored by the Emperor who had to confine him. The problem of dealing with this insolent Maratha

became a vexed issue. He could not be set free without damaging the imperial prestige which was seriously wounded after the snub delivered by the rude Maratha in the open court. On the other hand, he could not be put to death without antagonizing the powerful Rajput kings. The emotions of the Rajputs could not alone have accounted for the leniency of the Emperor. We all know that the Rajput devotion to the Kashi and Mathura temples did not prevent Aurangzeb from defiling them only three years later. It probably had also much to do with the soft corner Aurangzeb's own daughter Begum Zinat-un-Nisa, then 23 years old, appeared to have developed for this dashing Maratha. No trace of this romance could possibly survive in the Moghul records for reasons that are self-evident. It can only be gleaned from the tender care that this lady, who never married, later bestowed upon Shivaji's grandson, who remained a captive in the camp of Aurangzeb for about twenty years. At any rate Shivaji's ingenuity came to his as well as the Emperor's rescue. On August 17, 1666; the Moghul guards were horrified to find no trace of the dreaded Maratha. The Eagle had flown away.

The murder of Afzal Khan, the plunder of Surat, the attack on Shaista Khan and now disappearance from clutches of the Emperor himself; in the folklore Shivaji now assumed supernatural powers. The humiliation of Purender was now behind him like a bad dream. The demands of Realpolitik made Shivaji give an outward appearance of adhering to the treaty. The reality was well known to both Aurangzeb as well as Shivaji himself. In Deccan, the Maratha power was unstoppable. By 1668, the Kingdoms of Bijapur and Golkonda had conceded the Maratha demand of surrendering 25% of their state revenue as a tribute. The defeat of the Vijaynagar empire was avenged a century later.

It is well known that a flame flares as it approaches its end. The centuries old Hindu - Muslim war now entered its final stage of decisive struggle. On 9th April 1669, Aurangzeb gave up tolerant policy of the Moghul rulers, since the later days of Akbar reign. He issued orders to demolish all the schools and temples of the infidels and put down their religious teachings and practices. In its first demonstration, the Kashivishveshwar temple was demolished on 4th September 1669. The Keshorai temples at Mathura suffered a similar fate. The much hated Jizia tax was imposed, Hindus were systematically excluded from public offices, Hindu festivals of Holi and Diwali were ruthlessly suppressed. A Director General was placed over a large number of officers employed in this grand task. The Emperor himself called for periodic reports of the results achieved. Nor was this fanaticism a sudden development. As early as 1644, in his first tenure as the Deccan Subhedar, Aurangzeb had desecrated the temple of Chintamani at Ahmadabad by slaughtering a cow and turning it into a mosque.

Shivaji rose to the challenge and fired the opening salvo by retaking the fort of Sinhagad on February 4, 1670. Tanaji Malsure, a childhood follower of Shivaji laid down his life in the attempt. The ability of Shivaji to inspire such dedication for the national cause from ordinary people can only fill us with wonder. Within a year, the losses sustained at Purender were made good. Surat called Shivaji once again to provide him with the Moghul treasure. Marathas routed the Moghul army in 1672 sent by the Emperor to retain Deccan. Panhala surrendered in 1660, was retaken in 1673. Swaraj had taken firm roots.

It must be said that Shivaji himself was sometimes unaware of the devotion he inspired amongst his followers. On 15th April 1673, his General Pratap Rao Gujar decimated the forces of Bahlol Khan, a Bijapur captain but allowed him to return unmolested on the strength of his oaths. When the same Khan started creating fresh trouble for the Marathas against his solemn promises, Shivaji rebuked Pratap Rao, who felt deeply insulted by this reprimand. He swore never to show his face to his master without humbling the treacherous Khan. With this burning determination, he pursued Bahlol Khan. At long last on 24th February 1674, the Khan was sighted. The brave Maratha was eager to avenge his insult. In reckless disregard to the consequences, he galloped on to behead the Khan, whose army ran in thousands. The forces at the command of our hero at this time, whose own army was on its way, were all of seven people. The result was entirely predictable. Not one of them survived. Not one of them wished to survive as they repeatedly ignored the offers of the astounded enemy to stop fighting and accept offices in their army. No wonder that saga of the Gujar bravery continues to be sung in Maharashtra to this day.

The three decades of the struggle for independent existence was crowned by formal coronation of 5th June 1674. It was not to satisfy Shivaji's ego but was the proclamation of Hindu resolve to answer the Muslim tyranny, so that the sacrifices of Baji Prabhu Despande, Tanaji Malsure, Pratap Rao Gujar and many others would not be in vain.

From now on till his death six years later, Shivaji enjoyed unquestioned dominance in the affairs of the South, taking full advantage of the Emperor's involvement in North West Frontier province, where the Pathans had risen in revolt. The states of Golkonda and Bijapur, paying him tribute since 1668, now wished to join forces with him to oppose the Moghul invasion that seemed imminent after the settlement of the northern border. At the peak of his prowess, Shivaji was now troubled by the affairs of his own family. Within days of coronation Jijabai passed away, no doubt deeply contented at her son's outstanding achievements. With her guiding hand away, the field was open for his queen to plot against the crown prince, her stepson, Sambhaji. The prince did no credit to himself. He even rebelled and joined the Moghuls. Though he was weaned away from the Moghuls, he created more trouble by casting evil eye on women. He had to be confined at Panhala.

The end of Shivaji came rather unexpectedly on 3rd April 1680. Three hundred years later, one can only marvel at the range of his accomplishments. The Swaraj that he established had administration that would cause envy in many of our present day states. He was truly secular. Intensely proud of his religion for which he was prepared to lay down his life but showed no disrespect to any other religions. A leader, who inspired a devotion that he himself found difficult to fathom. A ruler, who smashed the traditions of the day in respect of wanton cruelty and use of enemy women as war spoils. In one respect he failed and thereby sowed the seeds of destruction of his achievements at the hands of British about 125 years later. Like all people of his day, he believed in the principle of hereditary succession. He could not dream of looking beyond his family to rule the Swaraj that was won at great cost. This as we shall see later proved to be the weak link, which led to the loss of national independence.

On the whole, Shivaji's historical role in ending the Hindu-Muslim war is easily discernible from the story narrated above. In his own lifetime, he had caused Southern Muslims to sue for peace. The war in North however continued unabated. This unfinished task was left for his successors to achieve. That is the true measure of his greatness.

To hold forth an ideal for which people are inspired to lay down their lives, generations later.

Chapter I-7

Aurangzeb's Waterloo - The Deccan 1681-1707

No sooner had the Emperor settled the northern front, than the Rajputs rose in rebellion. Akbar, the most dearly loved son of Aurangzeb was sent to crush the revolt. The result was startling. The valiant Rathod leader Durga Das was able to persuade the Shahzada on the righteousness of their cause leading him to raise the banner of revolt. This was however put down with a heavy hand forcing Akbar and Durga Das to flee to the South where Sambhaji, Shivaji's son had risen to power after considerable bloodshed in the succession struggle.

In June 1681, Aurangzeb who was then at Ajmer learnt that the rebel prince had sought shelter at the Maratha Infidel's court. At this his anger knew no bounds. He had long dreamt of subjugating South in the manner of Alauddin Khilji. With the flight of Akbar, this dream assumed urgency. He left for the Deccan and crossing Narmada reached Burhanpur on 13th November 1681 carrying with him, his entire family and best provisions in equipment and finances, blissfully unaware that he was not destined to see the North ever again.

Akbar and Sambhaji made many grand plans of deposing Aurangzeb and establishing a genuine Bharatiya empire. The Hindu-Muslim war had never before witnessed anything like this. But the young men sadly lacked Shivaji's genius for execution, thus prolonging the war for another quarter century. For more than a year after he arrived in Deccan, the Emperor achieved nothing in spite of his immense resources. With the rebellion of Akbar, his very faith in his own family was shaken and he did not know whom to trust or where he would be safe. The initial resistance of the Marathas was so strong that the Moghuls decided to direct their attention to subjugation of Bijapur and Golkonda, who being Shias in faith aroused the wrath of the Sunni Emperor. By 1687, this was accomplished leading Akbar to become disenchanted with the Maratha support, which seemed incapable of putting him on the Delhi throne. He left for Iran in 1687 and died a fugitive in exile around 1704. Durga Das left for Jodhpur, still having Akbar's children with him and finally gave in to the Emperor in 1696 after a long struggle.

The Moghul army that Sambhaji was confronted with; was the like of which even the great Shivaji had never faced in his lifetime. His valour was never in doubt but he lacked Shivaji's capacity to inspire ordinary people to great heights. Moreover his bloody rise to power had dismayed Shivaji's loyal allies. Soon, he came to be deserted by most of his followers and was surrounded by swarms of Moghul parties occupying passes and stopping communications. With this his eventual capture on 1st February 1689 was long expected. It is only in captivity that he led a life that inspired his people.

The atrocities that the Moghuls made him suffer were savage even by the medieval standards. The captive Maratha king was made a mark of public ridicule, dressed as a buffoon, mounted on camels and put on display as if he was a wild beast. Once safely in a

cell, he received an offer to save his life. All he had to do was to convert to Islam and disclose all the state secrets. It is said that even the hand of the Emperor's daughter, Zeb-un-Nisa, Begum Zinat-un-Nisa's younger sister was offered to him as an inducement for conversion. It appears that Zeb-un-Nisa like her elder sister had developed tender feelings of love for the hapless Maratha King. Once again, as in Agra before, the love story was not to bloom on the dreary desert of the Moghul canvass. This daughter of Aurangzeb too was destined to die unmarried; for nothing would persuade Sambhaji to change his faith. That he would be put to death was known but the wanton cruelty that was perpetuated horrified people. Sambhaji was blinded and later hacked in pieces to serve as food for the wild dogs. The severed head was filled with straw and exhibited to people. Within a few months, the wife and the minor child of Sambhaji, Shahu were also captured. The only other surviving son of Shivaji, Rajaram fled to Jinji in deep South.

The whole Southern country from Narmada to Tungbhadra lay at the feet of the Emperor. Now he was at the zenith of his power, the lord paramount of the whole of India -from Kabul to Chittagong and Kashmir to Kavrei, a feat unrivaled by any other Moghul Emperor. The empire now consisted of 21 provinces or Subhas, of which one was in Kabul, six in the Deccan and fourteen in the North. The northern provinces were Lahore, Multan, Sind, Kashmir, Ajmer, Agra, Delhi, Allahabad, Avadh, Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Malwa and Gujarat. The southern provinces were Berar, Khandesh, Aurangabad, Bidar, Telingana, Bijapur and Hydrabad.

The total land revenue alone of the empire was about Rs 330 million, more than double as compared to the times of Akbar and about ten times the total income of contemporary Great Britain. It was time for him to go home.

By 1690, it appeared as if the life time struggle of Shivaji was in vain. When all seemed lost, rose the Marathas as never before. The fearless manner in which Sambhaji met his death had united and steeled the hearts of the Maratha nation as nothing else would have done and nerved them to avenge the death of their sovereign; thereby putting paid to any plans of the Emperor to leave the Deccan.

At the head of the Maratha nation, which now existed only as an idea, was Rajaram. Resourceless and penniless, held under an eight-year siege at Jinji, his person continued to inspire his scattered armies. Aurangzeb was now confronted by a people's war. He could not end it, because there was no Maratha government or state army to attack and destroy. The initiative belonged entirely to the Marathas. Animated by a desire to avenge their wrongs, the Maratha bands spread over vast territories devastating Moghul stations, destroying their armies, exacting tribute, plundering Moghul treasures, animals and stocks of camp equipment. The Emperor soon found himself unable to cope with these methods. It was as if he had disturbed the comb of honeybees. The angry bees were attacking him from all the sides and the best he could do was to try protect himself from their angry sting. He could fight any large army in the field but guerrilla tactics, of stealth secret attacks from inaccessible places and at awkward unsuspected hours, proved too much even for his vast and splendid resources. The Marathas were inured to all kinds of hardships. They could feed upon the simplest food, stand inclement weather and

proved veritable ghosts to the average Moghul fighter. In a one particularly daring guerrilla raid, the Marathas attacked his personal camp and carried away the large gold pinnacles at the top. The huge cloth edifice came crashing down killing the inmates. Only providence saved the Emperor, who was not present in the camp then. Hardships of the Moghul troops went on increasing. They had to trudge through knee deep mud and ravaging streams, dragging heavy guns, baggage and ammunition to hills and ramparts, thousands feet high, not for one or two years but continuously for a quarter of century against an enemy who refused to cow down.

What was the driving force behind this epic struggle? Sardesai has proved on the strength of many contemporary documents “ which set down the Maratha aims as a crusade of a religious character and of abnormal magnitude ..the aims included even the conquest of Delhi, so as to make the whole sub continent safe for the Hindu religion and no more destruction of temples and idols was to be tolerated.” Even while Aurangzeb kept on pressing war in the name of his religion, he had the mortification of seeing a few Muslim Chiefs make common cause with the Marathas under the belief that they were being persecuted without reason. “Elusive as the wind, the ally and rallying point of all the enemies of the Delhi Empire” was the way Marathas now came to be described.

The actors on the Maratha stage went on changing. Sanatji Ghorpade, the man responsible for the raid on the Emperor’s camp fell out of favour and was murdered by his own people. Rajaram escaped from Jinji to set up a base in Satara but soon died in 1700. The fight did not dim in vigour. His wife Tarabai took up the mantle and carried on the fight relentlessly.

The Emperor now seized fort after fort of the Marathas in person, as he no longer trusted his own officers; only to find that what he gained was lost the moment his back was turned and the war protracted interminably. The endless war in the Deccan exhausted his treasury; the government turned bankrupt, the soldiers starving from arrears of pay mutinied; and during the closing years of his reign, the revenue of Bengal, regularly sent by the able Diwan Mushid Quli Khan was the sole support of the Emperor’s household and its arrival was eagerly looked forward to.

The Marathas now took their activities beyond Deccan into Central India in the provinces of Malwa and Berar. Gujarat also fell into their orbit. By May 1706, they became bold enough to attack the Emperor ‘s own camp at Ahmednagar and could be repulsed only with great difficulty. The last few months of his life witnessed the final break down. The Emperor had no money. His own wives and daughters came to the point of starvation. They all piteously pleaded for return to Agra but the Emperor would not yield. Finally, he came around to acknowledging his failure. He wrote to his son “ I came alone and am going alone. I have not done well to the country and the people and of future there is no hope”. Worn out in mind and body by the heavy burden of failure in his divine mission of Hindu subjugation, the Emperor died a lonely death on 3rd March 1707.

With this, the Hindu-Muslim war, that had started since the defeat of Prithvi Raj Chauhan, came to an end. Never again would a Muslim ruler be in such a position of power as to even dream of wiping Hindus from the face of the country. Never again would the Muslims dare forget the lessons of Aurangzeb's failure. The fury of Hindus led by the Marathas in the Deccan and the Rajputs in North, had forever, changed the course of the Bharatiya history.

There is a reference made to the soft corner that Aurangzeb's daughters seem to have had for Shivaji and later his son. Zinat-un-Nisa, 13 years younger to Shivaji is said to have pleaded for Shivaji's life to be saved during his visit to Agra in 1666. The lady at this time was about 23 years old and unmarried. Thus conjectures of her feelings of love cannot be dismissed out of hand. The Rajput oath to protect Shivaji possibly played some role in saving Shivaji's life but an Emperor, who did not fight shy of demolishing the temples sacred to the Rajputs only three years later; could hardly have been deterred by their oath to protect a person. Only someone like Zinat-un-Nisa, who was very close to Aurangzeb's heart could have stayed his hand. Some two decades later, the story seems to have been repeated during the capture of Sambhaji. It is hardly likely that Sambhaji would have asked for the hand of Zinat-un-Nisa, then an old lady of forty six. More likely is the possibility of her younger sister Zeb-un-Nisa, being smitten by love for the dashing thirty year old Maratha King. She could well have been more vocal than her elder sister, enraging the Emperor and accounting for the cruel manner of Sambhaji's death when he refused to embrace Islam. The senseless cruelty smacks of a personal vendetta and not the reasoned act of an Emperor. After all nothing could have been more unedifying to the Emperor than the spectacle of his own daughter wanting to marry an unrepentant Infidel. No wonder this lady was kept in confinement at Delhi, to die unmarried.

Did this romance really happen ? It will always remain a mystery, for no one in the court of Aurangzeb during those times would have dared to allow even a hint of this to appear on the records. Credence to this possibility arises from the way Shahu and his mother were treated during their long confinement stretching over decades. Is it not a wonder that while Aurangzeb put Sambhaji to a cruel death, the Moghuls took great care of the infidel's son and wife. It could not be that the Emperor was afraid of the Maratha wrath. Shahu was captured in 1690, when the Deccan campaign seemed almost at end. Its ultimate disaster was years away. They had to have a guardian angel within the Emperor's own camp. As Sardesai says "whatever the wishes or command of the Emperor might be, their immediate execution in the camp was in the hands of the Begum". Undoubtedly, it was Zinat-un-Nisa who made sure that Shahu and his mother were accommodated near her own quarter where she could save them from harm. By 1703, the failure of the Deccan campaign was evident. The power of Marathas had grown tremendously since 1690. This did not deter Aurangzeb from ordering that Shahu and his mother should be converted to Islam, whereupon they began a fast. The Begum Zinat-un-Nisa intervened and proposed an ingenious solution. Shahu and his mother could avoid the conversion if two Hindus offered themselves for conversion in their place.

It is too much to accept that the care and protection that the Begum lavished on the two unfortunate prisoners was simply the sympathy she felt for another human being. The reason had to be personal; coming from the heart. The story of the romance of Zinat-un-Nisa and her sister Zeb-un-Nisa must then rank as a love story at par with that of Romeo-Juliet or Hir-Ranjha.

The Hindu-Muslim war that started with the invasion of Shabab-ud-din Ghauri was put to an end by the sword forged by Shivaji. What began with Sayogita ended with Zinat-un-Nisa and her sister. What a shame that all these ladies died an unhappy death.

Chapter I-8

The Hindu - Muslim Synthesis

1707 - 1803

The Role of Marathas

Aurangzeb died a lonely death in 1707 – far away from his Imperial Capital, Delhi. Soon after his death, a chain of events was unleashed starting with the release of Shahu. However, before we start studying these events, we need to put to rest the nagging doubt that some of us may have at this point. Is it really worth spending time to understand these far away events ? For those of my friends, who have this doubt, I would invite them to learn from the British, the importance of honouring our past. Let us jump to 14th August 1947, the eve of British hand over of power to the Indians and move to Lucknow. Lapierre and Collins have recorded a fascinating event in the ‘Freedom at Midnight’ which brings out the meticulous manner in which the British went about protecting their interests before handing over power to the Indians. Only when we truly understand the significance of this event, would we understand how important it is to keep historical events alive in the national psyche.

“14th August 1947, Lucknow

Halfway across the sub-continent in the tower that was the repository of the raj’s most sacred memories, another informal ceremony was taking place. The Tower of the Residency. Lucknow, was the only spot in the British Empire where the Union Jack was never lowered. The tower’s shell scarred walls had been left unchanged since the day in 1857 when the 1000 survivors in the Residency greeted the column that had ended their 87 days siege. The tower had become the shrine of Imperial India, a symbol of that doughty British ability to hold fast in the adversity and some cynics claimed, of the arrogance that got them there in the first place.

At 10.00 p.m. on the evening of 14 August, the tower’s caretaker, Warrant Officer J.R. Ireland, had hauled that Union Jack for the last time. Now a team of sappers stood on the floor of the tower where ‘over the topmost roof our banner of England flew’. One of them took an axe and swiftly chopped the empty metal Flagstaff from its base. Another hacked the base out of its masonry foundations. The hole was carefully cemented over. No other nation’s flag was ever going to fly from Lucknow’s sacred staff”.

Of the many things that we need to learn from the British is the importance of understanding history in a manner that is consistent with our national interests.

Compare the length to which they went to keep their memories alive so as to inspire their future generations, to our apathy to one of the most important periods of our history, that of the eighteenth century. Try telling any Indian:

“After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, complete lawlessness and anarchy prevailed due to endless war that raged in the country till the British restored peace in 1818. The roots of our present poverty lie in the chaos that were let loose in this period”.

Chances are most will agree, some no doubt sadly but would still nod their head in agreement. Very few realise that for all the chaos that was let loose in this period, by the end of the eighteenth century, **Bharat continued to be an economic superpower**.

To the vast majority of people with whom I discussed this, the notion came as a flight of fancy till they were confronted with some startling figures from Paul Kennedy’s “The Rise and fall of Great Powers”. It is all too clear that the so called Third World was in reality **The First World** till as late as 1830. Let me reproduce Kennedy’s evidence:

**Relative Shares of World Manufacturing Output
1750 – 1900**

	1750	1800	1830	1860	1880	1900
						Figs in %
Europe as whole	23.2	28.1	34.2	53.2	61.3	62.0
United Kingdom	1.9	4.3	9.5	19.9	22.9	18.5
Habsburg Empire	2.9	3.2	3.2	4.2	4.4	4.7
France	4.0	4.2	5.2	7.9	7.8	6.8
German States/ Germany	2.9	3.5	3.5	4.9	8.5	13.2
Italian States / Italy	2.4	2.5	2.3	2.5	2.5	2.5
Russia	5.0	5.6	5.6	7.0	7.6	8.8
United States	0.1	0.8	2.4	7.2	14.7	23.6
Japan	3.8	3.5	2.8	2.6	2.4	2.4
Third World	73.0	67.7	60.5	36.6	20.9	11.0
China	32.8	33.3	29.8	19.7	12.5	6.2
India/Pakistan	24.5	19.7	17.6	8.6	2.8	1.7

Let us therefore come to terms with the fact that the Religious War between Hindus and Muslims did not destroy the economic vitality of Bharat. For over one hundred years after Aurangzeb died in 1707, Indian Share in Manufactured goods was second only to China in the world. The economic ruin of the country started only in the Nineteenth century after British seized the reins of power.

The British like to boast that they united India and that they restored peace and order. This is one boast that the most ardent nationalists have swallowed, hook, line and sinker. The first claim that they united India is demonstrably false, as we have seen. That they restored peace and order is true. The more important issue is what use was this order if it gave rise to the kind of economic disaster that is so patently visible in the figures given above? **It was the peace of the graveyard that the British imposed on this country.**

Let us, however go back to the issue under discussion. The period of hundred years after the death of Aurangzeb. This period between 1707 to 1803 is a very fascinating part of our history. That the first marks the death of the last Moghul is well known. The second i.e. 1803 marks the time when the control of Delhi passed on to the British is known to historians alone. But even the conventional history does not teach that 16th September 1803, when Shah Alam, the nominal yet universally acknowledged Sovereign of the country accepted protection from the British is the date when India could, safely have been said to have lost its independence. Even more dismaying is the unawareness that this hundred-year period was the period of true synthesis between Hindus and Muslims. **It is time that we give this period the importance that is due to it.** It is with this view that we shall now look at this missing link in our national evolution.

With the death of Aurangzeb, decks were cleared for the dawn of a new era in the Hindu-Muslim relations. The change was not long in coming. The writers of Maratha history from the conventional viewpoint are baffled at the decision of Shahu after his release from the Moghul confinement to accept the Emperor as his sovereign and thus give up independence. That anyone should even consider that the Moghul Emperor represented Muslim domination over Hindus after the death of Aurangzeb, is to be woefully ignorant of the history. The despair that Aurangzeb was driven to in the Deccan campaign had made it clear to one and all that Hindus could no longer be persecuted. The spirit of Shivaji had propelled the Hindus led by Marathas to the position of co-equals of the Muslims in political power by the early eighteenth century. It is only when the two communities attained parity that the true process of Synthesis can really be said to have begun.

What began to happen in Bharat can be best described in the words of Paul Kennedy "The most significant feature ..was the maturing of a genuinely multipolar system..each one ..increasingly tended to make decisions about war and peace on the basis of 'national interests' rather than for..religious causes. This was not, to be sure, an instant or absolute change..religious prejudice still fueled many quarrels ..of the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, the chief characteristics (of fights based purely on religious prejudice) now disappeared, and was replaced by a much looser system of short term, shifting alliances..which had been foes in one war were often to find themselves partners in the next, which placed an emphasis upon calculated Realpolitik rather than deeply held religious conviction in the determination of policy...the fluctuations in both diplomacy and war that were natural to this volatile, multipolar system were complicated by something which was not new, but was common to all ages: the rise of certain states and the decline of others." Kennedy of course was not describing our conditions. He was

concerned solely with the affairs of Europe between 1660-1815 but he could well have also been writing about happenings of the same period in Bharat.

Religious wars were no monopoly of Bharat. The Muslim - Christian, the Catholic-Protestant wars in Europe were if anything more brutal than the Hindu-Muslim war in Bharat. Spain is a classic case. Converted almost entirely to Islam by force when the Muslims won, not a trace of the religion was allowed to remain when Catholics won in the fifteenth century.

The so-called period of anarchy in our country, the eighteenth century, had at no time more than six or seven real contenders for power. A number considerably smaller than in the continent of Western Europe over an area that is much smaller than that of Bharat. One which had never seen uninterrupted peace in its history. It is only after 1945 that warfare ended in Europe. Even this fragile peace has been under the shadow of nuclear weapons, which can obliterate human race at the press of a button. In sharp contrast to the so called developed world, all contenders for power in Bharat during the eighteenth century acknowledged a single sovereign, which never was, nor still is the case in Europe.

Yet, the Indians suffer from an acute sense of embarrassment about their own past to the point of disowning it all together.

Let us now get back to the national story as it unfolded in the eighteenth century. Shahu was released soon after Aurangzeb's death. Once again his guardian angel played a major role. Neither did Zinat-un-Nisa's role end here. For another ten years, she continued to look after Yasubai, Shahu's mother, who remained in Moghul confinement till 1719. This unlikely Moghul heroine for the Marathas ultimately died in 1721. She had not been able to marry the man she loved - Shivaji. But she had looked after his Daughter in Law and grandson as her own, saving them from the wrath of her hard hearted father, whose religious fervour had ruined her own life.

The story of the civil war that Shahu had to fight with the other contender for Maratha power, Tarabai, need not detain us in this narration. Suffice to say that both Shahu and Tarabai were in the race to gain Moghul recognition. This dramatic change in attitude of the very people who had humbled the might of the strongest Moghul Emperor cannot be understood, if one fails to realise that the religious war they had fought with Aurangzeb had ended with his death.

By March 1719, Shahu's Prime Minister, the Peshwa Balaji Vishwanath had obtained Imperial Sanads for his rule thus accepting the status of a nominal vassal. In granting legal sanction to his rule, the Emperor was merely recognising the ground realities in respect of the Maratha power. This soon became the norm for behavior in the eighteenth century. The issue of territorial control was settled only by the trial of force on the battlefield. The winner then sought to obtain legal sanction for his act from the Emperor. The winners without fail gave assurances of stationing troops for the use by Emperor and payment of a specified revenue to the royal treasure. The ever-weakening power of the

Emperor gave him little flexibility to ensure compliance for the conditions under which the Sanads were given. The Imperial treasury began to run dry of the revenues, which used to flow in from the provinces and the Moghul Empire started hollowing out. This in no way reduced the importance of the Imperial Sanads for a long time. As we have already seen, it took the British a period of fifty years after they gained complete control over the country, before they could muster enough courage, to consign the Moghul Emperor to the dustbin of history.

Back in 1719, the Moghul Empire was substantially intact. There were many practical benefits to be reaped from the grant of Sanads. As Sardesai noted “An orderly government ..came to be immediately organised in place of what was till then a casual operation based upon force. Divided loyalties were thenceforth removed and a legal status for all Maratha governmental measures established. Thus this ..enabled the Marathas to become masters of their home and obtain fresh facilities for expansion outside their base in the Deccan.” No doubt similar considerations made Clive obtain the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to the East India Company on 12th August 1765.

In 1724, the Nizam became the first Moghul Subhedar to break away and started managing the affairs of Hyderabad without reference to Delhi. The Marathas were summoned to help. Peshwa Baji Rao I, who was appointed to the post at a young age of 20 in 1720 after the death of his father Balaji Vishwanath, defeated the Nizam comprehensively at Palkhed in 1728 forcing him to accept the Marathas as his overlord. Numerous attempts made by the Nizam and his successors over next seventy years were not to change this status. The Marathas remained firmly in control. Yet they never resorted to finishing him off. He was never considered a mortal enemy but rather a troublesome but useful vassal. Victory at Palkhed gave Marathas, the domination over six southern Subhas of the Empire. Soon they extended this to Malwa, Gujarat, Orissa, Ajmer and Agra and Allahabad. Thus out of 21 Subhas controlled by Aurangzeb, around 12 fell in the Maratha orbit within thirty years of his death.

Their excursion in Allahabad was to result in another love story, authenticity of which is under no doubt. The Peshwa fell in love with a Muslim dancer, Mastani whose beauty was said to be beyond compare, much to the chagrin of the orthodox Brahmins. Soon she was accompanying him on the battle front. The Brahmin Peshwa turned a meat eater and openly drank wine in the company of his lovely mistress. Now the scandalised Brahmin guardians of morality, who did not lift a finger to oppose any social evil, decided that the actions of this brave Maratha were a menace to the Hindu religion and imposed a social boycott on him.

Meanwhile, the growing clout of the Marathas alarmed Moghul nobles. Nizam was called for help, who was once again roundly defeated in 1738 near Bhopal. With Nizam having proved to be unequal to the task, some jealous Delhi nobles went to the extent of calling in Nadir Shah for reducing Maratha influence in the imperial court. This invader had however his own agenda. He kept the Emperor in confinement and proclaimed himself the new Emperor on 7th March 1739. For next two months he perpetuated those atrocities upon the hapless populace of Delhi, which have not dimmed with passage of time in the

Bharatiya memories. As the news reached Shahu, he sent Baji Rao to rescue the Moghul Emperor. Nadir Shah was wise enough to retire to Kabul with enormous booty collected at Delhi without waiting to meet the advancing Marathas. The only lasting impact that the raid of Nadir Shah left on Bharat was the loss of Kabul.

The dice was now cast. The Afghan invaders could threaten Delhi as they had done on countless occasions in the past. Yet, they could not hope to depose the Emperor and take over the reins of power, as they had done so easily in the past.

Baji Rao came under incredible personal strain on account of conservative elements of the Brahmin community of Pune. They managed to get Mastani arrested through Baji Rao's own brother. What could be more galling to this man, whose very advance had compelled Nadir Shah to run away from Delhi, than the fact that his own heart throb be taken away from him in his own house by force. Quite rightly, Savarkar has come down heavily on the self imposed bans of the Hindu society, which managed to enshackle bravest of their brave while doing no damage whatsoever to their oppressors. The guilt for his death at a young age of forty on the banks of Narmada must squarely rest on those who snatched Mastani away from him. As soon as the news of his death reached Mastani in Pune, she died - of shock or by suicide, the historians know not. Her sons continued to serve the Marathas. Amongst the thousands who perished at Panipat while fighting for Marathas was Samsher Singh, the son of Baji Rao and Mastani.

The untimely death of Baji Rao was followed by that of his equally brave brother Chimaji Appa, who in death repented the crime he had committed against his brother, of depriving him of the love of his life; at the urging of the foolish Brahmins.

The command now passed on to his son the Peshwa Balaji Rao at the age of nineteen. He was to rule for twenty one years. Success after success was the fate of Marathas for the first twenty years. The Maratha influence now reached Bengal and Bihar, where Nawab Aliwardi was forced to pay tribute to them. The tentative hold over other Subhas was consolidated. Poor Aurangzeb must have, at this time been turning in his grave. His dreaded enemies, the Marathas now controlled almost two third of his possessions. The remaining parts Kashmir, Lahore, Multan, Delhi seemed to be in their reach. What would have sorely taxed the Zinda Pir, Living Saint as Aurangzeb was called, that despite this possession the Infidels showed no inclination to depose his descendants. On the other hand time and again they defended them at great cost. Truly this was a future which was beyond his comprehension. But surely even he would have applauded the Marathas at Panipat, where they staked the cream of their nation for sake of recovering for the empire, one province which was lost by his successors, that of Kabul.

Panipat, the very word brings forth visions of gloomy defeat and disaster. For the Marathas, even today it is synonymous with Waterloo - the site of unmitigated disaster. This is truly unfortunate. The third battle of Panipat was radically different from the first two. True, twice before in the history, the dusty plains of Panipat had changed destiny of the country. The first battle in 1526 had laid the foundation of the subsequent Moghul rule in India as Babar, the invader triumphed over Bharatiya coalition of Afghan and

Rajput forces. The second battle won by Akbar in 1556 consolidated Moghul rule in India. In both instances, the victor ascended the Delhi throne. The very objectives of the third battle of Panipat from a Bharatiya viewpoint were different. No longer were the national forces seeking to merely defend Delhi. The goal was now to reach Kabul, the lost province of the nation. On the other hand the invader Shah knew perfectly well that to aspire for the Delhi throne was out of question regardless of outcome of the battle. At best he would have to be content with addition of Lahore and Multan to the Afghan conquest of Kabul in 1740. For the invader this time, at stake was not the throne of Delhi but a small part of Bharat. It is in this regard that the third battle of Panipat was radically different from the first two. But contrary to all expectations, this battle, as we shall later see, was to produce a startlingly different outcome that was beyond comprehension of both the antagonists

We have moved a little to fast. Let us get back to the decade of the forties in the eighteenth century. The year 1748 witnessed momentous changes in Bharatiya politics. Emperor Muhammad Shah died on the 25th April after a reign of nearly thirty years. A period which did see the decline of the Empire's influence but it still retained an imposing if increasingly hollow facade. Lest one underestimate the power of this facade, one would do well to recall the fate of Ahmad Shah Abdali, a rising Pathan sovereign who appeared as the successor of Nadir Shah but found his ambitions of attacking Delhi dashed to the ground with a defeat by Moghul army at Sirhind. This was to be the last victory of any note for the Moghul imperial army. The Moghul might which had overran Bharat in 1526 had now expended itself. The centralised power at Delhi was to give way to the rise of provincial autonomy. The bane of independent India has been excessive centralisation of power in Delhi. Decentralisation of power, all agree, is essential for national progress. Yet Indian intellectuals do not think twice before condemning the decentralisation of power which occurred in the eighteenth century as anarchy.

Meanwhile, Shahu the head of Marathas also died on the 15th December 1749. A period of turmoil followed. Tarabai, Shahu's rival in the early eighteenth century had survived him and now made an abortive bid for power. By September 1750, the Marathas saw a constitutional change. The power now passed on to the Peshwas, who came to be hence forth recognised as the Head of Marathas.

Ahmed Shah Abdali was not deterred by Sirhind set back. He kept up his attempts to reach Delhi and finally succeeded in January 1757. An event that we have seen caused Siraj-ud-daula to soften his antagonism to the British in Bengal. This time, it appears that Abdali wished to take over the throne as he had the Kutba read out in his name, the traditional ceremony marking assumption of power. The Marathas would however not allow this. They responded and by 1758 their commander, Ragunath Rao Peshwa had succeeded in driving Abdali back. As he retreated, he wrecked atrocities on the Bharatiya population. The sacred Golden Temple of the Sikhs was razed to the ground. Abdali had even offered a prize of Rs 5 to his soldiers for every Hindu head. This frenzy proved to be impotent before the might of the advancing Marathas. Indeed, they even crossed the banks of the river Indus in pursuit of Abdali. Thus going beyond the 'Attack' or the limit beyond which Hindus were not supposed to travel.

To see the amazing reach of the Marathas then, take a look at the map of India in 1758. The British, as can be seen were nowhere to be seen, battle of Plassey in 1757 notwithstanding. The battle of Plassey may seem of monumental importance to us now with the benefit of hindsight but surely even Robert Clive would have been astounded in 1757, if anyone had foretold him that this small skirmish in a distant part of the country would lead to eventual British rule over the entire sub-continent. Indeed, this would not have even been possible but for a series of events in which the British had no role to play whatsoever. The most significant of these was the third battle of Panipat on 14th January 1761.

With the extension of the Maratha reach to Lahore and beyond, they now started dreaming of recovering Kabul that was snatched away by Nadir Shah in 1740. This would have wiped out Ahmed Shah Abdali. By carrying the fight to Abdali's territory, the Marathas had left him no choice. Two rival contenders had to meet head on to resolve the issue on the battlefield. The stage was now set for the third battle of Panipat.

Shah had come to Bharat on the invitation of the fellow Pathan, Najib Khan of Rohilakhand, who was ousted from Diwani of the Moghul Emperor after the withdrawal of Abdali in 1757. More important was his ability to enlist support of the Moghul ruler of Ayodhya, Shuja-ud-daula. He was thus able to give a religious colour to his campaign against the Marathas who were fighting for the sake of Shah Alam, to recover for him, the Moghul territories which the Afghans had captured. This unfortunate prince, who was later to hand over the country to the British, had been proclaimed as the Emperor in 1759 after the murder of his father.

Sadashiv Rao Bhau, the new commander of the Maratha army which was sent to eliminate Abdali from Bharat; was fresh from his victory in the South. In 1760, he had put down one more attempt by the Nizam to get rid of the Maratha control. Bhau failed to garner any support - Hindu or Muslim in North India, which was new to him. The lack of local support as well as unfamiliarity with the terrain proved to be his undoing. This is not the place to describe military man oeuvres, which allowed Abdali to virtually trap the big Maratha contingent in Panipat cutting them off from the South and leaving them without any provisions. This act has given the impression that the military genius of Abdali was decidedly superior to that of the Maratha commander. Perhaps it is so. But it ignores the fact that Abdali too was cut off from Kabul. He had no hopes of any relieving troops coming to attack Bhau in the rear. Whereas the entire might of the Marathas lay in Deccan at Abdali's back.

The stand-off started on the 31st October 1760. With Bhau having dug in his heels at Panipat and Abdali at Sonpat. Now the war of nerves began with an eyeball to eyeball confrontation. No one was prepared to blink. The last communication received by the Peshwa from Bhau was dated 14th November. The receipt of this letter should have been around end November, as the Peshwa had already left Pune for North in October. Then the news stopped. It is difficult to understand why the Peshwa Vakil at Delhi did not communicate the news of Panipat, which was so near from Delhi. There was no way Abdali could have drawn a veil of secrecy over activities that involved around half a

million people in the two camps. If and only if the Peshwa had started off immediately once the regular flow of communication stopped, which by itself indicated something was wrong, things would have been so different. But then the tide of history is not swayed by the ifs and buts in the human affairs. Blissfully unaware of the increasing danger that began to envelop the Maratha army at Panipat, the Peshwa even stopped to get married on 28th December 1760. At this time, the Maratha ponies at Panipat had started dying of hunger. By early January the Peshwa was seriously concerned and started rapidly moving towards Panipat. On January 24th, 1761, he was at Bhilsa beyond Narmada. Panipat was just another fortnight away but the battle had already taken place ten days earlier. Less than a month is all that separated Abdali from being caught between the Peshwa coming from the Deccan and Bhau who blocked his way to the North. Would Abdali's genius have survived the onslaught of the two armies? The answer lies in studying the battle itself that took place on the 14th January 1761.

The stand-off, we have seen started on October 31, 1760. During November, the Maratha position was quite satisfactory. From December onwards, the position rapidly deteriorated with Abdali having stopped all the supplies. Bhau's camp had around two hundred thousand people, only a quarter of whom were soldiers, the requirement for provisions was therefore considerable. By end December, specter of starvation haunted Bhau. The animals including the ponies, which were so critical to the Marathas in the battle, started dropping dead. By 13th January, their position became grave. The proud Marathas told their commander that they would rather die in the battlefield than suffer the ignominy of death from hunger. The dawn of 14th January saw the two forces arraigned against each other, lusty for blood of their opponent. The battle was joined around nine in the morning. It was all over by three in the evening. Not a house, it is said, was left in Maharashtra that was not in mourning. Did the Marathas run away in fright or did they stand their ground and fight? It is best to read the victor's own description of the battle. Abdali recounted "The flame of fighting blazed up and raged on all sides. The enemy too distinguished themselves and fought so well, that it was beyond the capacity of other races. Gradually the fighting passed from the exchange of cannon and rocket fire to the discharge of muskets, from which it proceeded to the stage of combat with swords, daggers, and knives. They grasped each other by neck. Those dauntless bloodshedders (the Marathas) did not fall short in fighting and doing glorious deeds. Suddenly the breeze of victory began to blow and as willed by the Divine Lord the wretched Deccanis suffered utter defeat" Clearly even the victor appears to credit the God Almighty for his victory. "The breeze of victory" that began to blow had its genesis in a chance bullet that had struck, Vishwas Rao Peshwa, the eighteen year old nephew of Bhau and the son of Peshwa Balaji Rao, killing him on the spot. Up to this time the fight as described by Abdali was evenly poised. The Shah had even played his last card of throwing in the reserve troops, the onslaught of which had failed to move the Marathas. But now "as willed by the Divine Lord", Bhau went berserk on seeing the dead body of his nephew. In reckless disregard to personal safety, he threw himself into the fray instead of standing apart and directing his troops. This bravery was to cost the nation dear. The Marathas who had so far done their nation proud, fighting the battle of their life time against the odds of hunger and despite being deprived of their ponies; lost their heart when their

leader himself vanished in the thick of fighting and “the wretched Deccanics suffered utter rout.”

The Marathas did lose the battle but the war was far from over. The Abdali coalition started showing cracks. The old Afghan, Moghul rivalry surfaced. Shuja-ud-daula was always uneasy about opposing the Marathas. Once the battle ended, he even paid money to Abdali for permission to carry out proper religious cremation of the Maratha heroes. His discontentment mounted and he left Abdali camp on 7th March, having nothing to show for his war efforts. Peshwa was too late to save the Panipat contingent but his army was considerable and he was less than a month away. Neither Abdali nor his troops had the heart to face the wretched Deccanics once again in the battlefield. If only providence had saved the day against a contingent that was half starved, what would be their fate against the Peshwa army that was well provided for. The Shah wisely wrote to the Peshwa “There is no real reason why there should exist any ill feeling between you and us; true you have lost your son and brother in the unfortunate fight : but it was entirely provoked by Bhau Saheb and we could not act otherwise than we did in self defense. However, we are deeply sorry for the losses. We readily leave to you the subject of imperial management of Delhi, provided you allow us to hold Punjab up to the river Satlaj and support Shah Alam as the Emperor. You must forget the regrettable events that have taken place and entertain a lasting friendship towards us which we are anxiously soliciting”. This letter was *received by the Peshwa on the 10th of February 1761*, within one month of the battle itself. Would this be the language that would be used by someone, who according to Spear, appeared have Hindustan at his feet with the victory at Panipat. The Maratha valour at Panipat had made the Shah completely change his stripes. This was the same man, who in his 1757 raid had announced a prize of Rs 5 for the head of every infidel and who on being driven away had demolished the holy Golden temple of the Sikhs, while returning. After writing this conciliatory letter, the Shah left for Kabul on 20th march 1761. Amazingly, if Spear is to be believed then the Shah returned only because his troops did not have the tenacity of Babar’s Moghul begs and that there was no wealth left in Bharat. The assertion that Bharat was a country denuded of wealth in 1761 would shock Kennedy who writes that at this time Bharat accounted for 24.5% of World Manufacturing Output. Delhi had no money, true, but there was much money in the provinces.

Never again was the Shah to see Delhi. The Sikhs soon made his hold over the coveted province of Punjab impossible. The victory at Panipat was purchased at enormous cost and proved to be of little avail. The Marathas were victorious in defeat; as never again was Bharat to be troubled by the unruly Pathans, the national scourge since 1192. The Moghuls continued to rule Delhi. The debt of Zinat-un-Nisa was finally repaid by the Marathas. *They did lose the battle but won the national war against the traditional invaders - the Afghans*. The British never lowered the Union Jack at Lucknow and when forced by the tide of history to do so, cut off the flag post so that no other flag would ever fly at the place sacred to the British nation. We, the Indians, on the other hand are so ignorant of our past that we remember the third battle of Panipat only as an unmitigated disaster. What a shame that fifty years after independence we continue to teach our children the history that was written by the British with an ulterior motive.

The Maratha losses mounted only after the battle of Panipat. Torn by a feeling of shame at the delay in providing succour to his forces, the Peshwa's health broke down completely. He died heart broken on 23rd June 1761. With his death, began a civil war between the new Peshwa, Madhav Rao I, the sixteen year old son of Peshwa Balaji Rao and his uncle Raghunath Rao. Nizam once again tried to assert himself. Haider Ali got the chance of his life to build his kingdom in the South. Even the Maratha Subhedars began to assert their independence. In this atmosphere of gloom, Madhav Rao's brilliance soon shone forth. Within three short years, this young lad had asserted himself. The Maratha state that had begun to look like a loose confederacy at war with itself, gave way to the cohesion of the Pre Panipat days. Restoring order in the South, the traditional homeland of the Marathas took precedence over distant North and the East. Raghunath Rao continued to be an expensive distraction. Undaunted by these adversities, the Marathas had succeeded by 6th January, 1772 to restore Shah Alam to the throne ending his wandering in exile since 1759. Within eleven years, the Marathas had regained their preeminence in Bharatiya polity. Abdali lived to see this feat of the Marathas.

In the hour of their triumph, when the Marathas seemed poised to recover from the blow of Panipat, a great tragedy struck. Peshwa Madhav Rao I, died of tuberculosis at the age of twenty-nine. As Grant Duff wrote "The plains of Panipat were not more fatal to the Maratha Kingdom than the early death of this excellent prince"

If the Ahmad Shah Abdali gained nothing at Panipat and the Marathas took eleven years to fully recover from this defeat, who won at Panipat? The answer is the British. The people who fired no shot nor had any role to play in the conflict; were the people who gained the most from this deadly battle that exhausted the Bharatiya forces.

Chapter I-9

Union Jack Engulfs Bharat 16th September 1803

The death of Emperor Muhammad Shah in 1748 saw the rise of one incompetent person after the other to the Moghul throne. Abdali started hovering around like a hungry vulture waiting to devour the Moghul Empire. Only the Marathas saved the empire from extinguishing but they could not stop the internal fights. The Wazir himself had Alamgir II murdered on 30th November 1759. Ali Gauhar, the Shazada who had been driven to Bihar by the Wazir proclaimed himself as the Emperor on 22nd December 1759. Shah Alam II, as Ali Gauhar came to be known, was to remain the national sovereign throughout his life. The trials and tribulations of this unfortunate Emperor read like a heart-rending tale. Though by no means brilliant, he was the most talented and personable of the later Moghul emperors and in happier times, he might have had a prosperous reign.

Shah Alam was accepted as the Emperor by Marathas in October 1759. Abdali, despite his victory at Panipat did not disturb this arrangement in order to conciliate the Peshwa. This was cold comfort to the Emperor in his exile as the Wazir Najib-ud-daula would not allow him to even enter Delhi. For several years he endeavored to make imperial bricks without straws of money or loyalty by borrowing troops with which to assert his authority over his nominal lieutenants. On 15th January 1761, unaware of the disaster that had overtaken the Marathas at Panipat, Shah Alam made an attempt to recover Bengal which was defeated by the British forces led by Major Carnec. On 16th January 1761, Pondicherry fell into the British hands, thereby smashing the French power in India. Thus these three days in the middle of January 1761 proved to be momentous in determining the future of this country. The Peshwa sank to his grave under the blow of Panipat. For a few years till his son consolidated his power, the British had no serious rival on the horizon. To their credit, they utilised this interval to their great advantage.

The battle of Plassey had given them a foothold in Bengal. Mir Jafar, the traitor soon came to reap the fruits of the poisonous tree he had planted on the Bharatiya soil. He came to be deposed in favour of his Son in Law, Mir Kasim by the British in 1760. These events had attracted the notice of the Marathas. The Peshwa Balaji Rao had planned an expedition to Bengal after meeting the Abdali menace, to reassert their control over Bengal that was first recognised by the Nawab Alivardi during a meeting with the Peshwa in 1743 near Plassey. Panipat put paid to these plans. Mir Kasim like Siraj-ud-daula attempted to stop the British corruption in importing goods duty free for personal trade. This led to the outbreak of their war with the Nawab in 1763. On 10th June 1763, the Nawab was defeated by Major Adams forcing him to flee to Ayodhya. Here he got together with Shah Alam and Shuja-ud-daula to form an alliance against the British. The Marathas, who could have been the decisive factor were at this time absent from the scene. The battle of Buxar on 22nd October 1764 resulted in defeat of the Confederate army and ended Moghul challenge to the British power. Henceforth it was only the Marathas, Haider Ali and Nizam who kept aloft the Bharatiya flag. Shah Alam now accepted the British protection and resided at Allahabad. It is this turn of events that

allowed Clive to obtain the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa on 12th August 1765. For years, Shah Alam kept on pressing the British to take him to Delhi but they were not yet ready for this venture. Najib was not easy to get rid of. Nor could the resurgent Marathas be ignored. It was left to the Marathas under the orders of Peshwa Madhav Rao I, then at the pinnacle of his glory, to restore the Emperor to the Delhi throne on 6th January 1772. Thus the defeat at Panipat was fully avenged by the Marathas but now the Afghan menace had been replaced by the British, who had grown strong on the revenues from richest provinces of the country - Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Difficult as it may be in the twentieth century to visualize these provinces as being rich, it certainly was the case till British drained their wealth away.

The young Peshwa, though ravished by the killer disease was lucid to the last. His comments to his Generals on hearing about the restoration of the Emperor were pertinent. He wrote "I quite appreciate the value of a performance which the English desisted from undertaking. Our men have shed their blood, in return for which you must acquire money and territory proportionate to the sacrifice... have you at least freed the holy places of Kashi and Prayag from the Muslim control ? You must likewise recover the cost of the troops employed and the debts that our Government have incurred in this venture. The English if they had been so minded, did certainly possess the strength to place the Emperor on his ancestral throne : but as their power is mainly based on the sea, they declined, to go a long way inland without a corresponding advantage. **Now you must remember never to allow the English to make a lodgment at Delhi. If they once obtain a footing, they can never be dislodged.** Of all the European nations, the English are certainly the strongest. They have seized strategic points and have formed a ring around the Indian continent, from Calcutta to Surat". We now know how true his warning came. Once the British entered Delhi in 1803, they could be made to leave only 144 years later. Though this isn't totally true. They were indeed thrown out for four months in 1857 but let us hold this event for later discussions.

The prophetic Peshwa's untimely death at this critical juncture when the Marathas were getting ready for yet another trial of strength; this time with a new and a far more dangerous enemy, was a blow which crippled the cause of national independence.

It is unfortunate that neither Shivaji nor Madhav Rao Peshwa truly understood the real strength of the British. Their institution based polity as against the personality based polity of Bharat, particularly in matters of succession. Shivaji knew Sambhaji was not capable. Madhav Rao was well aware of the short comings of Narayan Rao. Yet, these otherwise outstanding leaders did not look outside their immediate family for succession. How could they miss that the British power grew from strength to strength despite ever changing Governor-Generals, who were not related to each other except by ties of loyalty to their nation. Dynastic rule proved in the ultimate analysis to be the bane of Bharat. As we shall now see there was no one single battle that tipped the scale in favour of the British. From 1772 to 1803, a period of thirty-one years, the war went on. Sometimes favouring Bharatiya forces, sometimes going against them. Man for man, there was hardly a difference nor was lack of money a serious problem. Finally the independence was lost when an by an incredible stroke of bad luck, all the major Maratha powers came

in the hands of foolish, vain persons at the same time. This was an opportunity that the British could not and did not waste. The lesson against the dynastic rule that we have been taught at such a great cost seems to have fallen on deaf ears on most of the present day politics with Congress being the worst offender.

The Marathas once again found their attentions diverted to their internal politics with the death of Peshwa Madhav Rao I. Narayan Rao, whose only lasting contribution was to aggravate caste struggle amongst the Marathas, was murdered at the behest of his scheming uncle Raghunath Rao Peshwa, who had aspired to the post ever since the death of his brother, Peshwa Nana Sahib in 1761.

The murder was duly investigated by the state judiciary and the famous Justice Ram Shastri held Raghunath Rao responsible for the murder. A wave of revulsion swept the sinner out of Pune, whereupon he sought solace in arms of the British. The end of Maratha kingdom appeared in sight but the spirit injected by Shivaji into the Maratha polity would not die so easily. A confederation replaced the kingdom. It now consisted of six Maratha chieftains who sometimes resorted to even arms against each other to resolve the disputes but Peshwa Madhav Rao II, the posthumous son of the late Narayan Rao provided the symbol of unity before whom all the factions bowed in reverence. It is this confederation that carried the Marathas through the first Anglo-Maratha war that lasted for eight years (1774-82). The most notable feature of this war was the role of Nana Phadnis, who at Pune was guardian of the young Peshwa. It is to him that goes the credit for the first nation wide Bhartiya attempt in 1778, to uproot the British from the Bharatiya soil. Haider Ali, Nizam and the Maratha Confederation joined arms in this attempt. It came to naught because one Hindu, Bhonsle and one Muslim, the Nizam held back. Bhonsle, who controlled Nagpur was in a position to cut off British base at Calcutta from Madras. This would have rendered the British vulnerable everywhere against the combined onslaught. Alas, this was not to be!! Haider Ali and Nana Phadnis held fast till the end. Mahadji Shinde called off the fight after a long struggle. **The days of Hindu-Muslim war were long over.**

At the end of the war in 1782, the confederation held sway in the North and Central Bharat and shared domination of South with Haider Ali and Nizam. The British continued to be held back in the East. The Emperor continued to elude the British. No doubt the seriousness of Nana inspired attempt led to the Pitts India Act of 1784, which enjoined the East India Company against further aggression in the country.

With the end of this war, Mahadji Shinde became the defacto ruler of Delhi. His attempts to ensure that the provinces once again remit revenues to the Center landed him in many fights with provincial rulers, who were loath to give up their new found autonomy. The political kaleidoscope otherwise remained unchanged. The mid nineties once again exposed the bane of Bharatiya politics, hereditary succession. Mahadaji Shinde died in 1793 to be succeeded by an inept youth. Similar story was repeated in the family of other Maratha chieftains. To cap it all, the young Peshwa now chafing at the restrictions imposed by Nana, committed suicide on 27th October 1795. With his death, the house of Peshwas was thrown in irreversible decline. His successor Peshwa Bajji Rao II would

easily win the contest of the most hated person in Maharashtra even today. Nana, who had guided destiny of the nation for over twenty-five years was thrown in jail, later released, to die deeply disappointed on 13th March 1800. The British Resident Palmer rightly reported to the Governor General “With Nana has departed all the wisdom and moderation of the Maratha Government”. Prophetic words that soon came true.

Veritable civil war that raged amongst the Marathas unabated since 1795; was to end only with the loss of independence in 1803. Even the spirit of Shivaji had to give way before the combined folly of the inept rulers, who had come to power for no reason other than the accident of their birth. The first Bharatiya rule to be swallowed by the British was the kingdom of Haider Ali, who had died in 1782. His son Tipu Sultan antagonized Bharatiya sentiment by being the first to declare independence from Delhi. At the same time, his atrocities against the Hindus smacked of the religious fervour of Aurangzeb. The alienated Marathas joined British in 1791 to put him down but as was their want, they studiously refrained from eliminating him. Tipu soon changed his stripes and henceforth became a champion of the Hindu-Muslim unity. In 1799, the British joined the war with him once again. In vain he appealed to Marathas for help. At the helm was the foolish Peshwa Baji Rao II. Nana’s word no longer carried weight. Mahadji Shinde, who had even in 1791 opposed attacking Tipu with the British, was no more. His successor was devoid of any critical power of reasoning. The two idiots only watched from the sidelines as Tipu was killed at Srirangpattanam and his Kingdom annexed. Nizam had walked into the British camp even before the death of Tipu Sultan. The whetted appetite of the British fox was soon to devour Marathas themselves. By May 13, 1803, the Peshwa fell under the British protection. On 16th September, the Emperor at Delhi followed suit. Other main Maratha chieftains were made to surrender their freedom before close of the year. Only one Maratha, Yeshwant Rao Holkar held out till 1805 but he too alone, was no match for the British,

Now the Union Jack was to be seen everywhere, fluttering proudly.

Perhaps this is being a little harsh to the brave Sikhs who continued an independent existence till the middle of nineteenth century or even the Marathas who kept a semblance of independence alive up to 1818 but then a single swallow does not make the summer. The die was already cast.

The British power that began in 1765 was in full flow after 1803. But in 1807, it was still possible for the British Officers in India to define the objectives of their power without even mentioning the word Welfare. The Charter of the company renewed by the British Parliament in 1813, asked it to set aside the grand sum of Rs One hundred thousand for advancement of arts and science. With this attitude, it is no wonder that between the period 1800 to 1850, Bharat’s global share in Manufacturing goods dropped from 19.7% to 8.6%. The import of cotton fabrics rose spectacularly from 1 million yards in 1814 to 51 million yards in 1830 to 995 million yards in 1874, driving domestic producers to destitution destroying the very fabric of this civilization. What Bharat witnessed in the nineteenth century was the process of deindustrialization. The so-called anarchy of the eighteenth century had not touched upon the economic and social basis of the nation - the

village communities. As Metcalfe was to himself admit ‘ The village communities are little Republics having nearly everything they want within themselves and almost independent of any foreign relations. They seem to last where nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down; revolutions succeeds revolution; Hindus, Pathans, Mughuls, Marathas, Sikhs, English are their masters in turn but the village Community remain the same.’ Do not include the British in this list Mr. Metcalfe, they were to destroy these little Republics. ‘In times of trouble they arm and fortify themselves; a hostile army passes through the country; the village community collect their cattle within their walls, and let the army pass unprovoked; if plunder and devastation be directed against themselves and the force employed be irresistible, they flee to friendly villages at a distance, but when the storm has passed over they return and resume their occupation. If a country remains for a series of years the scene of continual pillage and massacre, so that the village cannot be inhabited, the villagers nevertheless return whenever the power of peaceful possessions revives.’

This base of the Bharatiya civilization was destroyed by the British rule in their single-minded attention to the interests of their domestic producers and no Bharatiya could even protest. If this is not loss of independence, what else is ? Of what use was the peace and order that the British imposed on this country in the nineteenth century ? Inconvenient questions that not the British but our own foolish Indian friends, who remain in thrall of the Raj need ponder over.

It is on the strength of this overwhelming evidence that our case for dating the end of Hindu- Muslim War to 1707 and that of loss of Independence to 1803, firmly rests.

The British rule itself was a result of many an accidents. A series of ifs and buts that could have changed the course of history. If only Zinat-un-Nisa was permitted to marry Shivaji, if Mastani was allowed to live peacefully with Bajji Rao, if only the Peshwa Balaji Rao had not stopped to get married on way to Panipat, if the bullet had only grazed the forehead of Vishwas Rao Peshwa and not killed him, if Madhav Rao Peshwa had lived longer, if and ifs galore. A seemingly small event at a crucial time in history could have irrevocably changed the destiny of this nation. The stark poverty that we see around us, the contempt with which the Indian passport is treated the world over; could this all not have been different?? To look longingly at the past is not the driving force behind this inquiry. To demolish certain myths certainly is.

For instance the myth that the global dominance of the west, implicit since the days of Vasco de Gama in 1498 came to merely pass in the nineteenth century. The dominance of the west in Bharat was by no means foreordained right till 1803. Nor was it the superior weaponry of the British that won the day for them. It is the practice of hereditary succession to important public positions that was the bane of our society. *Finally all this long list of the ‘Ifs’ would have been irrelevant, If the hereditary succession was not practiced.*

Unless the past is properly understood, the way to the future is bound to be hazy. This is the principle driving force that lies behind looking at this distant past. To learn the lessons of the past so as to be able to march forth confidently to the twenty first century.

This brings us to Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, who has provided the intellectual base for this study through his incisive analysis. Much as Congress would like the nation to believe so; the fact remains that the destiny of Bharat in the twentieth century was not shaped by the Gandhi led Congress alone. The destiny of the nation was irrevocably influenced by momentous events starting from the expulsion of Lokmanya Tilak in the infamous Surat Congress session of December 1907, which as if was the signal to the revolutionary leaders to begin the campaign of violence. One name that came cropping time and again in revolutionary activities at London, Paris, San Francisco, Berlin, Calcutta, Lahore, Pune and in other countless places, was that of this long neglected revolutionary, even when he was being made to work like an animal in the dreaded prison of Andaman Islands.

Bibliography

1. The Discovery of India, Jawahar Lal Nehru, Oxford University Press, 1981
2. An Advanced History of India, R.C.Majumdar, Macmillan India Limited, 1982
3. Samagra Savarkar, Vinayak D. Savarkar, Saket Prakashan, 1994
4. New History of The Marathas, G.S. Sardesai, Phoenix Publications, 1958
5. The Indian War of Independence, Vinayak D. Savarkar, Phoenix Publications, 1947
6. An Economic History of India, Dietmar Rothermund, Croom Helm, U.S.A. 1988
7. Roses in December, M.C.Chagla, The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay 1974
8. The Oxford History of Modern India, 1740 – 1975, Percival Spear, Oxford University Press, 1997
9. Kaye's and Malleson's History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8, Longman's Green and Co., 1898
10. The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers, Paul Kennedy, Fontana Press, 1989
11. The Realities Behind Diplomacies, Paul Kennedy, Fontana Press, 1981
12. The Maratha Paramountcy, R.C.Majumdar, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1991

The Bharatiya Torch of Freedom

Our story has so far covered the history of India from 1192 to 1803. It is now time to move forward. The next stop of our story takes us to 1920. For the conventional wisdom is that nothing of note happened before Gandhiji came back to India from South Africa and launched the first civil disobedience movement in 1920. However, we have already seen that conventional wisdom does not take us far in explaining the real significance of 15th August. Indeed, it leads us astray and to conclusions that far from uniting the country deeply divides it. It is only when we take a radically different view, one that flows from the sharp logical brain of Savarkar that we come face to face with facts. Let us therefore once again keep the conventional wisdom aside and take a re-look at the history of the country from 1803 to 1920

For more than half a century, generations of Indians have fallen victim to an insidious myth propagated by vested interests. It is widely believed that the Freedom Struggle really began only with the Khilafat movement led by Gandhiji in 1920. It is of course known that some form of movement for Freedom existed. Often, it is dismissed as a sporadic struggle of no major consequence. Even in the Communist circles, one that would normally be expected to be least sympathetic to Gandhiji; the myth persists. I have been an incredulous audience to a die hard Communist follower holding forth that what happened before Gandhiji started his movements in the later half of the second decade of the twentieth century; was of minor consequence.

If India had been so docile as to have no serious movement for freedom for over a century after the British seized political power, it would betray a serious flaw in national sense of purpose. Fortunately, facts are otherwise.

The Bharatiya Torch of Freedom is the true unadulterated story of these facts. One that smashes to smithereens the myth that the pre Gandhiji era in India was of little consequence in the march to Freedom. This story needs to be told for the Generation that carried out this titanic struggle has vanished unsung in the pages of history – forgotten by those who reap the fruits of their sacrifices.

We will therefore start the story with Savarkar, one of the brightest flames of this era. This will take to the early days of his struggle against the British Empire in 1905. From then on we will flow with the events that he helped craft. Our first halt will be in Italy, the land that inspired Savarkar. A land that in the nineteenth century had overcome all the obstacles to its Independence. Problems very similar to those faced by India in 1905. The next halt in the story will be our own War of Independence in 1857. Far more material is now available to us than was the case to Savarkar, when he penned down the story of 1857 sitting in London during the first decade of the twentieth century. It will be far more easy for us to rubbish the British claims that it was no more than a struggle launched by Hindu and Muslim fanatics upset with use of modern cartridges that were incidentally smeared with grease made from pork & beef.

Once we become familiar with the story of 1857, we would logically move to Bal Gangadhar Tilak – the doyen of Indian Independence movement. The widely revered leader, to whom must go the credit of re-igniting the torch of freedom in the last decade of the nineteenth century. The torch that had been dimmed by the cruel repression of the War of Indian Independence in 1857. Once, Tilak held the Torch high, it illuminated the path of national service. The path that became the lifetime guide for many like Savarkar.

With this, we would have traversed the history of the country from 1803 to 1905. We would then be able to cover the next fifteen years which would take us to the start of Gandhi era in 1920. As each event becomes known, as we began to remove the thick layer of ignorance, we would be faced with a reality that is far different from the one told to us thus far.

This journey starts in 1905 and then moves back in time to 1803 and then moves forward till it meets 1905 once again. From then on the story moves in a linear manner up to 1920. I realize sitting in the Twenty First century, it is difficult enough to go back a century. It is even more difficult to go further back in time, sometime even to an alien land –Italy, travel through the nineteenth century and back to the beginning of the twentieth century. Nor is this the end of the story. For this, one has to travel to the second decade of the twentieth century. This journey backward and forward in time by itself is bound to leave one dizzy. But this journey is essential to learn the true story of this forgotten time in all its glory.

The facts that one would come to learn during this journey leave one speechless. It is enough at this stage to state just one simple fact. By 1920 the Indian Freedom Struggle was a roaring fire lit by all communities in India, one that was set to devour the British jackal. If this sounds unreal, let me now present to you my dear readers, *The Bharatiya Torch of Freedom*.

Chapter II-1

**Vinayak Damodar Savarkar
The Swatantraveer**

“The two men were welcomed to Savarkar Sadan with the same deference they had been shown on Wednesday evening. This time their stay was brief. Savarkar accompanied them back down the stairs to the grills of his Sadan. His most ardent disciples were setting to murder a man Veer Savarkar detested with all the fury of which his zealot’s soul was capable.

Despite that fact, there was nothing in his rigidly composed demeanor to indicate the enormity of that moment. Hardly, an emotion registered on his glacial regard, his taut, pursed lips. He laid a hand on Godse and Apte’s shoulder:

‘Be successful,’ he whispered,...and come back’

This testimony, dramatized in the above form in “Freedom At Midnight”, of a small time crook turned approver in the Gandhi Murder case was to haunt Savarkar for the rest of his life, as the reference it was claimed was to the murder of Mahatma Gandhi. Never mind the fact that the court threw out this testimony but Congress Governments have continued to rely upon it without being able to produce a shred of evidence. The British had sentenced him to a fifty year term of hard labour, little realizing that the fire lit by this man would drive them out of Bharat much before they could make him serve the full term. Where the British could not succeed, his own countrymen did. For the last fifty years the systematic neglect of this man, his contributions to the cause of Independence, his works which have been banished to the fringes of the national consciousness, so much so that the place in Mumbai where he spent the last thirty years of his life, the place which should be a national monument, is available to anyone on rent. Where even the British failed, we Indians have succeeded, never mind the cost we are thereby incurring.

Why should anyone want to know about this man? Of what relevance is he to the nation on the threshold of the twenty first century. In this world of Globalisation, of free flow of capital, of societies owing their existence to free play of market forces, is this long dead man, not best forgotten. Why wake the sleeping ghosts ?

The answers are many. First the simple economic truth. Economic growth, however essential cannot be had in a society torn about by social conflict. A skyline rendered black from the bellowing clouds of a building set on fire by miscreants, is hardly the best advertisement for attracting investors, particularly in a place described as commercial capital of the country. A grim reminder that the communal question that Mahatma Gandhi tried best to resolve, continues to haunt us. Why not give a chance to the Savarkar solution of recognizing that the Hindu-Muslim war ended a hundred years before the dawn of independence in 1947.

Mahatma Gandhi believed in equality amongst the castes. Savarkar wanted a caste less society. Mahatma Gandhi wanted the economic growth to focus on the villages. Savarkar believed in introducing Modern technology in society. Do we not have enough accumulated evidence, to now make a reasoned choice ? As Alvin Toffler tells us in the “Third Wave”, today the issue is not either Villages or Modern technology. The best path today is growth in Villages through Modern technology - ‘Gandhi With Satellites’ as he calls it. Gandhi and Savarkar after all can co-exist.

Finally, Savarkar is only a symbol of the revolutionary spirit that this country possessed much before Gandhi came on the national scene. The Do or Die spirit that had countless people court ruin for the sake of their nation. The three Savarkar brother were merely one of the many such families. It is the sacrifice of these countless unsung unhonoured people that had prepared the mood of the nation to readily accept the message of civil disobedience that Gandhi gave to the nation at the Nagpur Congress in 1920. Unfortunately neither Congress nor even Mahatma Gandhi really acknowledged the debt they owed to the Revolutionaries. Why Savarkar, even Subhas Chandra Bose, the Congress President in 1938, has been virtually disowned by Congress for committing the sin of following the revolutionary path.

The story of Savarkar needs to be told only because more than anything else that a country needs to progress; is the Spirit to Sacrifice for the sake of the nation, which an ungrateful nation can never possess. The revolutionaries can be criticized for many a faults. Certainly lack of Spirit to Sacrifice for sake of the nation is something that the most perverted mind will not accuse them of. Why Savarkar, why not somebody else, why not for instance Bhagat Singh or Khudiram Bose or Chandra Shekhar Azad or any one else who laid down their life ?? It can well be any one of them but as they themselves would have been the first to tell us that the Story of Revolutionaries is not a zero sum game. The story of Savarkar is indeed their own story, possessed as they all were, of the same zeal to free their motherland at any cost.

Let us get back to our story at the point at which we had left it - in 1803. The Union Jack fluttered everywhere, true but even the British had no pretensions to carrying the White man’s Burden at this stage. The Bharatiya princes may have lost their power but they sat in sullen silence waiting for the first opportunity to drive the Firangi out of the country. The spirit of Independence was very much alive. Now survey the same country a hundred years later. What were the dreams of the elite now ?

“Hardly ever have I known anybody to cherish such loyalty as I did to the British constitution...I therefore vied with the Englishmen in loyalty to the throne. With careful perseverance I learnt the tune of the ‘national anthem’ and joined in loyalty to the throne. Whenever there was an occasion for the expression of loyalty without fuss or ostentation, I readily took part in it.. It was for me more in the nature of an obligation.” This was Mahatma Gandhi writing about his mentality around the turn of the century. Nor was this sentiment an isolated phenomenon. For else, how would members of the Servants of India Society not blush, when asked to take the vow ‘ The members of the new society frankly accept the British connection as ordained in the inscrutable dispensation of

Providence for nation's good.' as penned by their founder Gopal Krishna Gokhale, the political Guru of Gandhiji, who died in 1916 without changing his views.

The most telling evidence of state of the mind of the Indian elite was demonstrated at the twenty-third meeting of the Congress, which opened at Surat on 26th December 1907. It is at this session that Lokmanaya Tilak was thrown out of the Congress as he and Aurobindo Ghosh were bold enough to ask for Swaraj. Those who believe otherwise would be well advised to read the comment of J.C. Ker, Personal Assistant to the Director of Criminal Intelligence from 1907-1913 on the Surat incident. " The session was however of special importance, for it was at this meeting that a definite and public cleavage took place between the Moderates and the Extremists.. The split took place ostensibly over the election of the President, but really, as will appear later over the general policy of the Congress. The question which really divided the Congress was whether the agitation for self-government was to proceed ..or not"

No wonder the British could legitimately claim " while the Italians had always refused to accept the Austrian rule as the national rule, boycotted the Austrians so as to make the administration impossible, the Indians on the other hand far from boycotting the British, had offered their cooperation and accepted the British rule as their national rule, while the resolutions of the Indian Congress showed how their grievances might be redressed and the people made prosperous and contented thus making the British rule popular, stable and strong."

This was the politically sterile environment, when mention of the word Independence was considered an act of Sedition not only by the British Government but also by the Indian elite, that a young lad from Bhagur, a non descript village near Nasik was to take the oath of dedicating his life to the cause of Independence. An oath for the sake of which he spent the best part of his life in prison doing hard labour, where even the possession of a scrap of paper was considered a punishable offense.

The Savarkars were Jagirdars of a small village Rahuri since times of the last Peshwas. Damodar and Radhabai were a typical Brahmin couple of the day. Damodar being a good natured, religious minded man and Radhabai a pious beautiful lady. They had four children, three sons and a daughter while at Bhagur. The sons being Ganesh, Vinayak and Narayan, who were all to be devoted to the cause of independence. Vinayak alias Tataya was born on 28th May 1883. This was two years before the Indian National Congress was founded by Sir A.O.Humes for the perpetuation of the British Raj. A little known fact about Sir A.O.Humes is that during the War of 1857, he was posted as the District Collector at Etawah and had to run away in the disguise of a woman on 23rd May 1857 to save himself from the fury of the Bharatiya soldiers. No wonder that Savarkar's "The Indian War of Independence –1857" was always to remain anathema to the Congress. For the present, both new born babies were blissfully unaware of their future conflict.

The young Savarkar was sent to school at the age of six and soon showed early signs of his future genius. At the age of ten, a Pune paper accepted his poem for publication, not being aware of the tender age of the contributor. The house of the Savarkars reverberated

with the epics Mahabharata, Ramayan, Ballads and Bakhars of Pratap, Shivaji and the Peshwas, filling the young Tataya with pride of his heritage that he was never to lose in his long life. Tragedy struck when Savarkar was barely ten. His mother, to whom he was passionately devoted, died leaving the children to the care of her husband. Quite remarkably particularly for that period, Savarkar's father never remarried combining roles of both mother and the father for the young ones.

In every life there are certain momentous incidents that leave an indelible mark. A frustrated and penniless mutineer from Piedmont asked alms of Mazzini in the name of the outlaws of Italy. This was the moment from which Mazzini dedicated his life to the cause of regeneration of Italy. Tataya was now about to undergo an experience that was to change the course of his life as well that of the countless others who were to come under his spell.

On 22nd June, 1897, when Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria's rule was being celebrated, the Plague Commissioner Rand and another British Officer, Mr. Ayerest, infamous for the severity of enforcing Anti-Plague measures, were shot dead by the Chapekar brothers in Pune. An act that electrified the country. The Government tried its best to implicate Tilak in the murder, failing which he was thrown behind bars for publishing seditious articles. Chapekars were betrayed by David brothers and were hung on the gallows on 18th April 1898. The betrayal by David brothers was avenged by youngest of the three Chapekar brothers and his friend, who shot them dead, an act for which the gallows awaited them.

Young Tataya was deeply influenced by the turn of events. He approached the family deity, Durga and swore before her that he would either die fighting like the Chapekar brothers or become victorious like Shivaji. The year was 1898, when the metropolitan India was content to be a British slave. This was to be the first and the last religious act of Tataya. There is no record of his having ever again approached a deity for either taking a vow or seek blessings for fulfillment of a wish. Intensely proud of being a Hindu all his life, he did not fail to ridicule superstitions rampant in the name of the religion. Cow for him, for instance was merely an animal important from an economic point of view, she had nothing else to do for him; consequently eating beef was for him in later life; not a taboo. Such irreverence for sacred symbols was to provoke wrath of the orthodox sections but he could not care less. A born poet, he composed a ballad in honour of these Bharatiya martyrs. So emotional would he become on singing this, that his face would glow and tears roll down his cheeks even in sleep, deeply disturbing his father.

During the same year, he happened to visit Pune, a city he had expected to echo with discussions about Tilak and Chapekar at every corner. The young Dehati, as the villagers are derisively known in India was bound to be disappointed. Fortunately this disappointment was more than offset by his coming across a Newspaper "Kal" edited by S.M.Paranjpe, which openly dared to call Chapekar brothers Martyrs instead of Murderers, an outrage for which the Editor was denied entry in Congress. Soon he became a regular reader of 'Kal' as well as 'Kesari' which was edited by Tilak, a person whose disciple he was always proud to call himself.

Just when his political views were gaining a maturity that were far ahead of the contemporary wisdom, once again the family was struck by a disaster. The dreaded Plague claimed his father. The Savarkar brothers were orphaned before the dawn of the twentieth century. As if this was not enough, the younger brother Narayan alias Bal was also taken ill with Plague. It is then the Savarkars decided to leave Bhagur for ever and went to Nasik for treatment, which in those days hardly amounted to much. The elder brother - Ganesh alias Baba decided to look after the orphaned youngster by staying with him in the Plague ward in utter disregard to his personal safety. The inevitable happened. Baba was also affected by Plague. All seemed lost. Tataya and his sister-in-law were thunder struck. Then a miracle happened. Both Baba and Bal survived.

The orphaned children with Baba, the eldest - a youth barely in his twenties and married to boot soon faced severe financial troubles. Baba had innate belief in potential of his younger brother Savarkar and resolved to ensure that the family financial troubles would not come in the way of Tataya's education. In this, he had full support of his wife, Yesubai. The quest to support Tataya cost her own ornaments that were sold off to fund his education. She served as a sounding board for his evolving political ideas during their discussions. In her devotion to the family, she even neglected her own health to the point of losing her only child born during this difficult period. No wonder he came to regard her as a mother, a sister, a colleague, a friend, a guide all rolled into one. This family of four struggled their way through innumerable odds but intensely happy to be together all the time, looking forward to a better future. By conventional standards, the education of the brightest of the family, Tataya, was their passport to a comfortable life. How were they to know that the dreams of Tataya were to lead them to a future that would be so different?

What was that a future that awaited the Savarkars ? A peek ahead in time would not be out of place. Let us go to the year 1919. The Savarkar brothers were meeting together for the first time since 1906. The place - Cellular Jail at Andaman Islands. Time available for the family get together - all of one hour; but why had the beloved Vahini (Sister in Law) of Tataya decided keep away from this meet ? She had waited in vain for around a decade, for a small glimpse of her husband sent away to the British Jail, followed soon after by Savarkar. The stark poverty that was her fate, did nothing to dampen her spirits but worries about Baba and Tataya would not let her sleep. After all Andaman was a place that had a well deserved reputation for swallowing those sent away to toil there. If only she could see them once. The Imperial Government had, of course more important matters to attend to, then worry about petitions from this poor woman surviving on the alms in Nasik, the back of beyond, to be allowed a visit to her husband. For Congress, the revolutionaries were only getting their just deserts. Their own civil disobedience movement was yet to take shape. Finally, the merciful Government relented. The long awaited permission for the visit was received. Only it was too late. Yesubai had already left for her heavenly abode.

We said that the Savarkars did not know the fate that awaited them but that is wrong. As we shall later see, young Tataya was fully aware of the consequences of his actions. Soon after the vow before the family deity, he formed a club - Mitra Mela; a gathering of

friends on the 1st of January 1900 when Savarkar was still in his teens. This was the public face of a secret society “The Patriots Club” dedicated to obtaining complete national independence. Only trusted friends were admitted to the inner circle, where discussions crossed the legal limits of Sedition and could invite severe repercussions. This inner circle of Mitra Mela was to metamorphosis into its more famous form - Abhinav Bharat in 1904. It is to Abhinav Bharat that goes the credit for truly globalising Bharatiya political struggle.

Globalisation and the Level Playing Field - the catch words of all and sundry today on either side of the ideological divide If only people would study Savarkar’s action, they would realise what true globalisation is all about. Level playing field is a myth. The very purpose of strategy is to create an Uneven Playing Field to the disadvantage of the opponent. With the Will to succeed even a penniless youth from the dusty lanes of a small provincial town, full of petty squabbles could go on to shake mightiest empire the world has ever known; to its roots. **This is what makes Savarkar relevant even today.**

The Mitra Mela became a forum where middle class youngsters from the town got together on a regular weekly basis and passionately debated about future of the country. What was the tone of these debates? The issues that they hotly debated, in the words of Savarkar were “If the goal is complete political independence, how was this to be attained without armed revolution. Congress Moderates like Gokhale could get the British to give some jobs to the Indians -no more. The extremists like Tilak could grab some real powers from the colonial government but not complete independence. Both the Moderates and the Extremists have their uses in the national struggle for which we need to respect them but the need of the hour is to go beyond them and choose the revolutionary path for that alone can get us complete independence.” With this tenor of debates in the inner circle, it would come as no surprise to know that the Mitra Mela soon busied itself in public activities that tested outer limits of the colonial legality. For instance, the then prevalent religious nature of celebrations of Shivaji Festivals was dramatically altered when Savarkar openly admitted that the objective of the festival celebrations was political. As he said ‘After all, if the only objective was to gain some minor relief from the colonial powers, then the appropriate symbol would be Peshwa Baji Rao II, the man who lost the national independence and then spent next 48 years of his life content to get an annual pension.’ The sensation that this created in Nasik can be well imagined.

During 1901, the dreaded Plague reared its ugly head in Nasik once again. Mitra Mela took on the job of cremating the dead. This was no easy act. Caste restrictions had to be thrown overboard to carry dead bodies of all the people. This by itself, though revolutionary was not the real problem, which was the risk of being infected. The inherent risk manifest itself in the death of one of Savarkar’s close associates due to Plague. During one such visit to the crematorium, a tired Savarkar fell asleep amidst the sweet scent of white flowers planted there to ward of stench of the dead. In his later life, whenever he saw those flowers, the memory of that night spent amongst the burning corpses would be revived

Events of the day attracted much notice in the Mela meetings. The death of Queen Victoria sparked off a lively debate. Was a resolution of condolence in order? The issue was discussed thread bare. Some members advocated the measure as a tactic to ward off any suspicion of the police. Others rejected it all together pointing out she was just one of the many people who died in the world that day. Bharat was in no way indebted to her for anything and the lady had much to answer for many of the country's ills. There was no need to join outpouring of the sympathy on display by Congress leaders of all hues and make the British feel their presence was welcome in the country. The ayes lost and the British Empire was deprived of a resolution of condolence from Mitra Mela, Nasik in the province of Bombay.

Mitra Mela endeavored to ensure that their activities for the public cause would not affect the academic progress of their members. This was done by allotting members subjects of their choice, expecting them to study and disseminate the knowledge to others.

Savarkar's own reading ranged from Mahabharata, the great Bharatiya epic to Herbert Spencer and Mazzini, the public library would find him engrossed in reading in all his spare time. The weekly meetings of Mitra Mela gave him the forum to sharpen the knowledge gained. Time and again he stressed upon his friends that the path of patriotism was not easy or a bed of roses. He quoted instances from history of revolutions around the world to highlight the fate of revolutionaries. Utter ruin, lack of public acclaim and endless prison terms was their foreordained fate. Mitra Mela members therefore attempted to steel themselves by rigorous physical and mental preparations, which were of immense use to them later for facing the wrath of the British Empire.

Now, Savarkar had around him a nucleus of friends who were later to carry the flame of revolution. Indeed some of the associates were to later serve prison terms, have their entire property confiscated and even walk smilingly to the gallows. Teenage, the time for chocolates, roses and romance, in all a carefree time, was the time when Mitra Mela members spent in steeling themselves for the rigors of their future life. Not all of them, as can be expected, carried their actions to the extremes but each one of them carried the torch of liberty right through their life. In those days, that itself was no mean achievement. By today's standards of the youth particularly in the metropolitan cities, even the least committed member of Mitra Mela was a positive revolutionary.

Savarkar's own final message to his beloved Vahini on eve of departure to the dreaded Andaman prison was in form of a beautiful Marathi poem, he had himself composed – possible in no small measure due to the years of mental conditioning. Here was a young man in the prime of his youth and being sent away to hard prison life for FIFTY years and yet he sang - “ We have not chosen this path blindly but in full realization of the consequences”. Rarely would one ever come across something more inspiring.

Around this time, the issue of Savarkar's marriage came up. Following practice of the day, his uncle fixed up his marriage without consulting him. To obey the family or not was an issue which took up quite a bit of Mitra Mela time. It was not merely Savarkar's personal matter. The question was should youth with aspirations of becoming

revolutionaries tie themselves up with bonds of marriage. Was it not Savarkar himself who kept on pointing out the life of trials and tribulations that awaited them. Considering this, was it fair to play with the life of an innocent girl who may be interested in a simple normal family life. Savarkar himself offered explanation that a person with a deep and abiding commitment to serve the nation is unlikely to be deterred merely by the fact of his marriage. A person who would claim to have given up the service to nation merely due to the fact of his getting married was using marriage as an escape hatch. In reality, he could not be said to have real commitment in the first place. This answered the first issue. The second was more complicated. In those times, there was no question of the boy spending time with the girl before marriage to explain his views. So Savarkar expressed the confidence that a dedicated person would soon make his wife see the righteousness of his cause. Before this raises the hackles of today's Feminists, it should also be pointed out that Savarkar was also of the view that should a married revolutionary die in furtherance of his cause, his widow should get remarried. For a Brahmin, to even hold such thoughts in mind, let alone express them openly, in those days was being a revolutionary. Savarkar was thus not merely a political but also a social revolutionary.

With this philosophical question out of the way, Savarkar was free to get married in April 1901, a bond that was to see him through next sixty-two years of life. Yamunabai alias Mai was a perfect foil to this volcanic personality. The marriage also solved problem of funding his further education, which a loving Father-in-law agreed to look after. By December, he had passed his Matriculation and went to Pune in January 1902 joining Ferguson College noted for producing historic personalities. At a send off in Nasik, he promised his Mitra Mela friends that he would continue to carry their work further at Pune, which now offered him a wider canvass and a chance to infect the pick of Maratha brains with Seditious thoughts. A Savarkar Group was soon formed at Pune which started publishing a hand written Weekly with Savarkar being a main contributor. The Group which dressed alike, studied together and went for regular evening walks soon reverberated with the woks of Kalidas, Bhavbhuti, Scott, Shakespeare and Milton which cast their magnetic influence on these youth. Their special favourite was Milton's Paradise Lost. Here Savarkar got a chance to get acquainted with his child hood heroes, Paranjpee and Tilak. This only served to catalyze his thoughts further. Savarkar's fiery eloquence earned him the title of Devil from those who felt scared by his enthusiastic patriotism. The youth of course flocked to him.

The success at Pune now boosted the Mitra Mela at Nasik, which became "Abhinav Bharat". In a meeting at Nasik in 1904, Savarkar explained that this new body would work on the lines of 'Young Italy' formed by Mazinni. The meeting was attended by youth from all over Maharashtra. The flag adopted by this body had the three colours similar to our present day flag. Only the middle colour, as can be expected of a revolutionary body was Red and not White and had 'Vande Mataram' written on it. Saffron colour at the top had Lotus while Crescent and the Moon found place on Green colour at the bottom. Thus Hindus and the Muslims were to be united in the revolutionary bond of blood in the quest for Independence. It is this flag that was waved as the flag of Independent India at Stuttgart in Germany on August 22, 1907 by Madam

Cama during the meet of the International Socialists Congress to the great discomfiture of the British delegates.

About two hundred people participated in the Nasik meet and took the following Oath, which is reproduced for the awe inspiring language in an atmosphere, when Congress was not even demanding Home Rule let alone Complete Independence. The second important point which comes out is the secular nature of the oath making the body open to all without distinction of Caste, Class, Religion or Language; divisions which are the bane of our country. Those who accuse Savarkar out of ignorance or prejudice, of fermenting Communalism would well to read this in its entirety and try to absorb its meaning along with the symbolism inherent in the flag.

In the name of God

In the name of Bharat Mata (Mother India).

In the name of all the martyrs that have shed their blood for Bharat Mata.

By the love, innate in all men and women, that I bear to the land of my birth and wherein lie the scared ashes of my forefathers and which is the cradle of my children.

By the tears of the Hindi Mothers for their children whom the foreigner has enslaved, imprisoned, tortured and killed.

*I *** convinced that without Absolute Political Independence or Swaraj my country can never rise to the exalted position among the nations of the earth which is her due.*

And convinced also that Swaraj can never be attained except by the waging of a bloody and relentless war against the foreigner,

Solemnly and sincerely swear that I shall from this moment do everything in my power to fight for independence and place the Lotus Crown of Swaraj on the head of my mother;

And with this object, I join the Abhinav Bharat, the revolutionary society of all Hindustan, and swear that I shall ever be true and faithful to this solemn oath, and that I shall obey the orders of this body.

If I betray this body the whole or any part of this solemn Oath or if I betray this body or any other body working with a similar object

May I be doomed to the fate of a perjurer.

A little known fact is that Congress sessions were used by Abhinav Bharat and other revolutionary societies such as Anushilan Society as a common meeting ground and also for recruiting members from the sympathetic Congress Extremists. Indeed the fourth annual convention of Abhinav Bharat was held secretly at Surat along with the Congress Session. 'The Lathi wielding volunteers who rushed to back up Tilak' noticed by the British Intelligence were none other than these members of Abhinav Bharat including Baba Savarkar. The British intelligence was thus fully justified of being deeply suspicious of motives of the Extremist Group amongst Congress led by Tilak.

Very soon Abhinav Bharat had spread its web throughout the country. A cardinal principle that was followed was that the members would not know each other in the interests of safety. Only some important leaders were aware of each other's identity. Different branches worked autonomously as a Confederation united very often by no

more than ties of patriotism and study of common literature which included 'Forst's Secret Society of European Revolution' and later 'How the Russian Revolution is Organised'

The issue of resort to violence was one over which Savarkar agonized for a considerable time. As he says " In Abhinav Bharat we deliberated over many practical and philosophical issues. For instance, why did we want independence - We did so due to a firm belief that the progress of a nation is stunted in absence of political freedom. Then the next issue that troubled us was whether the independence that we sought a bloodthirsty independence ? No ! For it was not as if we were fond of advocating violence for the sake of violence. If someone had persuaded the British to leave Bharat without blood shed, if the Congress Moderates or the Extremists had any real chance of obtaining Independence through means legal to the British, we would have been most happy. After all we were also humans. The attractions of life and particularly those of the youth were as alluring to us as anybody else. But the 'If' haunted us, for to us it was an impossible 'If'. Nevertheless, we considered all movements against the British, be those of the Moderates or the extremists of the Congress as beneficial to the cause of Independence. Though our firm belief was their methods were necessary but insufficient to attain Independence. Resort to arms was the inevitable last step without which those attempts were bound to flounder. *We were not against the British race but we were against the British occupation of Bharat.*

Some of us were also troubled by the inherent secrecy of our activities and the consequent need to be untruthful. A study of various incidents of the history convinced us that neither truth by itself is a virtue or nor secrecy by itself is a sin. The truth which harms the mankind is a sin. Secrecy becomes necessary when the forces of tyranny make an open conduct for the good of people impossible. Our goal was not to seek private profit but to work for the good of the nation in an environment that was tyrannical. Thus there was nothing wrong morally or sinful in our conduct of a secret society which advocated violence.

This also brought us to the realization that while violence was acceptable as a last resort against foreign forces of occupation, the resort to this extreme measure would be positively sinful when Independence is obtained and the country is ruled by a constitution ratified by the people"

These views were to be the bedrock of Savarkar's beliefs throughout his life as is seen from his writings from time to time spread over more than sixty years of his public life. Indeed the very public dissolution of Abhinav Bharat in May 1952, after the Independence was won, was the living proof that his actions matched his thought process.

By 1905, the political climate started changing. Partition of Bengal was announced which met with tremendous resistance. A wave of Swadeshi and boycott of all foreign goods started all over the country. The Japanese victory over Russia laid to rest the foolish notion of inherent European superiority over the Asiatic races. Lala Lajpat Rai appealed from Punjab to Indians to become arbitrators of their own destiny. Surendranath

Banerjee encouraged the people to rise against the British. Tilak's call for Swaraj became more strident. In this charged atmosphere, how could Savarkar stand aloof?

The Savarkar group became ardent promoters of Bharatiya made goods. Representing the students at a meeting on the 1st October, 1905, Savarkar urged his countrymen to abstain from purchasing foreign goods and suggested that they make a bonfire of English and Foreign goods on the Dassara Day, the holy day when Hindus all over the country burn effigies of Ravan, symbolizing the triumph of the Good over forces of Evil. Lokmanya Tilak was invited to the occasion. In his august presence, city of Pune witnessed the first bonfire of foreign goods in Bharat on October 7, 1905. Its flame whirled high in the sky and singed the British sympathizers.

The leading role played by Savarkar earned him a fine and rustication from the college hostel. The moderates led by Gokhale and including Gandhi, who was then at South Africa criticized the movement of Boycott and particularly the bonfire in the belief that it had its roots in hatred and violence. Sixteen years later, however, Gandhiji changed his opinion and made a public bonfire in Bombay on November 17, 1921. It was perhaps not a mere coincidence that Savarkar was born two years before birth of Congress. Perhaps it was a way of the fate to signal that Savarkar would always ahead of Congress in matters of nationalist thoughts and actions.

The turbulence of public activities was not to keep him from passing the year end examination. With graduation, it was now time to move to Bombay to study Law. The Bhagur typhoon now hit Bombay where he was to initiate people like B.G. Kher who was to become Chief Minister of Bombay in 1935 and J.B.Kriplani destined to be the future President of Congress, into Abhinav Bharat. The prolific writer Savarkar started contributing to 'Vihari' a local Marathi Weekly, which offered him a convenient platform for propagating the cause of Abhinav Bharat. Now his fame had spread through out Maharashtra and invitations to deliver public speeches came flooding in. The public activities and postures of Savarkar invited the attention of the British Criminal Intelligence Department (CID) as a potential troublemaker for the Raj. Abhinav Bharat however escaped their notice.

At this time Savarkar came across a scholarship for study in London, being offered by Pandit Shymaji Krishna Varma, a wealthy Indian who had left India since 1897, fearful of arrest for being in touch with Tilak, who was out of favour with the authorities. After lying low for some time, he came to prominence with offer of a grant of £ 1000 to Oxford University in memory of Herbert Spencer in 1904. By January 1905, he started the "Home Rule Society" and started monthly magazine "Indian Sociologist". The language used in the monthly magazine was far more seditious than that used by even the Congress Extremists taking full advantage of the much greater personal liberty available in the U.K. than in the Indian colony. He also made a proposal to offer scholarship to Indian students for studying in London but with a provision that the scholarship holder should not ever take up a job in the Government. His proposal sent to Congress was not read out in the Congress session as 'it contained such severe denunciation of the Indian Government that it seemed inexpedient for me to read ...considering how important it is

for the Congress to maintain its character for loyalty and moderation'. On July 1, 1905, he opened a hostel 'India House' at 65 Cromwell Avenue, Highgate, London. It is this India House that became the hub of revolutionary activities in London after Savarkar's arrival in London. Pandit Varma was to shift his residence to Paris in September 1907, when the things became too hot, leaving the young Savarkar in charge of the India House.

However all this was still in future. The experiences in Nasik, Pune and now Bombay had convinced Savarkar and his friends that Abhinav Bharat needed to go global. A dispassionate analysis made clear to them, their own limitations. The British had taken care to castrate the potential of Bharat to ever again pose a threat to their rule, as in 1857. The lessons of the 'Mutiny' were well learned. No Indian could become a commissioned officer in the army, the entry into which was restricted to a few so-called Martial races, a euphemism for those provinces, which had remained loyal to the Raj in 1857. On the side of the Civil Administration, though the iron frame, the Indian Civil Services, were thrown open to the Indians, the intake was restricted to the Indian elite, as the competitive exam was held only in the U.K. The state of mind of the elite can easily be gauged by utterances of the Moderates in Congress, who were no doubt rank revolutionaries compared to the Indian Elite; making sure that only the most loyal could even attempt an entry into the ICS. So thorough were they in their scrutiny of the candidates that throughout the freedom struggle, no ICS officer ever resigned in support of the nationalist demand despite the heaven and earth moved by Mahatma Gandhi. Subhas Chandra Bose, being among the very few exceptions. To top it all there was the Arms act, an unprecedented act of disarming an entire nation. Let alone the Revolutionaries, even the apostle of Non Violence Mahatma Gandhi found the act reprehensible. This is the way he has described his efforts to enlist people to join the British War effort during the World War I. "One of the arguments I had used was distasteful to the Commissioner: 'Among the many misdeeds of the British rule in India, history will look upon the Act depriving a whole nation of arms, as the blackest. If we want the Arms Act to be repealed, if we want to learn the use of arms, here is a golden opportunity.'"

With doors to even the access to corridors of power so firmly closed in India, who but a fool could dream of overthrowing the might of the British Empire on the strength of a few hundred unarmed members, however committed they might be. The rolls of Abhinav Bharat were full of people, who were anything but fools. They had already spent years in propagating the cause of political independence in an environment, where their own countrymen had done their best to ridicule and stop them. The seed of Independence was now firmly planted in many villages and towns of the country, unknown to the enemy. Hundreds of members were ready to sacrifice themselves; fully aware of the consequences, being trained both intellectually and physically. **Globalisation was now necessary to launch the final offensive.**

Savarkar grasped the outstretched hand of Shaymji Varma and won the scholarship on the strength of the recommendation of his childhood heroes, Tilak and Paranjpee. His own Father-in-law too promised financial help. With the flanks so secured, Savarkar set sail to London on the steamer 'Persia' on June 9, 1906. The reason for going was, as he

explained “ Ostensibly to become a Barrister but that is only the means. In England I would get a chance to influence those people who would later hold positions of great power, in their formative years. Thus a small propaganda in favour of revolution in England will have the potential of soon spreading all over Bharat. Moreover, one Public Meeting in the heart of London propagating revolution would have far more impact on the British people than thousands of such meetings in Bharat. One revolutionary act in London spreads the cause of Indian Independence through out the continent of Europe. The Congress leaders of all the hues keep on repeating ad nauseum that ‘We are loyal to the British Crown. We desire British Rule. All we want are some improvements.’ Thus the people in Europe and America genuinely believe that not only we want the British rule but are indeed fit only to live under their rule. We, the revolutionaries are now going to proclaim to the world from our base in the heart of the enemy camp that not only we do not want improvements in the British Rule; we do not want the British rule itself. Finally the climate in Europe is much more conducive to gaining access to the means of the revolution, the much need Arms, the skills to make Bombs, which is simply impossible under present circumstances in Bharat. The most important thing is that the stay in London can be fruitfully utilized to make contacts with the powers that are hostile to the British, so that the opportunity of a great war between them can be utilized for the cause of Indian Independence. *It is true that all this is but a dream but has anything worthwhile ever been achieved without a dream*”

What a shame that we, the heirs to these great revolutionaries, fifty years after Independence keep on either dreaming of foolish globalisation without regard to its consequences for us or demand a level playing field. Have we lost our will to succeed in the world on our own?

The revolutionaries failed in their first attempt. All of us know that. But do we not realize that this failure was more glorious than many of our so-called successes. And did they really fail? Had they had not done the impossible of making the word ‘Independence’ so respectable in the nation that even the Congress was forced to recognise it in its vocabulary. The British, who were forced to leave Bharat within forty years of Savarkar landing in London certainly knew their worth very well and therefore had spared no efforts at demoralising them completely, an act that was doomed to fail.

Let us now look at the story of Mazzini – the Italian revolutionary who was a source of inspiration to Savarkar.

Chapter II-2

Resurrection of Italy Mazzini

Mention Italy and the image that comes to the mind of is the land of Pizzas and wines, where a Mafioso lurks behind every corner wearing a 'Bennetton' sweater and a 'Gucci' watch. Any connection with India ? Oh! Sonia Gandhi of course but Italy as a land that provided revolutionary inspiration to Bharat; most educated Indians would dismiss the very notion without so much as a second thought. Yet, we have already seen that the Abhinav Bharat was modeled after 'Young Italy' founded by Mazzini in 1830. It was not the fascination of a dreamy youth in a far away land while in search of his own unreal dream. The move needs to be looked at in light of the realities of early nineteenth century.

When Savarkar reached London in 1906, unification of Italy that had taken the continent by the storm, was an event that had taken place a mere thirty-five years before. Rome now ranked alongside London, Paris, St. Petersburg, Vienna and Constantinople as place to which full embassies were accredited. A sure sign of its arrival as a full member of the European Great Power system. There was a decisive change in the economic life of Italy. A considerable shift to heavy industry had taken place. Iron, steel, Ship building, automobiles, textiles - the glamour industries of the times, were in full blast. Increasing urbanisation was in evidence. Agriculture showed every sign of keeping pace with the industry. Banking system readjusted itself to provide credit to boost the economic growth. No wonder, the real income spiraled upwards. The nation which had existed as a mere notion in the minds of a few of the enslaved patriots in 1800, a place that found it tossed from the French occupation to the Austrian; had within hundred years arrived on the center stage of the world. Finally, there was the mystique of Mazzini, widely acclaimed as the intellectual guru of spate of revolutions that, half a century before, in 1848, had rocked not only Italy but also almost the entire continent of Europe. The man who had spent a lifetime in fighting for the cause of Italy. How could any revolutionary fighting so similar odds not be entrapped in his thrall?

But Savarkar was no blind follower. He studied the works of Mazzini closely. The fascination of Savarkar with Mazzini only grew till he came to acknowledge this long dead Italian as his Guru. After an in depth study he soon came to the conclusion that Mazzini's methods offered practical solutions of relevance to the slavery of Bharat. Moreover, this European symbol was just the powerful antidote that he needed to fight the apathy of his own countrymen to the cause of Independence. How deep rooted was the apathy of Indians to Independence can be gleaned from the following speech that reverberated in the city of London on the 1st July 1905.

“ As the things stand, loyalty to Great Britain means treachery to India. Indians have uptill now hugged their chains. From England itself there is nothing to be hoped. It is the immoderate men, the determined men, the fanatical men who will work out the salvation

of India by herself. Some of those who are here this afternoon may live to see the first fruit of its triumphant success.”

Pray, who was this brave soul openly challenging the British Raj, Lala Lajpat Rai, Dadabhai Navrojee, Pandit Varma or Madam Cama; all of whom were present on the occasion. No !! It was not any one of them. It was not even any Indian. No Indian except fools like Savarkar dreamt of Independence at this time. It was an Englishman, Mr. Hydmann.

And how were these chains of slavery to be broken. Yet another Englishman, Townsend came to our rescue. In October 1905 issue of the Indian Socialist, he was quoted as saying “ the empire would collapse like a house of cards and every ruling man a starving prisoner in his own house. He could not move or feed himself or get water..if anyone refuses to buy or sell any commodity or to have any transactions with any class of people, he commits no crime known to the law. It is therefore plain that Indians can obtain emancipation by simply refusing to help their foreign masters without incurring the evils of a violent evolution.’

Independence and Civil Disobedience as the means to attain it, the two principal messages went unheeded by the Gokhale, Gandhi Congress for a full twenty-five years before being adopted in toto. No wonder, one never hears the name of these two British Gentlemen in Congress sponsored versions of the Independence struggle.

Why did Savarkar, who at this time was already fired by the zeal of attaining Independence choose to disregard this ingenious path to his goal. After all, as we have seen, he was no bloodthirsty monster out to kill innocent British people. His Patriotism was not so shallow as to ignore a good solution merely because it was the brainchild of a British Gentleman. Around this time, when his mind was ceaselessly searching for solutions to the vexing problem, an interesting scenario unfolded in France. Now, France, was not just another European nation. It was the great laboratory for experimenting with new forms of Government arising out of revolution after revolution in the period between 1789 to 1848. Thus happenings in this land attracted attention everywhere.

In the first fortnight of July 1907, Southern France was seething with discontent over imposition of certain taxes by the central government at Paris. The farmers in the South opposed these taxes. They were backed to the hilt by the people. Massive peaceful demonstrations were order of the day. The churches and schools overflowed with people, some of whom took to sleeping on the street, braving vagaries of the nature. Students boycotted the schools. Government servants, almost all of them junior assistants, resigned their jobs. The elected representatives of the province wired their resignation to Paris. The Army refused to accept orders to shoot people and break up the demonstrations.

It was a glorious display of Non Violent Passive Resistance. The episode demonstrated the great extent to which this mode of resistance could effect a change. At the same time, to Savarkar, it also exposed the limitations of this solution.

The determined Government did not yield. Gradually the superior oppressive forces at the command of the Government together with growing fissures in the People's movement enabled it to gain the upper hand. The young Savarkar was deeply influenced by these events across the English Channel. He noted the failure of this undoubtedly novel form of protest of the French people against their own Government. The reason for the limitations lay, according to Savarkar in the extraordinary demands it made on the common people, who being poor had more pressing needs such as the necessity to earn the daily livelihood, sapping their strength against a prolonged stand off against the Government, which faced no such problem. If this was the fate of Passive Resistance in France by the French people against their own Government; what realistic chance did it have in Bharat, where the problems of the common people were far more acute and where the opposition was against an alien Government which was far less sympathetic, wondered Savarkar. The episode reinforced his belief that while Non Violent Passive Resistance was indeed one desirable way of protest but by itself it could not succeed. The tried and proven method of Mazzini was far more attractive.

What was the history of Italy which made its arrival on the World Stage so alluring to people across the world in the early Twentieth century ? A small diversion to its' past would not be out of place here.

Italy, once the heart of the mighty Roman Empire had fragmented into a number of sovereign states since its passing. With the rise of Austrian Habsberg Empire, these tiny states became easy game for its imperial ambitions. By the eighteenth century, not only had Italy lost its political independence but the very notion of it as a nation had ceased to exist. It is to Napoleon Bonaparte that must go the credit for planting the seed of the notion of a unified state ruled by linguistically and culturally coherent Italian people. His rhetoric fired the imagination of the people but his actions crushed them.

It was in 1796, that this 'lank haired Corsican' was given the charge of launching an attack on Italy, then a mere province of the Austrian Empire with which France was at war. In a matter of a few weeks, the ragged French army on the frontier of the Maritime Alps was transformed into an invincible force. 'Soldiers of the army of Italy' the young General exhorted ' I will lead you into the most fertile plains in the world. You will find honour, glory and riches. Will you be found wanting in courage ?' Within next twelve months, the whole of Northern Italy was overrun. Bonaparte's tactical mastery first demonstrated on 10 May 1796 at Bridge of Lodi, delivered him strategic domination. Milan was liberated; Mantua was reduced by siege; Austrian resistance was broken at Rivoli. The road was opened into Carinthia and Vienna itself was awaiting attack.

Napoleon had launched himself on a career that was to dazzle the world but he had no intention of creating a united Italy. For him the Italian people were mere spoils of conquest. The map of Italy was drawn and redrawn over next two decades depending on the fortunes of the Napoleon army. Neither the French nor the Austrians showed least regard for the aspirations of the Italians themselves. Bonaparte's initial arrangements of 1797 were overthrown by 1801 but were reinstated and extended in subsequent campaigns. Five local Republics formed in 1797-99 - Lombardy, Geona, Naples, Lucca

and Rome, were the flagships of the revolutionary order. They were joined by other transient entities such as Principality of Piombino and the Kingdom of Etruria, until merged after 1805 into the French Empire or the Kingdom of Naples or onto the Kingdom of Northern Italy. The ancient Papal states were abolished. The Pope, Pious VI, was deprived of his temporal powers and died in the French custody at Valence. Pious VII ended up for five years under French arrest.

With the final defeat of Napoleon on the April 11, 1814; the Austrians found themselves firmly installed in Italy, retaining the possession of the once free city-states of Venetia and Lombardy. Republican and the nationalists' movements were forced underground but the Napoleonic experiences greatly enhanced national sentiments in Italy. The Italian national liberation movement ' il Risorgimento - the Resurgence' struggled for over three quarters of a century before attaining its objective in 1871. Its origins lay among the secret independence societies, among them the famous Carbonari, who launched the abortive revolt in Naples (1820), Turin (1821), and Rome (1830), and the Giovane Italia or 'Young Italy' of Giuseppe Mazzini. National revolutionary and Prophet, Mazzini spent much of his life in exile, in Marseilles, Berne and London. He created a national ideology, roused his compatriots from apathy, and called on sympathetic rulers, like Charles Albert of Sardinia, to support them. In 1834 he founded an international branch of his campaign, Young Europe, which trained a network of conspirators for preparing democratic constitutions all over the continent.

1848, the year of revolutions, brought Italy to forefront of the eruptions sweeping Europe. Independent republics were proclaimed in Venice and Rome. Sicily and Naples turned on their Bourbon monarch, Ferdinand II. Charles-Albert launched a 'Holy War' on Austria, hoping to benefit from the revolt of Milan. All were crushed amidst the counter attacks of General Radetzky and merciless bombardments of 'King Bomba'. Mazzini's slogan ' Italia Fara da se - Italy will do it alone, had failed. His romantic associate Giuseppe Garibaldi, who had fought both in Rome and in Venice, fled to South America.

Conditions improved only a decade later. Cavour's Sardinia was converted to the Italian cause as the best means of dislodging the Austrians. After the fine performance of the Sardinian troops in the Crimea, Napoleon III asked quaintly 'What can I do for Italy ?' A Franco - Sardinian pact was duly signed. France undertook to support Sardinia in the North against the Austrians whilst continuing to defend the Papal States in the center.

Three wars later the game was over. In 1859-60, the victors at Magenta and Solferino assured the success of the Franco - Sardinian attack on the Austrian Italy; whilst the sensational private expedition of Garibaldi's 'Thousand Redshirts' secured the fall of Sicily and Naples. Plebiscites in Parma, Modena, and Tuscany all voted for Italy; France took Savoy And Nice; Austria still held Venetia ; and the French still ruled in Rome. But in May 1861, an Italian Parliament proclaimed Victor Emmanuel II king of Italy. In 1866, with Austria at war with Prussia, Italy seized the remainder of Papal States and confined the Pope to Vatican. Except for the Irentino states (South Tyrol) and Istria. In 1871, the Kingdom of Italy was complete. Cavour was dead, Garibaldi retired to the isle of Caprera, Mazzini, the republican still in exile was to die heartbroken in 1872; for Italy

was free, united but not yet a Republic. The enclosed map gives the pace of Unification of Italy, 1859-70.

The heart rendering romantic story of Mazzini was not a full four decades old when Savarkar landed in London. The ashes of the revolution were still hot. What could be more thrilling than this saga of uniting a nation and struggling life long to free it from foreign domination. The story that had occurred in heart Europe and in which French, the traditional enemies of British had played such a major part. This was just the powerful symbol that Savarkar needed to achieve his own dreams. Within a week of reaching London, Savarkar started looking for literature on Mazzini. The kindly housekeeper of the India House proved to be of great help. The more he read, the more he realized the appropriateness of Mazzini as the symbol that he needed to fire his own countrymen. Small states, provincial loyalties, lost ancient heritage, crushing foreign domination, a failed revolution in middle of the century; all that could be said about the nineteenth century Italy was equally true for Bharat of the same period.

Indians may have watched the fight of Tantia Tope, the Bharatiya hero of 1857, of whom we shall hear more later, from a distance. But the news dispatches of his continuing to elude the British dragnet in 1858 and 1859 were read with great interest in Europe, which was then the hot bed of revolutionary activities. It is said that Garibaldi was so enthused that he wanted to go and join him but the planned insurrection of 1860 in Italy prevented this international revolutionary alliance.

The exploits of Mazzini were known in the nineteenth century Bharat. Leaders like Bipin Chandra Pal and Surendra Nath had acquainted their young followers with the stories of this Italian hero. Several secret societies had even been formed in Bengal, which had done no serious revolutionary work but did give a boost to the cause of patriotism. Lala Lajpat Rai had heard the lecture of Surendra Nath in 1884 and been deeply influenced by Mazzini. Some articles had also appeared in Maharashtra press. All this, no doubt, played some role in making the soil of Bengal, Punjab and Maharashtra fertile for revolutionary activity that was to rock the Raj in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

What was more striking to Savarkar was the close similarity that seemed to exist between his own work in Bharat and that of Mazzini in Italy. The segregation of the revolutionary activities into secret and public bodies, both dedicated to the same cause of Independence. The need for non-violent legal struggle to arouse patriotism, the importance of making contacts with the other nations inimical to the foreign power controlling the nation, sedition in the native press, use of individual assassination to provoke large scale uprisings. 'Were these not the very issues that had been discussed on a number of occasions in the Abhinav Bharat' wondered Savarkar. Finally, there was the cynical reaction of the older, experienced leadership, the public apathy, the ridicule that greeted the concept of Independence - very odds that had faced Savarkar and his friends in Bharat, had also been the lot of Mazzini.

In 1906, Mazzini was a Great Revolutionary, back in 1830, when he had started, he was a foolish dreamer. Savarkar was convinced that Abhinav Bharat was on the right track. But

this was not enough. This knowledge had also to be shared with his friends in Bharat. What a better way than to translate Mazzini's own Autobiography in Marathi and publish it in the form of a book. The young man started his work in right earnest. By 28th September, 1906, the book was ready. Who could this be dedicated but to the childhood heroes of Savarkar - Tilak and Paranjpe. The manuscript was soon on its way to Bharat for publication.

Who was to take on this arduous task ? Who but Savarkar's own elder brother - Baba. The resourceless young man struggling to make his ends meet but with implicit faith in his younger brother. The very first job that Baba had to undertake was to obtain the permission of Tilak and Paranjpe. The veteran Tilak went through the manuscript and quickly realized the seriousness with which it would be taken by the British. 'Consequences would be severe, you would face endless difficulties', he warned the young man, who refused to cow down. Seeing his obvious dedication, Tilak relented and gave permission to have the book dedicated to him. With this, Paranjpe also followed suit. Now, a publisher had to be found, who would take on this dangerous job. Not for the love of money, which Baba did not have anyway but for the love of the nation. Fortunately, a printer was located and the manuscript went into printing on 17th December 1906. The book was available within next six months and soon became a craze in Maharashtra. First edition of 2000 copies was sold out within a month. The authorities woke to the danger and banned the book; preventing all attempts to print the second edition. This work of Savarkar as indeed a lot else, was to remain banned till 1946. In next few years, the very possession of the book came to be considered as a proof of Sedition and invited penal consequences. Let us keep that story for the time being.

For the present, why not take a look at the Introduction written by Savarkar, which made this book so dangerous to the British Raj. Mazzini himself was given political asylum by British Government in London but his Works became so dangerous thirty-five years after his death that they were banished from its Indian colony by the same powers.

It is nearly a hundred years since this was written. Written in time when the British Empire was in its hey days. Not a trace of it remains any longer. Not by accident but by the fires lit by revolutionaries all over the world and led by those in Bharat. Savarkar was but one of the many soldiers, who sacrificed their all in the struggle to attain this. In 1906, the very word Independence was enough to send shivers down the spine of the Congress leaders, save for a few honourable exceptions. Within a year, it was to expel Tilak and other extremists from its rank, who knew not that the British Empire in India was ordained by the Providence for its own Good and demanding instead a substantial autonomy from the Raj. And as if this was not enough, they were also giving encouragement to reckless youths like Baba.

The successors of the very Gokhale / Gandhi Congress which had meted out such shabby treatment to Tilak, not to talk of revolutionaries like Savarkar and countless others, today with a perfectly straight face claims the ENTIRE credit for winning Independence. In the Golden Jubilee year of the Independence, is it not time for Congress to acknowledge the

debt it owes to those who made the word Independence respectable to it through their sacrifices ? Or is this too much to hope ??

This expectation of making amends to the forgotten warriors is not the principle reason for studying the old works of Savarkar. That at best can only be a partial reason. The more important motivation in studying this work is the moral and philosophical base that it seeks to provide for the human actions, of which political activities are but an integral part. It is one thing to blame the Congress for appropriating the whole credit for the Independence and ignoring the revolutionaries. But then as the old saying goes 'Point one finger at the other and you find three fingers pointed at yourself.' The bane of Independent India has not been Politics 'the last refuge of scoundrels', as the Indian intellectuals have persuaded themselves to believe. It is their own studied indifference to this vital democratic activity that has made the nation what it is today. Those of us who choose not to exercise even the basic democratic right of Voting in the Elections have no business attacking Congress for neglecting the Revolutionaries. 'It is better that we are forgotten in a nation, where the only pursuit of the Elite is Satisfaction of its own Greed to the exclusion of everything else', they themselves would have told us.

A synopsis of Savarkar's Introduction to his Marathi translation of Mazzini's Autobiography is offered here. Both keep on referring to Independence. In their time and age, confronted as they were with the bigger problem of alien occupation of their lands, they could not have referred to anything else but Political Independence. Times have changed. Faxes, e-mail, Computers, Satellites; instruments that were inconceivable in their times have become items of every day use. But unfortunately some things have remained the same.

In Bharat poverty continues to make mockery of the Political Independence to millions of people. Have we only changed our masters from tyrannical foreigners to tyrannical Indians - From the White Sahib to the Brown !! During the Colonial rule, we could rightly blame the British for draining the wealth away. Who but ourselves can we blame now. *Substitute the Political Independence by Economic Independence in the works of Savarkar and Mazzini; and their unfinished Agenda will strike the eye - thereby making both of them relevant to our times, long after their deaths. The means will necessarily have to keep pace with the change in times.* Let us keep this broader goal for studying their work at the back of the mind while we delve into the amazing logical details that they have left behind of their works.

Savarkar was writing for conveying to his friends, the same excitement that he himself felt on reading Mazzini, so as to facilitate spreading the cause of Independence all over the country through Abhinav Bharat and its allied societies. At the same time, he wished also to put their activities on sound historically proven, logical foundations so that they would not suffer from intellectual disorientation on being confronted with adversity. All this had to be done keeping within the Four Corners of the Colonial Laws. His success can be measured by the fact that the British Executive in India, unrestrained by any notion of fair play or justice, could promptly ban his work but under watchful eyes of the

British and the European Press, they could not take any action against the author himself in London.

In the introduction, Savarkar took the readers through various aspects of the works of Mazzini in the struggle against the Austrian occupation. Its implications for contemporary Bharat were too clear to be missed out by anyone but an imbecile. Abhinav Bharat had always cautioned its members against a fanatic breed of patriotism that rejected any and everything that was foreign. Savarkar now clarified this position further saying “ Principles of Science are not limited by constraints of time and place. Once proven, they do not become false simply with passage of time or because the place of its application has changed. This is applicable to all branches of Sciences - Political Science is no exception to this rule’ Or as we can add ‘neither is Economics’. ‘Look around you’ he implored ‘search for such principles that have been discovered by other nations at great cost and through efforts spanning several centuries. For it would be the height of the folly to ignore what others have learnt and grope in the dark every time to reinvent the Wheel. Pitiably would be the state of the nation that suffers from this cursed fate. It is to ensure that Bharat does not suffer from this fate that I look to Mazzini.”

A few years ago, one recalls attending a meeting where representatives of the industry were having an interaction with a senior executive of the World Bank. This elderly gentleman gently chided all of us “I notice all of you sincerely believe that India is a unique country where lessons learnt elsewhere do not hold good. You may like to consider that while India does have many things to teach to the world; there remain a few things the World can teach you. Lessons learnt elsewhere have their uses in this undoubtedly unique country too.’ We bristled at the audacity but Savarkar would no doubt have cheered this insolent foreigner.

‘The first Principle expounded by Mazzini was’ Savarkar wrote ‘Independence is the key to human existence as ordained by God. Slavery is incompatible with human welfare; for it leads to Untruth and Poverty. The two evils that not only retard the growth of people and the society that is not free but also affects the entire human race. For in the overall scheme of things, all human societies have their special contribution to make. When some societies are unable to fulfill their part due to their not being free, welfare of the entire human race is bound to be jeopardized. It is therefore the sacred duty of all true believers in God to wage a life long struggle for the cause of Independence with all available weapons, undeterred by the innumerable odds that may stand in the way of realizing Independence; without worrying about ‘What is in it for me.’”

‘Mazzini said - Use all available means and advocated use of violence but that came later. First and foremost, he was an advocate of Love. ‘Love is the only way to God. Love, my friends, Love your family, Love your nation, Love the entire human race’ exhorted Mazzini. ‘Love the Independence not only of Italy but also that of the other nations’ was Mazzini’s romantic concept according to Savarkar.

‘ These Principles’ noted Savarkar ‘ were not the empty dreams of a foolish young man. They had caused revolution throughout Europe in 1848 and inspired freedom-loving

people all over the world. The revolution of Italy, which was to succeed in 1871 after a long struggle spanning eight decades, itself was based on these dreams with which Young Italy was founded in 1830. It is these underlying principles that helped Italy in shunning Hate and Greed during its Freedom struggle, making it a 'Cause Celebre'; the world over. The resort to Violence was a sad decision taken by Mazzini in light of the unfortunate realities that prevail in the world. Principles that are not backed by the might of the sword, never carry much weight. It is this moral bond that enabled the Italian revolutionaries to shun Hate even as they resorted to Arms against the Austrian occupiers. Never did Mazzini allow his friends in Young Italy to forget the cardinal principle that the Sword is merely the means of driving the revolution and no more. Unrestrained use of the Sword, not backed by the revolutionary dreams was Sinful.'

'The question of separation of Religion and Politics also tormented Mazzini' observed Savarkar. 'He savagely attacked the notion of the gates of Heaven, if there be such a thing, being open to anyone who had neglected to serve the nation, whiling away his time in empty rituals of religion. He defined Politics as the means of serving the nation and contributing to the welfare of the Society. In his conception, Politics was therefore the way of discharging the debt of gratitude that we all owe to the soil that has nurtured us throughout the thick and thin of life. With this view of Politics, he attacked the high ground which the Priests occupied in his times in keeping away' as do the intellectuals do in our time 'from this Cesspool of Corruption. Does the Bible not hold the Independence of the human beings as sacred ? Is your country not being defiled by the loss of Independence. How can true religion enjoin anyone to keep away from the efforts to remove the tyrannical misrule that the land of your birth is being subjected to. If you truly believe in the sacredness of the spirit of Independence, if you really wish that all people should live together in peace and harmony, come and join us in our crusade for Independence. That alone would be a truly religious act.' Ringing words that have echoed in Churches, Temples, Mosques and Gurudwaras across the world. 'Mazzini is the rare revolutionary prophet in Europe who openly declared that true Religion and Politics are the two sides of the same coin' wrote Savarkar. He also felt that any Maratha 'is bound to see great deal of similarity in Mazzini and Ramdas, the Guru of the great Shivaji. Mazzini was only echoing the very words of this seventeenth century Bharatiya saint, when he said that the true test of a person's faith in his religion are the efforts made by him for liberation of people.'

In our own country, Mahatma Gandhi himself never separated Religion and Politics. Never did he fight shy of admitting his own Hindu identity. Time and again he had asked 'How can I who am a Hindu by birth, a Hindu by deed, a Hindu of Hindus in my way of living, be an enemy of Hindus?' It is only the post 1948 Congress which took to branding anyone who asserted that he was a Hindu as a Communalist. A notion fully backed by the SSPB. From where have they picked up this strange notion, one would dearly like to know. Typically, they dare not carry their arguments to their logical conclusion and also brand the Mahatma as a Communalist.

Getting back to Savarkar - 'Once the task of defining the intellectual base of the Young Italy was completed, Mazzini then turned to the more practical aspects of gaining

Independence. He suffered from no illusions that freedom could be had by pious appeals to the alien masters. He noted that Italy which led the world in the times of the Roman Empire was reduced to such dire straits that people did not have enough to eat even in places like Venice and Milan, which used to be prosperous centers of trade and commerce. The whole country had become a huge prison, where only an outward calm prevailed but that was nothing other than proverbial peace of the graveyard. In these difficult times, the revolution sweeping Poland and Spain had enthused the Italians. The first manifestation of Patriotism was in love of Swadeshi, goods that were made in Italy. The movement grew and soon things came to such a pass that in Milan students would not allow anyone to smoke Austrian tobacco' At this juncture Savarkar took a detour to the boycott of British Tea in the United States of America before its independence from the British rule. ' The boycott movement grew both in Austria and USA and gave rise to feelings in both the places that it was not British Tea or the Austrian tobacco that the people did not want. They did not want the foreign rule itself. The Swadeshi movement was transformed in both the places into a War for Independence.' The implications for Bharat, where the Partition of Bengal had led to the Swadeshi movement, in which Savarkar himself had participated, were more than clear.

'The patriots before Mazzini had aroused Italian patriotism to the extent of supporting Swadeshi but how was the cause of Independence to proceed further. It was scarcely possible to openly demand Austrian ouster. Symbolic language would not be understood by the common people. There were no legitimate forums available to propagate the cause of Italian freedom. It is this environment that forced Mazzini to turn to formation of the secret society - Young Italy. 'Where truth is not forbidden, where the nation is not a huge prison, secret societies are certainly sinful but where these conditions do not obtain, they are the only way forward' was the categorical assertion of Mazzini.' wrote Savarkar.

'Secret societies gave a forum where the need for independence could be openly debated without the fear of inviting wrath of the authorities or in a manner that was impossible in any open forum in the Austrian Italy. In case the Secret Society was exposed, it served only to highlight the cause of Independence as People at large came to know of its existence. Moreover, the nature of its organisation enabled a few people to frighten the Government. 'We were a mere hundred but Governments across Europe lived in our dread' - was Mazzini's view. Finally the secret societies enabled a properly planned Independence War. The preparation for War was on two levels. Educational and Martial; which were mutually reinforcing each other. The educational activities of Young Italy covered four aspects. Need for Independence, Unity, Equity and Democracy. Most of which were missing in the Italy of 1830. The need for Independence was already being felt by the time Young Italy came into being. No longer were the Italians content to live under the slavery of Austrians. Unity though felt to be desirable was considered a pipe dream in view of the continual provincial strife that was the bane of the Italian states. Mazzini proposed a solution. Any revolution by Young Italy in any province would be carried out under the Italian banner, whether or not other provinces were involved. This, in Mazzini's view would enable people to submerge their narrow provincial loyalties in the larger cause of Italy. The next on the agenda was Equity for this unity was bound to be short lived unless there was equity amongst the provinces, felt Mazzini. Alien

tyrannical rule could not be substituted by local tyrannical rule without causing a breakdown of the nation. Finally, the power belonged to the people. So nothing less than a democratic form of Government was acceptable and this indeed was the only guarantee that Independence, Unity and Equity would be maintained in the long run.’

‘The Martial preparation of Young Italy’ informed Savarkar ‘was equally interesting, and which proceeded simultaneously. The Italian youth traveled to Spain, America, Germany and Poland in search of knowledge about use of Arms. A knowledge which was for them impossible to obtain in Italy, then. Some of them were storing Arms on the Italian borders in states friendly to this activity so that any insurrection in Italy could be quickly supplied with Arms. Plans were also made of shipping Arms to Italy in secrecy by ships. Still others carried out the dangerous work of manufacturing weapons within Italy. Finally, the Italian soldiers in the Austrian army were being instigated to rise in rebellion against their foreign masters.

Young Italy was under no illusions that its ragtag army would be able to take on the might of the Austrian army in an open fight. So like Shivaji they decided to resort to the Guerilla warfare, as that alone could be their salvation. This was sought to be complimented by enticing states, which were hostile to the Austrians to extend their military support to the cause of Italian freedom.’ The preparation was no doubt sound and scientific but this did not mean that Young Italy suffered from no set backs or disappointments on its way. The reality was harsh. As Savarkar noted ‘The rebellion of 1820 had already been crushed. Nor was the 1831 effort led by Young Italy more successful. With this defeat Mazzini himself was soon in exile. A much more serious attempt in 1848 was also fated to fail notwithstanding the sensation it created in Europe, which was engulfed in wave after wave of revolution in one state after the other. Finally in 1859, some partial success was attained. In 1866, Venice was freed. Rome followed in 1870. And then it was matter of time before success crowned the struggle for Independent United Italy. But it still was not the democratic Italy of Mazzini’s dreams. He was to die in 1872, without seeing the realization of his dream.

1830 -1871, forty one years of ceaseless efforts is what took for partial realization of Mazzini’s dreams but it is the sound preparation that brought Young Italy closer to its eventual triumph with every defeat.’ ‘Mazzini was an eagle’ wrote Savarkar in reverence ‘he had set sights on attaining a goal that was not even visible to the shortsighted. Time and again he soared in the skies in pursuit of his dreams. Time and again he returned badly wounded but never shaken, never broken in spirits. The key issue that excited him was whether his Principles were morally sound. For he had an unshakable belief that success was a matter of time if the Principles guiding the efforts were correct. Denounced as a mad dreamer, impractical Prophet, he had the satisfaction of dying under the flag of free and united Italy. There was little more that he wanted in his life.’

The reverence with which Savarkar came to regard Mazzini was nothing short of the feelings of a disciple for his Guru. As we all know now, in true Bharatiya tradition, Savarkar was the disciple who was to surpass his own Guru.

Chapter II-3

The 1857 Great War of Independence History of Savarkar's Account

Mazzini story of the struggle against alien rulers in an ancient land that had become so much mired in defeat that it had lost its very identity as a Nation; created a sensation in Maharashtra. Blessed as it was by Tilak, the foremost leader of the freedom struggle at the time; soon became mandatory reader for every patriotic Indian. If the young Savarkar had done nothing else in life for his country, this one act of making this inspiring story available to his countrymen by itself would have made his place in the history secure. The very thought of stopping at this stage would, however, have been repugnant to Savarkar.

In London, he was like a man possessed. He was on the prowl for more such stories to shake his fellow countrymen out of the stupor that they had fallen in. If they could be rooted in the Bharatiya soil; so much the better. Vociferous reader that he was, the story of 1857 soon came to hold him in spell. The event was, then, still in the living memory of people but educated Indians could look at it only from the British eyes. The more he read, greater was his amazement at the callous neglect of this inspiring piece of history. A glorious page of Bharatiya heritage that the British had done their best to erase from the pages of history. Sadly, in this, as in many other areas, their success was near total.

This stirred Savarkar to the depth of his heart. He flung himself headlong into the research on 1857, oblivious of his wife and son waiting for him in India. So involved was he in the project that even the news of the untimely death of his three year old son failed to deter him.

To date, one of the very few Indians who have carried out a detailed study on the events of 1857 using the imperial records at London; remains Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. He for one would surely have not wished this distinction to be his passport to fame. His introduction to the original edition of his book "The Indian War of Independence - 1857" first published in 1909 is worth reproducing. He writes:

"Fifty years having passed by, the circumstances having changed and the prominent actors on both sides being no more, the account of the War of 1857 has crossed the limits of current politics and can be relegated to the realms of history.

When, therefore taking the searching attitude of an historian, I began to scan that instructive and magnificent spectacle, I found to my great surprise the brilliance of a War of Independence shining in 'the mutiny of 1857'. The spirits of the dead seemed hallowed by martyrdom, and out of the heap of ashes appeared forth sparks of a fiery inspiration. I thought that my countrymen would be most agreeably surprised, even as I was, at this deep buried spectacle in one of the most neglected corners of our history, if I could but show this to them by the light of research. So I tried to do the same and am able

to-day to present to my Indian readers this startling but faithful picture of the great events of 1857.

The nation that has no consciousness of its past has no future. Equally true is that a nation must develop its capacity not only of claiming a past but also of knowing how to use it for furtherance of its future. The nation ought to be master and not slave of its own history. For, it is absolutely unwise to try to do certain things now irrespective of special considerations simply because they had been once acted in the past. *The feeling of hatred against the Mahomedans was just and necessary in the times of Shivaji-but such a feeling would be unjust and foolish if nursed now, simply because it was the dominant feeling of the Hindus then.*

As almost all the authorities on which this work is based are English authors, for whom it must have been impossible to paint the account of the other side as elaborately and as faithfully as they have done their own...if some patriotic historian would go to northern India and try and collect (the Indian part of the story) from the very mouths of those who witnessed and perhaps took a leading part in the War...Will any patriotic historian undertake ..this while it is not yet too late.

Before laying down this pen, the only desire I want to express is that such a patriotic and yet faithful, a more detailed and yet coherent, history of 1857 may come forward in the nearest future from an Indian pen, so that this my humble writing may soon be forgotten!”

It is really tragic that Savarkar’s wish about his writing to be forgotten is on the verge of being fulfilled without any other Bharatiya account of 1857 emerging.

Savarkar’s motive in writing the history of 1857 was fairly straightforward. It was to place before the revolutionists an outline of a programme of organisation and action to enable them to prepare the nation for a future war of liberation. The ideal of absolute political independence and conviction that ultimate and inevitable means to realize the ideal could be no other than an armed national revolt against the foreign domination; were concepts which in those days - lay even beyond the horizon of the accepted political thought and action in India. The very thought was considered impractical, criminal or immoral by various shades of conventional political opinion. Savarkar wanted to conclusively establish that an epic struggle for Independence was launched, a mere fifty years ago, on the same soil; which came very close to succeeding. If the very first effort could nearly succeed, surely the next attempt had much more chances of achieving its goal, was his logical reasoning.

The goal was to “develop its capacity not only of claiming a past but also of knowing how to use it for furtherance of its future”, as he clearly stated in the Introduction.

The extent to which he succeeded is clear from the manner in which the book came to be used by freedom fighters in next forty years, even while the British maintained a strict ban on the book.

The book was written in Marathi by Savarkar, when he was a mere lad of twenty-six years. It failed to find a publisher in India, so strong was the fear of penal action. The manuscript was then translated in English by some young Indians, who were in London to appear for entrance examination of the Indian Civil Service. It was then sent to France for publication to escape prosecution from the British Government. The flames of French revolution that had once inspired the world with ringing cries of 'Liberty, Fraternity and Equality'; were well and truly extinguished. No publisher would run the risk of attracting the wrath of the British Government. Finally, it was in Holland where the book was first published. In the meanwhile, British Government had found the story so explosive that it chose to take the very unusual step of proscribing the book, even before it could be printed.

Once the book was published, it was smuggled into India with the help of Indian visitors to London. One of them was the then young Sikander Hayat Khan, who was later to become the Chief Minister of Punjab in British India. Soon afterwards, Savarkar himself was sentenced to fifty years of imprisonment on charges of waging war against the King and exiled to the islands of Andaman.

The flame of 1857 was not to be so easily extinguished. It came to occupy the central stage in the intellectual make up of revolutionaries of all hues. Gadhar Party, which attempted to incite a revolution in Punjab during the World War I, used the book widely. Bhagat Singh is also reported to have published this book in the late Twenties to arrange funds and inspire youth. A copy of this was sent to Savarkar, then in Ratnagiri, as a mark of respect. So popular was this book that copies are reported to have been sold for sums as high as Rs 300/- in those days.

Ras Bihari Bose, the famed freedom fighter in exile in Japan was also instrumental in getting the book published, which was later distributed to the soldiers of the Indian National Army, which attempted to free the country during the Second World war under the leadership of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

It became a regular feature for revolutionaries across the country to be caught with one or other copy of this book. The harassed British authorities came to take the very possession of this book as a proof by itself of the complicity of the possessor in revolutionary activities. It will not be out of place to state that the book changed the very nature of public discourse on Revolutionary activities. The ignorant Indians continue to call the War of Independence in 1857 as Mutiny. No one, just no one however dares to term the efforts of Indian National Army to free the country; during the World War II, as Mutiny despite its very strong association with the discredited fascist forces.

Savarkar, the author served almost fourteen years of rigorous imprisonment and another thirteen years of confinement to Ratnagiri, where he was banned from taking any part in

any political activity of any kind. He was finally set free after twenty-six years of confinement in 1937.

The author was set free but the ban on all his works including *The Mazzini Story* and the book on 1857 continued till the dying moments of the Raj. It took prolonged public criticism before the Congress Ministry in Bombay Presidency came around to lifting the ban in late 1946.

It suited the British historians to portray the events in 1857 as the dying spasm of a feudal order led by soldiers who mutinied against being made to use cartridges smeared with beef and pork grease, as it offended their religious sentiments. An outburst of reactionary direction less mob violence that was bereft of any ideology, which resulted in savage and barbarous attacks on the British men, women and children. The very people who were only doing their duty of spreading the light of civilization in this unruly country. In so assiduously weaving these myths around the story of 1857; the British historians were perhaps only fulfilling their patriotic duty. What however passes comprehension is the manner in which these British myths have been swallowed by the Indians. So much so that even fifty years of Independence have failed to erase these myths from the consciousness of the nation.

It is now time for us to read the story of 1857 as penned by Savarkar not only to understand why the British found it so dangerous but also to realize its present day relevance. It is not the intention of this piece to offer a summarized version of Savarkar's book. The stirring book is best read from start to end. Rare would be a patriotic Bharatiya, who would not shed a tear, not only in memory of those unsung heroes and heroines of 1857 but also at our own criminal neglect of this stirring work. The intention is to use Savarkar's account to demolish the myths that have come to surround the story of 1857.

Chapter II-4

Roots of the Upheaval of 1857

The most persistent myth of 1857 has been that the ignorant Indian Sepoys went berserk on being ordered to use modern cartridges, which happened to be greased with beef and pork. The unsuspecting British had committed the folly of offending the religious sensibilities of both Hindus and Muslims, who then went on a rampage, destroying anything that was associated with the foreigners including such modern day instruments as Telegraph wires.

Generations of Indians have swallowed this patently false British claim. This included such leading Indian lights like Gokhale, Gandhi who welcomed British Raj as the gift of the providence to India. Savarkar, who had his head and feet firmly planted on the Bharatiya soil suffered from no such illusions. He had no doubt in his mind that 1857 was indeed the First War of Independence. However, was he merely using 1857, as a mere propaganda tool to further the cause of his ideology or was there substance in his argument? The question needs to be examined. After all, even such historians as R.C.Majumdar reject the contention that 1857 represented a genuine freedom struggle.

We have seen earlier the staggering fall in the India's share in the World Manufacturing output. From 19.7% in 1800, it fell to 8.6% in 1860. The implication of this information is staggering. After all, which country would accept such a fall in its fortunes without a murmur of protest? Spurred by a curiosity to understand the phenomenon, the impact of which is still visible in the country, we will now attempt to understand if this was merely a case of a dynamic Western civilisation overtaking its decaying oriental counterpart on the strength of scientific innovation.

It is now time to take up the story of the events that unfolded in this ancient land after the battle of Plassey in 1757. With this began an erosion of independence culminating in its total loss on 16th September 1803, when the Moghul Emperor fell into the British hands. Except for a very brief spell, there was to be no escape for the National Sovereign.

True in the late eighteenth century Bharatiya civilization was no more a leading light of the world that it once was. The society was plagued by several evils. People were harassed by warfare that never seemed to end bringing death and destruction in its wake. The central political authority; the Moghul Emperor was reduced to a pale shadow of his powerful ancestors, forever dependent on his nominal subordinates. Poverty was wide spread by twentieth century standards of the Western world. Even so, it is worth keeping in mind the fact that the same can be equally said of any other part of the world at that point in time including all the tiny European states, which were bent on acting as the 'saviors of the oriental civilizations'.

A few unique features that characterized Bharat then bear recall. It is when these features were radically altered by the British that the stage was set for life and death struggle against their rule. The roots of the volcano that erupted in 1857 lie in this. Pork and Beef

grease may have been the proverbial last straw that broke the Camel's back; it can hardly be the real reason for the titanic struggle launched by those who were supposed to be the back bone of the British Raj in India. Lest anyone forget, the Sepoys who were supposed to have revolted against the use of greased cartridges, never once hesitated to use the same cartridges to kill their enemy.

Village Republic

First and foremost was that the unit of society was Village, which was a closely-knit social and economic unit. One has only to read their description by Metcalfe to realise that while life in these communities was no Utopia, these units were bedrock of stability on which the plural Bharatiya society had securely rested for thousands of years. The lasting damage done by the British was to demolish these viable units. It was not the march of technology but the British greed for revenues which proved to be their undoing.

In their anxiety to extract more and more revenue from the land, the British introduced systems that uprooted the rural life. The land had always belonged to self-governing collectivities and the government received a portion of its produce, usually limited to one third of the revenue. The Village elders decided individual burden. In their zeal to maximise the revenue, the British officers now by-passed the village communities, conferred 'the boon of private property' on the Indian peasantry and sharply increased the weight of taxation. The British standard for taxation was one half of the revenue. In other parts of the country, an absentee landlord replaced resident Zamindar, whose only link with the cultivators was collection of revenue.

The net result of these changes was introduction of a much harsher tone in the rural life than was the case in pre British era. As Eric Hobsbawm notes "Of all the territories under administration of European governments...even including Tsarist Russia, India continued to be haunted by most gigantic and murderous famines...**increasingly so as the century wore on**". This is hardly surprising considering that as late as between 1880 and 1924, the Government spent a paltry sum of Rs 7 million per year on Famine relief. On the other hand, it remitted on an average Rs 30 million per year on account of Pensions payable to retired British officers of the Raj.

Foreign Trade

In this age of Globalization, when every pundit of Strategy promotes Exports of Value added goods as the sure-fire way to national prosperity. India is asked to look at this or that country for the formula to succeed. There is no doubt that India that has divorced itself from Bharatiya traditions needs to look outward to chart a new path out of the present day morasses of poverty and improvisation.

Bharat can legitimately remind India that traditionally, the dominant feature of its foreign trade, throughout recorded history was the ever-present Trade surplus. It always exported more than it imported from other parts of the world. This part of the world was a low cost producer of almost all the important consumer goods, which not only kept the higher

priced European goods out of its national markets but found so much acceptance in Europe that their local industry cried out for protection against Bharatiya imports. As we have seen earlier, it is this feature that had made East India company to choose Bengal as its major area of operation. The resulting trade imbalance was corrected by a flow of treasure in the form of Gold and Silver into the country. Much has been written about the Indian fascination for Gold without realising that till very recently in history it was the only currency that the rest of the world could use to buy the much coveted Bharatiya goods.

The victory on the fields of Plassey gave the servants of East India Company the de facto power to control the trade of Bengal, the richest province of the country. However, it was not until the assumption of Diwani of Bengal by the Company in 1765 that radical changes were introduced. Thus far the Company had bought goods for export in the local markets like any other trader. Now under the guise of legality, it began to resort to extortion. The Weavers and other producers of the goods were compelled to supply their output to the company at rates determined not by market forces but by the Company itself. Up to this point in time, the exports from Bharat were paid for by import of bullion. The Company itself had a bullion import trade of £ 700,000 to £ 1,000,000. Other foreign traders also imported bullion on a large scale. As the Select Committee of 1783 itself noted: “ The influx of money poured into India ...encouraged industry and promoted cultivation in a high degree; *notwithstanding the frequent wars with which the country was harassed, and the vices which existed in its internal government.* ”

A clear admission of the fact that the political instability following the demise of the Moghul authority may have been irritating to the Merchants but scarcely affected the economy. Wealth now remained in the provinces instead of flowing to Delhi. Thus dimming of lights in Delhi by no means indicated general economic decline in the country.

What radically altered the situation was not only the extortion resorted to by the Company to buy its export requirements but also the manner in which the Trade now came to be financed. As the East India Company gained control over the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, it began a conscious policy of running Budgetary Surplus. This surplus was simply appropriated to finance its export trade. Thus Bharatiya provinces were not only expected to supply the export goods to Europe but also the Silver to finance the Company's purchase of Tea and Silk in China.

As if this was not enough, corruption was rampant in the Company. This resulted in a market for remittance of the ill-gotten fortunes of the Company servants, back home. Company's official channels not only gave a rate of exchange that was not considered lucrative but also there were inconvenient questions to be answered on the sources of these private fortunes. Other European companies rushed to fulfill the need. The remittance funds became an important source of their trading capital giving them an unfair advantage over the local merchants.

Soon none of the European companies needed to import bullion to finance their exports. Danish company for instance ceased to import bullion altogether in 1775. With the withdrawal of the stimulus provided by the bullion imports, the local economies began to wither.

In this period East India Company enjoyed monopoly over India's foreign trade. Though it could handle only a part of this, it guarded its monopolistic rights with unrelenting tenacity further damaging the Indian economic welfare. A fact attested to by none other than Adam Smith. For instance between 1780 - 90, the company's annual share of European exports to India was 14.4%, while its share of imports was 26.8%. The company continued to defend its monopolistic privilege on the plea that there was no export market for European goods in India while it was perfectly capable of meeting the entire demand for Indian goods at home. It was only in 1813 that the Company's monopoly was withdrawn.

Yet for all the British abuses heaped upon it, the economic machinery of this ancient land continued to tick. Exports continued to exceed imports. Value added goods retained their dominance of exports. Bharat was down but was not yet out. It had not yet turned into an exporter of primary goods nor turned into a Debtor nation. This was to rapidly change.

Historically, Bharat was an exporter of Cloth of a quality that was far superior to any known to the Western world. During its peak period, Bharat was exporting some 30 million yards of fine and coarse textiles. The handloom industry that supported millions of weavers was destroyed in the first three decades of the nineteenth century unleashing a wave of misery that led the British Governor General of India, Lord Bentinck to report in 1834 that 'the misery hardly finds a parallel in the history of commerce. The bones of cotton weavers are bleaching the plains of India.'

The British have left no stone unturned to cultivate the myth that this was no more than the case of efficient modern producers, incidentally based in Lancashire, overcoming their commercial rivals using outdated technology, who happened to be located in India.

It is another matter the facts are somewhat more complex. No economic historian now seriously disputes the fact that the Imperial policy was deliberately framed so as to give most favoured treatment to British economic interests. This was an area where the colonial status of India was most apparent. After all, the British capitalists expected to see visible benefits of the empire in the form of a protected market for their products. By 1810, rates of duties on exports and imports were fixed at 5 to 10%. The duty on British imports was pegged at 2.5% giving a great stimulus to their consumption in India. Local producers were discriminated against by imposition of much higher rates of internal transit duties. This differential treatment sounded the death knell of local industry. Not content with this, the Raj also banned import of modern machinery into India. This was the fair competition that the Indian Industry was exposed to.

As late as in 1811, the Textiles accounted for 33% of exports from Calcutta. It is no wonder that by 1850, this had dwindled down to a mere 3.7%. What happened in these crucial few decades was the virtual deindustrialisation of the country. Even while the Western world was moving from an agricultural society to being an Industrial one, the process was exactly the reverse in Bharat. As Nehru noted: “India became progressively ruralized. In every progressive country there has been, during the past century, a shift of population from agriculture to industry; from village to town; in India this process was reversed as a result of British policy. The figures are instructive and significant. In the middle of nineteenth century about fifty five percent of the population is said to have been dependent on agriculture; recently this proportion was estimated to be seventy four percent.” Sixty years after Nehru wrote this, at the dawn of Twenty first century, the country today has nearly two third of the population still dependent on agriculture.

Nor was Nehru alone. Eric Hobsbawm has echoed the same conclusions :

“What happened in India was simply the virtual destruction within a few decades, of what supplemented the rural income; in other words **the deindustrialisation of India...** By 1840, an observer already warned against the disastrous effects of turning India into ‘the agricultural farm of England, she is a manufacturing country, her manufactures of various descriptions have existed for ages, and have never been able to be competed with by any nation wherever fair play has been given to them...to reduce her now to an agricultural country would be an injustice to India’...leavening of manufacture had been in India..an integral part of the agricultural economy in many regions. Consequently deindustrialisation made the peasant and the village itself more dependent on the single fluctuating fortune of the harvest”.

A change in composition of Bharatiya exports directly flowed from the deindustrialisation of the country. Export of Cotton, which was a mere Rs 4.0 million in 1813 rose to Rs 56.4 million by 1860. By 1850, Bharatiya exports came to be dominated by primary commodities for the first time in history. Indigo, raw silk, opium and cotton accounted for 56 - 64 percent of the total value. An export surplus merely became a mechanism for denuding the country’s wealth.

The case of opium is particularly instructive. In 1814-15, its value stood at Rs 1.2 million; in 1834-5 it was Rs 10.8 million and by 1849-50 increased to Rs 50.7 million. The expansion of Opium exports was the direct result of financing the China trade. East India company had built up a considerable trade of export of Chinese tea, silk and porcelain in the eighteenth century. Since the demand for European goods was low in China, as in India, the trade was balanced by large exports of Silver from Europe. With the conquest of India, Opium exports from India provided a convenient and far cheaper alternative to financing the Chinese trade in place of expensive silver. Opium cultivation and trade was traditionally a government monopoly in India, a position now usurped by the Company. However, as Opium was contraband in China, it had to be smuggled into the country through private traders. When the Chinese government threatened to take drastic action against the Opium traders in 1839, the company acting in concert with the home authorities, declared war on China, and the Chinese market was subsequently kept

open by overt threats of war. The growth in Opium trade did little to benefit the producers as the Company kept a check on the prices that the producers could get.

Indigo exports might have been expected to boost the local income. But the violence committed by the indigo planters and their attempt to shift all risks of cultivation and losses onto the peasant made the industry in Bengal a by-word for oppression. The injustice meted to the Indigo cultivators was among the first public causes that Gandhiji was to take up on his return to India in 1914.

Thus during this period not only India shifted from exporter of Finished goods to that of primary commodities but even increase in trade of primary commodities brought no relief to people at large.

A Creditor Nation turns Debtor

Yet, the wretched story does not end here. The change in composition of Exports from Finished Goods to Primary Goods, imposition of extortionist taxation on land, did not sap the economic vitality of this ancient land. Exports continued to exceed imports. A large trade surplus remained. Curiously, this did not result in either a rise in foreign exchange reserves or an increase in overseas lending.

Indeed by 1850; Bharat became a debtor nation for the first time in history as the permanently favourable balance of trade after including movements of treasure was accompanied by a net import of capital. An achievement for which we must forever remain beholden to the British. This amazing economic turnaround was directly on account of the unilateral transfer of funds that India had to suffer on account of political charges that were debited to her external account, wiping out the gains on account of positive trade surplus.

Up to 1813, the mechanism was fairly straightforward. The East India Company simply ran surplus budgets, the whole of surplus was then remitted to Britain without any considerations to the requirements of the people from whom the revenue was collected. If this is not loot, what else is ? No wonder then that up to 1807; it was still possible for Sir John Barlow to define the objects of Government in India *without even mentioning the subject of welfare*. It was only in 1813, that a princely sum of Rs 100,000/- was set aside for advancement of arts and science.

After the Charter Act of 1813, the East India Company was required to pay for establishment costs incurred in England out of public revenues raised in India and a nominal payment of £ 500,000 to the shareholders of the company. The total size of these payments varied from £ 1.5 million to £ 3.5 million before 1850. To these must be added extraordinary claims made in individual years for liquidating parts of Company's public debt payable in England.

Nehru has very aptly noted: “Thus India had to bear the cost of her own conquest, and then her transfer (or sale) from East India Company to the British Crown, for extension of the British Empire to Burma and elsewhere...indeed India was charged for all manner of other expenses incurred by Britain, such as the maintenance of British diplomatic and consular establishments in China and Persia, the entire cost of the telegraph line from England to India, part of the expenses of the British Mediterranean fleet, and even the receptions given to the Sultan of Turkey in London”

It will not be out of place here to deal with the marvel of British rule in India - the construction of railways. For one they were done in an enormously wasteful way. More over the Government of India guaranteed 5% interest on all capital employed. This was a time when the interest rates in England were about 3%. Little wonder then that the lines which were estimated in 1868 to cost £ 8,000 per mile ended up costing £ 18,000 per mile. All purchases were naturally made in England. Even by 1880, the only items that could be locally procured were Red tape and handcuffs. The manner in which the railroad expansion was attained in India stinks of exploitation. As this belongs to the second half of the nineteenth century, let us leave it out of our discussion for the time being.

Castration of an Entire Nation

The nineteenth century India lay divided between British India and the Indian States. Initially, the States were treated as foreign and there was no interference in the internal administration so long as the British interests were not tampered with and agreed to maintain British forces on their soil. Maintaining independent external contacts was a strict taboo for the States. Senior British civil servants were of the view that British should claim the rights of paramouncy over Indian States as the heirs of Moghuls but it suited the Company to be vague in this matter.

British India was part of the country that was directly ruled by the Company. This included the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa that were being governed under grant of Diwani to the company by the Moghul Emperor in 1765. Among other areas were the province of Pune, where Peshwa Baji Rao II was deposed in 1818 allegedly to restore the descendants of Shivaji to the throne in Satara. It took the British no more than thirty years to annex the very state of Satara, in the name of which Baji Rao II was deposed.

Gradually, the British became impatient with keeping up the facade of being nominal subordinates of what to them appeared decadent rulers. They were naturally completely oblivious to their own role in supporting this decadence as long as it suited them. The mask of traders who had reluctantly assumed the reins of power was about to be stripped off. They stopped minting currency in name of the Moghul Emperor in 1835. The title of Nawab of Carnatic was abolished. The states of Satara, Jaitpur, Sambalpur, Baghat, Udaipur, Jhansi and Nagpur were annexed under flimsy excuses. Death of Baji Rao II in 1853 gave them the excuse to disown his heir and bury the Peshwa seat once and for all; thereby get rid of the Maratha menace forever. The Raja of Tanjore was consigned to

history in 1855. An attempt was made to abolish the imperial title in Delhi but this was to be held in abeyance till the death of aged Bahadur Shah

Finally, the state of Oudh was annexed in 1856. This state of fertile land and rich commerce was long coveted by the British. Nawab Shuja-ud-daula had been restored to throne after the battle of Buxar on payment of Rs 5,000,000/- and a treaty of mutual assistance. It came as no surprise that it was always the Nawab who needed the British assistance. In 1801, half of the kingdom was annexed on the spacious plea of the Nawab being in arrears for help rendered by the British. A most unwise arrangement was foisted on the remaining half. The British even retained control over internal administration but it was the Nawab who was invested with the responsibility of administration. It became the fate of the Indian ruler to have responsibility without power while the British enjoyed power without the attendant responsibility. Little wonder that the administration degenerated. This then became an excuse to depose Wazid Ali Shah on 13th February 1856. This was an annexation that was “not warranted by international law” as the then Governor General Dalhousie himself admitted.

From perspective of the twentieth century, it has become fashionable to deride the Indian states and even sympathize with the British attempt in first half of the nineteenth century to sweep away deadwood of the feudal relics in the form of numerous Kings and Nawabs, who dotted the countryside. Many of who were, without doubt unfit, to hold position of any power save for the accident of their birth. It is from this attitude that the coldness to the events in 1857 arise with its emphasis on restoring the feudalism. Like many others, I too suffered from this viewpoint for a long time. It may be emotionally stirring to recall the angry outburst of the brave Rani of Jhansi, a popular heroine of 1857; who is reported to have cried out “I will not give up my Jhansi” on hearing of the annexation of her kingdom by the British. The fact remains that the concept of an independent Jhansi, for whose sake one should give up all, is anarchism in modern India.

This viewpoint ignores the reality that what is today derided as feudalism was a revered institution at that point in time. Only one modern state was free from the real influence of this institution, the United States of America. Granted that monarchy did not really rule in Britain or her other white dominions but elsewhere it reigned supreme. France, Germany, Italy, Austria, Turkey, Japan, China or any other state in Europe were all effectively ruled by Monarchy. It is patently unfair to judge a particular event in history by the standards of morality that belong to another time.

We have seen in 1860, Italy became partly independent. By 1871, the flag of united and free Italy once more was fluttering in the skies after ages. This was not the flag of a Republic Italy that Mazzini had devoted his lifetime to. It was the flag of the ruler of Piedmont - a long time rival of Mazzini. This did not stop Mazzini from rejoicing over the Italian Independence. He knew well that the dream of a Republic Italy was futile so long as it was a disunited slave nation. It was only a free Italy that could aspire to become a Republic and attain its potential. Who are we then to deride the freedom fighters of 1857 who were fighting to free the country but failed to read the future and know that the

Institute of Monarchy that they were planning to restore would not meet the approval of their later day ungrateful successors.

By the Charter Act of 1793, the British had employed a deliberate policy of excluding Indians from all positions of power. They were barred from holding any job, which paid more than Rs 500 per month. Most Indians in employment of the company reached nowhere near this ceiling. It was not until 1864 that the first Indian entered the hallowed precincts of the Indian Civil Service. The Indian sepoy was much in demand for the military expeditions. For any Sepoy to dream of becoming an Officer was a blasphemy.

Thus at a practical level, every annexation of an Indian state by the British meant reduction of the public area where Indians could hold high office, where energetic men could seek fortunes based on their vitality and hard work.

The overriding British attitude to the Indians was best expressed by Lord Northbrook, when he complained in 1880 that hardly anyone in India could bring himself to believe any Indian to be capable of responsibility. One presumes he was referring only to the views British population in India. No wonder then that an attempt by Lord Ripon in 1880s to allow Indians juries to try Europeans raised a howl of protest forcing him to beat a hasty retreat.

The last comment on the British record in India during the nineteenth century must belong to Nehru when he said “ *It (the British rule during nineteenth century in India) must necessarily depress and anger an Indian*”

We should ask ourselves if an attempt to eradicate such a malignant influence is not a struggle for independence, what else is? Does it really matter that the Vision of these early freedom fighters was different than of those in the twentieth century?

Need these questions be answered in light of the mountain of evidence presented so far for the consideration of readers!

Chapter II-5
The War of Independence
1857

The British reports about 1857 tended to revolve around certain gory incidents, which were offered as evidence that what happened in India was nothing but a savage outburst of mob fury driven by religious passions of the worst kind with no noble or redeeming feature. Consider for instance, the blood curdling description of the happenings in Kanpur.

“On 27th June 1857, the defeated English soldiers prepared to leave Kanpur together with their families, their safety promised by the rebel leader Nana Sahib. The English were to be seen off in boats from Sati Chowda Ghat on the banks of Ganga. The rebel cavalry and the infantry stood around the ghat and the artillery was also in position. Prominent leaders like Azimullah Khan, Tatia Tope were present to command the rebel troops. Thousands of the citizens of Kanpur had also gathered to witness the departure of the English.

The English waded through the water and took their seats in the waiting boats. The boatmen were ready with their oars. The silence was deafening. At last Tantia Tope waved his hand to signal the boats to move. Suddenly, the shrill blast of a bugle pierced the tense atmosphere. This was the signal for a hail of bullets to fly from the waiting guns of the Indian troops. The boatsmen jumped from the boats and came on the banks. Sepoys rushed into the water with swords, kukries and unsheathed bayonets of their guns and began the massacre.

Soon all the boats were on fire, men, women and children jumped hastily into the Ganga. Some began to swim, some were burnt and most succumbed to bullets sooner or later! Lumps of flesh, broken heads, severed hair, chopped-off arms and legs, and a stream of blood ! The whole Ganga became red ! As soon as any one took up his head above the water, he would be shot by a bullet; if he kept it under water, he would die of asphyxia !

Out of forty boats, only one escaped. Out of one thousand English people in Kanpur on 7th June 1857, only four men and one hundred twenty five survived on the 30th June. Not for long.

As the advancing British troops led by Havelock neared Kanpur in July 1857, order was sent to Sepoys to kill all the surviving English women and children on the 15th July. They refused. The dastardly task was then given to the butchers of Kanpur. As the sun set below the horizon, a group of butchers entered Bibigarh, brandishing naked swords and big knives. As soon as they entered, they stabbed right and left and killed every living English soul, whether woman or a babe in arms. The room was a lake of blood with pieces of human flesh swimming in it. When they went in, the butchers walked on ground; but when they came out, they had to wade through blood. The night was wailing with the screams of the half dead, the deep groans of the dying, and the piteous cries of a few children who escaped on account of their size in the general massacre. About dawn,

the unfortunate creatures were dragged out of Bibigarh prison and pushed into a neighbouring well. A couple of children, so long crushed under the weight of the dead bodies, got out near the well and began running away. A blow threw them also dead on the heap of the dead. Men had so long drank water from the well. The well now drank human blood.”

This is an account of the atrocities committed by the Revolutionaries, which Savarkar did not flinch from recording in his book. The two gruesome incidents in Kanpur, which cost a thousand English lives, were taken to tar the entire Revolution. They came in very handy to portray Nana Sahib as the blood-thirsty vermin of hell not only to the English but also to his own countrymen. With this, 1857 became an event to be ashamed of, an embarrassment best forgotten; for the Indian intellectuals There is no denying the truth of this truly regrettable incident but it is unfair to pronounce a judgment on those involved without reading the whole story and particularly part played by the English themselves.

What is that happened in 1857, that kept generations of the English on tenter hooks, throughout the next ninety years of their rule in India. If there was one theme that ran uninterrupted in all their policies, it was to prevent the reoccurrence of 1857 at any cost. Let us try and understand the true story of 1857 from the very beginning.

On the face of it, the uprising was started by Mangal Pandey, the Brahmin sepoy of the 34th Regiment of Bengal army, who attacked his British superiors on 29th March 1857 at Barrackpore, angered by being asked to use cartridges smeared with beef tallow, which offended his religious beliefs. He was quickly court-martialed and hanged to death on 8th April. The spark lit by his rebellion refused to die down. After a temporary lull, the whole of north India was fire in the summer of '57 with sporadic outbursts in Western India as well as in the South of Vindyas. It took over two years, several thousand British lives including those of a thousand in the infamous Kanpur massacres; for the British to regain their control over the country. By then, the name of Mangal Pandey became a recognized distinction for rebellious Sepoys throughout India. Bibigarh in Kanpur had passed into the British folklore along with the Black Hole of Calcutta.

For the time being, let us first realize that this simplistic version of the revolt, as being solely caused by greased cartridges, does not stand a moment's scrutiny.

At the very onset of his research, Savarkar came across irrefutable evidence that the story that a gullible Indian elite had swallowed, was baseless. For instance, Charles Ball's 'Indian Mutiny' had Mr. Disraeli quoting that nobody (in England) believed the cartridges to have been the real cause of the outbreak. Another historian Medley stated that : “But, in fact the greased cartridges was merely the match that exploded the mine which had, owing to a variety of causes, been for a long time preparing.” Finally, another author put it most succinctly : “That the fear about the cartridges was mere pretext with many is shown beyond all question. They have not hesitated to use freely when fighting against us, the cartridges which they declared, would, if used, have destroyed their caste.”

We now know enough of the devastation caused by the British in the first half century of British rule in the nineteenth century to argue with Malleon, who said : “In this lesser sense, then, and in this only, did the cartridges produce the mutiny. They were instruments used by the conspirators, and those conspirators were successful in their use of the instruments only because, in the manner I have endeavored to point out, the mind of the Sepoys and of certain sections of the population had been prepared to believe every act testifying bad faith on the part of their foreign masters.”

What ever they may have told the Indians, the British knew the truth. This was no chance uprising provoked by religious passions of an ignorant people. It was a well-planned conspiracy to throw the aliens out. The British have been at considerable pains to project that the fight against them was a localised affair and was never an all India affair.

This was of course half-true. It ignores the continental dimension of the undivided India. The land area measured about 4.2 million square kilometer. This figure needs to be put in perspective. After being at war with each other for centuries, the European nations are struggling for last fifty years to form a real union. The land mass of the countries involved, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom totals up to only 2.3 million square kms. In other words, unity of action that has so far not been seen in countries spread over an area a little more than half of India’s size, was expected in this land - in an age when let alone Internet or fax, even Telegraph lines were a novelty.

Mazzini came to be revered in Europe as a revolutionary guru despite the fact that several attempts by him to launch an all Italy revolution failed miserably. The area of Italy was not spread over more than 300,000 sq. km, roughly the same size as one province of India, Utter Pradesh which was on fire along with many other provinces in 1857. What an irony that efforts that failed over a much smaller area in Europe were hailed as symbols of monumental national fervour, as they no doubt were; while on the other hand the Bharatiya efforts that were spread over a much larger areas have been sought to be dismissed as localised affairs.

Consider the chain of events. The first sign of anti British feelings were noticed in the 19th and 34th Regiment stationed at Barrackpur in Bengal, near Calcutta. Disbanding of these regiments and the hanging of Mangal Pandey on 8th April 1857 failed to bring the situation under control. Strange events started taking place in Ambala on other side of the country. Mysterious fires started breaking out in the British houses. No amount of reward money could help authorities trace the culprit. Commotion was visible in Lucknow, when on 3rd May, some Sepoys rushed in to threaten their officers. In Meerut, eighty five Sepoys were court-martialed on 9th May.

Finally, the dam burst on 10th May. The Sepoys freed their comrades and galloped on to Delhi. Colonel Ripley marched with his 54th Regiment to prevent their entry into the seat of Moghul power. As the two armies faced each other, bullets began to fly but they were all aimed at the British Officers. The victorious Sepoys were now joined by the general populace who now took up the arms against the hated British. By 16th May, not a trace of

the British domination was left in Delhi. Bahadur Shah Zafar was restored to the throne of Delhi. *The de jure Emperor was proclaimed as the de facto ruler as well.*

The British no longer had any legal justification to remain in India for the administration of any territory. It was the grant of Diwani in 1765 to Clive by the Moghul Emperor, which had so long provided the fig leaf of legality to cloak the aggressive nature of British presence in India. Events in Delhi had stripped the British cover. From this day that is 11th May 1857, when the Moghul Emperor once again stood forth as the national sovereign to 1st November 1858, when Queen Victoria formally assumed the Government of India, one might well ask what was the status of any English soul in India; if not that of a aggressor bent on defying the Indian sovereign.

The news of Meerut and Delhi resulted in outbreak of unrest in Punjab and the North West. This was however quickly nipped in the bud by Sir John Lawrence, aided by the treachery of a Brahmin spy. The Sepoys at Lahore fort were disarmed on 13th May, while those at Amritsar on the 15th May. Troops at Peshawar were stripped off their arms on 21st May. The 55th Regiment at Hotimardan revolted on 24th May. Their march to Delhi was however foiled by Nicholson, who had a thousand troops blown up at the mouth of guns.

It is now time to recount the story of British Black Hole, which unlike the story of Calcutta is virtually unknown. The British had captured 282 sepoy near Ajnala, who were on their way to Delhi. They were promptly thrown in a cell that had no windows. Batches of ten were led out at a time to be shot dead. In this manner 216 sepoy were massacred. Of the remaining 66, it was found that 45 had died of suffocation by the time their turn came to be led out and shot. The half dead 21 bodies that still were breathing had their life snuffed by the British bullets at the command of one Cooper. Far from being ashamed of this cruelty, the British had no hesitation in holding that the actions of Cooper were justified.

This prompt and merciless reprisals saved the day for the British in Punjab. It could not however prevent the regiment at Jallandhar, which revolted on the 9th June from marching to Delhi with their comrades from Ludhiana and Pilhur. With the help of the Sikh states of Patiala, Nabha and Jhind, the British now organised a counter offensive on Delhi, well aware of the strategic implication of a Delhi free from their control. On their way, the British troops wreaked terrible vengeance on thousands of villagers suspected of aiding the revolution. The process was simple. Hundreds of villagers were herded together and tried. As Holfes's described in 'History of Sepoy War' :

“Officers as they went to sit on the court-martial swore that they would hang their prisoners, guilty or innocent and, if any dared to lift up his voice against such indiscriminate vengeance, he was instantly silenced by the clamours of his angry comrades. Prisoners condemned to death after a hasty trial were mocked at and tortured by ignorant privates before their execution, while their educated officers looked on and approved.”

By first week of June, the siege of Delhi was in progress. Meanwhile revolution broke out in almost all the upper Gangetic provinces and parts of Central India - at Nasirabad in Rajesthan, Bareilly, Allahabad, Kanpur, Lucknow, Benaras in Utter Pradesh and Jagadishpur in Bihar. The Benaras outbreak was put down by Colonel Neil of the 1st Madras Fusiliers in such a savage manner that made even the British historians squirm in embarrassment. Villages after villages were razed to the ground and set on fire. As an anguished Savarkar recounted : “ Poor peasants, learned Brahmins, harmless Mussalmans, children, woman with infants in their arms, young girls, old men, blind and lame, all were burnt in the mass of flames ! Mothers with suckling babes also succumbed to these fires ! Old men and women, and those unable to move away even a step from the fire, were burnt in their beds ! And if a solitary man were to escape the fire, what then ? One Englishman says in his letter, ‘We set fire to a large village which was full of them. We surrounded them, and when they came rushing out of the flames, we shot them !’”

Other methods employed to crush the revolution was to send out “hanging parties into the districts and amateur executioners were not wanting to the occasion. One gentleman boasted of the numbers he finished off quite ‘in an artistic manner’ with mango trees for gibbets and elephants as drops, the victims of this wild justice being strung up, as though for pastime, in ‘the form of a figure of eight’

As Kaye himself says, “Though I have plenty of letters with me describing the terrible and cruel tortures committed by our officers, I do not write a word about it, so that this subject should be no longer before the world.”

What were these letters describing that forced an historian to knowingly turn his eyes away from the truth. Here is one sample from Indian Mutiny by Charles Ball:

“One trip I enjoyed amazingly; we got on board a steamer with a gun, while the Sikhs and fusiliers marched up to the city. We steamed up throwing shots right and left till we got up to the bad places, when we went on the shore and peppered away with our guns, my old double barrel bringing down several niggers. So thirsty for vengeance I was. We fired the places right and left and the flames shot up to the heavens as they spread, fanned by the breeze, showing that the day of vengeance had fallen on the treacherous villains. Every day, we had expeditions to burn and destroy disaffected villages and we have taken our revenge. I have been appointed the chief of commission for the trial of all natives charged with offenses against the government and persons. Day by day, we have strung up eight and ten men. We have the power of life in our hands and I assure you, we spare not. A very summary trial is all that takes place. The condemned culprit is placed under a tree, with a rope round his neck, on the top of a carriage, and when it is pulled off he swings.”

Holmes, an another historian has offered an amazing defense of the actions of Neil : “Old men had done us no harm; helpless women, with suckling infants at their breasts, felt the weight of our vengeance no less than the vilest malefactors. But, to the honour of Neil, let it be said that, to him, the infliction of punishment was not a delight but an awful duty”.

As Neil himself confessed : “I have done all for the good of my country, to re-establish its prestige and power”. A defense that could well have been offered with equal justification by Hitler and his cronies after the second world war.

It was in this surcharged atmosphere that the defeat of English took place in Kanpur. The Sepoys who had gathered at the Sati Chowda Ghat on 27th June to watch the English soldiers depart included those whose fathers had been hanged in shapes of figures of 8. They included husbands whose wives and infants in the cradle had been burnt by Neil. Fathers whose daughters had their hair and cloths set to fire by English soldiers amid shouts of applause, also crowded the place. The massacres were waiting to happen.

It was left to Sir W. Russel, correspondent of London Times to put the incident in perspective, in a rare moment of British candour, when he remarked :

“We who suffered from it think that there never was such wickedness in the world....Helpless garrisons surrendering without conditions have been massacred. The history of medieval Europe affords many instances of crimes as great as those of Kanpur. The history of more civilised periods could offer some parallel to them in more modern times and amidst more civilised nations. In fact, the peculiar aggravation of the Kanpur massacre was this-that the deed was done by a subject race, by black men who dared to shed the blood of their masters and that of poor helpless ladies and children. Here we had not only a Servile war and a sort of Jacquerie combined, but we had a war of religion, a war of race, and a war of revenge, of hope, of national determination to shake off the yoke of a stranger and to re-establish the full power of native chiefs and the full sway of native religions”

One presumes, the ‘more civilized nations’ that Russel was referring to was France. The parallel that he was in all probability alluding to was the terror unleashed during the French Revolution, half a century earlier - hailed as the Revolution of its time which offered hope to the oppressed all over the world. The dark side of this acclaimed revolution was the terror unleashed in which at least 14,000 people were guillotined in a short span of 14 months, in other words one Kanpur every month. One of course never condemns the French Revolution despite the terror involved - for it was not violence unleashed by a subject race on its masters.

By July 57, the flame of revolt had spread to Maratha states of Holkers at Indore and Sindhias at Gwalior in central India. Well over a third of the country was up in arms against the British. In other words, fight against the British was now spread over an area that covered more than the combined area of Germany, France and Italy. *This was the localised nature of the revolution of 1857.* Yet what tilted the balance in favour of the British was not only the active support of the Sikh states but also the manner in which the chiefs of Jaipur, Jodhpur, Kutch, Gwalior, Indore, Bundela and Rajputana; hesitated to join the revolution despite the revolutionary fervour of their people.

Meanwhile, victory of the British was by no means a forgone conclusion in the third month of the revolution. The Moghul Emperor had broken free of the shackles imposed by the British on 11th May. On 1st of July, Nana Sahib was coronated as the Peshwa in Brahmavarta. The two events portend great danger to the British. They had grabbed power in India from these two institutions which had come to represent real power in the earlier century. Their revival amidst the freedom now enjoyed by Delhi and Kanpur could not but greatly weaken the British prestige.

The contagion now spread to South. The city of Hyderabad actually rose against the British on 17th of July and an armed contingent attacked the British Residency. In the skirmish, the leaders were killed. Salar Jung, Prime Minister of the Nizam, chose to side with the British and curb the disturbance with a heavy hand. Kolhapur witnessed an uprising on 31st July, which was put down. The dissatisfaction at Belgaum and Dharwar was stopped in its tracks by the arrest of its leaders on 10th August.

For the greatly shaken aliens, reconquest of these two centers of power became a matter of life and death. The conquest of Kanpur proved to be the easier task. By 17th July, victorious armies of Havelock had entered the city and began to wreck terrible vengeance on the people including making them lick the blood stains at Bibigarh before hanging them, so that they would not have the satisfaction of dying a death sanctified by their religion. The Inquisition was well and truly on.

The siege of Delhi proved to be a much tougher proposition. Attack after attack failed to dislodge the revolutionaries. Both sides kept on getting new forces. The English from their other strongholds in the country which had been bypassed by the spirit of revolution. On the other hand, the institute of the Emperor became the banner which served to unite revolutionaries from different regimental centers. June gave way to July. Kanpur rose and fell but Delhi continued to stand. August came and gone. Yet, the British could not claim victory. A terrible battle raged in September. A pitched battle was fought from 15th to 24th September before the Emperor could be captured. His sons were put to death in cold blood by Hudson. Then began a terrible looting and a general massacre at Delhi. It is Lord Elphinstone who wrote to Sir John Lawrence, "After the siege was over, the outrages committed by our army are simply heart rendering. A wholesale vengeance is being taken without distinction of friend or foe. As regards the looting, we have indeed surpassed Nadir Shah."

Lucknow was another thorn in the British side. Capital of the recently annexed state of Oudh, it might have been expected to keep aloof from the revolution. The state had after all been recently rescued from the misrule of the Nawab by the British. Yet the ungrateful natives choose to side with their compatriots.

After months of efforts, a British relief force reached the residency of Lucknow on 25th September to free the five hundred Europeans bottled up inside. A battle in which the insolent cruel General Neil lost his life. The relief force soon found itself blockaded inside the residency as the Revolutionaries cut off their supplies. It took another two

months and more English lives before the bottled up relief force could be rescued. The conquest of Lucknow continued to elude the British.

However, Tantia Tope, the commander of Nana Sahib had remained undaunted by the defeats. On 6th December 1857, he made a bold but unsuccessful charge on the British Commander in Chief Collins himself. The defeat only served to strengthen his resolve to keep the flag of revolution flying.

Meanwhile, a veritable people's war erupted in the province of Oudh. British had to strain every nerve to keep the lid on. It took the help of Jang Bahadur of Nepal, which finally gave the prized possession of Lucknow to the British on 21st March 1858.

By now, Tantia Tope had moved his operations to central India. He was now in Jhansi together with Rani Laxmibai, the young heroine of the revolution. On 4th April, Jhansi fell. Laxmibai and Tantia Tope marched to Kalpi where were once again defeated. In the meanwhile Barilley fell sounding the death knell of the struggle in north. The Revolution was now on the wane.

The Maratha trio - Laxmibai, Tantia Tope and Nana Sahib came together for the final time in Gwalior. The Maratha king Sindhia refused to join them but his troops deserted him. Once again the British were haunted by the specter of a Maratha uprising. Sir Hugh Rose realised the danger and did not allow the enemy to consolidate. He moved quickly to attack Gwalior. The young Rani died in the ensuing battle on 17th June 1858. Ballads sung in her honour, even today do not fail to strike a chord in the depth of one's hearts. Nana Sahib left Gwalior to vanish forever without a trace.

Tantia Tope kept up a lone battle for the better part of next year. Defeat after defeat failed to unsettle him. Indeed, he seemed to mock at the defeat. As the British moved heaven and earth to capture him, his name became a legend not only in India but also in Europe. He kept together an army of soldiers bound by no tie other than love for his country and hate of the British. He moved at lightening speed, which baffled his enemies, took some dozen cities, obtained not only fresh provisions but also new recruits for a service that offered no prospect but incessant flight at sixty miles per day. He was betrayed and finally captured on 7th April 1859. He was hanged in Shivpuri after a mock trial on 18th April.

Thus fell curtains over the epic struggle against the alien rule. A struggle that lasted for two years and the flames of which made British insecure in every nook and corner of the country. Salar Jung, Sindhia; only if any of the prominent kings had openly come out in favour of the revolution, the British exploitation of this country would have well ended ninety years before it eventually did.

That a struggle of such a mammoth scale could be launched without any well-oiled machinery supporting it cannot be the conclusion of anyone but a perfect imbecile. Stupidity was certainly not one of the British faults. Their investigations after the 'Mutiny' was controlled, squarely pointed the suspicion towards Nana Sahib, as

being at the center of a national conspiracy to drive the British out. In 1857, the era when the seat of Peshwa was the de facto ruler of the country, while the Moghul Emperor was the de jure sovereign, was still in the living memory of people. The fact of British having snatched power from the Maratha head was something that people like Nana had not come to terms with.

Trevelyan has noted that “Nana’s object, then, was to lay the foundation of his future sovereignty at Kanpur. The mighty power exercised by the Peshwas was to be restored; and to himself, the architect of his own fortunes, would belong the glory of replacing that vanished scepter.”

White even discovered that “the calamitous revolt at Meerut on 10th May 1857 was however, of signal service to us in one respect; in as much as it was a premature outbreak which disarranged the preconceived plan of simultaneous mutiny of Sepoys all over the country, settled to take place on Sunday, the 31st May 1857”. J.C. Wilson also concluded the same in Official Narrative : “From this combined and simultaneous massacre on the 31st May 1857, we were humanly speaking, saved by the frail ones of the bazar. The mine had been prepared and the train had been laid, and it was not intended to light the slow match for another three weeks. The spark which fell from the female lips ignited it at once and the night of the 10th May saw commencement of the tragedy never before witnessed since India passed under British sway.”

Neither White nor Wilson were writing based on bazar gossip. The British had arrested a messenger at the Durbar of Mysore, who had confirmed about a conspiracy being hatched by Nana forcing Kaye to acknowledge in *Indian Mutiny* that : “For months, for years indeed, they had been spreading their network of intrigues all over the country. From one native court to another, from one extremity to another of the great continent of India, the agents of Nana Sahib had passed with overtures and invitations discreetly, perhaps mysteriously, worded to princes and chiefs of different races and religions but most hopefully of all to the Marathas... There is nothing in my mind more substantiated than the complicity of Nana Sahib in wide spread intrigues before the outbreak of the Mutiny. The concurrent testimony of witnesses examined in parts of the country widely distinct from each other takes this story altogether out of the regions of the conjectural.”

Well before the storm broke, the British officers had come to know peculiar events taking place soon after annexation of Oudh. There were reports of the circulation of a Red Lotus. A messenger would appear from somewhere carrying the Lotus flower and hand it to the chief of the regiment. The flower would then be passed from man to man in the entire regiment till it came to the last. The flower was now ready to begin its onward journey to the next regiment. There was not, it appears, a detachment, a station in Bengal, through which the lotus flowers was not circulated.

There were also reports of circulation of Chapati from village to village. Vexed British officers had taken to get hold of them and cut them to see if it contained any message. There was none. The Chapati, it appears spoke only to those it meant to speak. Early in 1857, Nana Sahib had gone on a *pilgrimage* along with his counsellor Azimullah that

took them to Delhi, Ambala, Lucknow, Kalpi and other places in the north. Each of these were to soon figure prominently in the Revolution. The coincidence was too visible to be ignored.

The details, however remained beyond the grasp of the British. As Trevelyan recorded in frustration : “No society of rich and civilised Christians who ever undertook to preach the gospel of peace and goodwill can have employed a more perfect system of organisation than was adopted by these rascals whose mission it was to preach the gospel of sedition and slaughter.” All their efforts to pierce the Secret Society that had organised this mass revolt against them came to a naught. The Raja of Zorapur in South faced death for his part in the revolution. On being offered the possibility of a pardon by his close British associate Meadows Taylor, he flatly refused “I shall tell everything else...but if they ask me the names of those who incited me to rise, I will not tell that..cannons, gallows, the region beyond the black water - none of them is as terrible as treachery.”

Our tragedy is that the British never forgot the lessons of 1857, while we have yet to realize the real significance of the event. It is to this that we shall now turn.

Chapter II-6

Hindu and Muslims As Blood Brothers From 1857

May 1998

Exactly a good one hundred forty one years after the Great War of Independence in 1857, the world watched in incredulous horror, the unedifying spectacle of two of the most poor nations in the world boasting in glee of having acquired the capacity to kill millions of citizens of each other's nations. There are of course no prizes on offer for guessing the identity of these belligerent nations. What is less known and scarcely realized is the fact that it is these same nations, which had once put up an epic struggle against the British; whose ancestors had laid down their lives in defense of their common motherland.

That the sacrifices of our ancestors have been laid waste is something that is even today painfully clear. There are many reasons for the state of poisonous relations that exist today between two parts of a once united country. Not least of which is the criminal neglect of our own heritage. Savarkar is one of very few Indian leaders who had grasped the true nature of 1857. Consider his stand on the following :

Bahadur Shah as the Emperor of India

“After declaring her independence on the 11th May, the city of Delhi had been busy organising the wild storm that such a bold step had raised into a systematised revolution. By restoring the Emperor of Delhi to the ancient throne of the Moghuls, the citizens of Delhi had created a nucleus mighty enough, by the very prestige of its name, to sustain the struggle of a people's liberation. But this restoration of the old Moghul was a restoration, neither to the old power nor to the old prestige, nor to the old traditions. Though the raising of the old Bahadur Shah to the Emperorship of Hindustan was, in a narrower sense, a restoration to him of his ancient throne, still in a wider and truer sense, it was no restoration at all. For, the Moghul dynasty of old was not chosen by the people of the land. It was thrust upon India by sheer force, dignified by the name of the conquest, and upheld by a powerful pack of alien adventurers and native self-seekers. It was not this throne that was restored to Bahadur Shah today. No, that would have been impossible; for such thrones are conquered and not received. That would have been suicidal; for then, it would have been in vain that the blood of hundreds of Hindu martyrs had been shed in the preceding centuries.

From the death of Prithvi Raj right up to the death of Aurangzeb, the war between the Hindus and Muslims had been waged without a truce. For more than five centuries the Hindu civilisation had been fighting a defensive war against the foreign encroachment on its birthrights. And in the midst of this gory struggle of countless years, a Hindu power arose in the western mountains of Bharat, which was destined to fulfill the mission of the innumerable dead, who fell fighting in protecting the honour of the race. From out of Pune, a Hindu prince Bhausahib - advanced with a mighty army, captured the throne of

Delhi, and vindicated the honour of the Hindu civilisation : the conqueror was conquered and India was again free, the blot of slavery and defeat being wiped off. Hindus again were masters of the land of the Hindus.

So in the truer sense, we said that the restoration of Bahadur Shah to the throne of India was no restoration at all. **But rather it was the declaration that the long standing war between the Hindus and the Mahomedan had ended**, that the tyranny had ceased, and that the people of the soil were once more free to choose their own monarch. For, Bahadur Shah was raised by the free voice of the people, both Hindus and Mahomedans, civil and military, to be their Emperor and the head of the War of Independence. Therefore, on the 11th of May, this old venerable Bahadur Shah was not the old Moghul succeeding to the throne of Aurangzeb - for that throne was already smashed to pieces by the hammer of the Marathas - but he was freely chosen monarch of a people battling for freedom against a foreign intruder. Let, then, Hindus and Mahomedans send forth their hearty, conscientious and most loyal homage to this elected and freely accepted Emperor of their native soil on the 11th of May 1857.”

Nature of Revolution

“It is difficult to find in Indian history another revolution, so exciting, so quick, so terrible, and so universal ! It was almost an unheard of thing that the power of the people should awaken with a start and begin to shed pools of blood for the freedom of the country, even as thundering clouds shed rain. **Besides, the sight of Hindus and Mahomedans fighting side by side for Hindustan realizing their true interests and natural comradeship, was truly magnificent and inspiring.**”

These days will be ever memorable in the history of Hindustan for yet another reason. It was proclaimed first that Hindus and Mahomedans are not rivals, not conquerors and the conquered, but brethren. Bharatmata gave sacred mandate that day, ‘Henceforward you are equal and brothers; I am equally the mother of you both !’ These were the days during which the Hindus and the Mahomedans proclaimed that India was their country and that they were all brethren, the days when Hindus and Mahomedans unanimously raised the flag of national freedom at Delhi. Be those grand days ever memorable in the history of Hindustan !”

Synthesis of Hindu and Muslim Civilisation

“The English domination came into India at a time when a revolution was taking place in Indian politics. Various small groups of accumulated waters, divided for centuries, were trying to break the dams that separated each other from the rest and unite into a vast river. That vast river is the United Nationality of India. The great united and compact nations of the world of today passed before their unity, or even for the sake of their unity, through an intermediate stage of disorganization, internal strife and disorder. If we look at the strife in Italy, in Germany, or even in England under the Romans and the Saxons and the Normans, if we see the mortal enmity between different races, provinces, and religions, and the inhuman persecutions in the course of mutual vengeance, we shall realise that the

strife in India (the war between Hindus and Muslims) was a very small matter. But who can deny that the above countries have now united their several people into strong and powerful nations of to-day, because they had been melted in the furnace of internal strife and the fire of foreign despotism ?

By a similar process of historical evolution, Bharatbhumi was in the course of creating a great nation out of the heterogeneous elements that inhabited it. The steam roller of English slavery was strong enough to crush out all the differences among the peoples of Northern India and make them unite together to throw it off”

Sikh Aloofness from the Struggle

“The Punjabees had not yet felt the common national awakening of the Hindus and the Mahomedans as the people of Northern India had. As a matter of fact, it was hardly ten years since they had lost their freedom. But the very Sikhs, who in 1849 fought furiously with the English, were now in 1857, embracing them. The key to this extraordinary historical mystery is to be found in the fact that the Revolution of 1857 came so soon after the loss of their independence. The ten years were not enough to make them realise the nature and effect of the British slavery. Those brave, illustrious, spirited followers of the Khalsa, who so hated Mahomedan slavery that they fought continuously for one hundred years and made Punjab free, would certainly not have tolerated the slavery under the English if they had realised the nature of English rule.

The revolution of 1857 broke out before they had enough time to understand it fully. And therefore, the Sikhs and Jats could not conceive the idea and help in the realisation of a United Indian Nation”

The statements are reproduced verbatim from Savarkar’s account of 1857. Nothing has been added or subtracted from his original writing.

That the British learned their lessons all too well is clear from the following extract from Forrest’s Introduction : “Among the many lessons the Indian mutiny conveys to the historian, none is of greater importance than the warning that it is possible to have a revolution in which Brahmins and Sudras, Hindus and Mahomedans, could be united against us, and that it is not safe to suppose that the peace and stability of our dominions, in any great measure, depends on the continent being inhabited by different religious systems; *for they mutually understand and respect and take a part in each other’s mode and ways of doings*”.

The one lesson that the British learn all too well was that the stability of their rule in India depended on the sowing discord between the two communities. Never again were they to be allowed the chance to unite in revolt against the aliens. The infamous Divide and Rule imperial policy, the results of which continue to haunt us to date.

Illegal British Rule in India from 1857

Time and again one reads about the British sense of fair play and their belief on the rule of law. A myth that has been so well propagated that it continues to linger. True, the British were fair to a fault on many an occasions when their vital interests were not threatened. 1857 demonstrated that on being faced with a real threat to their imperial powers, the mask fell and the real and ugly face came to the fore.

Shah Alam had given them the perfect legal basis to govern on his behalf by the grant of Diwani in 1765. At first they were empowered to govern only the provinces of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa. Each successive conquest was simply added to these provinces so that by 1810, they stretched up to Delhi and beyond to the Sikh frontier. In the run up to 1857, numerous Indian Kingdoms were annexed on one pretext or the other without however challenging the Moghul sovereignty. Indeed, when Dalhousie wished to abolish the Imperial title at Delhi, home authorities overruled him. They saw no reason to give up the fig leaf of legality that had cloaked their Indian presence since 1765. Particularly, when it was planned that the Imperial title would wither away with the demise of the aged Bahadur Shah. The wily British had made recognition of his heir conditional upon his agreeing to give up the Imperial title and withdraw from the Imperial palace.

A perfect legal coup that would have allowed the British to forever claim that their rule in India was “established by law”. Traders who reluctantly turned to governance at the express invitation of the Indian sovereign.

1857 was therefore a major embarrassment to the British. The Bharatiya sovereign did not fade into oblivion quietly as per the script crafted by Dalhousie. He actually had the termity to rise in defiance against East India Company and revoke the Diwani granted to them by his hapless forefather. An act that was perfectly legal. If the British were as legal minded or fair as they claim to be, they should have gracefully withdrawn from the Indian shores and then at best claimed damages for the losses incurred.

What they did defies the canons of any civilized behaviour. They launched a savage attack on their erstwhile patron and did not rest till they had laid the Imperial city to waste. The heirs of Bahadur Shah were killed in cold blood, while the unfortunate Emperor was himself banished to die unsung in Rangoon. Any one who claimed any sort of allegiance to the Delhi throne was hunted down like a wild animal and hanged.

From 1765 to 1857, the British could legitimately defend their presence in India as being legal. It boggles the mind to imagine that after 11th May 1857, anyone should seek to justify their presence in India. If one were to use present day phrase, their Visa to remain in India had expired on this day. From then on, their very presence in India was completely illegal. Treatment of people who overstay after expiry of their Visa is far from friendly in any country even today. Illegal aliens with hostile intentions and actively waging War against the state continue to attract Capital punishment. Deplorable as the Kanpur massacre may have been, it must be remembered that each and every British soul

by then was an unwelcome illegal alien actively hostile to the state and therefore deserved no mercy even by the standards of twentieth century.

That the British won the battle cannot change the illegal nature of their conquest or be used to justify their act of aggression. Truth be told, 1857 exposed the fact that the British rule in India was based on limitless violence that they unleashed on the unsuspecting civilians. It was based on the strength of their sword. To claim that it was based on law is to debase the very concept of law. Spear admits that the British crown stood out by 1859 as the paramount power of India as the successor of the Moghuls. He however conveniently omits to add that this was not a natural succession but one obtained by force.

The more honest British always accepted that the Raj had been created by the army and was always to be sustained by force. It is these people who took up the cause of Brigadier-General Rex Dyer and presented him with a purse of £ 26,000 for killing hundreds of unarmed civilians at Amritsar in 1919.

Savarkar's book was stirring enough to raise a host of such issues that the British had worked so hard to keep out of the Indian consciousness. No wonder, that it was considered so dangerous by the British authorities that it was kept banned for four decades well until the dying moments of their Raj. That is understandable.

How can we explain the neglect of this work in the very land, by the very inhabitants for whose sake it was written!! Truly, we have paid a very heavy price for the neglect of our heritage.

Why else the blood brothers of 1857 find themselves staring at each other through blood shot eyes, across barbed wires; one hand on the nuclear button capable of pulverizing the very cities that their ancestors once laid down their lives, to protect from the aliens?

If there is one common thread that the readers would hopefully find running through out this book, it is to understand our past so that the future would be radically different from the dismal present.

Chapter II- 7

Tilak Fans the Flames of the Torch of Freedom

Surat, December 26,1907

Cries of ‘all..no,no’ rent the air at the 23rd annual session of Congress ostensibly over the issue of election of the new president. A general bedlam prevailed as the moderates declared their candidate Dr. Rash Behari Ghose elected brushing aside the opposition led by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, denying him even the courtesy of being allowed to speak.

Tilak , who had an unparalleled mass following, was not one to take such an insult lying down. He walked over to the podium in slow and measured steps demanding that proceedings be suspended till all concerned were allowed to air their views. The response he got included chairs thrown at him in a vain attempt to intimidate him into giving up his just demand. The lion who could not be tamed by the British Government itself, was not going to be so easily deterred. His enraged supporters however threw a protective cordon around him. The man responsible for this protective cordon was none other than Baba Savarkar, the elder brother of Savarkar.

By now, moderates lost control over the meeting. Finding the going too tough for their liking, they took the easy way out by declaring the 23rd session of Indian National Congress suspended sine die. Not content with this, they asked Police to come in and force Tilak led dissidents out of the hall. By now stage was set for a split in Congress. In what remains an episode that Congress would today like people to best forget, Tilak and his followers were expelled from the party.

At stake was not who should be the president of Congress. If that was indeed the case, then Tilak was riding a losing horse, for his nominee, Lala Lajpat Rai went over to moderates. Now Aurobindo Ghose took his place. *The real battle was over the soul of Congress.* On one side were moderates who believed that India’s salvation was through benevolence of the British. On the other side were Tilak, Aurobindo Ghose and their legion of supporters, who were impatient to throw off the yoke of slavery through any means. Their argument was very simple. British rule in India rested on force and therefore violence was perfectly legitimate to get rid off them. Aspirations of Tilak camp are clear from the letter that the British intelligence discovered. Written the very next day i.e. on 27th December 1907, by Barindra Ghose, younger brother of Arabindo Ghose, which declared that the time had come to send *Sweets* all over the country. Naturally, the *Sweets* were of fiery taste capable of blowing people to bits.

1907 was no ordinary year. It was the 50th Anniversary year of the Great War of 1857. The memories of a past not too distant were fanning the embers of the struggle that had laid dormant for so long and flaming the passions of patriotic Bharatiya citizens

Congress may have had succeeded in expelling Tilak and all other supporters of Independence from its ranks but it proved to be a loser in the bargain. Commenting on the incident, Nehru wrote “..in 1907 the clash came resulting in apparently a victory for the old moderate section. But this had been won because of organisational control and the then narrow franchise of the Congress. There was no doubt that the vast majority of politically minded people in India favoured Tilak and his group. The Congress lost much of its importance.”

Open conflict served a bigger purpose. It became clear to the world at large that Bharat may be a subject nation but was not crushed. There were people who cherished the spirit of independence, who were prepared to face enormous odds to realise their dreams. No longer were the British going to be given the luxury of claiming that Indians welcomed their presence in the country.

Ironically, it was Lord Curzon, who had sparked off this nationalist fury. In an act that was designed provoke and perpetuate the Hindu-Muslim divide, he had announced Partition of Bengal in July 1905 with scant respect to the Indian opinion. Thus setting in motion the chain of events culminating in Surat Congress, where for the first time in its history, dreams of Freedom were unfurled on its stage, much to the horror of its British patrons.

For a moment, let us get back to the aftermath of 1857. The wanton cruelty with which the struggle was put down could not but have caused a pause in the freedom struggle. Nevertheless, the manner in which the Indian elite supported the British quest for retaining control over India was nothing short of nauseating.

At the apex of social order was the so-called nobility. Canning described them as breakwaters in storm and were therefore to be preserved as useful relics, caught in a time wrap from which there was to be no escape save by death. After 1857, traitors to the Bharatiya cause were rewarded. The value of their loyalty became too important for British to pursue the Dalhousie policy of annexation. So long as British interests were not threatened, the rulers were free to lead a life of absolute decadence, depending on the paramount power to crush any incipient popular revolt against their misgovernance.

Such Rulers were unknown in the long history of Bharat. Indeed, one does not know of such rulers being in existence in any part of the world for any length of time. It will not be an exaggeration to say that after 1857, they had forfeited the right to be considered persons of any consequence other than being British stooges.

From time to time, some rulers showed sparks of life. A palace coup during 1890 replaced the Manipur king by his brother. Real power was exercised by Tikendrajit Singh, who was the Commander in Chief of the army. Resident British agent, Frank Grimwood informed his superiors that the new regime was sound and Tikendrajit Singh enjoyed great popularity. Furthermore, he quickly proved an energetic administrator, launching a programme to repair roads and bridges throughout the state. Tikendrajit Singh was distrusted in Calcutta, where he was suspected of being anti-British. A popular

ruler, who was also anti British could not be tolerated. Chief Commissioner of Assam J.W. Quinton marched to Manipur with 400 troops on 22nd March 1891 to arrest Tikendrajit Singh, whose only fault so far seemed to be that he was well liked by people and was at the same time anti British. The imperial forces were soon routed. Now Manipur declared Independence, which proved to be short lived. By 27th April, the Raj had struck back and Tikendrajit Singh hanged in a public ceremony for the fault of being too popular for British liking.

Yet another Prince who became a thorn in British side was the ruler of Baroda, Sayaji Rao Gaikwad. He presided over what British themselves admitted was a 'thoroughly well governed native state'. But Sayaji Rao's concept of modernisation was not confined to the provision of proper drainage or funding a public museum, it embraced new ways of looking at India. This placed him beyond the pale as far as British were concerned. Successive British residents were therefore ordered to keep him under the tightest surveillance. During 1912 and 1913, his arms were twisted to enforce anti-terrorist and sedition laws. He was forced into sacking all the employees who were suspected to harbour any nationalist feelings.

The British found it easy to accept princely decadence. When Maharaja of Vizagapatnam was mildly rebuked for his drinking habits, he confessed, "I know, sir I am an idle, drunken fellow...but what can I do ? Your pax Britannica has robbed me of my hereditary occupation." Were he to make the mistake of following his hereditary occupation, he would soon have found himself bereft of the throne or his state. No wonder, most of the princes spent their time in the misty haze of alcoholic fumes seeking refuge in sexual perversion to prove their manhood. It is amazing that these ancient relics rose from their stupor to claim Independence in 1947 and succeeded in driving a hard bargain with Congress Government. More of it later.

The Indian elite may have become fond of slavery but at the grass roots of the national life, the spirit of Independence refused to die down. Bapu has written about his experience in eating meat at the prompting of his friend as a child around 1880. He has confessed that he could overcome his scruples in deceiving his parents, for whom eating meat was a taboo, by prospect of becoming strong, "so that we might defeat English and make India free." It is startling that in a small place like Porbandar, such thoughts excited the children. Barrenness of so called metropolitan India is clear from the fact that when same children moved to Metro towns, they soon became devoid of such patriotic feelings. In case of Bapu himself, his quest for Independence died soon after meat eating experiment stopped and was not be reawakened till another four decades had lapsed.

It is no wonder then that the struggle for Independence was led not by the elite, who were far too busy keeping their British masters happy to even dream of freedom. Charge for freeing the country from the shackles of slavery had to be led from unpolluted environment of the country side.

The first struggle was initiated by Vasudeo Balwant Phadke who dared to dream of a free Republic of India, way back in 1879. His armed exploits revived the specter of 1857. By May 21, 1879, Statesman wrote "It is not strange that the recent incendiarism at Poona should have excited the keenest interest and anxiety throughout the country..where conflagrations have come to be recognised as serious rebellion." By 20th July 1879, Phadke was caught. He was to die in Eden in 1883. The story of Manipur in 1891 has already been recounted.

It is to Bal Gangadhar Tilak, born on 23rd July 1856 at Ratnagiri, that the credit has to go for fanning the flames from dying embers of the freedom struggle in 1857. Unlike Gokhale, Dadabhai Naoroji, Ranade, Surendra Nath Banerjee or Bapu; at no stage of his life was Tilak ever enamoured of British Rule. A brilliant student, he had upon graduation vowed never to serve in British Government. Seeds of the freedom struggle which ultimately forced British to leave their prized possession of India lay in the political awakening initiated by Tilak. The medium chosen by him was annual public celebration , starting in 1895, of the birth and coronation of Shivaji. This was accompanied by a great deal of nationalist agitation in Deccan, which was reflected not only in Tilak's newspaper but also other local papers. To restrict the agitation to annual celebrations of the birth and coronation of Shivaji would have left long intervals during the year. Tilak devised an ingenious scheme. He took to the celebration of Ramdas, the reputed Guru of Shivaji and turned annual worship of Ganpati into a political demonstration. Ramdas celebration came in February, birth of Shivaji in April, coronation in June and Ganpati worship around September, so that year was fairly well divided. Ramdas was popular in Deccan for having inspired Shivaji with his ideas of Independence, and was represented as prototype of the educated agitator and founder of secret societies. Ganpati is the most revered God in Hindu mythology and provided a most convenient platform to reach out to people. The public meetings gave Tilak and his followers the opportunity to spread nationalist feelings. For instance, at one celebration he frankly admitted that "the festival's political aspect cannot be ignored and we never ignored it." On another occasion, he held forth that India should be bound together by ties of brotherhood, friendship so that in the hour of need the different people of India might come to each other's help. He urged the people to work on disinterestedly in the cause of the nation, Shivaji would then come forward to help them. His followers were no less skilled in the art of oratory. S.M.Paranjee told his audience that Penal codes were not applicable to men like Shivaji. Like Shivaji, it was necessary to resort to guerilla warfare, when the enemy was strong.

Tilak and Paranjpe became childhood heroes for generations of young men and women of Deccan. Savarkar became just one of them. It was no accident that led Savarkar to dedicate Mazzini's autobiography to them.

The results of nationalist awakening were soon to become visible. Deccan youth lost their fear of British and thirsted for revenge when their sensibilities were hurt. It was on 22nd June 1897, that saw the outbreak of political terrorism that was to haunt British for the rest of their years in India. It is on this day Rand and Ayerest, the hated British officers in Poona were killed by Chapekar brothers. Informers who caused the arrest of Chapekar

brothers were shot dead on 8th February 1898. It was widely believed that Chapekar brothers were the front for a wide ranging conspiracy. British Intelligence recorded that the father of Chapekar brothers, old Brahmin priest Hari Chapekar, went to Amravati in December 1898, soon after his sons were martyred. He held *religious* meetings in the town for about a fortnight. Meetings of 29th and 30th December 1898 were held in the house of G.S.Khaparde, who was a well known friend of Tilak. Khaparde later accompanied Tilak to the Shivaji celebrations in Calcutta in 1906. A visit that gave so strong an impetus to the cult of the bomb in Bengal.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak was suspected as being the brain behind the actions of Chapekar brothers but this could never be proven. The lack of proof did not deter the Government. It went on to prosecute him for some *Verses* that had been printed in his paper and had him sentenced to 18 months of imprisonment.

The imprisonment did nothing to dampen Tilak's pronounced hostility to British rule. It only served to hasten his transformation from Bal Gangadhar to Lokmanya Tilak – the dreaded foe of the British imperialism. Soon after his release, he went on to relentlessly attack the British rule through the medium of his newspapers. What caused the authorities tremendous irritation was the fact that the articles contained just enough ginger to make them palatable to the Indian public without crossing the borders of law. Ingenious tricks employed by Tilak included championing the nationalist cause much more openly in Kesari, which was a Marathi paper and using a more restrained language in Mahratta, which was printed in English. This served two purposes. Marathi being local language, Kesari had a wide ranging audience. In the event of prosecution, Tilak could always quote Mahratta in defense and claim prosecution allegations were on account of errors in translation.

It was no wonder then that nationalist spirit began to spread beyond Deccan. In 1900, a paper called Kalidas began to come out in Benares immediately after a visit by Lokmanya Tilak. The unrestrained language of the paper in favour of Independence allowed the authorities to force its closure.

People like G.S.Khaparde, who were found hobnobbing with Chapekar clan continued to stoke flames of freedom in the Central provinces. It was Khaparde, who had originally conceived the idea of boycotting the British goods way back in 1896. An idea he continued to pursue at every available opportunity. The British found him mixed up in many a dangerous matters. No doubt accounting for his sky rocketing popularity, which in Western India was soon second only to Tilak.

Baroda, ruled by the rare nationalist prince Sayaji Rao Gaikwad was another nurturing ground for the freedom lovers. With the ruler himself daring to dream of a new Bharat – one without the corroding British influence, his state became the favourite meeting ground for nationalists of all hues. The prince was ever ready to provide employment to all patriotic citizens of Bharat much to the annoyance of the colonial masters. The memories of 1857 were too fresh and Baroda was too important a state for the British to ride rough shod over easily.

A prominent nationalist, who was employed in Baroda was Aurobindo Ghose, since 1893. By 1899, Jotindranath Banerjee had joined Baroda state services and became friends with M.B.Jadhav, in whose house Aurobindo lived. The trio was joined in 1901 by Barindra Ghose, Aurobindo's younger brother. Under influence of Shivaji celebrations in neighbouring Bombay presidency, they took to studying such political subjects as French Revolution, Ranade's history of Marathas. Relationship of this group with Tilak camp that became visible at Surat, was a natural result of the commonality of their aspirations. The Baroda group, as we shall see later, was to found to be the moving spirit behind famous Maniktola conspiracy. Tilak's inspiration to Savarkar's Abhinav Bharat is by now too well known to bear recounting.

By 1905, Lokmanya Tilak strode the national scene like a colossus. His influence was all pervading in all parts of the country. In 1917, British intelligence carried out a review of the events that had rocked their Indian rule in the preceding decade. They concluded; "Thus the centers of conspiracy in Calcutta, Dacca, London, Paris, and San Francisco, are taken up separately, and it will be observed that the lines of propagation of the revolutionary movement, leading to Bengal on one hand and to Europe and America on the other, both radiate *from Poona.*"

Events on the international front excited the political life in India. There was the rise of Japan as a force to contend with. This was a remarkable turn around for a nation that had been forced to swallow its pride and open its port to international trade and commerce by the Gunboat blackmail of Commodore Perry of the US navy in 1853. By 1902, Japan had secured tangible recognition of its status as major international power by concluding a treaty with Britain as an equal. Two years later, it went to war with Russia. The war was highlighted by the spectacular defeat of the Russian fleet in Straits of Tsushima in May 1905. Victory at land followed forcing Russia to accept Japanese claim. After a long long time, a White European power had been humbled by an Asiatic nation.

It is in this charged atmosphere, that the partition of Bengal announced by Curzon in July 1905. It was implemented by October showing complete contempt to the Indian opinion. This was just the catalyst that the efforts of Tilak camp needed. Partition of Bengal was far from a mere division of an unwieldy province into more convenient administrative units. It was a deliberate attempt to create two separate provinces. A Hindu province to be kept in check by the adjoining Muslim part. One more colonial move to keep India divided. The resulting uproar caught administration unawares. The two main themes of the anti-partition movement - Swadeshi and Boycott caught popular imagination. They were aimed at economically crippling British interests by depriving them of the Indian market. After all if the Indians refused to buy anything from British industry, Bharatiya producers only stood to gain. Swadeshi had a political side which went much further. Not only Indians were exhorted to buy Indian goods; it also demanded Swaraj or self-government. The principal agency used to enforce the boycott in Calcutta and throughout the provinces of divided Bengal was organisation known as 'National Volunteers' with Lokmanya Tilak as its President. University students and schoolboys took part in the movement chanting *Bande Mataram*, which became the battle cry of the nationalist

forces. Despite the undercurrents of Hindu-Muslim antipathy present in the agitation, outbreaks of sectarian violence were rare and localised.

The readers would recall that it is in this charged atmosphere that Savarkar organised the first bon fire of the foreign goods in India in October 1905. The fire was well and truly lit. There was no going back now. By 1906, Bengal press was blessed by addition of a few more publications. One was Yugantar - started by Barindra Ghose, Abinash Chandra and Bhupendra Nath Dutt, brother of Swami Vivekananda and written in fluent colloquial Bengali. Bande Mataram started by Aurobindo Ghose, written in English was meant to appeal to a more educated audience. Both were modeled after Kesari and Mahratta published by Tilak. Sandhya was yet another publication sharing close links with Yugantar and Bande Mataram. Utter disdain for British rule and a burning desire to gain freedom was a common thread running through all these publications. They threw caution to the winds and were almost eager to provoke the wrath of authorities.

It is on Bipinchandra Pal that rests the honour for being the first prominent Congress leader to issue the clarion call for British to quit India. In Bande Mataram he openly called upon the British to leave India. He wrote, "Time has come to frankly call upon the British to leave India. The issue is neither the Partition of Bengal nor improvements in governance. We now want to exercise our fundamental right to govern our country. We are aware that begging would not get us autonomy. Our struggle is therefore aimed at making the administration of the country impossible for the British and compelling them to leave the country."

It was not until 1942 that is a good 36 years later that Bapu asked the British to leave the country in so blunt a manner.

In 1906, Shivaji celebration reached Calcutta. Administration was incredulous. The supposed depredations of Marathas in Bengal were supposed to make Bengalis impervious to the legend of Shivaji. Yugantar's appeal was permeating through all layers of society. A letter written to Yugantar and intercepted by the Police spoke for itself.

" I, a schoolboy living in the hilly country, don't feel the oppression of the Feringhi (foreigner), and I give way before people for want of information. I am therefore in need of Yugantar, for it acquaints us to a great extent with the desire of driving away the Feringhis, and also make us alive to wrongs. I am in straitened circumstances, *hardly able to procure one meal a day*; nevertheless my desire for newspaper reading is extremely strong."

In Punjab, discontent was stoked by Lahore lawyers Lala Lajpat Rai and Munshi Ajit Singh. They built on the popular discontent caused by proposal for higher charges to be levied on farmers living in the areas irrigated by waterways. The additional charges would have crippled the already hard pressed farmers. Popular grievance was the platform that the nationalists needed to spread their message. Orators fanned all over the province reminding their rural audience how the Sikhs had betrayed Bharat in 1857 but now had the chance to redeem themselves.

Discontent in Punjab was something that British could ill afford. After all, the province accounted for over a quarter of Indian army. Reports that the agitation was disturbing Sepoy morale could not but cause British serious worry. At Ferozpur several hundred sepoys attended a meeting, held specially for them. Intelligence described the meeting as “most seditious.” By end of April 1907, Punjab Governor concluded that he was facing something far more sinister than protest movement against an unpopular law. The protests were the façade for a massive conspiracy, whose ultimate goal was a major uprising against the Raj. On 7th May, against the background of near panic in Lahore, where British officers and their families were openly hooted at, he reached for instruments of coercion. Ajit Singh and Lala Lajpat Rai were arrested and deported to Mandalay, to be released later in November.

The deportations forced Bipinchandra Pal to cut short his lecture tour in Madras, which “bid fair to put the whole of Southern India in an uproar.” On 2nd May, 1907, he is reported to have told a wildly cheering audience that, “We desire to make it (Government) autonomous, absolutely free of British Parliament.” Cries of Bande Mataram greeted the bold declaration.

“Bal – Bal Ganagadhar Tilak, Pal – Bipinchandra Pal and Lal- Lala Lajpat Rai” the trio from three different parts of country became the Icons of the freedom struggle

On eve of the 50th anniversary of the first freedom struggle, Bharat was once again alive and getting ready to once again challenge the imperial power. Tilak, at 50 was now an elder statesman. Shivaji celebration initiated by him over a decade ago, had brought the results he sought. British had realised that ‘the masses were not inert as had been imagined’. He now worried for the revolutionaries, he had himself inspired. He knew more than anyone else that the assessment of Punjab Governor was right. The unseen hand of the revolutionaries was indeed at work behind the outburst of popular agitation that was fast spreading through out the country. A devout Hindu, he knew his scriptures well. Ramayan was the story of victory of Good over Evil – won on the battlefield by violence of Ram’s unfailing arrows. Gita advocated that even the near and dear ones deserved to be annihilated, if they took up the cause of the Unjust. A Gandhi, who turned the scriptures on their head and advocated the cause of Absolute Non Violence, had not yet arrived on the Indian scene. Indeed, so long as Tilak was alive, Gandhi had to rest content with being a poor second at best.

The practical Tilak had no quarrel with the Revolutionary methods that attracted his young followers. His only disagreement with the youngsters was over their timing. He tried his best to channelise the revolutionary fervour along the lines that would enable them to decisively attack the colonial power. Time and again he warned them not to launch an adventure without being adequately prepared.

Even as the revolutionaries hunted for manuals to make Bombs, their spiritual Guru looked at ways and means to serve the national cause further. He knew that Time and the Revolutionaries waited for no one. On December 6, 1907, an attempt had been made, at Kharagpur in Bengal to blow up the train; in which the Lieutenant-Governor was

travelling; Tilak knew he could not wait any longer. Fully aware of the odds that faced him, he nevertheless launched an attempt to capture Congress in order to provide just the shield that Revolutionaries needed; in order to be successful. No doubt the Government was also alive to the danger it faced. In what, at best, can be described as their naïveté, moderates played into the hands of British and drove Tilak out of Congress folds.

The die was now cast. On April 11, 1908 an attempt was made to assassinate M. Tardival, the Maire of French Chandernagore. April 30th was the night of Amavasya, darkest night of the month, considered auspicious to offer sacrifice to Goddess Kali. This was the day chosen by Khudiram Bose to throw a bomb at Muzaffarpore. He had intended to kill Mr. Kingsford, the British Judge responsible for convicting persons connected with Yugantara and Bande Mataram in August 1907. The explosion claimed unintended victims but shook the Raj as never before.

Tilak moved quickly to the forefront in defending the Revolutionaries. He wrote two articles in Kesari. "The Country's Misfortune" on 12th May and "These Remedies are not lasting" on 9th June. The thrust of the articles was that while he disapproved bomb throwing as a means to secure Independence, he considered British Government was a curse to the country. According to him, if it went on doing as it was doing and did not give the people the rights they asked for, Indians would resort to bomb throwing like the people of Portugal and Russia. In an interesting and frank comment on his inability to keep pace with his young followers, he had added; "Old and experienced leaders can, so far as they themselves are concerned, keep this indignation (against the alien rule) permanently within prescribed bounds with the help of their experience and mature thought but it is impossible for all the people of the country thus to keep their feelings of indignation or irritability always within these bounds; *perhaps it may be said without hesitation that the inhabitants of any country in which it is possible for feelings of indignation to remain always within prescribed bounds are destined to remain perpetually in slavery.*"

Promptness with which Tilak defended his young friends offered a stark contrast to the studied silence that Bapu maintained over Jallianwala Bagh massacre of hundreds of unarmed civilians for well over a year, barely a decade later.

A prosecution was ordered in respect of these articles and Tilak arrested on 24th June. After a mock trial that lasted for less than a month, Tilak was sentenced on 22nd July 1908, to six years of transportation and exiled to Mandalay. Popular feelings ran high at this indignity imposed on the Bharatiya consciousness. Bombay witnessed Hartals that lasted for several days. Mill hands struck work. Shop keepers downed their shutters. Tilak's sentence was greeted by violent protests. It took several instances of firing in which 15 people were killed as per the Government version, before the situation could be brought under control.

It is time to take note of a canard that has been spread about Tilak by his petty minded opponents. Tilak was a devout Hindu and certainly by standards of his followers like Savarkar, an orthodox Brahmin. He successfully used Hindu icons like Ganpati, Shivaji

to arouse the patriotic feelings. Moreover, he championed the Anti partition agitation and turned it into a national cause. A partition that was supposed to be beneficial to the Muslims. All this has been sometimes deliberately misinterpreted to portray Tilak as being anti Muslim and communal. This stupid charge would have infuriated Jinnah. Chagla has shed some light on the relations between Tilak and Jinnah, which is worth taking note of.

“I might mention here that during my long association with him, I found that Jinnah always showed greatest respect and regard for Tilak. Even when he was in the process of changing his political stand and becoming more and more communal, I never remember his ever saying anything, which was derogatory of Tilak. Two persons in public life for whom Jinnah showed greatest respect were Gokhale and Tilak. He had hard and harsh things to say about Gandhiji, Nehru and others; but as far as Gokhale and Tilak were concerned, Jinnah had the most profound admiration and respect for them and for their views.

It is surprising that there should have been so much in common between Jinnah and Tilak. I understand that the regard Jinnah had for Tilak was reciprocated by Tilak. Jinnah told me that when he was a junior he was reading in the chamber of Lowndes-Sir George Lowndes, who afterwards became a member of the Viceroy’s Legislative Council, and later still a member of the Privy Council-Lowndes’ opinion was once sought regarding some speech Tilak had delivered. There was going to be a conference, and Lowndes asked Jinnah whether he had read the brief and what he thought about it. Jinnah replied that he had not touched the brief and would not look at it as he wanted to keep himself free to criticise the Government for prosecuting a great patriot like Tilak”.

Lokmanya Tilak had by 1908 attained a desire cherished by him since childhood. His nation had been aroused from its deep slumber. The fires lit in 1857 were now burning brightly. Independence had entered the vocabulary of the masses, though Congress was to fight shy of this word for yet another few decades. Freedom lovers from all over the country were about to embark on their trial by fire inspired by the sight of their Guru thundering like a lion, unmoved by the prospect of a hard prison life at the ripe young age of 52 years. The fire was to consume many of his beloved Revolutionaries. It is their activities that we shall now look at.

Chapter II-8

Savarkar at India House in London

“We cannot control the spread of sedition in India, until its London connection had been eliminated” admitted George Clark at the beginning of 1910. The Indian Viceroy, Minto, who had narrowly escaped in an attempt on his life at Ahmedabad on 13th November 1909; was worried that not enough was being done to keep track of London plotters.

On the face of it, it was inexplicable that the Raj should feel threatened in 1910. The Raj reprisal after the bomb thrown at Muzzafarpur had been swift and merciless. Finding that docile Indian was a myth and that the age of “the mute acquiescence” had passed forever, the Raj responded with a show of muscle and cunningness. Tilak was accordingly packed off to Mandalay. The instigators of Khudiram Bose had been tracked down, in what came to be known as Maniktola conspiracy, and dealt with in a harsh manner. Even as it bared its fangs, the Raj sought to draw the moderate Congressmen into the folds of power. The instrument was the Indian Councils Act, more commonly known as Morley-Minto reforms, announced in November 1908. This provided for election of sixty Indian representatives to the Viceroy’s Executive Council, though there was no pretence of giving the Indians any real power. Mischievously, it provided for separate electorates for the Muslims in a bid to keep the major communities apart.

That the so called reforms were nothing but a mask to hide the real intentions of perpetuating British rule for ever; was clear from the reply Lord Morley gave in House of Lords on 17th December 1908. Responding to his critics that he was giving away far too much to Indians, he replied; “ If it could be said that this chapter of reforms led directly or necessarily to the establishment of a parliamentary system in India, I, for one would have nothing at all to do with it.” Despite this disclaimer that showed the real face of imperialism, Congress moderates were all too happy to welcome the measures, having got more than what they had ever expected. A sort of avowed entente grew up; the government and the nationalist opposition were more in accord with each other than at any time between 1888 and 1937, now that the Extremist section was locked away.

Why then in 1910 did the Raj continue to feel more unsafe at anytime since the tumultuous days of 1857? Let us now go back to the story of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, where we left it, before going on to Mazzini.

Savarkar’s literary contribution to cause of Independence in form of his writing on Mazzini and 1857 is already known. Savarkar was however not only a historian but himself a shaper of history. In his short stay of less than four years in London, he went on to leave his mark in a manner that led British Government to conclude that unless he was removed from London, their rule in India would not be safe. The amazing impact of this young man from Bhagur needs a little elaboration.

Free India Society

Savarkar, as we know already, had set sail for London on 9th June 1906 with avowed intention of furthering the cause of Independence. A born organiser, he could not sit still and waste the one month long journey to London. It is on Steamer 'Persia' itself that he started his work. He made two new devoted members of Abhinav Bharat – Harnam Singh and one more person, who remains anonymous, as following his own request, Savarkar never named him but merely called him 'Shishtachar.' From an account of Savarkar's associate V.M.Bhat, he appears to be Mirza Abbas of the Nabha state. Both of them went on to assist Savarkar in numerous ways through out his stay in London. Shishtachar contributed generously to the cause of Independence. If in any meeting, there ever was a scent of danger, he made sure that a protective cordon was thrown around Savarkar.

In 1906, there were barely 2000 Indian students in London. Most of them were sons of the Indian elite, who were as a class more loyal to the King than the King himself. The height of their aspirations was to be accepted as a true English Gentleman. In this quest they went to ludicrous extent of adopting what they considered British life style.

Gandhi's own quest in this regard in 1888 is worth reading in his own words. On reaching London, his first task was "undertook the all too impossible task of becoming an English gentleman. The cloths after the Bombay cut that I was wearing, were I thought, unsuitable for English society, and I got new ones at Army and navy stores. I also went in for a chimney-pot hat costing nineteen shillings-an excessive price in those days. Not content with this, I wasted ten pounds on an evening suit made in Bond street, the centre of fashionable life in London; and got my good and noble-hearted brother to send me a double watch-chain of gold....As if all this was not enough to make me look the thing, I directed my attention to other details that were supposed to go towards the making of an English gentleman. I was told it was necessary for me to take lessons in dancing, French and elocution...so I invested £ 3 in a violin and something more in fees. I sought a third teacher to give me lessons in elocution and I paid him a preliminary fees of a guinea..."

Nehru's life in London was not very different. Unlike Gandhi, he did not have to take any special efforts to integrate in English society. His very western upbringing had already taken care of this. Interestingly, Nehru reached London by end of May 1905, a year before Savarkar did - at an impressionable age of fifteen. Throughout his seven-year stay, which more or less coincided, with Savarkar's own stay in London, he keenly followed the political developments in India. At one stage, he even had the cheek to upbraid his own father on reading an article of his. "I wrote to him rather an impertinent letter in which I suggested that no doubt the British Government was greatly pleased with his political activities. This was just the kind of suggestion, which would make him wild, and he was very angry. He almost thought of asking me to return from England immediately." In his own words again, "It is curious that in spite of my growing extremism in politics, *I did not then view with any strong disfavour the idea of joining the ICS and thus becoming a cog in the British Government's administrative machine in India.* Such an idea in later years would have been repellent to me".

If this was the state of mind of the two people, who were to later become leading lights of the freedom struggle, the British influence on minds of the ordinary students can easily be imagined. It is in this sterile environment that Savarkar set out to sow the seeds of a freedom struggle. By December 1906, he had influenced enough like minded people to form Free India Society. Gyanchand Verma, Harnam Singh, Khan, Jaiswal, Sen, Madanlal Dhingra, Koregaokar, Bhai Paramanand, Baba Joshi, Bapat, Maheshcharan Singh, Hardayal -all joined hands with Savarkar in setting up the Society. They were to be soon joined by Hemchandra Das, who was specifically sent by Aurobindo Ghose to learn skills of making bombs. Many others like Madam Cama, Sardar Singh Rana soon joined the India House gang.

Now Savarkar was to embark on a career that continues to dazzle, nearly a hundred years later. Under the Free India Society's banner; India House became meeting ground for nationalists of all hues. By 10th May 1907, the Free India Society had enough members to celebrate the 50th anniversary of 1857. The meeting has been thus described by Indulal Yagnik, "The 10th May, however did not pass unnoticed in London. Vinayak Savarkar had not spent a year at the India House in vain. He had already carried an intensive propaganda among the wide circle of Indians in London, just as he had carried on thorough-going research in the events of the great war with the help of classical works on the subject, fully equipped with historical material on the subject, Savarkar held a private celebration of the fiftieth anniversary which was attended by a small but determined group of young enthusiasts at the India House."

In the meanwhile Pandit Shaymji Varma, the patron of India House decided to leave London and settle in Paris. No doubt the deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai had deeply unsettled him. Savarkar was now fully in charge of the India House.

The halls of India House reverberated with discussions on Mazzini and 1857, the revolutionary literature that Savarkar was actively working on. The story of Mazzini had already created a sensation in Maharashtra by middle of 1907.

Free India Society decided to popularise the cause of Indian freedom on an international level. As a part of this quest, Savarkar wrote political articles on Indian affairs for a New York publication and got them translated in German, French, Italian, Russian, and Portuguese. The translated articles were printed in the respective countries by the Society members. Madam Cama and Sardar Singh Rana attended International Socialist Congress, which was held on 22nd August 1907 at Stuttgart. Their attempt to get a resolution passed in favour of Indian Independence was blocked by the British delegates. This could not either stop Madam Cama from unfurling the flag of Independent India at the Conference nor deter her from making an impassioned speech calling for Indian freedom. Society's attempts to make the cause of Indian freedom a live international issue bore fruit when Kaiser clearly told President Wilson that absolute political Independence of India was one of the indispensable conditions for world peace.

Abhinav Bharat

Free India Society was merely the public face of the secret revolutionary society. Soon after the May 1907 function, Bapat, Hemchandra Das, Mirza Abbas set out in search of the technology to make bombs. They established a contact with a Russian revolutionary, Safranski, an ex officer of Engineers and then a student at Ecole des Langues Orientales in Paris. It is through Safranski that Bapat could obtain a copy of the manual at Berlin. Language now appeared as a stumbling block for the manual was in Russian. Bapat once again provided a solution. He got it translated in English by his Russian girl friend - Miss Anna, a medical student at Berlin. Finally a few usable copies were ready. In an age when Photo copying was yet to be invented, the revolutionaries guarded the precious copies with missionary zeal. This did not stop them from sending one copy to Tilak as a mark of their gratitude. The copy was handed over by Hotilal Verma. Other people who got these prized copies included Sikender Hyat Khan.

The revolutionaries now took to making bombs as described in the manual. It is during one such an experiment that the valour of Madanlal Dhingra came to Savarkar's notice. During one late night experiment, he realized to his horror that the chemicals that were being heated had reached their flash point. There was nothing around to lift the pot from the burner. Time was running out. Possibility of an explosion was very real. Every body was frantically looking around for something to hold the burning hot pot containing the chemicals. It is at this critical juncture that Madanlal, who stepped forward and coolly lifted the pot with his bare hands.

Hem Chandra Das soon returned to India with his newly acquired skills and a copy of the manual. With this, the Maniktola conspiracy soon came to haunt the British. By December 1907, The Commissioner of Police in Paris informed British intelligence that Indian revolutionaries had acquired the dreaded skill to make bombs. No headway could be made till the blasts of Muzzafarpur rocked the Raj in April 1908. In a swift action, Police were then able to trace the blasts back to Calcutta and raid the head quarters of Bengali revolutionaries by 2nd May 1908. What they found in a house located in Maniktola Gardens caused their eyes to bulge.

The house owned by the Ghose family was a veritable institute to impart practical instruction in revolutionary methods and manufacture explosives. The police were able to recover a large cache of guns, revolvers, dynamite and material for making bombs. In this raid the revolutionaries also lost one of their prized copies of the Bomb manual.

On 12th May 1908, when Tilak wrote the article in defense of Khudiram Bose, full dimensions of the Maniktola conspiracy were well known. He well knew the fate that awaited him, when he penned his thoughts. Such reckless disregard to consequences is usually the prerogative of an impetuous youth and not of a reasoned mature statesman, 52 years of age. One can not but bow in reverence to this courageous act. No wonder, Jinnah had nothing but the highest regard for Tilak throughout his life.

As many as thirty freedom fighters were committed to trial on 19th August 1908 and seven more were added to the list on 14th September. In between, on August 31st, Kanai Lal Dutt and Satyendra Nath Bose shot an approver dead. This approver had disclosed the part played by Bapat in the Bomb manual episode, forcing him to go underground for years. Dutt and Bose were executed for their deed but their act enabled Bapat to see an independent India. A relatively protracted trial followed. First judgement was delivered on May 6th 1909. Four – Barindra Kumar Ghose, Ullaskar Dutt, Hemchandra Das and Upendra Nath Banerjee were sentenced to transportation for life, while ten others were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. On November 23rd, the convictions were upheld by High Court. By 18th February 1910, final part of the legal farce was over.

The case of Aurobindo Ghose caused considerable excitement. He was widely perceived as the moving spirit behind the whole conspiracy. For instance, the School for Revolution in Maniktola was organised along the lines laid down by him in his pamphlet, Bhawani Mandir. Overwhelming sentiment, cutting across all shades of political opinion however favoured his acquittal. The revolutionaries let it be openly known that the Judge who convicted him would have to pay for his act with his life. Want of direct evidence, fear of life, the establishment need not to offend the Indian sentiment beyond a point; all played a role in his acquittal.

Whatever Congress moderates professed to believe, the Raj knew the trials were not criminal in nature but were essentially political. It is this knowledge that caused acquittal of Aurobindo and also made the Raj refrain from subjecting Tilak to physically rigorous prison life. It rested content with removing him from political scene and subjecting him to solitary confinement that was no less inhuman. More proof of the Raj intentions, if ever needed, were laid bare in the telegram that Savarkar's associates in Abhinav Bharat intercepted during Tilak trial. Sent to Viceroy by Justice Davar, who was trying Tilak, it read "Defence grave, depending Jury". So much for the famed separation of Judiciary and Executive during the British Rule.

Maniktola was not the only revolutionary act that the London based Savarkar was involved in. Even as he wrote the History of 1857, he conspired to cause an uprising in Punjab, the province that had let the country down in 1857. Savarkar took to learning Gurumukhi enabling him to prepare the revolutionary literature for the Sikh soldiers in their native language. He also read the Sikh scriptures. Indeed, he also wrote a book 'History of Sikhs'. Unfortunately, no copy of this has survived turmoil of the revolutionary ferment. With the help of the man, we know only as Shishtachar, he started sending the revolutionary literature to various parts of Punjab. This anonymous freedom fighter appears to have belonged to well to do family of a trading community. This is evident not only from the generous contribution made by him to the cause but also organising the dispatch of the material hidden inside the goods being imported by merchants in Punjab. This lends credence to the belief that Shishtachar was indeed Mirza Abbas of Nabha state. No doubt Harnam Singh, who belonged to a prestigious Sikh family also lent his full weight to the effort in a bid to wipe stigma on the fair name of Sikhs. This appears to have played no small part in the wide spread discontent that erupted in Punjab during 1906-1907 and caused the British endless worries.

By now, Savarkar was a revolutionary in his own right and no blind follower of Tilak. This did not mean that there existed any antipathy between the two. Indeed, yet another telegram intercepted by Abhinav Bharat between Secretary of State, Morley and the Viceroy shows their relationship in true light. It said "G.K. informs that Savarkar and Bapat are close associates of Tilak. Kindly therefore keep strict watch on Savarkar." Reference to G.K. was taken to mean Gopal Krishna Gokhale infuriating the Abhinav Bharat members. Though Savarkar himself never believed the accusation against Gokhale.

In 1908, even as bomb explosions were rocking Muzzfarpur, Free India Society was busy arranging to organise the 51st anniversary of 1857 on a grand scale in London itself. This was an audacious challenge to the might of the Raj, particularly intolerable in view of the ongoing disturbances back in India.

On this occasion, Savarkar prepared a pamphlet entitled "Oh Martyrs!!" It was a clear and unambiguous clarion call for Independence. The inspiring piece of penmanship, in the age when the 'Sun never set on the Empire'; was bearding the devil in its own lair. The tone and tenor can be glimpsed from the very first sentence,

*"The battle of freedom once begun,
And handed down from sire to son,
Though often lost is ever won"*

It went on to champion the cause of freedom in firm and clear language and went on to end with the following;

*"For, the bones of Bahadur Shah are crying vengeance from their grave!
For, the blood of the dauntless Laxmi is boiling with indignation!
For, the Shahid Peer Ali of Patna when he was going to the gallows for having refused
to divulge the secrets of the conspiracy whispered defiance to the Firungee said in
prophetic words "You may hang me today, you may hang such as me every day but
thousands will still arise in my place. Your objectives will never be gained.*

*Indians these words must be fulfilled! Your blood oh Martyrs shall be avenged!
Bande Mataram!"*

The function itself was a grand success. For days before hand, a festive environment pervaded the Indian society. A big crowd gathered at India House on the 10th May. Savarkar himself has thus described the setting of the function. "The hall of India House was well decorated. A huge blood red cloth decorated with flowers was hung in front of the audience. The names of Bahadur Shah, Nanasahib Peshwa, Rani Laxmibai, Molvi Ahmedshah, Raja Kunwar Singh and the names of other heroes of 1857 were written in half a foot high letters on the cloth in golden, green, white and pink colours. Pictures of various patriots were hung around the hall.

Celebrations of 1857, language adopted in the pamphlet, publication of Mazzini's Autobiography, the now no longer secret connections of Manikola revolutionaries with India House Group meant that the revolutionary nature of their activities were no longer hidden from British Intelligence. Free India Society and Abhinav Bharat were now merged together for all practical purposes. Much as they would have liked to, the Raj authorities could not move against them without causing serious loss of face for the English in Europe.

The celebrations of 1857 reverberated throughout London. A college principal abused the Bharatiya heroes of the Great War. This infuriated Harnam Singh and M.R.Khan, who were studying in the college. They choose to quit the college rather than swallow the insult. The conviction of Tilak in July 1908 was condemned by all sections of the society. A protest meeting was held in London. Gokhale, who was in London, choose not to attend the meeting. By end of 1908, India House had played host to a number of nationalist leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai, Bipinchandra Pal, Har Dayal, Dadasahib Khaparde.

In the charged atmosphere that prevailed in the latter half of 1908, the revolutionary fervour in the India House Group increased considerably. Any proposal to have any truck with the government brought forth only jeers. Monte-Moreley reforms were scoffed at. On 8th of November 1908, Savarkar spoke on "Are we really disarmed". He pointed out that in spite of the Arms Act there was considerable warlike material in India. He instanced the Native states and Native troops, which he said, would be sufficient to overpower and drive the British out of India. What was wanted was active work in the Native states and among the native troops, and it would be the duty of every Indian leaving these shores for India to work in that direction. Savarkar for one; was certainly working tirelessly for the cause.

Meanwhile back in India, growth of Abhinav Bharat picked up pace. Branches were being set up all over the Bombay presidency, penetrating as far as Gwalior in the north. Bapat had returned by March 1908 to disseminate the skills to make bombs.

Poverty was no deterrence to the cause. V.M.Bhat, his mother and grandmother were living on a monthly income of Rs seven and a half. Aba Darekar, poet Govind could sustain themselves only because their mother was working as a maidservant. Bengal revolutionaries were no better off. Half cut coconut were used by them as utensils to eat. Yet, none of them was prepared to dilute the ideal. Any money that they could lay their hands was immediately utilised for buying arms, and material to make bombs. Attempts were being made to coordinate the efforts with the other revolutionary groups such as the Anusilan Samiti of Dacca. By 1908, Abhinav Bharat had set up a secret unit at Vasai, near Bombay to manufacture bombs. This unit was never to be discovered by police.

By early 1909, Savarkar arranged for a consignment of 21 Browning pistols and thousands of rounds of ammunition to be sent to his associates in India. The courier was Chatturbhuj Amin, then employed as a cook at India House. The plan was to rock the Raj

to its roots by simultaneous assassination of 21 District Collectors – the symbol of the might of the Raj.

By this time, Baba Savarkar was already under watch following the telegraphic warning received by the Viceroy. In February 1909, tragedy struck the Savarkar family. Savarkar's young son died of small pox. This did not stop Baba from coming to Bombay to receive the pistols. It appears that the Intelligence had already received information about the consignment that was on its way. In a bid to stop him from receiving the pistols, he was arrested at Bombay on 28th February 1909. A nationalist police officer, Rambahu Ballal, ensured that Baba would have a chance to talk to Bhat, who was then free. Unfortunately, Baba did not avail of the opportunity to inform Bhat about the location of secret papers. As a result, in the ensuing raid on Baba's house, the police discovered one copy of the Bomb manual and several other papers about the activities of Abhinav Bharat.

The prosecution harped on the crime committed by Baba for having published some verses by poet Govind. These Marathi verses meant that history teaches that no one has got independence without war. Those who desire Independence must wage war. These were taken as incitement to violence. By 8th June 1909, he was sentenced to transportation for life. The discovery of the Bomb manual no doubt came in very handy for the prosecution.

The arrest of Baba Savarkar did not prevent the consignment of the pistols from safely reaching the hands of the Abhinav Bharat members. The police investigations intensified following his arrest, leaving forced Abhinav Bharat no choice but to lie low for some time.

Back in London, Savarkar was heartbroken by the untimely death of his only son. Baba's arrest caused him deep anguish. He knew his family in Nasik now faced utter ruin with the only earning member behind bars. All for a cause that seemed hopeless. A lesser man would have given up the impossible struggle. Savarkar's resolve only hardened. Abhinav Bharat now decided to strike in London itself.

The British Empire was rocked by the assassination of Colonel William Curzon –Wyllie, Political Aide-de-Camp at the India office on 1st July 1909. The assassin was Madan Lal Dhingra. It was no ordinary murder driven by personal grievance but a political statement of Abhinav Bharat. During course of the trial, he made his stand very clear.

“I maintain that if it is patriotic in an Englishman to fight against the Germans if they occupy the country, it is much more justified and patriotic in my case to fight against the English. I hold the English responsible for the murder of eighty million of Indian people in the last fifty years” Those who find this a figment of imagination would well to recall Eric Hobsbawm , who as we have seen earlier; has noted that “Of all the territories under administration of European governments...even including Tsarist Russia, India continued to be haunted by most gigantic and murderous famines...increasingly so as the century wore on”. Nor was the choice of a British civil servant as a target on account of any personal grievance. As Madan Lal added “The Englishman who goes out to India and

gets £ 100 a month, that simply means he passes a death sentence on a thousand of my poor countrymen, because those thousand people could easily live on £ 100 which the Englishman spends mostly on his frivolities and pleasures.”

Once again the statement was not one to be dismissed lightly. As we have seen Bhat’s family of three was at this time living on what amounted to an income of half a £ per month. Moreover, the just and fair Government of India, under the benevolence of the British parliament had no problem in spending as much as four times the money on pensions of British civil servants alone; than the money made available for famine relief.

Our own dismal track record after Independence should not blind us to the realities of British loot during the colonial era. It is quite likely that the revolutionaries like Madan Lal would have meted out the same treatment to the present day corrupt politicians

In final part of the statement, Madan Lal appealed to the world at large. He said; “I put forward this statement to show the justice of my cause to the outside world and especially to our sympathisers in America and Germany.” This was really rubbing salt on to the British wounds.

It was widely believed, though never proven, that it was Savarkar who not only sent Madan Lal on his mission but had also drafted his statement. Indeed he went even further. Immediately after the assassination, a meeting was held at Caxton Hall. Attended by several prominent Indians, it attempted to pass a resolution condemning Madan Lal. Savarkar rose to oppose the motion on the ground that since the matter of subjudice, the meeting could not arrogate to itself the right to condemn an undertrial. This created a commotion. In the ensuing melee, Savarkar was stuck on the head and started bleeding. This enraged his associates. A Sikh associate of Savarkar rained blows on his attacker. Another associate Aiyyar was on the point of drawing a revolver to shoot the man but Savarkar restrained him.

The point was made and Madan Lal could not be condemned. Let no one sing praises of English fairness on account of this. The incident had its fall out. The point made by Savarkar was within the English law but the incident was used to deny him recognition as a Barrister.

The Madan Lal trial was brought to a speedy conclusion. He was sentenced to be hanged on 17th August 1909. The Raj was to have one more shock. Madan Lal had one statement on his person, when arrested. The police suppressed it. Court supported the police action. Yet, to their shock, they found it published in all the newspapers on 16th August. It boldly stated: “*I attempted to shed English blood intentionally and of purpose, as an humble protest against the inhuman transportations and hangings of the Indian youth....I believe that a nation unwillingly held down by foreign bayonets is in a perpetual state of war. Since open battle is rendered impossible I attack by surprise-since cannon could not be had I drew forth and fired a revolver.*”

The British humiliation was complete. Now the Raj was fully convinced of Savarkar's complicity in Madan Lal affair.

By this time, Shyamji Verma had sold off the India House. It became difficult for Savarkar to find a roof over his head as his reputation preceded him everywhere he went to look for a place. For some time he stayed with Bipinchandra Pal. He spent some time at Bryton in the first half of August 1908 with Nirenjan Pal.

It is while sitting desolately on the seashore of Bryton one evening that the poet in Savarkar came to fore. A young man in an alien land, with near and dear ones thousands of miles away; who was facing tragedies galore. Death of a son, imprisonment of a father like brother; improvisation of his family to the point of starvation, imminent death of a friend, hunted by an Empire that was the strongest and the biggest the mankind has ever known. This was Savarkar that memorable evening. As he watched the waves, a haunting song sprang forth his lips.

Niranjan Pal has thus described the creation of the song. "Presently, he commenced to hum a song. He sang as he composed. It was a Marathi song, describing the pitiable serfdom of India. Forgetful of all else, Savarkar went on singing. Presently tears began to roll down his cheeks. His voice became choked. The song remained unfinished. Savarkar began to weep like a child."

I had the good fortune to listen to this song in the immortal melodious voice of Lata Mangeshkar at Mumbai nearly ninety years later, with my family. It is an appeal to the ocean to take the singer back to his motherland. As the magic of the song cast its spell on us, I looked around. It was clear that the vast gathering of about 50,000 people, many of whom did not know Marathi, could feel the agony of Savarkar, who was reaching out to us across the barriers of time and space.

It is time that we now look at the interaction of Gandhiji with the India House group. It is during 1906 that he had first visited India House, while on a visit to London to protest against Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance. His meeting with Savarkar was cordial, as he himself later confirmed in a letter to S.D.Deo on 20th July 1937. It appears that this contact was maintained subsequently. The meetings served to provide a platform to hold discussions on the relative merits and demerits of Non violence. Ideological gap was too wide to be bridged.

By October 1909, Savarkar was keen to regroup the nationalist forces, which were somewhat in disarray following the closure of India House and the prosecution of Madan Lal. For this purpose, he decided to organise Dassara celebrations. None of the established Indian leaders could be persuaded to preside over the Dassara meeting. Gandhiji, who was then in London was approached. Savarkar was the acknowledged leader of Revolutionary party, while Gandhiji was still enamoured of the virtues of Raj. Discussions were held and a compromise was reached, when it was agreed that neither parties would refer to Madan Lal. With this Gandhiji agreed to preside over the meeting.

Savarkar and Gandhiji came together on a public platform for the first and last time on 14th October 1909. Gandhiji was full of praise for the fact that even though the occasion was a Hindu festival, people from all communities were participating in the function. He went on to add that though he had a difference of opinion with Savarkar, he was proud to share the dais with him and prayed that the country would benefit from his selfless sacrifice and patriotism for a long time to come.

Next meeting of Gandhiji with Savarkar was to take place eighteen years later, on 1st March 1927 at Ratnagiri. The world had changed in between. Gandhiji was now a Mahatma, while Savarkar was SwatantraVeer Savarkar. Ideological gap had widened beyond reconciliation. **They were never to meet again.**

Gandhiji has himself referred to these meetings. In a 1938 article published in Hind Swaraj, he wrote: “ I came in contact with every known Indian anarchist in London. Their bravery impressed me but I feel that their zeal was misguided, I feel that violence was no remedy for India’s ills and that her civilisation required the use of a different and higher weapon for self protection.”

There is no record of any meeting of Nehru with Savarkar. For a politically conscious young man that Nehru was during his stay in London from 1905 to 1912; his silence on the activities of India House Group, is strange to say the very least. In his autobiography, all he has to say on the subject is a terse short sentence: “In London we used to hear also of Shyamji Krishnavarma and his India House but I never met him or visited him. Sometimes we saw his Indian Sociologist.” This was the same young man, who was at this time upbraiding his own father for being pro British. Nor was he unaware of Savarkar, as is clear from his lamenting over the ban on Savarkar’s account of 1857 in ‘Discovery of India’. Strange indeed are the ways of the High and Mighty.

Unknown to anyone but the destiny, by December 1909 Tataya’s work in London was nearing its final phase. Back in India, the members of Abhinav Bharat were getting restless. Impatience to be a Martyr like Khudiram Bose, Madan Lal Dhingra was growing. Harsh sentences on Tilak, heroes of Maniktola, Baba Savarkar were fuelling the fires of revenge. Attempts by leaders like Bhat to introduce restraint in the ranks were not being very successful as was clear from the attempt to assassinate Lord Minto in Ahmedabad on 13th November 1909. The youngest brother of Savarkar was caught as a suspect but later let off. Finally, the dam burst. Anant Kanhere, a young lad of 16, assassinated Jackson, the District Collector of Nasik on 21st December 1909 with the pistol sent by Savarkar earlier in the year. The trail was to lead back straight to Savarkar and snare him in the imperial trap.

This was still in future. For the moment, people like George Clark could not but lament that unless the London terrorists were caught, India would not have peace. They were now to have their chance but peace in India would nonetheless elude them. *The torch of freedom would now find fresh pair of hands every time the bearer fatigued. The Sun would set on the Empire.*

Chapter II-9
Globalisation of Bharatiya Freedom
Trial of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar

Abhinav Bharat had by 1909 spread its web throughout the Marathi speaking areas of the Bombay presidency. Nasik, Pune, Pen, Mumbai, Vasai, Kolhapur, Satara, had active branches. Its work had spread beyond the confines of Bombay presidency to Aurangabad, Hyderabad, Baroda, Gwalior. The international branch headed by Savarkar is by now already well known to the readers. It followed the pattern of Russian and Irish secret societies. Each branch was independent. Only the head of the branches knew each other. There was no contact between the members of different branches. The membership was strictly by invitation. A passionate desire to work for freedom of the country was a prerequisite. Intelligence, education and moderate to poor financial resources were the other common attributes shared by all. None suffered from the debilitating concepts of the essential goodness of the Raj. Its strict secrecy norms enabled them to escape the notice of British intelligence till the assassination of Jackson. Even then Bomb making centers at places like Vasai escaped detection.

The objectives of Abhinav Bharat were quite clear. These included developing a dedicated core team of members working in tandem other similar groups supported by its sympathisers in different wings of the Government so that at an opportune time, a massive blow in the cause of freedom could be struck. Incipient signs of a major struggle in Europe were clearly visible. The Society was therefore making preparations to take advantage of such a power struggle for the cause of Bharatiya freedom, just as Mazzini had done in what was then in the living memory. The reference to Germany and America in the last part of Madan Lal's statement was no accident.

Dr. Vishnu Mahadev Bhat was a close associate of Savarkar and was one of the major leaders of the Bharatiya branch. It was he who together with Patankar, Thatte and Gore arranged for safe distribution of the pistols received from Savarkar during March 1909. He was acutely aware of the haste with which the Abhinav Bharat members were prepared to attack the symbols of the Raj, in what they perceived as the cause of freedom. Bhat knew better and advocated patience. Things became very difficult by October 1909. Bombs were under preparation, Pistols were already at hand. Government was providing one provocation after the other. Transportation for life awarded to Baba, Maniktola heroes, hanging of Madan Lal all made the young revolutionary blood boil. Conviction of 20 members of the Gwalior branch in August was the veritable last straw. Bhat realised the danger. In a meeting of the branch heads, he got them to commit to a specific plan of simultaneous uprising in Bengal and Maharashtra. Karve, the head of Nasik branch was among those who agreed to this plan of action.

The unexpected news of the Jackson assassination came as a thunder bolt not only to the Raj but also the leaders of Abhinav Bharat. Anant Kanhere was a unknown entity to all except the members of Nasik branch. His arrest did not therefore ring alarm bells. It is a few days later, when the name of Karve figured in those arrested that the seriousness of the situation became apparent. With remarkable presence of mind, they eliminated all

traces of Bomb making at Vasai. So successful was this, that the chief of Vasai center, Rambahu Bhatt remained undetected and indeed later joined and retired from Government service. Police investigations became swift and merciless, when they stumbled upon the news of 20 pistol consignment from London. By 1st week of January, all the major leaders of Abhinav Bharat were under arrest. Chaturbhuj Amin had confessed to Savarkar being the sender of Pistols from London, nine months earlier. This was the opportunity that the Raj was waiting for to wreck its vengeance on the upstart Indian young man.

The hitherto secret existence of Abhinav Bharat came to the knowledge of the Raj. George Clarke, Governor of Bombay appointed Montgomerie, a special magistrate at Nasik and decided to prosecute Savarkar. A complaint was filed on January 17, 1910 before Montgomerie, who dutifully issued a warrant for arrest of Savarkar as sought by the Government of Bombay. A telegraphic warrant was issued under the Fugitive Offender Act of 1881. The warrant was granted by Bow Street Court, London on February 22nd, 1910.

Meanwhile in London, ever since the closure of India House, Savarkar was keeping indifferent health on account of irregular eating. Like other Abhinav Bharat members in India, he was also taken by surprise by the developments in Nasik. The pistols were after all in India for more than nine months. In any case, the plan had been to launch a simultaneous attack and not cause an isolated incident. The strain proved too much and his health broke down and he became seriously ill. His friends advised rest in Paris, where he would be out of the harm's way. The news of the intentions of the Government of Bombay following confessions of Chaturbhuj Amin reached him in London. By the time, the complaint was filed against him on 17th January 1910; he was already safely in Paris since 6th January 1910. His return to London of his own volition on Sunday, the 13th March 1910, less than two months later, to virtually get himself arrested; remains an unresolved mystery.

Savarkar himself never shed any light on the incident. Keer has compared it to Shivaji going to Agra. This comparison does not stand a moment's scrutiny. For one, Shivaji was forced to go to Agra following his comprehensive defeat by Mirza Raje. Moreover, the Rajputs had sworn to defend Shivaji from any harm. Neither was Savarkar under any compulsion to go to London nor had any one given him the slightest assurance of safety.

Karendikar has attributed it to his desire to make sure that the London activities of the revolutionaries remain on track. He also claims that Savarkar did not want himself to be subjected to the kind of criticism that was being heaped on Shaymji Varma for inciting violence while himself remaining safely in Paris. There may be some truth in this but surely Savarkar was too intelligent to not realise that a two month absence could not attract the kind of criticism that Shaymji Varma attracted, being away from London for over two years. Bhat has severely criticised Savarkar for his reckless act. This criticism, made openly in a book recommended by Savarkar himself, remained unanswered by him.

There has been some talk of Scotland Yard having lured Savarkar to London by false letters written in the name of a girl. A charge that has been indignantly but rather

unconvincingly rejected by his autobiographers. He would certainly not be the first revolutionary to have had an extra-marital affair. It is not unknown for either a pretty young girl to fall in love with a handsome young man of 27 nor for the young man to reciprocate the love. The mystique of a revolutionary would have only added to the attraction. Did this really happen to Savarkar ? One can only speculate. There is the curious and real case of one English woman Miss Hilda Howsin, who was arrested during the World War I, in 1915, for maintaining contact with the India House Group, which by then had shifted to Berlin. What was motivating this girl to act against the interests of her own nation? Was it love - was Hilda the lady love of Savarkar – a question that must remain unanswered. Even if Savarkar was in love and fell into the police trap, it does not in any way diminish the value of his work. On the other hand it only adds to the glamour of a romantic revolutionary. It provided proof if any was ever needed; that he was no blood thirsty monster motivated by racial hatred against the British.

Whatever the reason, the fact remains that Savarkar left Paris on the fateful morning of Sunday, the 13th March 1910; despite all advice to the contrary. He was accompanied by a lady – Perin Ben Captain. This was to be his last day of freedom for the next quarter century. He reached Victoria station at 8 p.m. in the evening. Inspector Macarthy and Parker of the Scotland Yard were waiting to receive him with the warrant of arrest. Their presence on the platform proved that they were aware of Savarkar's plans to come back to London.

Over three and a half months, Savarkar's associates waged a battle to ensure that his trial would take place in England. The British could scarcely afford yet another public trial involving a challenge to their rule in India; in the heart of Europe, so soon after the Madan Lal episode. It was going to be very difficult to establish Savarkar's complicity in the Jackson killing. Time gap of nine months between the pistol consignment and the actual killing would have tilted the balance in favour of Savarkar. Nasik was far too convenient. The Raj could be as harsh with him as it desired, away from the glare of European press.

The round two also went in favour of the Raj. All the efforts of his friends came to nothing. The rag tag Bharatiya army was no match for the might of the Raj. Finally, on 1st July, S.S.Morea set sail for Bombay carrying a forlorn Savarkar in its holds. The brain of the London terrorists was snared. The Raj could breathe a sigh of relief. On its way, it developed engine trouble and anchored at the French port of Marseilles on 7th July 1910.

Now began the drama that was to allow Savarkar internationalise the cause of Bharatiya freedom like nothing else had done since 1857. The events of next few days turned Savarkar into a living legend. Even today, if there is one thing that people recall about Savarkar, it is his daring jump into the French sea and the dash for freedom. In the process the liberal mask of imperialism was to be ripped off and its true ugly face was there for everyone to see.

As the ship docked at the French port, Savarkar's hopes rose. Gone was the mood of despondence. A burning desire to free himself of the British clutches rose in his heart. In

a momentary weakness, he had allowed himself to be trapped. This was the moment to force open the jaws of the prison. It is in France that he could hope for some help from his friends. If this moment passed, there was little to hope for. The French soil was visible from the ship but the presence of guards everywhere offered no possibility of escape. Freedom was so near but so far. The prospects of freedom were receding with every passing moment. By early hours of the 8th July, his mind was made up. It was better to die in a bid to escape rather than rot in the cells. It was now or never.

He entered the toilet. The sentries stood guard at the door. Losing no more time, he divested himself of his sleeping suit and squeezed through the narrow porthole, scraping his body very severely in the process. Just as his legs went over, guard noticed the escape and set off alarm. As Savarkar fell into the sea, salty water seemed to burn through his bleeding body. There was no time to worry about the burning sensation that ripped through every pore of his being. Desperately, he began to swim towards the shore with the guards hot in pursuit. Childhood spent in swimming in Godavari at Nasik proved helpful. Savarkar won the race and climbed over the jetty. He was now on the French soil. The British police had no jurisdiction to lay their hands on him. The decision if any to hand him back to the British authorities, could only be taken by an authority competent to do so under the French laws.

Savarkar had no faith in the so called fairness of the English. Quite rightly, as it turned out. He kept on running. It was a strange sight. A half-naked bleeding man running wildly with the British police close behind. After running for about 500 meters, he noticed a French policeman. In broken French, he demanded to be taken to the Commissioner of Police. By this time, his pursuers caught up with him. In a bid to save their skin, they said Goodbye to the famed English fairness and bribed the policeman, who then allowed them to lead Savarkar back to the ship. At the earliest possible moment, it set sail for India - on the 9th July.

This was not the arrest of a fugitive. It was kidnapping of a man from French soil by force. A man who had broken no French laws. As long as it suited the British, they always went by the rules. When it came to the crunch, it was a different matter altogether. The whole incident was too serious to be hushed up. The news spread like a wild fire in the port city and reached his associates like Madam Cama, Aiyar etc. The daring escape could not have been pre planned for none of his associates were at hand to receive him on the shore. Nevertheless, they put up a relentless pressure on the French Government to protest against the flagrant violation of the French sovereignty and demand the return of Savarkar from illegal British custody. A jump, a daring swim and Savarkar was now an international celebrity. More importantly, so was the cause of Indian freedom.

This was 1910. The war clouds had already gathered over Europe. France was getting wary of the German might and therefore reluctant to annoy its powerful neighbour across the channel. Nevertheless, by 19th July 1910, it had to yield to the popular outrage over violation of its sovereignty and demand suspension of any trial of Savarkar. Abhinav Bharat did not let up the pressure. On 25th October 1910, the two governments decided to refer the matter to International Tribunal at the Hague. As per the first article of the

agreement, the tribunal was charged with deciding the following question: “Ought Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, in conformity with the rules of international law to be surrendered by the Government of his Britanic Majesty to the Government of the French Republic.” Decision on this question was expected by 14^h March 1911. The wily British managed to keep any representative of a powerful nation like Russia, Italy or Germany out of the tribunal. Savarkar in London or Savarkar even when safely locked up in a Nasik jail, continued to be a thorn to the Raj. The extent of its irritation can be gauged from the following editorial in London Times. “It is to be deeply regretted that the fate of such a prisoner should in the event of his conviction in the Indian courts, be dependent upon the decision of another tribunal on points of international law, which however important in themselves, are wholly irrelevant to his actual guilt”. In plain English, Times was really saying that it was more important to punish the crime against the Raj than to uphold international law. The real ugly face of imperialism was to come to the fore again and again.

Even as Savarkar’s jump into the French sea at Marseilles was creating waves in Europe, our hero was locked up in the cage like an animal after the ship sailed for India. The heat in the cell became unbearable. As it sailed past Eden, Savarkar was haunted by thoughts of committing suicide but soon his indomitable spirit revived, putting such thoughts out of the way. The steamer docked at the Bombay port on 22nd July 1910 and the prized prisoner was taken to Nasik. A little over four years ago, the young man had sailed to London, as it appeared to the world, to seek fame and fortune. Fame was certainly his now. Far beyond wildest imagination of any one, who had then saw him off. Fortune was never to be his in his long life time. Yet he remained rich in a manner that most of us would never understand.

In India, the Raj was safely away from the prying nose of the European newspapers. Ignoring the French demand for suspension, the famous Nasik Conspiracy Case hearing began on Thursday, the 15th September 1910 before the Special tribunal. The Police filed three cases in all. In the first, there were 38 accused. In the second, there were two. In the third, there was only one. Needless to add, it was Savarkar, whose name figured in all three. Savarkar refused to take part in the trial. His stand was forthright. He stated he was eligible for protection of France, the land of Liberty, Fraternity and Equality, where he had gone to seek asylum. The British police had illegally kidnapped him from the French soil and as such he refused to recognise the jurisdiction of the Indian Court to try him. Right through the trial, he refused to budge from this stand. The shameless Raj pressed on with trial even after the British Government had agreed to submit Savarkar’s case to International Tribunal in October. As was to become evident, there was a purpose to this madness.

A word about Karve , the head of Abhinav Bharat Nasik branch, would not be out of place here. It was his impatience that had led to the failure of this phase of revolution. In a bid to atone for his mistake, he chose to sacrifice his life. During the last phase of the trial, he willingly testified that the ultimate responsibility for assassination of Jackson rested with him though the information available in the course of the trial did not bring this out. In act that amounted to signing his own death warrant, he admitted that he had

incited Deshpande and Kanhere to kill Jackson as a reply to the unjust British rule in India and lastly that it was he who was present in the theatre to kill Jackson if Kanhere had failed. With this testimony, the Raj had no hesitation in hanging him along with Anant Kanhere, and Deshpande on 19th April 1910. Karve knew he had blundered and willingly paid the price with his life. This was the stern stuff that members of Abhinav Bharat were made of.

The result of trial before the Special Tribunal was a forgone conclusion. The formal judgement in the first case was pronounced on Saturday, the 23rd December 1910. Savarkar was sentenced to transportation for 25 years. Twenty six other accused were sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment. This was not the end of the matter. The second case had been withdrawn. The third opened for hearing on 23rd January 1911. Judgement was pronounced within a week on the 30th January. Sentence was yet another term of transportation for 25 years. The sentences were to run separately. That is Savarkar was to spend a total of 50 years behind the bars.

By the time the International Tribunal began its work on 16th of February 1911, Savarkar was pronounced as dangerous hard core convicted criminal. A more blatant attempt to bias the deliberations is difficult to imagine. Its judgement on the 24th February 1911 was on predictable lines. It held that irregularity was committed while arresting Savarkar in France but there was no international law that compelled Britain to hand him back to France particularly since Savarkar was a convicted hard core criminal. *Now the reason for the British haste in pressing on with trial without waiting for the Tribunal judgement was there for everyone to see.* What judicial credence can be given to this so-called judgement is best left to readers imagination.

His incarnation in the cells of Andaman, where he was banished following this verdict, inspired legions of freedom fighters. The poet and the writer within him refused to give way to despair, even in an environment that provided encouragement to nothing but thoughts of committing suicide. Readers are best advised to read his account of this phase of his life in his own words, which is fortunately available to us today. A book, that like all his other nationalist literature remained banned by the Raj till its very end.

Recently, I went on a business visit to Madras by the morning flight. As I had some time to spare before returning by the evening flight, I took a walk on the famous Marina beach. Andaman lay right across the sea. A chill went through my body. Here I was staying in the same house that Savarkar once lived in. How easy it was for me to leave the same premises and come back in the evening after a glimpse of the seas surrounding Andamans. The place where this great revolutionary was once imprisoned for years with nary a thought of returning alive to the shores of mainland. How many of his ilk gave their all so that we have today the freedom that we take for granted. How often do we remember them, let alone dream of following their footsteps?

One can go on and on about Savarkar. Let me stop here or the story will never end. We are following the Torch of freedom and not an individual however great he was. The British had snatched the Torch from Savarkar's hands. The torch did not fall. The flame

did not dim. Several others, as we shall now see rose to take his place. The struggle went on.

No doubt that Savarkar spoke for all Martyrs of the freedom struggle, when on hearing the judgement pronouncing harsh penalties, he remarked.

“I am prepared to face ungrudgingly the extreme penalty of your laws in the belief that it is through sufferings and sacrifices alone that our beloved Motherland can march on to an assured, if not a speedy triumph.”

As a matter of interest, I read this quote in a biographical book “Savarkar’s Charitra” by S.L.Karendikar. Published in May 1943, it was banned by the Government in October 1943. Congress has made much of Savarkar’s refusal to back the 1942 Quit India movement, going to the extent of accusing him of collaboration with the Government. It is later that we shall turn to his seemingly ambivalent attitude to the Freedom struggle in 1942 and understand the underlying reasons. For the time being, will anyone explain how come in 1943, Government banned the book on the Character of a man who had allegedly helped it just a year before?

Chapter II-10

The Ghadar Party

23rd December 1912
Delhi

The second anniversary of the judgement pronounced in Nasik sentencing Savarkar to first term of transportation for life. The London base of the revolutionaries had been in disarray since the arrest of Savarkar. Strenuous efforts made by Aiyar, Madam Cama, Rafik Mahomed Khan, Vishnu Prasad Dube, Niranajan Pal to revive fortunes had not borne desired results. Partition of Bengal had been undone in the Imperial durbar of King George V to blunt the edge of Bengali opposition. Delhi, which since 1911 was once again the capital of the country, was all decked up. Princes and nobility all vying with each other to show their loyalty to the Raj were present in the Capital. The new Viceroy, Lord Hardinge was riding on a splendidly decorated elephant sitting in howdah. No expense had been spared to recreate all the trappings of a Moghul emperor making a triumphant state entry into the Capital in a procession. The Raj was out to prove that the British ascendancy over the revolutionaries was complete.

Suddenly the procession was rocked by a loud blast and a pale of smoke filled the atmosphere. When it cleared, the horror stricken officers found a bleeding and badly shaken Viceroy thrown to the ground. The procession had to be wound up midway. The revolutionaries had once again seriously dented the prestige of the Raj. Ras Bihari Bose, who threw the bomb, was never to be caught. Har Dayal, who was then in Berkeley, claimed responsibility. The blast was to echo its way into the Andamans, giving some solace to Savarkar.

The gauntlet thrown by the Raj had been picked up, Har Dayal now embarked on a whirl wind tour to spread the cause of freedom. By November 1913, Gadhar newspaper was started in San Francisco to appeal to the people. Printed in Urdu and Gurmukhi, its initial target audience were the masses in Punjab, the traditional recruiting ground for the Imperial army. It frankly called itself 'the enemy of the British Raj'. There was plenty of real information to be given to the people. The Delhi durbar of King George had cost US \$ 5 million even as millions of Indians went hungry. This – the Raj could afford to ignore. Ostentatious display of wealth was something that was hardly unique to the British. What hurt the Raj where it counted was, when Gadhar put its finger on the discrimination not only in the promotion opportunities but also the pay of an Indian and a White soldier. The latter was worth \$ 25 as against a mere \$ 4 paid to the 'nigger'. Excerpts from Savarkar's book on 1857 began to be serialised. Gadhar went on to question the tall claim of the Raj that the citizens of the Empire were free to reside and travel to any part of the Empire. It articulated the real difficulties faced by Sikhs when they took this claim at its face value and attempted to settle in places like Canada. The Raj had refused to intervene on the specious plea that Canada was Self-governing dominion and could not be forced to do anything by London. It was embarrassing for the Raj to be hoist with its own petard.

Hundreds of copies found their way into India defying ban on its imports. The alarmed authorities managed to persuade United States to arrest Har Dayal by end March 1914 with a view to arrange his deportation. Fortune favoured Har Dayal. He was released on a bail of \$ 1,000 allowing him to escape to Switzerland. Gadhar publication did not cease. On the other hand, it began to be printed in Gujrati and later in Hindi as well.

The voyage of Komagataru was to give a big fillip to the Gadhar. Some facts of this forgotten voyage need to be recalled. By itself, the voyage was a business transaction and had nothing to do with politics. Canada in a bid to bar the Sikh immigration had passed a law that only those who performed a continuous voyage from their land of residence to Canada were to be permitted entry. As there existed no direct ship plying between India and Canada, the Indians were effectively barred entry. But Canada had not reckoned for the Sikh ingenuity.

They chartered a ship Komagataru, which sailed on April 4, 1914 and reached Victoria on May 22. Arrival of the boat-load of Sikhs aroused passions in Canada and a whirlwind propaganda was soon underway to deny them entry. For two months the ship anchored in the harbour with no one allowed to get off. The Sikhs refused to depart. The stalemate continued till 19th July 1914, when the Police attempted to board the ship. Encountering fierce resistance, they had to beat a hasty retreat with broken noses and ribs, not to talk of seriously bruised pride. Finally, the 352 unfortunate souls agreed to turn back and started on their return journey on 23rd July to reach Calcutta on 26th September. On their return, their belongings were searched and arrangements were made to herd them off to Punjab. This was resented by the passengers who had lost a fortune in their travel to Canada. During a prayer meeting, an officer went to speak insultingly to their leader. Now the matters went out of hand. The police fired 177 rounds killing unknown number of the people present.

The episode highlighted as nothing else would have done that the Sikhs were useful to put down the 'Mutiny'. To give them equal rights was out of question. They were British subjects and not British citizens. To the embittered Sikhs the Gadhar acquired a new appeal.

Meanwhile, World War I had broken out following the assassination of the heir to the Austrian throne by Serbian nationalists at Sarajevo on 28th June 1914. Posing as an injured party; Austria-Hungary made aggressive demands on Serbia, which looked to its Russian protector for help. Russian involvement dragged France in the conflict as the two were in military alliance since 1894. On the other hand Germany was allied with Austria-Hungary since 1879. Imperial interest ruled out British neutrality since an Austro-German victory over France and Russia would lead to shift the balance of power against Britain, and a redistribution of overseas colonies in Germany's favour. As Germany overran Belgium to attack France, Britain got the excuse it needed to enter the war since by a treaty of 1839, it had guaranteed Belgium neutrality. Thus by 4th August 1914, the major nations of Europe were at war with each other.

At stake was nothing more than what each nation considered its vital national interests. **There was no lofty moral principal involved.** It is in this charged atmosphere, Gadhar line advocating the principal of an Enemy's enemy being one's friend, was no more than what all European nations were themselves following. Naturally as it advocated courting Germany in the cause of Indian nationalism, it drew the Raj's ire as never before.

Alarming for the Raj, the actions of Gadhar were no longer confined to merely to printing newspaper. The outbreak of war in August 1914 generated a great deal of excitement amongst the Sikhs in San Francisco. Meetings began to be held, which called upon the Indians to go home and fight in revolution. Ram Chandra, Mahomed Barakatullah and Bhagwan Singh addressed the meetings. Armed revolt incited by a Hindu, Muslim and Sikhs. The portents for Raj could not have been more ominous.

The great exodus to India began. Sikhs were sailing for India in large numbers not only from West coast of Canada and the United States but from Japan, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Manila, Honolulu, and other places round the world. They were proving Savarkar right. He had written seven years before that in 1857 the Sikhs "would certainly not have tolerated the slavery under the English if they had realised the nature of English rule. The revolution of 1857 broke out before they had enough time to understand it fully. And therefore, the Sikhs and Jats could not conceive the idea and help in the realisation of a United Indian Nation". Now that they were aware of the British perfidy, they were rising to wipe the stigma of 1857.

The difference in the reaction of the Indian elite to the outbreak of hostility could not have been more pronounced. The princes vied with each other to contribute to the imperial cause offering men, material and money. The Government of India headed by the Viceroy gave £ 100 million to the war cause as a token of appreciation for being ruled by Britain. £20 –30 million were given annually for the duration of the war. Out of a total of 8.5 million troops who were involved in the war effort, as many as 1.2 million were Indians. A large part of the Indian troops were imperial service troops, which were trained and led by the British but maintained by the princes. Thus a large number of Indian troops were available at little cost to Britain. No wonder then that the Viceroy described Indian princes as 'helpers and colleagues in the great task of Imperial rule.'

The declaration of war had found Gandhiji enroute to London from South Africa. He had no hesitation in offering his services to the war effort as a non-combatant. As he explained later that as he then held views favourable to British rule of India, he felt it was his duty to do his bit in the war. In a logic difficult to fathom, he reconciled his participation in the war effort with his philosophy of Ahimsa by arguing that he participated in the war on the side of the empire to acquire the capacity and fitness for resisting the violence of war. It is only the mind of a Mahatma that can understand this rationale. Ordinary mortals would find it beyond their comprehension.

By the time, the great exodus ended to take up the arms ended, the Government was to know of at least 8000 emigrants who returned to Punjab to take up arms against the British. Many more naturally remained undetected. One can safely assume the correct figure to be in excess of 10,000. Today, the Government of free India keeps on devising various schemes to attract the Nonresident Indians. NRIs as they are called. Quite of few of these are those who have studied at Tax payer's money in the elite Indian institutes and then left for greener pastures without ever repaying the debt. They keep on demanding one thing or the other in order to help their motherland. It is time we realised that any NRI, who is putting preconditions to helping his motherland is merely parading his own self-interest as Patriotism. He is merely a shrewd businessman intent on driving a hard bargain and needs to be treated as such. After all, what concessions had been offered to these brave souls to return back to their roots ! All that made them come back to suffer severe hardships was sheer love for their country.

Nor was this exodus a lemming like rush. At the end of November 1914, at least two serious attempts were made to start an uprising. A gang collected at Lahore cantonment on November 25th and moved to Ferozpur with the intention of attacking the arsenal there on the 30th. An encounter with the police on the 27th foiled their plan. Meanwhile on 26th, 23rd Cavalry at Mian Mir was about to rise in revolt. Leakage of the plot gave enough time for the Raj to avert the calamity. The revolutionaries remained unfazed. Vishnu Pingle from Poona held a meeting at Kapurthala towards the end of December 1914. He informed the returnees that a Bengali bomb expert was on his way to give them revolutionary training By middle of January 1915, Ras Bihari Bose had made his appearance in Punjab.

Now the brain and the brawn of the revolutionary party had combined their forces resulting in a spurt in the revolutionary activities. 21st February 1915 was fixed as the day an Uprising was to begin from Lahore. This was to be the signal for the entire Punjab province to go up in flames. One again the Revolution was to be betrayed. The police had been able to introduce a spy in the revolutionary circle. On 15th February, he informed his masters of the plot. Meanwhile, the revolutionaries became suspicious of Kirpal Singh - the spy and hastily antedated the rising to 19th. But it was too late and the police succeeded in foiling yet another quest for freedom.

Pingley and Bose were undeterred. On 30th March 1915, Pingley was caught in the lines of the 12th Cavalry at Meerut with a box containing 10 bombs. His hanging was then a matter of time. Ras Behari Bose was to keep on haunting the British. The Lahore trail led the Police to catch Bhai Parmanand, who was caught with one copy of the Bomb Manual and evidence of having done the ground work for the revolution after returning to India ahead of the exodus in December 1913. He went on to be serve transportation for life.

As was to be expected the fate of the Sikhs caught by the Imperial power was harsh. 36 people were hanged to death, 77 were sentenced to transportation for life and yet another 15 were given sentences of varying terms. As many as 1,723 were interned in their villages. What a tragedy that today, we do not even know the names of these heroes.

They did not win freedom for the country. They however washed with their blood, the stigma attached to the Sikh race since 1857. Why did they fail ?. It is not an odd informer who was the cause of their failure. When more than 10,000 people get together, attracted by nothing more than ideals and no prospect of any material gain; a few black sheep are inevitable.

The gravest unrest in India during the war collapsed due to German ineptitude. The Raj was relieved that their foes had allowed a golden chance to slip by. If they had supplied these determined band with money and arms, the outcome could well have been very different. By contrast, the 1916 Arab revolt, masterminded by British Foreign Office and military intelligence agencies, was kept alive by regular injections of cash, arms, aircraft and troops, which were delivered by sea.

The Ghadar party had no such help. They had landed in the country when its political life was at its lowest ebb. Moderates ruled the roost in Congress, having expelled the Extremists from its ranks years ago. Police repression in Punjab, Bengal and Maharashtra had kept the Revolutionary ferment in check. Landing on a ground that was not prepared to help them, having no money or arms, all they had was a passion to see their motherland free of the British slavery. They faced all the odds and succeeded in posing a challenge to the might of the Empire, the gravity of which was only too well recognised by the Punjab Governor – Micheal O'Dwyer. Only he knew how close was the call.

Impressed with the unflinching devotion by the Sikhs, the Germans kicked themselves hard for letting an excellent opportunity slip by. They now tried to make some amends. The Gadhar leaders were taken much more seriously. By this time, what remained of the India House Group flocked to Berlin. Once more, plans were afoot to take up the cause of freedom.

A scheme that was to cause the Raj considerable worry revolved around the Eastern front using conduit through Bangkok and Java. A ship load of arms was sent by S.S.Maverick, which sailed from California on 22nd April 1915. This was to land arms in the Sunderbans in Bengal. This operation failed due to problems in logistics and as the ship could come nowhere near the Indian coast. Bengali revolutionaries, who waited in vain for the consignment, were apprehended on 9th September. Soon thereafter, one more German effort to help revolutionaries strike the Raj came to light. It was disclosed by Kraft, a German spy, who double crossed. A coup was planned in Calcutta for Christmas day of 1915. German agents in the Dutch East India were to hire a ship, fill it with arms, land on the Andaman Islands, liberate Savarkar brothers as well as the heroes of the Maniktola case and convey them to Calcutta for a surprise revolt. The Raj had known about an earlier attempt of German submarine Edmens to attack the Andaman Islands and set the revolutionaries free. The Raj had been able to breath freely only after its destruction on November 14, 1914. With this history, Kraft was taken seriously and the Raj was able to protect its flanks, even as it was engaged in struggle for life and death in Europe.

The manner in which the Andaman authorities had responded to the threat of Edmens deeply impressed Savarkar. Hundreds of miles away from mainland with meager forces at command, their rule could evaporate at a moment's notice. Yet, they had not allowed the smallest change to creep in the daily routine of the prisoners. As ever, every prisoner had to fulfill the daily quota of making three pounds of ropes. There was no let up. The experience remained etched on his conscious and was, as we shall see later, to guide his actions in 1942.

The Germans had also tried to ferment trouble on the Afghan border. They tried to fish in the troubled waters that the Britain had landed itself in on account of its war with Turkey. Many Muslims had regarded the Sultan of Turkey as head of Islam. Thus Turkey tried to put a religious gloss to its fight with Britain and called for Jihad. The cause of Pan Islam was sought to be promoted by Germany. This had its impact on the army morale. 130th Baluchis mutinied twice during the winter of 1914-14. The 5th Light Infantry, an all Muslim regiment mutinied at Singapore on 15th February 1915. From India, leaders like Abul Kalam Azad contributed to the cause. He is believed to have provoked 15 Muslim students in Lahore to run away to Kabul and join the Jihad against the British. A provisional Government was set up at Kabul nominating Kunwar Mahendra Pratap as the President and Barkatullah as the Prime Minister. This leadership openly declared itself to be friends of Buddhists, Christians, Hindus and Muslims. Their plan was to induce Afghanistan to join the war as a German and Turkish ally. With Kabul on their side, they felt an insurrection in India could be well supplied with arms and ammunition. Not much came out of it as the Amir of Afghanistan cold shouldered the project and adopted strict neutrality.

The Empire had survived by the skin of its teeth. Next time it would not be so lucky. The end of the Empire was now a matter of time.

I shuddered when I read this. Caught up in the rat race to go ahead in life, running after seeking one material comfort after the other, I wondered if these men and women were real. They were running after a dream that appeared impossible. Fighting an Empire that had endless resources. A fight that offered no tangible rewards. Failure after failure stared back at every corner. Yet, if one stumbled, the other took the place. Khudiram Bose, Madan Lal Dhingra, Karve, Pingley and the tens of brave Sikhs all followed the other to the gallows. Hanging or transportation for life, the chain never ended, no matter what was the extent of repression let loose. I hung my head partly in gratitude to these known and unknown Martyrs, partly in shame.

True, the torch of liberty was brightest in Punjab; Bengal and Maharashtra but it had cast its glow throughout the length and the breadth of the nation. The word Independence had been brought out from the long forgotten shelves. The blood of Martyrs had rejuvenated the nation. Bharat was once more a living entity.

Chapter II-11

Tilak – the Last Hurrah

It is time to go back to Lokmanya Tilak, who had been removed from the national scene in 1907. The British made him serve a six year jail term at Mandalay, while the revolutionary cauldron boiled over in the country. The story of these tumultuous years has been covered so far. We shall now take up the story of this spiritual mentor of the revolutionaries once again.

Even in the enforced isolation of the prison, Tilak had not been idle. He used the time to write a treatise on Gita, the sacred book for Hindus. Greeting from all over the country poured when he was released on 17th June 1914. It became an occasion to be celebrated. His popularity, always very high, scaled new peaks. A mass leader with unparalleled following in every nook and corner of the country, six long years away from Bharat - spent in jail, had done nothing to dim his vigour or love for freedom..

In an interview with an Officer of the Criminal Intelligence Department, he set out his views clearly. He pointed out that anarchism arose from a feeling of hopelessness, from bad treatment of Indians by Europeans. A shallow system of education, the general poverty of the people, the high handedness of the police, the apathy of Government and a policy of injustice were causes which contributed to its growth. In conclusion he praised the Bengal politicians for their uncompromising attitude towards the Government, and found fault with the Bombay moderates who were always consulting officials and moulding their opinions as per the wishes of the Government.

This was a 58 year old man, unbent after six years of imprisonment setting out his views when the World War I had already started and the Sikh exodus to India had begun. The Government could not but recognise him as *the most important extremist agitator in the country*.

In the manner of a Chankya, the Brahmin who had single handedly brought down the mighty empire of the Nanda around 324 BC, Tilak had confronted an empire so huge that 'it ruled countries that Caesar knew not'. In 1895, when he started Shivaji celebrations, the word Independence did not exist in the vocabulary of the country's elite. It was proud to pass resolutions which said "We Indians believe that our highest patriotism and best interest demand the continuance of the British rule." The embers of 1857 were slowly turning into coal. It is at this crucial juncture, that Tilak arrived on the scene. Always testing the limits of open criticism, he set out the agenda of freedom before the country. By his words and deeds, he inspired thousands of youth to take up the cause of freedom.

So powerful was the Tilak magic that it did not fail to cast its spell on government officers either. The approver in Jackson case, Ganu Vaidya had confessed that, Tilak had attended a secret meeting of Abhinav Bharat in 1906. This was the kind of proof the Government was looking for to implicate Tilak, who at this time was already in Mandalay. The confession was to be recorded before the magistrate – Palshikar. On

hearing this, Palshikar became very angry and made Ganu retract the statement. This was the same magistrate, who had so blatantly gone out of his way to help the police that his ways had drawn the ire of the tribunal.

Tilak inspired youth were to outrace him on many an occasions. This was natural considering their generation gap. Tilak applauded the youth who went ahead of him. For he knew that in the process, the nationalists forged a challenge that would defy every trick employed by the Raj to defeat them. As a public leader, he had many times taken a stand mildly critical of the Revolutionaries. Both the revolutionaries and the Government knew better. Bhat has narrated the help Tilak was always prepared to extend to the revolutionaries. He had been released in 1915 after serving five years of rigorous imprisonment in Jackson case. On release, Bhat had no money. His family was on the verge of starvation. A convicted criminal and that too on account of revolutionary activities, he found all doors closed. It is in these circumstances that he went to meet Tilak in December 1915, who immediately offered a job in his newspaper. It is Tilak's help that enabled him to survive and later become a doctor. Nor was he alone. Other revolutionaries like Bapat and Joshi were also supported by Tilak.

Tilak's contribution to the cause of freedom between 1895 and 1915 was second to none. This did not satisfy him. The lion was not to rest till the goal was fully achieved. As he studied the events that had taken place in his absence, he found that the British were up to their old game of Divide and rule. They were actively widening the Hindu-Muslim gap to perpetuate their rule. Ever the realist, he decided to take counter measures.

The Muslim League had been started in 1906 to counter the growth of nationalism amongst the Muslims. On his release, Tilak watched with growing interest the change in the outlook of the League under growing influence of Muhammad Ali Jinnah. It had begun to imbibe the nationalist spirit which animated the country. In 1913, it had adopted 'Self Government within the Empire' as its goal. This was a truly remarkable development. Tilak well knew the trouble it had caused him to get a similar resolution adopted by Congress in 1906. The 1914 League Conference had stressed upon Hindu-Muslim unity. Congress and the League had held their 1915 conference at the same time in Bombay. Many of the delegates were common. Tilak decided to seize the opportunity and reach out to the League. His ally in the quest was none other than Jinnah.

1916 was a landmark year. Not only did the Congress and the League held their sessions at the same time in Lucknow but under the influence of Tilak and Jinnah concluded the famous "Lucknow Pact". By this the Congress agreed to separate electorate for the Muslims and in return the League agreed to jointly frame a constitutional scheme on the Dominion status.

More friendly cooperation between the League and the Congress for the common cause of the country was never to be seen again. For the time being, the so called Hindu – Muslim question had been resolved. The Congress moderates were soon to fade into oblivion.

This was the pinnacle of Tilak's political career and the essence of his contribution to the cause of freedom - Setting the country firmly and unitedly on the road to Swaraj.

Tilak was a man of action even at the age of 60. Soon after concluding the Lucknow pact, he threw himself whole heartedly into the struggle for Swaraj. He formed Home Rule League in association with Annie Besant and set off to propagate the cause of freedom. Expectedly, he soon ran foul of the law. Prosecution was launched against him for his speeches at Belgaum on May 1st, and at Ahmednagar on 31st May and 1st June. In a surprising outcome, he was found not Guilty by the Bombay High Court in November 1916, which set aside the judgement of the lower court that had gone against Tilak. Court was persuaded by the learned counsel of Tilak that though his speeches were bad in places, they could not be wholly condemned on that account. The lawyer who caused this miracle to happen was none other than Jinnah, who had pleaded the cause of Tilak without charging any fees. In 1917, the League Session reverberated with the following clarion call by Raja of Mahamudabad "The interests of the nation are supreme. It is meaningless to discuss whether we are first Indians or Muslims. We are both. The Muslim league has taught the Muslims to sacrifice for both the nation as well as religion."

Tilak died at the age of 64 on 1st August 1920. Till the last day of his life, the country remained firmly on the path chalked out by him. In a political career spanning over a quarter of century, Tilak changed the very course of public debate in the country. In 1895, Independence was a taboo. By 1920, the real issue was how soon to get Swaraj. The only failure of Tilak was his inability to get a formal resolution passed by Congress in favour of Complete Independence. Given the overall composition of Congress, it was a titanic achievement to have got the Congress to demand Immediate Swaraj. Most importantly, despite the best efforts of the Raj, Tilak had managed to ensure that the demand for Swaraj was supported by the Muslims.

This was the glorious legacy that Tilak left behind. Given the upsurge of Revolutionary ferment that he inspired, by 1920, Bharat's march to freedom was unstoppable. What is surprising is that it took us over another quarter century after his death to become independent. The most shocking part is that the Independence was accompanied not only by partition but also by a massacre that was truly horrendous. A turn of events that would have been completely incomprehensible to both Tilak and Jinnah in 1920.

Yet, there is no getting away from the fact that the terrible tragedy happened. The poison of which is still to be exorcised from our body polity. For years, we Indians have kept on demonising Jinnah and Jinnah alone for being responsible for the partition and also the accompanying massacre. At the same time, we have also eulogised his arch political rival Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. By elevating him to the status of Father of Nation, we have placed him on a pedestal that makes him beyond any critical scrutiny.

Gandhiji's title of Father of the Nation needs some discussion. There are enough and more reasons to call him Mahatma, which he undoubtedly was. To call him the Father of Nation is to do injustice to the souls of all Martyrs in the cause of freedom, who sacrificed their all; much before he came on the national scene. If Gandhiji is to be called the Father of the Nation, then it stands to reason that the nation that he is credited to have created came into being after 1920, when he assumed the reins of freedom struggle. In case this is true, naturally the logical question would be - Which was then the nation that Khudiram Bose, Madan Lal Dhingra, Karve, Pingley and scores of other people gave up their life for? Did they give up their life for a nation that had not been then created? Or was it a different nation than what we are living in today?

The sheer absurdity of this notion boggles the mind. The truth is that Bharat as a living nation has existed for thousands of years. During a particularly bad phase of its national life, it became a colony of the British. A massive attempt to awaken the country failed in 1857. The same effort made starting from 1895 was much more successful. By 1920, when Tilak died, the nation was once again awake and struggling hard to break free of its bondage. This struggle was no doubt carried forward by Gandhiji. There are many a debt that we owe to him. Creation of the nation is certainly not one of them.

In 1947, Gandhiji was the preeminent leader of India. His only rival was Jinnah. If Jinnah can be blamed for partition, there is no way that Gandhiji can escape the blame either. True, his intent was pure but in this world we are all judged by the results of our actions and not merely by purity of the intent. Mahatmas of the world are no exception.

By blaming Jinnah alone for the tragedy of partition and absolving Gandhiji from all the blame, we start our discussions with our neighbour from a viewpoint that is diametrically opposite to theirs. No wonder, we are unable to have any discussion with them. We only seem to talk at each other. Never with each other. An expensive luxury of conflict that none of us can afford is all that we seem to be indulging for the last fifty years. On the threshold of the twenty first century, it is the crying need of the time to take a relook at the past, build on the right lessons, so that our future can be very different, from what is a most dismal present.

One lesson that Tilak taught us seems to have forgotten today. With all the power and prestige of the Empire at their command, the British were unable to prevent him from winning over the Muslims into the nationalist camp. All their machinations and persistent hostility could not prevent the Tilak coup. India and Pakistan are both an independent sovereign nation today. There is no hostile third party that can prevent our friendship with Pakistan. Our own failure to come to terms with the past and incompetence is all that is preventing us from being able to follow in Tilak's footsteps.

Let us first dispassionately understand what went so horribly wrong between 1920 and 1947. What turned Jinnah, who was an ally of the Congress so long as Tilak was alive turn into its sworn enemy after Gandhiji took over; thus sowing the seeds of a conflict that has not ended even today. If in the process of our enquiry, we have to demolish some myths so be it. No one, however great, can ever be greater than the nation

Bibliography

1. Veer Savarkar, Dhananjay Keer, Popular Prakashan, 1950
2. Savarkar Charitra, S.L.Karandikar, Modern Book Depot, 1947
3. Europe – A History, Norman Davies, Pimlico, 1997
4. Mazzini, Denis Mack Smith, Yale University Press, 1994
5. The Cambridge Economic History of India, Tapan Raychaudhuri, Irfan Habib, Cambridge University Press, 1993
6. Gandhi – An Autobiography, Beacon Press, 1993
7. The Age of Revolution, Eric Hobsbawm, Penguin Book India (P) Ltd. 1995
8. British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance, R.C.Majumdar, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1988
9. Abhinav Bharat, Dr.V.M.Bhat, G.P.Parchure Prakashan Mandir, Mumbai, 1950
10. The Proudest Day, India's Long Road to Independence, Anthony Reid & David Fisher, Pimlico, 1998
11. The Rise and fall of the British Empire, Lawrence James, Lawrence James, Little, Brown and Company, 1994
12. Raj, The Making and Unmaking of British India, Lawrence James, Little, Brown and Company, 1997
13. Political Trouble in India, 1907-1917, James Campbell Ker, Oriental Publications, 1973
14. Freedom Struggle for India, R.C.Majumdar, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1988
15. Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography, Oxford University Press, 1997
16. Hindustan Garad Party, Sohan Singh Josh, People's Publishing House, 1977

**A Mahatma's Quest For Power
1915-1939**

You would recall dear readers that when you started reading the *Bharatiya Torch of Freedom*, I had warned you that the journey through the time machine we were to undertake would make you dizzy. My objective was only to present the true story of the *Bharatiya Torch of Freedom* in all its splendour and glory. To present to you the central reality of the time, namely by 1920 the Indian Freedom Struggle was a roaring fire lit by all communities in India, one that was set to devour the British jackal.

Now that you have undertaken the dizzying journey through time, now that you have read *The Bharatiya Torch of Freedom*, I hope you would agree that the journey, uncomfortable as it was, disorienting as it was, nevertheless was worth the trouble.

I am sure many of you would then ask me if the reality was as stark as I have made it out to be, why did it take another 27 years for India to become Independent. After all, we had a Mahatma at the helm of affairs and not a corrupt power hungry politician who abound today. On this count alone, I am sure some of you would be tempted to ignore the compelling evidence that I presented earlier. Nor would you normally be wrong to do so. For it is entirely possible that I may be presenting one side of the story and leaving out some evidence to the contrary – by design or out of ignorance.

We therefore need to seriously examine the events of 1915 to 1939. What is it that went wrong? Why did it take us more than a quarter of the century to become Independent? And when we did get what we want, why did it come smeared with the blood of the many, amidst acts of animal savagery that remain a blot on our civilization

This is what we shall now seek to understand. In the process, if we end up with conclusions that are once again far different from the conventional wisdom, so be it. If it does not enhance the reputation of some of the most respected leaders of the time, so be it. If it causes acute discomfort, so be it. Our only concern is a quest for truth. This would be the sole guiding principle that we would follow.

It is with great sadness that I come to the conclusion that the greatest tragedy of the time was the relentless quest for power exhibited by none other than Gandhiji during this period. The single largest contributing factor to the tragedy that was to unfold in 1947. I say this with great sorrow. For I am no admirer of Godse, whose violence I condemn. Yet, I say this with full sense of responsibility. I say this for this painful truth is necessary to understand that Jinnah was no devil who stabbed a God like Gandhi in the back by insisting on Partition. If Jinnah was really a devil as many of us believe, we would have been right to ignore the Pakistani sentiments on the issue. The reality is that this is not even true. So, why hold on to false beliefs that only antagonise our neighbours?

Read on, dear readers and make up your own mind.

Chapter III-1

What Did Gandhiji Really Achieve??

I am fully aware of the fact that the very title of this chapter will raise hackles of many. Yet, I have chosen the words carefully. During the course of writing this book, I have been discussing my drafts with my wife. Naturally enough, some of the conversation had been overheard by my daughters. One day, I was startled to find my twelve year old daughter, asking me if I was really writing that Gandhiji was not a Mahatma. I could see that she was deeply disturbed. Gently, I tried to explain to her that Gandhiji was indeed a Mahatma. He was a great man. He did great things for the country but he was also human and had many failings. Some of them cost the country dearly.

A Mahatma, who wanted to be The Leader, where ever he went, is the best way to describe him.

This has not been an easy conclusion to arrive at. Like the most of my countrymen, I have been in thrall of the Mahatma's charisma for long. As a Hindu, my religion teaches me that whenever the powers of the Evil becomes dominant, Vishnu comes to the earth in a human form – an Avatar, to ensure that the forces of the Evil are routed. In Gandhi, there have been every signs of an Avatar. A penniless lawyer, who was thrown out of a train in South Africa to a saint who could melt even the most bitter mind filled with communal animosity in the riot torn Delhi during the winter of 1948. Spanning over a half century of public life, this has remained one of the most extraordinary journey, of a human being, in the modern times. A career which witnessed clash of the so called civilised world, not once but twice in Great wars that caused unprecedented murder and destruction of life and property. All within a short time of two decades. No wonder, his message of peace and nonviolence was a welcome relief, in a world torn apart by Greed, Hate and Cruelty.

Quest for Power are words, one would therefore normally never associate with a person like Gandhiji. They amount to blasphemy in India. After all, did this Mahatma ever aspire for any position of state power. Did he even remain a four anna member of the Congress, the very organisation that he took to remote corners of the country? Did accumulation of money hold any fascination for him? The answers to these questions must remain firmly in the negative. Few would seriously dispute Albert Einstein's tribute on his death – "Generations to come will scarcely believe that such a man ever walked in flesh and blood on this earth".

Yet, I maintain, he was involved in lifelong quest for power. True, Power that flows from gun, Power that flows from coercive apparatus of the State, Power that flows from Moneybags did not hold him in thrall like most of us. That is the reason why no one can dispute that he was a Mahatma.

His works are too well known to bear repetition here. Suffice to say that the legend of Gandhi, has been very easy for the Avatar driven Hindu mindset to accept. Jinnah,

everyone knows, did not like Gandhi and therefore it has always been easy to dismiss his opinion about Gandhiji. I read and even rejected the intense and bitter criticism of Gandhiji by Savarkar, after his release in 1937, as the outpouring of a frustrated man.

I was therefore shaken to read scathing attack that Babasaheb Ambedkar, known as the father of the Indian Constitution, made on Gandhiji in 1945, in the evening of the Mahatma's life. Suddenly, it was no longer possible to dismiss out of hand, the opinions of Jinnah and Savarkar about Gandhiji. I began to take a relook at this phenomenon called Gandhi.

It is then I realised that Bharatiya history or mythology as my Secularist friends of the SSPB would call it; is full of instances of Saints who loved power. Power that flows from adulation of people. Power that flows from hundreds of thousands of people outbidding each other to follow the command. Power that comes from willing acceptance of every Wish as a Command by the people at large. Intoxicating, exhilarating feeling that comes from being universally admired. Saints, who strayed into the realm of Power Politics and consequently caused untold damage.

Mahabharat, the great Bharatiya epic is all about one such saint. Bhishma, the prince who not only renounced his claim to the throne but also remained a *Bhramachari*, a virgin, lifelong. All for the sake of ensuring that his own father was able to marry a girl half his age. A saint, who stayed in the Palace and protected the King at any cost. He won universal acclaim for his sacrifices. His greatest tragedy was he became a prisoner of his own fame. Nothing else can explain the fact that Bhishma, the Great, remained a mute spectator to the disrobing of his own Grand Daughter in Law in an open Durbar. The shameful episode that sowed the seeds of the Great Bharatiya War. His own regard for his **Personal and Private reputation** once again prevented him from making his King accept the most reasonable peace terms that Lord Krishna, Avatar of Vishnu had proposed before commencement of hostilities. The same trap of reputation also lead him to accept the position of Commander in Chief of the forces he knew represented Evil and fight his own beloved grandchildren, whose cause was just and fair. Not only did he take up Arms but fought so ferociously that the forces of the Truth were nearly annihilated and Krishna had to intervene, breaking his own vow in the process. *Bhishma was truly a Saint, who loved power, the Power of One's Own reputation.*

Mahabharat took place in *Dwaper Yug*, the end of which saw the beginning of *Kali Yug*. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi in Kali Yug was to the society, what Bhishma, the Great was in Dwaper Yug. Immensely inspirational but also immensely harmful.

Kali Yug is the age of Evil. No wonder, Gandhiji's sacrifices by themselves were not adequate to propel him to position of Power. He had to use every trick in the book and also those outside it. Right through his public life in India, the politician in the Mahatma did not, as we shall see, fight shy of this. It is startling to realise that some facts are beyond dispute and yet are often overlooked, while assessing the impact of Gandhiji's leadership on the national life. These facts though obvious, need to be stated.

By 1919, before Gandhiji could leave a mark on the national scene:

- Swaraj was already the battle cry of Congress. Freedom struggle was intense enough to force the Raj to make three major conciliatory gestures to the nationalist opinion. The Monte-Morley Reforms of 1908, annulling of the partition of Bengal in 1911 and the Montagu - Chelmsford reforms of 1918. All within a short time of 15 years from launch of Swadeshi movement following the partition of Bengal in 1905.
- Hindus and Muslims were at reasonable peace with each other.
- Yet, it was not until three decades later that Independence was finally won.
- By the time, independence was in sight, the communal peace of 1919 was a distant dream and partition was the only practical alternative left. Indeed, the two communities were at each other's throat as never before in history.
- The savage manner in which the country was partitioned, an event that itself was unimaginable in 1919, has left wounds that continue to fester. India and Pakistan are about the only two countries in the world that are bleeding each other to death for control of inhospitable terrain at Saichen and Kargil, where even normal human life is impossible. This on the eve of the 21st century, when most countries are engrossed in attaining higher economic growth and bettering the standards of life of their citizens.

Somebody has to take responsibility for this. As the most prominent leader of the era, Gandhiji must shoulder major portion of the responsibility. There is no denying the efforts made by Gandhiji to make sure India attains Ram Rajya – an ideal state. A leader can however be judged by the results of his actions, not his intentions.

Let us take a dispassionate look at results of his life long quest and do a reality check on the three pillars of his legend. His lifelong contribution to the cause of communal harmony. The fight to eradicate the curse of Untouchability. Finally the dream like act of winning Independence by the pure path of Satyagraha. A half naked Fakir, who won the heart of a mighty Empire and persuaded a ruling race to peacefully relinquish power.

He intended to eradicate the curse of Untouchability from the Hindu society. The harsh reality is that railways, that Gandhiji derided, have done more to remove Untouchability, than all the efforts of Gandhiji. He considered himself as the foremost leader of the so called Untouchables. Unfortunately, they did not share his perception. Today, if at all they remember him it is with anger and not veneration. It is not that they are ungrateful. It is simply the fact that the educated amongst them distrusted Gandhiji even in his life time. Even today, they bristle at the mention of the Poona Pact that Gandhiji forced on an unwilling Ambedkar in 1932.

Shivaji Park, the place I live in Mumbai becomes a place of pilgrimage twice a year. The people considered Untouchables in a bye gone era, come by the droves from all over the country to pay homage to their leader Babasaheb Ambedkar. As any other pilgrimage

spot in India, the place becomes unbelievably dirty. For a week, elite residents of the place have to endure about the same filth that is the lifetime fate of an average slum dweller. Rajghat, the government memorial of Gandhiji, in New Delhi by contrast; is a sterile show piece, visited only by state dignitaries.

He intended that Hindus and Muslims should live like brothers. Yet, he lived to see the worst ever communal conflagration in history accompanied by a mass migration that was truly horrendous. Price of which continues to be paid in form of loss of precious human life, in the prime of their youth, at heights in Saichen, where even the animals can not live.

All that is then left of the Gandhi legend in terms of the hard quantifiable results is that he intended to induce a change of heart of the British through his unique nonviolent method of Satyagraha and thereby win Independence. This is what he achieved. The change of heart of British not only gave us Independence but also gave rise to a wave of decolonisation that started after the end of the Second World War. It is for this legacy that he has bequeathed, that we should remember him as the *Father of the Nation*. So comforting is this belief that we have always shied away from looking at it with anything other than complete reverence.

Alas ! Facts are otherwise. On a critical examination, this legacy turns out to be no more than a myth.

Up to 1975, a little known memo by Lord Keynes, the noted Economist and Treasury Advisor to the British Government during the Second World War remained hidden from public gaze under the secrecy rules. Paul Kennedy referred to it in 1980 but has continued to remain completely unknown in India. Written on eve of the Japanese surrender in August 1945 for benefit of the incoming Labour Government, this explosive memo is a 'Must read' document for any student of forces that shape affairs of the world. This memo lays bare entire rationale behind the process of decolonisation; that led not only to the independence of India but also of Sri Lanka and Burma; besides a hasty withdrawal of the British forces from Palestine in 1948. Sad to say, the rationale was entirely Economic and had nothing to do with any change of heart due to Satyagraha. It is only in India, amongst the Avatar driven Hindu mindset that this revelation would cause any surprise.

The memo "Our Overseas Financial Prospects" was circulated within the British Cabinet on 14th August 1945 by the Chancellor of Exchequer with a comment that "I am anxious that my colleagues should be informed, without delay of this most grim problem". This was amongst the first documents that the new Prime Minister, Clement Attlee saw on assumption of Office.

What is this "most grim problem" that the Chancellor was referring to? As an eminent economist, Lord Keynes was fulfilling his duty in drawing attention of the new Government to the fact that economic condition of the nation was such that "there would have to be an indefinite postponement of the realisation of the best hopes of the new

Government.” In a remarkably forthright language, full of candor, Keynes pointed out, that though victorious, the British nation was bankrupt and needed new strategies to survive. The figures provided by him, as can well be seen, were chilling to the most ardent of the Imperialists. An eminent economist and not a mere bean counter, Keynes could not stop with a mere statement of facts. He proposed a radical financial strategy involving projections up to 1949, being well aware of the implications.

Lord Keynes on State of the British Economy in August 1945

Government Expenditure in Million Sterling Pounds

	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949
Imports, food and raw materials	1,250	1,300	1,400	1,400	1,450
	Keynes pointed out that imports of £ 1,700 million at 1945 prices were needed to keep import volumes at pre war level.				
War Related Imports	850	0	0	0	0
Total Imports	2,100	1,300	1,400	1,400	1,450
Overseas Gov. Expenditure					
<i>Military Services</i>					
SE Asian Command	100	50	0	0	0
<i>Normal</i>	325	325	250	200	150
	Keynes was clear that a reduction of this scale called for ‘Major Policy Changes’ in other words <i>Selective decolonisation for there was no way to reduce military expenditure and yet retain control of the colonies</i>				
Total Military services	425	375	250	200	150
War Supplies and Munitions	300	75	0	0	0
	725	450	250	200	150
	In 1945, out of £ 725 million, as much as £ 410 million were being spent in India, Burma and Ceylon, while the Middle East accounted for another £ 110 million. So the areas of Selective decolonisation were beyond dispute.				
Aid	75	0	0	0	0
Total Overseas Expenditure	800	450	250	200	150
Debt repayment			75	75	0
Total Expenditure	2,900	1,750	1,725	1,675	1,600

Keynes pointed out that “In the third place (and above all) a substantial part of our existing Government expenditure overseas has no direct or obvious connection with the Japanese war; and will therefore not come to an end merely because the Japs have packed up”. Indeed as much as 50% of the Overseas Government Expenditure had nothing to do with the war and was a *Normal* expenditure for a colonial power like U.K. As if this realisation was not frightening enough, the sources of Income for meeting this kind of expenditure were drying up with end of the war.

Government Income in Million Sterling Pounds

	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949
Exports	350	600	1,000	1,300	1,450
Net Invisible Income	100	50	100	100	150
War related Income	350	150	0	0	0
Lend Lease / Mutual Aid (U.S.A.& Canada)	1,350	0	0	0	0
Credit from Colonies	750	300	50	0	0
Sale of Gold		250			
Total Income	2,900	1,350	1,150	1,400	1,600

The figures vividly bring out the horrifying truth that by 1947, the drop in War Related Income would be far more than savings in the war related expenditure, causing a severe imbalance in financial stability of the country.

It was expected that the **Income would drop by £ 2,400 million**. This comprised of £ 1,350 million of Lend Lease assistance from the United States of America, which stood suspended with cessation of hostilities with Japan, War related Income of £ 350 was also expected to cease with end of hostilities. Colonies, which had been “induced to lend to us”; could also not be expected to continue giving credits with the fig leaf of the War excuse withdrawn; resulting in a drop of £ 700 million.

As against, this drop of £ 2,400 million in income, the **expenditure was expected to reduce by only £ 1,250 million**. War related imports of £ 850 and War supplies and Munitions expenses £ 300 million were expected to be saved together with a saving of £ 100 million with disbanding of the South East Command after victory over Japan.

Keynes therefore called for a focussed export drive, dramatic measures like Sale of 50% of the Gold reserves. In respect of the Overseas Government expenditure, he pleaded that

“ We have got into the habit of maintaining large and expensive establishments all over the Mediterranean, Africa and Asia to cover communications, to provide reserves for unnamed contingencies and to police vast areas eastwards from Tunis to Burma and northwards from East Africa to Germany. None of these establishments will disappear unless and until they are ordered home; and many of them have pretexts for existence which have nothing to do with Japan”. He then proceeded to point out that India, Burma and Ceylon accounted for £ 410 million expenditure, while Middle East share was £ 110 million; out of a total of £ 800 million and went on to add : “To an innocent observer in the Treasury very early and very drastic economies in this huge cash expenditure overseas seem an absolute condition for maintaining our solvency. There is no possibility of our obtaining from others for more than a brief period the means for maintaining any significant part of these establishments.” He was well aware of the implications as he himself noted “substantial reduction (in Overseas Government expenditure) will require drastic revisions of policy which do not automatically ensue on V-J”

Meanwhile, cup of woes of the new administration was not yet full. Keynes noted that selling gold, obtaining a dramatic increase in exports and a drastic cut in Overseas Government expenditure would still leave the country begging U.S.A. for a Grant of as much as US \$ 5,000 million.

The Deficit in Million Sterling Pounds

	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949
Total Expenditure	2,900	1,750	1,725	1,675	1,600
Total Income	2,900	1,350	1,150	1,400	1,600
Deficit	0	400	575	275	0
Total deficit = £ 1,250 or US \$ 5,000					

He concluded; “It seems, then there are three essential conditions without which we have not a hope of escaping what might be described, without exaggeration and without implying that we should not eventually recover from it, a financial Dunkirk. These conditions are (a) an intense concentration on the expansion of exports, (b) *drastic and immediate economies in our overseas expenditure*, and (c) substantial aid from the United States on terms which we can accept. *They can only be fulfilled by a combination of the greatest enterprise, ruthlessness and tact.*” (italics mine)

Thus, without using the word decolonisation, he had effectively called for Independence to be given to India, Burma and Ceylon and withdrawal from Palestine; latest by 1948. *This is, as we are all aware - exactly what happened.*

Thus if Gandhi is to be called ‘Father of the Nation’ for his contribution to the Freedom of India, Lord Keynes can easily lay claim to title of ‘Grand Father’ of the Nation.

It will take an extremely naïve mind to contend, after reading this document that Independence of India had anything to do with a Genuine change of heart due to Peaceful and Non Violent Satyagraha launched by Gandhiji from time to time. Nor had this anything to do with “ Consummation and fulfillment of the historic traditions and democratic ideals of the British race” as stated by Dr. Rajendra Prasad on eve of the Independence. A sentiment later echoed by Majumdar, when he approvingly recorded this statement with a comment that “ This is a great truth, which is not always realized nor remembered by the Indians”.

In the final analysis, it was the hard kick of Nazi Jack boots in the British butt coupled with political awareness in India initiated by Tilak, furthered by revolutionary fervor and of course also by Gandhi led mass agitation, is what got us the Freedom. Cost of keeping the Empire was now, simply not sustainable. It is this cost benefit analysis that prevented Churchill, for all his fulmination and ranting, from blocking the Independence of India Act in the House of Lords, where the Conservatives still had majority in 1947.

A single minded focus on the Economy is what had got the British in India in the first place. Single minded focus on the Economy is what got them to leave this country. When, oh, when shall we ever understand this fact and more importantly learn from this?

Once we confront these hard facts, what do we find left of the Gandhi legend? Very little, I am afraid. Intuitive and sharp minds of Jinnah, Savarkar and Ambedkar did not have to wait for a Keynes to tell them that getting British out of the country was not a moral dilemma for a Mahatma to solve but simply a matter of Realpolitik. Once this understanding sinks in, it becomes easier to understand what was it in Gandhiji style of leadership that Jinnah, the unabashed admirer of Tilak, found so repulsive. It certainly was not communal animosity. For that matter, forget, Savarkar, why even Ambedkar was so critical of Gandhiji. Last but not the least, why, even Subhas Chandra Bose found it impossible to work with the Mahatma.

These are issues that need to be examined critically. They are not academic but very real. Perhaps, the answers would provide the key to a lasting rapprochement between present day hostile states of Pakistan and India, armed to teeth with nuclear weapons that can only cause a holocaust. States that were a very much an integral part of the same nation at the dawn of Gandhi era in Indian polity.

What we seek to know is not whether Mahatma had feet of clay. Like any other human being, he had his share of faults. That can hardly come as a surprise to anyone but the most blind of his followers. Nor would that detract an iota from his greatness.

What we need to understand is whether in 1920, we needed a cool headed Statesman rather than a Mahatma to guide our destiny. Let us therefore first examine the manner in which Mohanchand Karamdas Gandhi acquired control over the destiny of this nation by 1920.

Chapter III-2

Gandhiji's Rise to Prominence in India 1915-1918

Gandhiji set sail for London on the 18th July 1914 after almost two decades of stay in South Africa, where he had emerged as the undisputed leader of Indians – both the Hindus and Muslims. He arrived on the 6th August, in a country that was embroiled in World War from the 4th August. About this time, Gandhiji was still a great believer in the essential goodness of the British Empire and considered his duty to help the Empire in its days of distress. The war confronted this votary of Ahimsa, with a dilemma. Knowing fully well that “those who confine themselves to attending to the wounded in battle cannot be absolved from the guilt of war”, he volunteered to serve in the Medical corps as a “matter of duty”. Thus participating whole heartedly, as an active participant, in the terrible violence unleashed by the War. Once back in India, he never gave the same moral freedom to the Revolutionaries to participate in the War that the Indian nation was fighting against British occupation.

Meanwhile, even while being an enlist in the Army, he insisted on being treated as Unofficial representative of the Volunteer Corps. Such an absurd proposition was rejected out of hand by the Commanding Officer as being completely repugnant to Military discipline. Where upon, Gandhiji began a Satyagraha and began shooting off letters to the high and mighty protesting against hapless Commanding Officer. The matter did not come to head due to fortuitous circumstances and Gandhiji left for India, much to the relief of the people, he had sought to help. He reached India on the 9th January 1915 to a rousing reception. The more discerning had already noted, two things in the episode that jarred:

- Gandhiji was willing to be an active party to the violence, his convoluted logic, making this participation consistent with principles of Ahimsa, notwithstanding
- He had a compelling desire to be accepted as The Leader, even in a place like the Army, where he could not legitimately demand this.

Soon after his arrival, Gandhiji was politically orphaned with the death of his mentor, Gokhale on 19th February, 1915. In South Africa, he had a poor opinion of Gokhale's Servants of India Society. Curiously, soon after arrival in India, he made a futile attempt to become a member of the same society. However, his attempt to find a space for himself came to naught due to resistance of some members.

Before the end of the year, he had set up his famed Ashram on the banks of Sabarmati in Ahmedabad aided with a donation of Rs 13,000 from the industrialist Ambalal Sarabhai. His inclination to join Politics was evident from his attendance of the 1915, Annual Convention of Congress, where he witnessed first-hand, enthusiasm generated by reentry of Tilak in Congress after a gap of eight years.

The political pace quickened with entry of Tilak in Congress. Gandhiji could only watch from the sidelines. The 1915 Convention of Congress had been held in Bombay along with that of the League. Several Congress leaders were lustily cheered as they joined the League session.

Meanwhile, the Home Rule Movement started by Annie Besant on 25th September 1915 gathered steam and worked in close co-operation with the Tilak led Home Rule League, started on 28th April 1916. The united and untiring activities of Mrs. Besant and Tilak propagated the idea of Home Rule far and wide, and made it practically the only living issue in Indian politics. A “Home Rule Special” carried Tilak and his party to Lucknow session of the Congress in December 1916, receiving ovation all along the way. When he arrived at the pandal of the Congress he was carried by his admirers on their shoulders and greeted with deafening cheers.

This session held along with that of the Muslim League sealed Hindu-Muslim pact, a scheme of political reforms jointly drawn up by the committees of Congress and the Muslim League and under preparation since 1915. The Hindu-Muslim pact was hailed with delight by all sections of Indians as a significant milestone in the march towards Freedom. The British Government was more surprised than anybody else, for the pact seemed to deprive them of the one trump card they held in their hands to stem the tide of Indian nationalism.

Gandhiji had little to do with these developments. His contribution at this time included an interview, in which he was critical of Congress resolution in favour of Swaraj on the specious pleas that it was based on ill feelings and hence morally unsound.

The general feeling of the British towards the developments in Congress is aptly captured below:

“It will be seen that the proceedings at this session constitute a remarkable leap forward from the position taken by Mr. Sinha in the previous year, and a remarkable triumph for Mr. Tilak and Mrs. Beasnt. They did more. They showed that **absolute political independence had become the professed ideal of Moderate and Extreme politicians alike**”

It will not be out of place here to note the goal of Absolute Political Independence was actively resisted by Gandhiji, once he acquired mastery over it, in 1920 for well over ten years. Young Turks led by Jawahar Lal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose had to move heaven and earth to get the resolution formally adopted in 1930. In this sense, without being factually incorrect, it can be said that Gandhiji actually set the clock back by well over 15 years, in respect of Independence.

Home Rule movement got a boost after the Congress session. Participation of women and prominent Muslim leaders like Jinnah and family of Muhammad Ali were some of its highlights. As the movement spread like a wild fire all over India, the Government became worried. On 17th January 1917, the Home Member of the Government of India

wrote : “The position is one of great difficulty. Moderate leaders can command no support among the vocal classed who are being led at the heels of Tilak and Besant.”

The appeal of the Home Rule movement was not confined within the frontiers of India. Sir Subrahmaniya Aiyar, K.C.I.E., retired Judge and Acting Chief Justice of the Madras High Court was the President of the Indian Home Rule League, Madras and in this capacity wrote a letter to President Wilson of United States of America on 24th June 1917. He described the intolerable condition of India under alien rule and made a moving appeal to the President to apply his war message of democracy and self-determination of nations to India. The publication of this letter created a furore in England and making Aiyer so angry that in protest he renounced his titles. The letter, however was warmly received in U.S.A. and England itself strongly criticised.

On 15th June, 1917, the Government of Madras issued orders of internment against Mrs. Besant. A storm of indignation swept India from one end to the other. Protest meetings were held all over the country and even those, who had hitherto held aloof from the movement joined the League campaigns. Under the inspiration of Tilak, All India Congress Committee strongly protested against the internment of Mrs. Besant.

By now, the Government had come to the conclusion that their game of playing Muslims against the Hindus had failed. Moderates had been wiped out. Political India was united as never before. The Home Rule movement had stirred people as was earlier witnessed only in Bengal at the height of Swadeshi movement in 1905. The Government had even then found it difficult to cope with the national awakening though, it was confined mainly to Bengal, They therefore dreaded the prospect of containing such an awakening all over the country. To make matters worse, the fortunes of the war were steadily going against the British. On 20th August 1917, an announcement was made that consultations would be held with Indians for a fresh set of Constitutional reforms. The announcement was cautiously welcomed by Tilak, who however did not suspend or relax the Home Rule agitation.

Montagu received a series of depositions on his arrival in India. He met Tilak on 27th November 1917. As he later wrote: “Then, after lunch, we saw Tilak, the politician, who probably has the greatest influence of any person in India, and who is very extreme. His procession to Delhi to see me was veritable triumphant one. He was really the author of the Congress-League scheme. It was quite obvious that he was not going to be satisfied with anything but what the Congress asks for. **‘We shall take whatever the Government gives us’, he said, ‘but it will not satisfy us, unless it is at least what the Congress asks.’**”

This last statement sums up the practical approach of Lokmanya Tilak. This could only come from a cool headed Statesman. He knew what he had. Followers, who were largely Hindu. He knew, what he wanted – Freedom of India. He therefore had no ego problems in coming to an agreement with Jinnah to forge a united front against the British. His was a language that others of his age, could relate to and therefore do business with. Not for him was the moral posturing of a Mahatma, which left everyone cold.

What is it that the Congress wanted at this stage? Let us move on to December 1917. Calcutta session of Congress was a great triumph for the Home Rule movement. It was Congress of Mrs. Besant and Tilak. Mrs. Besant, elected as the Congress president; moved a resolution demanding that India be given the status of a Self-Governing Dominion latest by 1928. Soon she made clear that this was only the beginning. "I once said in England : The condition of India's loyalty is India's freedom. I may now add : The condition of India's usefulness to the Empire is India's freedom."

Never before had the Indian National Congress heard such seditious language from its President.

Meanwhile, as the epoch events were taking place in Indian polity, where was the Mahatma? He had studiously kept away from the Home Rule movement, which offered him no possibility of taking over leadership. Nor was he idle. At the repeated requests of Brajkishore Prasad, he left on 9th April 1917, for Champaran in Bihar to study first hand oppression faced by the Indigo cultivators.

This led to a Satyagraha that was unique in Gandhi's career and showed the greatness of the man. It was a rational agitation which called for specific remedies to a demonstrable set of injustices. Free from any emotional or religious appeals, it was a truly secular movement led by Gandhiji – first and sadly as it turned out, also amongst the last.

Champaran was a district famed for Indigo cultivation. Once the British rule took roots, the British Zamindars made it a matter of compulsion on the cultivators to keep aside best part of their land for the Indigo crop. The system came to be known as 'Teen Kathia'. Once, synthetic Indigo came into the world market, the prices dropped. Teen Kathia was relaxed and cultivation of Indigo no longer remained compulsory. This relaxation came at a price. The farmer was made to pay Rs 100/- per bigha of land. Those, who could not pay were made to sign equivalent loan deeds @12% p.a. Some Zamindars, were more merciful. They did not insist on a cash compensation but replaced Indigo by other cash crops in Teen Kathia.

Oppression was not limited to Teen Kathia. Farmers were also expected to provide carts for transportation of material for the benefit of Zamindar's tannery factories. The hides of their dead cattle automatically became the property of the tannery. The farmer and his family were expected, as a matter of routine to work in conditions of slavery on the farms of the Zamindars without regard to their sex or age. There was no question of any payments. Those, who resisted were fined, boycotted by the community and had to face false police cases.

Once Gandhiji had carried out a study on the spot, he concluded : "having studied these cases, I have come to the conclusion that we should stop going to law courts. Taking such cases to the court does little good. Where the ryots are so crushed and fear-stricken, law courts are useless. The real relief for them is to be free from fear. We can not sit still until we have driven Teen Kathia out of Bihar. I had thought I should be able to leave here in two days, but I now realize that the work might even take two years. I am prepared to

give that time, if necessary but I want your help.” Even as he prepared to organise the work, he met the Zamindars and Commissioner of the Division, Tirhut, to know their side of the story. As can be expected, the Zamindars told him to get lost. An advice, which was soon given legal shape by the Commissioner.

Gandhiji refused to budge his ground. He wired the Viceroy and the Governor. They already had their hands full with Home Rule movement and did not want yet another problem on their hands. The local administration was therefore directed to cooperate with Gandhiji, who proceeded to conduct a semi official but an impartial enquiry. Soon, it became an official affair with Gandhi as one of the members. A unanimous report was submitted on 3rd October 1917 recommending scrapping of Teen Kathia.

The recommendations were accepted by a beleaguered government, out to prove that it was open to reasonable demands of Indians provided they co-operated and did not make a nuisance of themselves as the Home Rulers were doing. Most importantly, there was no issue of substantial revenue loss involved for the Government to worry about. The fact remains that the relief Champaran farmers got was substantial and very real.

At the same time, no one knew better than Gandhiji that his real work had only begun. As he himself wrote, “As I gained more experience of Bihar, I became convinced that work of a permanent nature was impossible without proper village education...but I did not want to stop at providing for primary education. The villages were insanitary, the lanes full of filth, the wells surrounded by mud and stink and the courtyards unbearably untidy...they were all suffering from various skin diseases....so it was decided to penetrate every department of their lives.” Even for a Mahatma, this was a life time’s work. The beginning was encouraging. “The volunteers with their school, sanitation work and medical relief gained the confidence and respect of the village folk, and were able to bring good influence upon them.”. As the work progressed, new difficulties came to light. A poor peasant woman told him to provide a second sari so that she could wash the only one she was wearing. Faced with such seemingly insurmountable problems, the initial enthusiasm soon waned and Gandhiji had to “confess with regret that my hope of putting this constructive work on a permanent footing was not fulfilled.”

Bihar could well have been the arena of his life long quest for transforming the life of these poor peasants. Amazingly, he gave up the cause as lost, even before making a serious sustained effort. All he offers by way of an explanation is a halfhearted excuse; “it did not please God, as often before to allow my plans to be fulfilled. Fate decided otherwise and drove me to take up work elsewhere”

Not a word of explanation on which area of public life so sorely needed his attention that he had to ditch the very people, whose cause had brightened the halo around him. As we have already seen, political life of the country was getting along fine and needed no Mahatma to meddle around. *Nothing and nothing but a Mahatma’s quest for power lead him away – certainly not fate or the God.*

Champan agitation for Gandhiji was over, the moment Teen Kathia was abolished. With his moral halo suitably enhanced, he was on to the next cause. This time, it was a dramatic labour dispute in Ahmedabad. Mill owners, being led by Ambalal Sarabhai, the very man who had contributed so generously to setting up of the Sabramati Ashram. Workers being led on the other hand by his own sister – Anusuyaben. At stake was the age-old dispute over pay. Workers demanding 50% increase, the mill owners being ready to offer only 20% rise. It is at this stage that Gandhiji stepped in and decided a 35% increase was Just and Fair, for the sake of which a Satyagraha was in order. He alone knew, why 35 and not 20 or 50 was the right number. Meanwhile, the Mill Owners declared a Lock Out on 22nd February 1918 and the Satyagraha commenced. By 12th March, the Workers were despondent. Sensing victory, the Mill Owners opened the gates and invited the Workers to join accepting the 20% increase, they had originally offered. Several workers responded. The Gandhi led struggle was in tatters. The politician was alarmed at the prospect of defeat and resorted to fast, the first of the many to follow. The Mahatma's life could not be endangered. The mill owners relented partially and offered a 27.5% increase. Shrewdly sensing this was as far as they would go, Gandhiji had no hesitation in pronouncing victory and advising the workers to accept an Increase, which was **Less** than what he himself had considered **Fair**.

It is during this struggle that he gave vent to his animosity against Tilak. Ahmedabad strike was a local issue, being led by Gandhiji and had nothing to do with the Home Rule movement. This did not stop him from criticising Tilak. He claimed that though Tilak was immensely popular and was author of the classic, Gita Rahasya (Secrets of Gita), he (Tilak) had not understood the soul of India. *No one other than Gandhiji, not even Lokmanya Tilak, was ever to be given the freedom to understand the true soul of India.* Tilak's fault according to Gandhiji was that Tilak wanted India to attain the prosperity level of Europe. *What a crime!!* Not content with this, Gandhiji even choose to belittle Tilak's prison sentence of six years (1908-14) by claiming that Tilak had undergone the sentence merely to prove that Indians could be as courageous as the Europeans. One would have thought that to be courageous was a virtue that Gandhiji would admire. But no – according to Gandhiji, there was no moral or philosophical base for Tilak's courageous stand and the prison term was therefore without any use for the nation !!

This is not a statement worthy of Gandhiji. The less said about this statement the better. More curious is the fact that these utterances find no mention in his "Experiments with Truth" published ten years later. It appears that Gandhiji was well aware that to utter such nonsense about Tilak in front of Mill Hands, wearied by a long struggle, was one thing but to do so in front of a national audience, was to seek a quick banishment to political exile.

This was no Mahatma; this was a Politician waiting in the wings to take over political leadership from Lokmanya Tilak. Champan farmers, now Ahmedabad workers were all strategic tools to be used to enhance the moral halo won in South Africa. They also provided useful platforms for chipping away Tilak's popularity. Classic Guerrilla tactic to usefully utilise the time before a bid for toppling Tilak could be made at the opportune time.

Meanwhile, plight of the Kheda farmers beckoned the Mahatma. A severe drought had devastated the country in 1917-18. Kheda was no exception. Farmers claimed that the revenue reduction due to them as per the Government rules was not being given by the Administration. Gandhiji had become convinced that the farmers were right. When appeals to the Government failed, he once again began a Satyagraha on 22nd March 1918. Neither Champaran nor the Ahmedabad experiments had tested the might of the Government. Nor had they affected its power to collect Revenue. For the first time, Gandhiji had launched a struggle that affected a key function of the State – its power to loot the country. It could hardly allow this to happen. Full force of the state coercion was let loose. It is not surprising that it won the trial of strength. For the Satyagraha ended in a compromise. By June 1918, the Collector accepted the principle that only those farmers, who were rich enough, would be required to pay the land revenue. It would be waived for the poor. With this, the struggle was called off. Soon Gandhiji came to realise that it was not the people, who had any say in deciding who could afford to pay and who could not. The power belonged to the Government. The end result was; most ended up being required to pay. The people also saw through the gimmick and the Mahatma's popularity waned. When Gandhiji toured Kheda for supporting War recruitment, the same people who, a few months earlier had considered him their saviour; now turned their back.

Thus, on three different occasions spread over a twenty-year period, Gandhiji was a willing participant in Violence of War. Boer War in South Africa (1898), World War I in London (1914), and now again in World War I in Kheda (1918). Gandhiji had kept aside Ahimsa and lent full weight to the War effort. So deeply ingrained was his belief that the British Empire on the whole was beneficial to Indians. A belief, he sustained at least up to the age of 50. Did he ever get rid of this regard for the Empire? An interesting question that we shall attempt to answer by our study.

Champaran, Ahmedabad and now Kheda, Gandhiji had tried the weapon of Satyagraha and met with diminishing success. Nevertheless, these three agitations bore his stamp and immensely enhanced his popular standing. Even as Gandhiji immersed himself in endeavors outside the main political current of the day – Home Rule, tide of events continued to accelerate.

Home Rule movement was sought to be extended to the isle of England itself. A delegation had sailed for England in two batches on 10th and 18th March 1918. They were forced to disembark at Gibraltar and return to India. Meanwhile, Tilak himself had left Bombay on 27th March 1918 to go to England via Madras and Colombo. The proposed visit generated tremendous enthusiasm. Tilak made it clear that he was not going to appeal to the generosity of the British but rather to tell them that it was in their own interest that India should be granted immediate Home Rule. Colombo was as far as he was allowed to travel. Once back in India, the Government tried to belittle him by not inviting him to a Conference of prominent Indians to discuss Indian support to the War effort. The exclusion was widely resented. Gandhiji joined the chorus of protest but allowed himself to be persuaded by the Viceroy to attend the conference. **His actions spoke louder than his words regarding his professed regard for Tilak.**

The Montagu-Chelmsford report was published on 8th July 1918. It was a document, which failed to enthuse, even the Moderates, but they nonetheless welcomed it. Home Rulers were scathing in their criticism. The Indian Civil Services, fearing the whittling down for their untrammelled authority lobbied against the proposed reforms, showing that the so called Iron Frame of the Raj could become soft as a jelly, when its vital interest were threatened. As usual, the ever pragmatic Tilak had the last word, aptly characterizing it as a 'Sunless dawn'.

A special Congress was held in Bombay on the 29th August 1918 under Presidentship of Hasan Imam, to finalise its approach towards the report. The Moderates knew they had little influence left in the Congress. Fearing that they would be meted out the same shabby treatment that they had given to Tilak ten years earlier, decided to boycott the session. Their fears were unfounded. Tilak, the Great statesman knew that there were many ways to reach the goal of freedom. Even the moderates had their uses. A split would only benefit the British. He therefore made sure that the Congress adopted a very conciliating attitude. It reaffirmed the Hindu-Muslim Lucknow pact of 1916 and called for setting up of a full Self Government within a period not exceeding 15 years. Several changes were suggested in the Report but the door for working within the given reforms was left open. This was Tilak at his best. He had told Montagu. **'We shall take whatever the Government gives us', he said, 'but it will not satisfy us, unless it is at least what the Congress asks.'** He was being as good as his word.

Moderates were made of a different clay. They held a separate session of their own in Bombay on 1st November 1918. The resolutions, they passed differed little from the ones in Congress session. The real difference was in the spirit. For Tilak, the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms were one step towards the real goal – Absolute Political Independence. The very words frightened the Moderates and who were basically content with crumbs thrown by the Raj but only wanted some more.

The separate session of the Moderates marked their exit from Congress and with also from the national scene. The annual session of the Congress was held at Delhi in December. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya was the President. Freed from the restraints of keeping the Moderates in good humor, Congress now demanded full responsible government **at once**.

At this time, Savarkar was battling for maintaining his sanity in the cells of the cellular Jail at Andaman. Years of toiling like an animal were telling on him. Ravaged by the dreaded tuberculosis, the body was nearly broken. Lonely solitude of the Jail broken only by unceasing insults of the Warders, began to haunt and fleeting thoughts of suicide crossed the mind. Savarkar was to overcome this ordeal, suffer another six years of such inhuman torture and amazingly live on to see his beloved motherland become an Independent Sovereign Republic, a good thirty two years later. Meanwhile, the torch of revolutionary fire had not fallen. **It had made its way to the center stage of the national polity.** In his own unique manner, Tilak was bowing in reverence to his younger comrade and toiling to fulfill his dreams.

Where was the Mahatma at this time? He was laid low by dysentery following irregular eating during the War recruitment campaigns. In the first prolonged illness of his life, he came close to death but survived by breaking his own vow against consuming milk. The Doctor, as the Viceroy earlier, managed to persuade him that he could consume Goat milk to rebuild his constitution, as his vow was limited to Cow or buffalo milk. This was self-deception and Gandhiji knew it. As he himself says, “The will to live proved stronger than devotion to truth”

Some letters written by Gandhiji during this period, one on 17th August to his associate, and the other on 25th August to Tilak, who had inquired about his health, are interesting. They throw light on the nature of fundamental conflict between the Tilak and the Gandhi way.

To Tilak there were many paths leading to the goal. Each useful in its own way, even the Satyagraha, which to Tilak was the Weapon of the Weak. It was this broad practical outlook that allowed Tilak to unhesitatingly help Savarkar’s comrades in arms like Bhatt, a core member of *‘dreaded criminal gang of Savarkar.’* At the same time, without fear of contradiction, he could also do his best to bridge the gap with Moderates, who would have recoiled in horror by the very shadow of Bhatt.

To Gandhiji, Satyagraha was the only true path. All others were false.

In the war that the Indian nation was fighting against the British occupation, Tilak’s motto was “Do unto others as they do to you”. Whereas Gandhiji believed in “Do unto others as you would want them to do to you” as an inviolate cardinal principal of life. One was a practical Statesman; the other was a Mahatma. In a Kargil like situation, who do we follow – the Statesman or the Mahatma. The answer is fairly obvious. No wonder, Tilak was by far the most popular leader of the day.

Gandhiji knew and acknowledged the wide gap that divided them. Yet, this did not stop him from hoping that one day, Tilak would accept that he was wrong and that Satyagraha was the only right weapon. This was a hope in vain. For Tilak died without changing his beliefs.

A most unfortunate event took place during this crucial period. Tilak had to leave for England on 19th September 1918, soon after the special session of the Congress, in connection with a case, which he had bought against Sir Valentine Chirol for libel. He could therefore not accept the Presidentship of Congress to which office he was elected on the eve of his departure. In a surprising turn of events, Mrs. Besant came to fully support the Montagu-Chelmsford report and departed from the Tilak line.

It is during this absence of Tilak that momentous events – The passing of Rowlett Act and Jallianwala Bagh massacre took place in India. Now was the time that Gandhiji was waiting for. While the Lokmanya was away, the Mahatma launched a blitzkrieg to grab the political power.

Chapter III-3

Communalisation of the Freedom Struggle 1919-20

The year 1919 is a watershed year in the history of this country. It is in this period that Gandhiji became a major political leader. It is in this period that for the first time in hundreds of years, Pan-Islamism became a dominant force in the country. The effect of which has continued to poison the body polity, to this date, a good eight decades later. The man responsible for this was none other than Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. In his quest for power, he turned the Wheel of History back by hundreds of years and communalised Indian politics as never before.

It is this sad story – The story of a Mahatma's Quest for Power that shall now engage our attention. It is hard to believe that a Mahatma would resort to cynical manipulation of popular aspirations for the sake of promoting his own political agenda. Unfortunately, this is exactly what seems to have happened in that fateful spring of 1919.

By the dawn of 1919, the country was politically alive and throbbing with anticipation of great things to happen. The murderous World War I had ended on 11th November 1918 with the Raj having won complete and decisive victory. Congress was rightly demanding returns on the national resources invested to make the victory possible. India had gifted £100 million to the United Kingdom, an amount that exceeded the annual revenue of Government of India. By 31st March 1918, India had spent £130 million on the war. The supplies included 1,874 miles of railway track, 6,000 vehicles, 13,073 L. ft of girders, 237 locomotives, 883 steamers and barges and ten million cubic ft of timber. The war was fought with 1.2 million Indian soldiers, of whom about 10% died. As the War ate up valuable national resources, millions of Indians died of hunger and diseases without even pricking the conscience of the White rulers. Of what use were the *Nigger* lives, if not spent for the sake of their masters?

Not only was the Congress merely demanding returns, the people at large were readily supporting the clarion call for Home Rule- by now a barely disguised term for Independence. Thousands of Revolutionaries, from Bengal, from Punjab, from Maharashtra and indeed all over the country had laid down their lives for the sake of the nation. Leaders like Tilak, Mrs. Besant, Jinnah had made sure that these sacrifices would not go waste. The political awareness that sprang in hundred breasts with the death of one Madanlal Dhingra or Khudiram Bose was stoked by these leaders in a such way that a mighty fire now roared. A fire that called out for the sacrifice of the British Raj in India.

The Raj was only too well aware of the precarious nature of its hold on the country. The Governor of Punjab, Michael O' Dwyer, with unpleasant memories of the Ghadar Party was particularly wary. With good reason too, as was soon to become evident.

Alarmed at the extent of revolutionary activities in India that had continued unabated despite repression, Viceroy Chelmsford had appointed Sedition Committee on 10th

December 1917. Justice Rowlatt was its President. As the name suggests, the Committee was charged with the responsibility of drafting a special legislation that would curb the seditious activities. It submitted its report in April 1918. On 6th February 1919, the Government decided to give effect to the recommendations of the Committee. By 21st March, the Rowlatt act had been placed on the Statute Book.

In hindsight, this Act was no more draconian than many such Acts in Independent India. Even in 1919 far more draconian acts were on the Statute book for the Frontier Provinces. Nevertheless, in the generally expectant atmosphere of the time it deeply disturbed people. This was the opportunity Gandhiji appeared to be waiting for. From 1915 to 1919, for four long years, he had waited, taking up causes that were outside the political domain. Four long years in which he had waited on the sidelines while political activities had taken shape without the benefit of his guiding hand. This seems to have been a difficult thing to swallow for one who was used to be the center of lime light in South Africa. The goal of being acknowledged as the undisputed leader of the Indian masses had remained beyond his reach. Now, at last the destiny beckoned. Lokmanya Tilak was out of the country. Mrs. Besant seemed to have mellowed with age. The Government had presented him the chance to become a leading political light on a platter. Now was the time to strike.

6th February 1919 to 18th April 1919 – a span of less than three months, Gandhiji's organisational genius came to the fore. Rising quickly from a prolonged illness, he quickly established a Satyagraha Sabha, "as all hopes of any existing institutions adopting a novel weapon like Satyagraha seemed to me to be in vain". Naturally, none other than Gandhiji could be the President. "From the very beginning, it seemed clear to me that the Sabha was not likely to live long". A curious way of stating that the Sabha owed its existence only to the fact that a Tilak dominated Congress, even in his absence, was not likely to adopt Satyagraha as its weapon. No sooner than the Congress could be captured, the Sabha would cease to exist.

Moving with an energy that would have been the envy of a man, half his age, Gandhiji undertook tours across the country with lightening speed. Delhi, Lucknow, Alahabad, Bombay, Madras, Tanjovur, Tuticorin, Gandhiji had covered the country from North to South within less than three weeks spreading the gospel of Satyagraha. 30th March was fixed as the day for observing *Hartal*, unique Indian phenomenon of suspending all normal activities. This was later changed to 6th April. In the confusion that resulted due to change in dates, Delhi and Amritsar observed Hartal on the original date. The event was marred in Delhi by police firing in which a few people were killed. British nurses in the Police hospital refused to treat the wounded rebels.

6th April, 1919 was observed as Black Sunday all over the country, even in Peshawar, where laws far more draconian than the Rowlatt Act were already in operation. Gandhiji was in Bombay, where it was observed with full decorum that a peaceful Satyagraha demanded. The government too co-operated by turning the Nelson's eye to such illegal activities as sale of books that were banned. On 7th, Gandhiji started for Delhi and Amritsar. On his way to Punjab, he was made to return back to Bombay, under Police

custody. The arrest of the Mahatma incensed the people and riots erupted first in Bombay and then in Ahmedabad.

Gandhiji's arrest was just the spark that the dry timber in Punjab needed to burst forth in a blazing fire. Lahore, Gujranwala, Kasur, Jallanhar, Multan, everywhere the story was the same. All were rocked by riots over the arrest of Gandhiji leading to police firing and death of the innocents. At Guranwala, events took a dangerous turn and an airplane was used to strafe and bomb the rioters. Chelmsford informed Montagu, "Punjab is in open rebellion".

Things were peaceful in Amritsar up to the 9th April. Agitation grew, when two local leaders, Dr. Satyapal and Dr. Kitchlew were deported even as the news of Gandhiji's arrest was filtering in. Police resorted to firing, which served to madden the people. There were several acts that brought live uncomfortable memories of 1857. There were enthusiastic displays of Hindu-Muslim unity. There were attacks on Europeans and five were even murdered. Signs were ominous for the Raj.

By the time Brigadier General Rex Dyer arrived in Amritsar on the 11th April, the city had passed out of British control and all attempts to restore order had been suspended. His contingent of 1100 troops, a third of whom were British, were greeted with derision. They marched to the Gobindgarh fort and comforted 100 terrified European women and children, who had escaped to safety from the violence of the mob. By 12th, General Dyer established a de facto Martial Law, though it was not officially proclaimed till the 15th. A series of indiscriminate arrests and a ban on public meetings followed. The roused people of Punjab were not to be cowed down so easily. In defiance of the ban, a Public meeting was organised on the fateful day – the 13th April 1919 at 4.30 p.m.

Some 15,000 people gathered, in a city of barely 150,000. Peaceful or otherwise they were as much Rebels to the Raj as they remain Patriots and freedom fighters to the people of Bharat. Dyer was straightforward military man. Not for him was the hypocrisy of his superiors. He knew the truth about the Raj. It was won at the tip of the sword and would only exist so long as the natives did not overcome their fear of the British gun. He was determined to make a horrible example of the *Rebels*. If it called for the brutality that was displayed in 1857, so be it.

He arrived at the scene of the meeting just after 5.00 p.m. with two armoured cars. In a cool unhurried manner, he deployed his men facing crowd and ordered them to open fire. This was war. No prisoners were to be taken. It was a methodical, directed fusillade with Dyer ordering volleys. A total of 1650 rounds were fired, leaving about 379 people dead and 1200 dying. The British nurses were spared the indignity of being asked to treat the rebels. For none were carried to the hospital. They were left to the tender care of the vultures. The nasty natives who survived the massacre were given liberal dose of flogging in the days to come so that they could never again dream of threatening the Raj.

Elsewhere in Punjab, repression was equally severe. Machine Guns, bombs and even airplanes were liberally used to quell an incipient revolt. The province was treated as

worse than enemy territory. In all more than a 1000 people were killed. A veil of secrecy was drawn over the Government repression in Punjab under the cover of Martial Law.

If ever any one doubted that Indian nation was at a State of War with the British nation, treatment of Punjab in 1919 was enough to provide the clinching evidence. If anyone ever again doubted the moral basis of any act of violence against the British, he was either being naïve or a hypocrite or blinded by quest for power.

The Mahatma was shaken by the turn of these events. He suspended the Satyagraha on 18th April calling it a *Himalayan miscalculation*. He refused to make any public announcement about Punjab since no authentic information was available, as he himself admitted in a letter dated 30th May to the Viceroy. This lack of information seems to have been confined to Gandhiji alone. For, the great poet Rabindra Nath Tagore relinquished his Knighthood as measure of protest on 30th May itself. By 31st July, Gandhiji came to the conclusion that on account of indications of good will on part of the Government as also his desire not to embarrass the Government, he had decided not to resume the Satyagraha. It was not until the 4th of November, more than six months later, that the word Jallianwala Bagh was uttered from his mouth. Once again with moralisation that even if all the people present in the Bagh on that fateful day were killed, revenge would not be a proper course of action.

One fails to understand the rationale of the great urgency behind launching an all India struggle of this magnitude. A struggle that was launched without even pretence of consultation with Congress or Tilak, the foremost political leader of the day, under aegis of a body that was known to have short life. Neither home rule nor self-government was its aims. The only stated objective was the repeal of the Rowlatt act. An objective that was not attained and yet the movement was tamely withdrawn. For what cause then did people all over the country struggle? Little wonder that Gandhiji noted “some irate young Punjabis...went the length of threatening me with assassination.”

One thing did happen from the turmoil. Gandhiji had arrived on the national scene, as major political leader. The blitzkrieg had succeeded.

Let us now examine what kind of “good intentions”, the Raj displayed. Hunter Commission set up by the Government concluded that Rex Dyer had committed a grave error of judgement. Due to a display of intolerance by Lord Hunter, the relations between him and the Indian members of the Commission became so strained that they ceased to talk to each other. Following this censure, he was discharged from the Military. It was Churchill, who swung the debate in House of Commons in favour of Dyer’s discharge. This was despite the fact that Churchill, “believed that Dyer had been right to shoot hard...what stuck in his craw and that of the army’s high command was Dyer’s repeated assertion that he would liked to have killed more”. The poor soldier did not know the value of hypocrisy. His boss, who allowed use of airplane strafing of unarmed civilian population, Michael O’ Dwyer was allowed to go scot-free. A grateful British public would not allow their Hero to suffer a hardship. They collected a fund of £ 26,000 for his

use. The House of Lords deplored the removal of Dyer from army as unjust and establishing a dangerous precedent.

If the anti - Rowlatt Act agitation brought Gandhiji to the political forefront, the Khilafat movement provided him the platform to emerge as the leader of the Muslims as well. Let us first try and understand, what Khilafat movement was all about.

The Afgan rulers of Delhi, especially, Mohammad Bin Tughlaq had acknowledged the Khalifa (Caliph) at Cairo. This was way back in the fourteenth century. The Ottoman emperors at Constantinople subsequently became the Khalifa but they were not recognised as such in India. The Moghul Emperors in India recognised no Khalifa or spiritual superiors outside India. Thus for well over five hundred years, the Indian Muslims had looked within India for their roots.

It was only after the collapse of the Moghul power in the nineteenth century that the name of the Turkish Sultan began to be mentioned in the Indian mosques as the Khalifa. The Muslims seemed to derive some psychological satisfaction from continuance of Turkey as an independent power. In the early years of the twentieth century, two trends appeared in the Muslim mind. The inclination of the younger element was towards nationalism, while the older lot tended to gravitate towards the seat of Khilafat in Turkey. Its entry in the World War as an ally of Germany against Britain put these elements in a quandary. Not willing to take any chance, the British Prime Minister, Lloyd George as well as President Wilson assured the Muslims that the allied forces would not deprive Turkey of its territorial integrity so far as the Asiatic dominions were concerned. With complete victory in the War, there appeared no reason for the allied forces to pay heed to the sentiments of the Muslims. They then proceeded to carve up the Turkish Empire as it suited them the most. The conservative Muslims launched a movement demanding the restoration of Turkish Sultan as the Khalifa and to restore the territorial integrity of the Turkish Empire. This movement came to be known as the Khilafat movement.

The very ethical basis of the movement was suspect. For the Turks themselves did not want the Sultan. They wanted a Republic and they were soon to have it. To insist upon the integrity of the Turkish Empire was to mean perpetual subjugation of the Arabs. Yet Gandhiji took up the cause with a tenacity and faith that surprised many Muslims themselves. Many people tried to dissuade him from taking up a cause that was not only so suspect morally but he would not yield. In his quest for power, he failed to see that he was contributing to reversing a process that was hundreds of years old. The process of Indianisation of the Muslims.

As we have seen earlier, Moghuls began their rule as aliens but then became a part and parcel of this soil. They came to recognise no one outside the land as being their Sovereign. So much so that the last Moghul – Bahadur Shah Jaffar remains brightest symbol of the true Hindu-Muslim unity over a period of nearly one thousand years. Without fear of contradiction, it can be safely said that by 1857, the Indian Muslim had become a completely indigenous element of the Bharatiya soil. They followed Islam as a religion but shared in equal measure the joys and sorrows of their Hindu brethren.

It is this fact that was brought to light by Savarkar in his epic – “The Indian War of Independence”. The book which earned him a place in Andaman and an everlasting notoriety with the Raj. So why was this wholly indigenous episode of Hindu – Muslim unity consigned to dustbin after Savarkar was jailed in 1909? Tilak understandably never needed it. His pragmatic approach had enabled him to come to an understanding with Jinnah on a secular basis and did not need to delve into the history for a solution. The case of Gandhiji is curious. He chose to ignore the history, which then was only seventy years old. Was Gandhiji unaware of Savarkar? That can hardly be the case as he had written an article on the Savarkar brothers in Young India on 26th May 1920 calling for their freedom. The article even referred to his book on 1857. So why did the Mahatma ignore its message and instead choose to travel back in time by over five hundred years and come up with the Khilafat ?

Even, Nehru fails to enlighten us. Instead he has been bitterly critical of it, “the movement itself had no solid basis in social and economic conditions or in the needs of the masses”

Khilafat movement propagated the obnoxious idea that the joys and sorrows of the Indian Muslims were not tied to their fellow Hindus, who shared the same soil with them. Their destiny was tied with the despotic Sultan of a far away land, who was not even loved by his own people. Poor Bahadur Shah Zafar was to lie forgotten in his tomb at Rangoon.

This was blessed by Gandhiji. As he said: “We talk of Hindu – Muslim unity. It would be an empty phrase if the Hindus hold aloof from the Muslims when their vital interests are at stake.” The most charitable explanation that one can offer for such a stand is that the emotional Mahatma did not understand the logical implication of what he said. The plain fact is that the pan-Islamic idea, which inspired the Khilafat question, cut at the very root of Indian nationality. If the real sympathy and vital interest of a large section of the Indians were tied with the political destiny of a land far beyond its borders, they could never form a political unit of the Indian nationality. By his irrational support to the Khilafat movement, Gandhiji was really telling the Muslims that they were in India but not of India.

It was thus the Mahatma and not Jinnah, who was the original propounder of the two-nation theory that has continued to haunt us for last eighty years.

The movement began in right earnest on 27th October 1919 when the day was celebrated as the Khilafat day all over the country. On 24th November, Gandhiji was elected as the President of All India Khilafat Conference at Delhi. Finally, the dream of the long cherished dream of Hindu – Muslim leadership was at hand. Never mind the cost that the nation was to pay for this venture. The release of Ali brothers from internment after four years on the eve of Annual session of the Indian National Congress at Amritsar in December 1919 gave a great fillip to the Khilafat agitation.

Meanwhile the British Government had pressed ahead with its scheme of Constitutional reforms. A Parliamentary act giving effect to Montagu-Chelmsford report was passed by the House of Commons on December 5, 1919, which received Royal assent on 23rd December 1919.

Amritsar session of Congress- the last that the Great Tilak, who returned from England in November 1919, would ever attend. The proceedings clearly brought out the fact that Tilak remained the most popular leader despite his year long absence from the country. C. R. Das, wanted Congress to completely reject the reforms. Gandhiji took the opposite view. He said, "The Reforms Act coupled with the Royal proclamation is an earnest of the intention of the British people to do justice to India...Our duty therefore is not subject the Reforms to carping criticism but to settle down quietly to work so as to make them a success". It was in the same city, eight months earlier, the British had given a live demonstration of their intentions when well and truly cornered – at Jallianwala Bagh and the good Mahatma was willing to trust the same hand tainted with the blood of his fellow citizens. A hand that was not yet even wiped clean. Ultimately, the line that prevailed was neither the pacifist voice of Gandhiji nor the violent rejection of Das but "Responsive Co-operation" of Tilak.

1920 was to mark a turning point in the history. As the year started, Khilafat movement was not a part of the Congress programme. This did not dim Gandhiji enthusiasm. He continued to promote its dubious cause. On 10th March 1920, the Khilafat Conference met at Calcutta and accepted the principle of Non-cooperation as the best way to further its cause. The terms offered to Turkey by the Allied Powers were announced on 15th May 1920. There was to be a complete dismemberment of Turkish Empire. Events now moved fast. On 28th May, Hunter Commission report was published stoking discontent. Gandhiji urged Muslims to initiate Non-cooperation for Khilafat. By July, the Khilafat Committee sent a notice to the Viceroy. Gandhiji returned all his War medals. Khilafat had moved him to an extent that Jallianwala Bagh had not. Non-cooperation for the cause of Khilafat began on the 1st August.

It is on this day that Bal Gangadhar Tilak; the Lokmanya breathed his last. An era had come to an end. The Statesman was no more. The national polity was now going to be held hostage to the emotional impulses. No nation has progressed by relying on the emotions alone. India had proved to be no exception.

Special session of the Congress was held in Calcutta on 4th September 1920. Gandhiji held the field now that Tilak was no more. The Mahatma, who had pleaded for giving the Reforms a real try a mere seven months before, now spoke eloquently in favour of Non-cooperation. The Congress resolution called upon the Government to redress wrongs done in Khilafat. It also spoke of Punjab atrocities and establishment of the Swaraj was added on. In case the Government failed to respond, people were called upon to practise Non-cooperation. The debate generated considerable heat. Mrs. Besant was heckled as she got up to oppose the resolution. Gandhiji graciously asked people not to interrupt the lady. The resolution was carried by 1886 votes against 884. Within a month of the death

of Lokmanya, his rational policy of “Responsive Co-operation” was given up by the Mahatma.

Ambedkar has noted that the “Swaraj was not the primary object, it was Khilafat and that Swaraj was added as secondary object to induce the Hindus to join it”. A view seconded by Mrs. Besant when she said: “It will be remembered that Mr. Gandhi, in March 1920 had forbidden the mixing up of non-cooperation in defense of Khilafat with other questions; but it was found that the Khilafat was not sufficiently attractive to Hindus..., so Punjab atrocities were added to the list of provocative causes.”

The resolution had to be ratified at Annual session to be held at Nagpur in December 1920. There was unprecedented enthusiasm at Nagpur. More than 14,000 delegates attended the session. When Calcutta Resolution was put to vote, it was apparent that the overwhelming majority was in its favour. Yet a solitary soul got up to oppose it. “Mr. Gandhi,” he began only to be hooted by the delegates, who would not allow him to address their Mahatma as a mere ‘Mr.’. This would not deter the man. He made his stand clear. He was opposed to the resolution. Now the boos became shrill and finally the insulted soul had to leave the meeting in humiliation. A bemused Mahatma made no attempt to stop this farce. The nation was to pay a heavy price for this insult. Indeed a price that we continue to pay even today. For that insulted humiliated soul was none other than Jinnah. The man who had struck a deal with the Great Tilak as a co-equal four years back; had come to be completely unwanted in Gandhi Congress for the sin of being opposed to the Mahatma’s views.

If 1915 – 1918 was the time for preparation, 1919-20 was the time to make a strike for power. Tilak’s absence during most of 1919 was very handy. Rowlatt agitation could be launched. Unrestrained by the wise counsel of Tilak, it was a disaster. Passions in Punjab were very high. The martyrdom of the Gadhara party was too recent to be forgotten. Local Congress leaders had warned in 1918 that they were sitting on a Volcano, waiting to erupt. It is on the author of the Rowlatt agitation that the responsibility of the Punjab disturbances lie. Rex Dyer did, what to him was his duty in killing people at the Jallianwala Bagh. What duty did Gandhiji fulfill when he provoked the people to defy the Raj without any preparation? What was the burning urgency in launching the agitation? No such urgency was later in evidence in either condemning the Government. It is difficult to escape the feeling that the object was to utilise the absence of Tilak.

Nothing much different can be said about the support for Khilafat movement. Everything suddenly became subordinate to the cause of the Sultan of Turkey. In this Gandhiji allied himself with the most reactionary elements of the Muslim society for a cause that was not only anti-national but also morally dubious. All for the sake of brushing aside the secular leadership of nationalist Jinnah.

If this is not Quest for Power, what else is?

It is by Machiavellian strategy, not by Satyagraha that by 1920 Gandhiji came to acquire a vice like grip over the Indian polity, one that was to last for nearly two decades.

Chapter III-4

Bahadur Shah Zafar The Bharatiya Answer to Khilafat

Bahadur Shah Zafar as an Emotional Bond

Let us for a moment concede that Gandhiji wanted to forge an emotional unity between Hindus and the Muslims. Let us grant that he was not happy with merely a political unity that had been brought about by Tilak and Jinnah in 1916. What he wanted was something far more enduring.

When Gandhiji looked around to find a symbol to forge the emotional unity between Hindus and Muslims, 1857 itself was then in living memory. The ban on Savarkar's book as well as inhuman treatment being meted out to him at Andaman were both well known. Gandhiji had also read the Kaye and Malleon's History of Indian Mutiny of 1857/8, while at South Africa. It contains the entire concluding statement of the Attorney General, parts of which I have quoted above. Curiously Gandhiji throws no light on the impact that this book left on him. Did he ever read Savarkar's account of 1857? Once again, we meet with a wall of silence in "My Experiments with Truth"

As a symbol of national and emotional unity, Bahadur Shah Zafar was unsurpassed. For he was a Bharatiya Muslim, for whom the Hindus too had fought. For in his own way, he had tried to forge national unity back in 1857 and nearly succeeded. For he was the rightful national sovereign, who was wrongly deposed. His cause was rooted in the Bharatiya soil.

Yet, Gandhiji ignored him and took up the cause of the alien Turkish Sultan. Someone whom the Moghuls had disowned more than four hundred years ago. The poison of Separatism that Khilafat represented; injected by Gandhiji in the body polity of the nation continues to give bitter fruits, eighty years later.

In the heights of Kargil and Saichen, the descendents of Bahadur Shah Zafar find themselves locked in brutal hand to hand combat tearing each other's guts out. The poor Emperor lying forgotten in his tomb in Rangoon can only weep at the senseless loss of life – of young blood in its prime soaking the soil red, in defense of a cause that belies his comprehension.

Why did Gandhiji do this? Was it because he wanted to invent a new and unique way in everything that he did and did not want to pollute his hands by taking up a cause that somebody had already taken up? Was it the fear of mortally offending the British? For, the moment, something like 1857 was mentioned, the kids' gloves came off and the Raj bared its fangs. Or was it simply because like most of his countrymen to date, he did not truly understand the Real Story of 1857?

Only the Mahatma can tell. The fact remains a truly wonderful opportunity to forge national unity was lost. Not only was an Opportunity was lost but the ship of the nation was made to sail in a direction that had no connection with historical reality. The Khilafat sowed seed of fanaticism, that has now mushroomed in a poisonous tree with ever spreading tentacles.

This is the price that we are paying for ignoring Bahadur Shah Zafar. This is the price; we are paying for ignoring the story of 1857 that was penned by Savarkar ninety years ago. This is the price, we are paying for the Gandhiji supported Khilafat movement. How long, how long shall we keep on paying this price? How long will the precious lives in the prime of their youth be cruelly cut short by hail of steel on the ridges and inclines of mountains, far away from their home?

For as long or as short a time that we decide to. Remember, we no longer have the British amidst us to prevent us from forming One vast brotherhood, with common fatherland, language, religion, caste and associations. The question is not whether we can but whether we want to?

Bahadur Shah Zafar as a Test of Legality of British Rule

Bahadur Shah Zafar was not merely tool to forge emotional unity between Hindus and Muslims. As the last reigning sovereign of Hindustan, he also determined if the British rule in India was based on Law. This was an important consideration in determination of the response to the British rule. For if it was based on Law, then Gandhiji was perfectly justified in insisting that any resistance to a lawful rule, even if undesirable, must be based on Non-violence. However, if this was not the case, then the Revolutionaries were perfectly in order in insisting that an illegal rule had to be resisted by all possible means – violent or non-violent.

At the ripe old age of twenty seven, Savarkar was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for fifty years. His crime - *“Guilty of Waging War against the Government as by Law Established.”* It is quite another matter that the revolutionary fire that he had lit was to consume the very Government which had been so anxious to put him in fetters; well before these fifty years were over. He was to die a free man in an independent Bharat. His other countless comrades-in-arms, Karve, Dhingra, Kanhere, Khudiram Bose, Bhagat Singh and countless others were not as lucky. They died a martyr’s death, so that we may enjoy the fruits of liberty.

All the revolutionaries were driven by the mission of freeing their scared home land from the illegal occupation of the British Government in India. None of them ever accepted that they had taken up arms against a Government which was established by Law. They held that the very Law which was dispatching them to a cruel fate was itself Unlawful. In the ringing words of Savarkar, “They were all prepared to face ungrudgingly the extreme penalty of the British laws, in the belief that it is through sufferings and sacrifice alone

that the beloved Motherland could march to an assured, if not a speedy triumph.” It is this belief that enabled them all to face even the hangman’s noose with a smile on their lips. The Gandhian Satyagraha was also prepared to break the British laws but only up to a limit. Gandhiji’s strange allergy to the cause of Absolute Political Independence and a fascination for Absolute Non Violence, meant that the Gandhian struggle would not jeopardize vital interests of the Raj. The Gandhian way was based on a naïve belief that the sufferings imposed by the Satyagrahis on themselves would arouse compassion in the hearts of the rulers and soften the Imperial hearts. Purification of soul that would somehow lead to Swaraj. A Mahatma, who never stopped swearing by Ram Rajya and Gita, curiously overlooked central facts of the epics.

Ravan, the ruler of Lanka had kidnapped Sita, the wife of Lord Ram. When he refused to release her, Ram had no hesitation in attacking Lanka, killing Ravan and all his followers. Once the battle was over, the large scale death and destruction caused by the battle caused great misery in Lanka. There was hardly a woman left, who had not lost a son. There was hardly a woman left, who had not lost a brother. There was hardly a woman left, who had not lost her husband. The wailing and shrieks of these unfortunate women rent the battlefield. It is only after wading through this sea of misery that Ram was able to establish the Ram Rajya.

The other epic, Gita is Lord Krishna’s message to his disciple, Arjun to take up the arms against his own kith and kin for a just and righteous cause. What was the result? Arjun won the war but not before he had killed his own Great Grand Father. Not before, he was a mute witness to the murder of his own Guru. Not before, he lost his teenaged son, Abhimanyu in a treacherous fight. When the battle was over, only a handful people on either side were left alive to savour victory or to face the agony of defeat.

For all the death and destruction inherent in these epics, there is nothing to suggest that either Ram or Krishna came to believe in the cause of Absolute Non Violence. Resort to violence, when all other means fail, against an Illegal and Evil ruler remains the Dharma of a true believer. The course of Absolute Non Violence advocated by Gandhiji simply has no foundation in the Great Hindu epics.

Illegal, Evil ruler – these are the key words. Gandhiji’s stress on Absolute Non Violence meant that he did not consider the British rule as either Illegal or Evil. If the British rule was indeed Legal and Good, the Revolutionaries would have been too happy to give up the path of violence. For, they advocated a far different course of action for redressal of grievances in a Legal and a Good society. *Savarkar, as we have seen, considered use of violence, once independence was attained as completely Immoral.* None of the freedom fighters who took to arms were blood thirsty vermins. They took up arms only because they saw no other alternative to throwing out the Illegal and Evil rule of the British. They were under no illusions about either the legality or the evil nature of the British.

Let us first see, if the British rule in India was based on Law. Legally, it all began when Shah Alam, Emperor of Bharat and the national sovereign, granted the Diwani of three Subhas, Bengal, Orissa and Bihar to the East India Company on 12th of August, 1765.

Let us read the Moghul Farman itself.

"At this happy time our royal Firamund, indispensably requiring obedience, is issued; that whereas, in consideration of the attachment and services of the high and mighty the noblest of exalted nobles, the chief of illustrious warriors, our faithful servants and sincere well wishers, worthy of our royal favours, the English Company, we have granted them the Dewanny of the Provinces of Bengal, Behar and Orissa, from the beginning of the Fussul Rubby of the Bengal year 1172, as a free gift and ultungau, without the association of any other person, and with an exemption from the payment of the customs of the Dewanny, which used to be paid to the court. It is requisite that the said Company engage to be security for the sum of twenty-six lakhs of rupees a year, for our royal revenue, which sum has been appointed from the Nabob Nudjumul-Dowla Behauder, and regularly remit the same to royal Circar; and in this case, as the said company are obliged to keep a large army for the protection of the Provinces of Bengal & we have granted to them whatsoever may remain out of the revenues of the said Provinces, after remitting the sum of Rs twenty-six lakhs of rupees to the royal Circur, and providing for the expenses of the Nizamut. It is requisite that our royal descendents, the Viziers, the bestowers of dignity, the Omrahs, high in rank, the great officers, the Muttaseddees of the Dewanny, the managers of the business of the Sultanut, the Jaghirdars and Croories, as well the future as the present, using their constant endeavours for the establishment of this royal command, leave the said office in possession of the said company, from generation to generation, for ever and ever. Looking upon them to be assured from dismissal or removal, they must, on no account whatsoever, give them any interruption, and they must regard them as excused and exempted from the payment of all the customs of the Dewanny and royal demands. Knowing our orders on the subject to be most strict and positive, let them not deviate therefrom.

Written the 24th of Sophar, of the 6th year of the Jaloos, the 12th August 1765.

Contents of the Zimmun

Agreeably to the paper which has received our sign manual, our royal commands are issued, that in consideration of the attachment and services of the high and mighty, the noblest of exalted nobles, the chief of illustrious warriors, our faithful servants and sincere well wishers, worthy of our royal favours, the English Company, we have granted them the Dewanny of the Provinces of Bengal, Behar and Orissa, from the beginning of the Fussul Rubby of the Bengal year 1172, as free gift and ultungau, without the association of any other person, with an exemption from the customs of the Dewanny, which used to be paid to the Court, on condition of their being security for the sum of twenty-six lakhs of rupees a year for our royal revenue, which sum has been appointed from the Nabob Nudjum-ul-Dowla Behauder; and after remitting the royal revenue and providing for the expenses of the Nizamut, whatsoever may remain we have granted to the said Company:

The Dewanny of the Province of Bengal
The Dewanny of the Province of Behar
The Dewanny of the Province of Orissa

It is worthwhile to read this Firman for the following points emerge :

- The East India Company had accepted the Sovereignty of the Moghul Emperor.
- The East India Company had accepted the Subordinate position of Diwan or Civil Administrator, in the Court of the Moghul Emperor.
- The East India Company had accepted the Nawab as an equal partner in administration of the provinces, as the Emperor's representative for Administration of Justice.
- It was to collect the Revenue, pay for expenses of Nizamut or Administration Justice in the Provinces, pay a sum of Rs Twenty six lakhs to the Emperor and only then keep the balance for its own use.
- In return of the above, the Emperor had granted the post of Diwani to the East India Company on a hereditary basis.

Neither Shah Alam nor his descendents ever issued another Firman to the East India Company. This important document remained the very basis of the rule of the East India Company in India till it was taken over by the British Crown in 1858. Was this a worthless scrap of paper issued by a Wanderer that merits no serious attention ? By 1772, the East India Company had stopped paying the sum of Rs 26 Lakhs with the Emperor being in no position to do anything about it. By 1786, the Emperor had been blinded by the grandson of the villain at Panipat, Najib. Yet, this is what Edmund Burke had to say about the sources of the authority of the Company on 15th February 1788. Speaking on the occasion of the impeachment of Mr. Hastings, he said in the British Parliament:

“The East India Company itself acts under two sorts of powers, derived from two sources. The first source of its power is under a charter which the Crown was authorised by act of Parliament to grant. *The next is from several grants and charters indeed as well as that great fundamental charter which it derived from the Emperor of the Moghuls, the person with whose dominions they are chiefly conversant; particularly the great charter by which they acquired the high stewardship of the kingdoms of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa in 1765. Under those two charters they act.*

As to the first, it is from that charter that they derive the capacity by which they can be considered as public body at all, or capable of any public function; it is from thence they acquire the capacity to take any other charter, to acquire any other office, or to hold any other possessions.

This being the root and origin of their power, it makes them responsible to the party from whom that power was derived.

As they have emanated from the supreme power of this Kingdom, they themselves are responsible-their body as a cooperate body, themselves as individuals-and the whole body and train of their servants are responsible, to the high justice of this Kingdom. In delegating these great powers to the East India Company, this Kingdom has not released its sovereignty. On the contrary, its responsibilities is increased by the greatness and sacredness of the powers given”

Let us apply same logic in case of both the sources of the powers of the East India Company. Mr. Burke passionately argues and rightly so, that the British Crown could not have said to released its sovereignty merely because it had given a Charter. By the same logic neither had the Emperor of Bharat released his sovereignty merely because he appointed the Company as his Diwan for three of the Twenty-one Subhas.

“As to the other power, which they have derived from the Moghul Empire by various charters from that Crown, and particularly by the charter of 1765, by which they obtained the office of lord high steward, as I said, or Diwan, of the Kingdoms of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa, by that charter they bound themselves and bound exclusively all their servants, to perform all the duties belonging to that new relation; they were bound to observe the laws, rights, usages and customs, of the natives, and to pursue their benefit in all things; which was the nature, institution, and purpose, of the office which they received”

Thus the Diwani was not a license to loot the Province in any rapacious manner that they chose but a responsibility to promote the welfare of the people. Indeed, how did the Company discharge its responsibility that had *increased by the greatness and sacredness of the powers given*. We shall later see how exactly the Company discharged its greatly increased responsibility. For the time being, let us continue to see what Mr. Burke has to say:

“If the power of the sovereign from whom they derived these powers, should be by any misfortune in human affairs annihilated or suspended, the duty...which they acquired under this charter ...remains in all its force.”

The Emperor’s misfortune in human affairs was that he had appointed a Diwan, who even as Mr. Burke spoke, had embezzled Rs 442 lakhs. This being the amount due to the Emperor since 1772, as per the very Charter that Burke was quoting. The lack of resources had substantially contributed to the travails of the unfortunate Emperor. Not content with the loot, the Company had also illegally usurped the Nizamut. Not a word, has Mr. Burke to say about this, as he went on to add:

“For when the company acquired that office in India, an English corporation became an integral part of the Moghul Empire. When Great Britain assented to that grant virtually, and afterwards took advantage of it, Great Britain made a virtual act of union with that country.”

Mr. Burke is telling the truth but it is only half the truth. It is true that ‘an English corporation became an integral part of the Moghul Empire’ but it is also true that it became a Subordinate part of the Empire. For implicit in accepting the office of Diwani was the recognition of the Overlordship of the Emperor. Therefore ‘when Great Britain assented to that grant virtually, and afterwards took advantage of it, Great Britain made a virtual act of union with that country’; Great Britain accepted the position of a junior partner in this union.

Moreover, Mr. Burke, who had so eloquently elucidated the prevalent legal basis for the rule of the East India Company, would have been staggered if he was to know that without any change in the legal framework he had described, the Moghul Emperor, the Overlord of Diwan, would himself come to be considered a British subject. Yet this was to be the fate of Bahadur Shah Zafar. This story, we shall hold for the time being.

From 1788, let us move on to 16th September 1803. The day when Shah Alam was taken into custody by the British forces. The British had by now become the Paramount power in the country. Of what use was this old, blind relic from an age gone by, to them? On the face of it, he could be of no use whatsoever. Why did they then maintain this symbol of Moghul Sovereignty for another 54 years? Why did they spend lakhs of rupees on him?

Perhaps it was compassion. That would be a little too wild to accept for even the diehard Tories. Then perhaps it was the famed British adherence to legality. They had accepted that their breach, since 1772 of the Royal Firman was wrong and henceforth they now wanted to follow the terms of the 1765 Firman scrupulously. So what if they now paid him Rs 12 lakhs per annum and not Rs 26 lakhs as agreed in 1765? It was still a generous sum of money. Perhaps.

As they say, if Wishes were horses, pigs would fly and the British imperialists would be swayed by legal and ethical considerations. The decision was based on hard-nosed assessment of the situation, keeping British interests ahead of any other consideration.

This is what Wellesley and his Council to say on the reasons for taking the Moghul Emperor under British protection on 13th July 1804:

“Notwithstanding his Majesty’s total deprivation of real power, dominion, and authority, almost every state and every class of people in India continue to acknowledge his nominal sovereignty. The current coin of every established power is stuck in the name of Shah Aulum. Princes and persons of the highest rank and family bear the titles, and display the insignia of rank which they or their ancestors derived from the throne of Delhi, under the acknowledged authority of Shah Aulum, and his Majesty is still considered to be the only legitimate fountain of similar honours.

The pride of the numerous class of Mussulmans in India is gratified by a recognition of the nominal authority of the illustrious representative of the house of Timour over the territories which once constituted the extensive and powerful empire of the Moghul, and the Mussulmans are still disposed to acknowledge the legitimacy of pretensions or demands, ostensibly proceeding from the authority of the imperial mandate.

Under these circumstances, the person and authority of his Majesty Shah Aulum might form a dangerous instrument in the hands of any state possessing sufficient power, energy and judgement, to employ it, in prosecuting views of aggrandizement and ambition.....

The preceding observations may serve to illustrate the importance of placing the person, family and nominal authority, of his Majesty Shah Aulum under the protection of the British Government, and the accomplishment of that arrangement was accordingly considered by the Governor-General to be a principal object, though not cause of the war, and an indispensable condition of peace.”

In 1765, the East India Company obtained a legal basis for its rule in India. A basis that was acknowledged in 1788 by Burke, to be on par with the Charters issued to it by the British Crown. We have now come up to 1804, when we find that the Moghul Emperor, the issuer of the Firman in 1765 continued to be acknowledged as the national sovereign by all classes of people and all princely states. The scrap of paper that Clive had obtained in 1765 continued to be of great value, for it commanded universal respect in the country.

What happened then? Did this admittedly nominal national sovereign quietly fade into the oblivion content with the crumbs thrown at him by the British? And why crumbs, Rs 12 Lakhs per year remains a mouth-watering sum in India even 200 years later. Back in 1804, this was a very big fortune indeed. All that the British had to do was to get this blind old man to sign away his sovereignty in their favour. If he proved to be too obstinate, his sons or even grandsons could be so persuaded for the proverbial Coin of Silver. With this piece of paper, the British would have been free to proclaim that their rule in India was indeed as by Law Established.

Did this happen? Had the House of Timur bartered away its sovereignty by 1857 ? For that is the only Legal way, the British could have held that Bahadur Shah Zafar was a British subject, who rose in rebellion against them in that fateful year.

Let us continue our journey. Once, the Moghul Emperor was safely in their custody, the British were soon at work, trying to chip away the last vestige of his authority. In 1815, Hastings was on a tour near Delhi. He refused to visit Emperor Akbar II, who had succeeded his father in 1806. The reason for this refusal was “His Majesty expected my acquiescence in a ceremonial which was to imply an acknowledgement that he was the liege-lord of the British possessions.” Hastings stopped the practice of the British Resident at Delhi presenting Nazar in the name of the Governor General. Soon the seal of the Governor general, no longer carried a phrase declaring him to be servant of the Emperor. In 1819, the ruler of Avadh was encouraged to change his title from *Wazir* to Padshah, an independent king. This move was disliked within the country. In 1827, Lord

Amherst met Akbar II on equal terms. The money issued by the British Government still bore the effigy of the Emperor and was “issued in the 9th regnal year of Shah Alam”. In 1835, the effigy of the Moghul Emperor was replaced by that of the British Sovereign.

The Commander in Chief paid Nazar to the Emperor as late as 1837 on accession of Bahadur Shah. The last Nazar on behalf of the Governor General was paid to the Emperor in 1843. The ceremony has been thus described:

“Mr. Thomason and myself.... proceeded to the palace on elephants.....we were required to proceed without any shoes into the immediate presence-such having been in all ages in India the usual mark of respect on the part of an inferior on approaching a superior... We made a low obeisance to the Emperor, and on approaching the throne, each in succession presented the bag of gold mohurs, and inquired after his Majesty’s health and prosperity...The King simply removed it, and ordered us to be robed in dresses of honour, and to have turbans round our heads. This was done in due form; we made our obeisance to the King and departed.”

Once the practice of presenting the Nazars was stopped, a plot was hatched to get the Emperor to voluntarily resign his title and quit Red Fort, the Emperor’s place of residence from the early days of the Moghul rule. A secret understanding to this effect was reached between the heir apparent, Fakir-ud-din and Dalhousie. This came to naught when the prince died in 1856. By then the British had decided that the Moghul Emperor was to fade into the dustbin of the history after the death of Bahadur Shah Zafar.

This frail old man had refused to barter away the national Sovereignty. In a grand heroic act that remains unsung and unappreciated, he spurned the British efforts and maintained his dignity forcing them to wait for his death. Not only did he not get lured by the British temptations; he even rescinded the 1765 Firman, the great charter that Burke had spoken of. An act that tore the legal fig leaf that cloaked the British occupation of India. It is for this one act for which Bahadur Shah Zafar should be an object of veneration, not only in Delhi but also in Rawalpindi and Dhaka, instead of lying forgotten in a tomb in Rangoon.

It is this one act that really infuriated the British. The first thing that they did on capturing Delhi was to murder the sons of the Emperor in cold blood. The Emperor himself was exiled after a sham trial. Before, we come to the trial, let us first get our facts right:

- The Royal Firman issued in 1765 provided the legal basis for the rule of the East India Company in India. The jurisdiction of the Presidency of the Fort William covered Bengal, Orissa, Bihar and the Ceded and Conquered Provinces. So much so that in 1849, when Punjab was won from the Sikhs, it simply became yet another addition to the list of Ceded and Conquered Provinces, which they could legally rule.
- The terms of this great charter from which they derived their power to rule were thrown to the winds by the British, when they stopped paying him the stipulated sum of Rs 26 lakhs in 1772.

- Shah Alam was taken in custody in 1804, only because he represented the symbol of national Sovereignty. It would have been dangerous for the British to have him on the loose.
- The British made every effort to chip away the last remains of the prestige and authority that the Moghul Emperor commanded in the country.
- For all the efforts made by the British, they could not find any Emperor to sign away his sovereignty, so they had planned to end it after the death of Bahadur Shah Zafar.

Faced with this long record of ill treatment and flagrant violation of the terms under which the office of Diwani was granted to the East India Company, Bahadur Shah Zafar was within his legal rights to terminate 1765 Firman and throw off the yoke of bondage that his Diwan had placed around him. He was the national sovereign and his proclamation on the 11th May 1857, reasserting his authority, as the Emperor of Bharat was fully and completely Legal. It is this proclamation that renders the entire British presence thereafter in the country as an Illegal and forceful occupation.

So, how did our fair-minded British friends respond to this? Did they quietly pack their bags and went home, for they no more had any legal justification to remain in the country? We all know the answer. The thought never crossed their mind. That they won the battle does not mean that what they did was either Legal or Right. ‘The Bloody Nigger’, who had the audacity to stand up for his legal rights had to be taught a damn good lesson and to hell with legality. It is this one theme that seems to run through the entire treatment of this unfortunate last Moghul Emperor. Far from obeying his legal commands, they had him arrested and put on trial.

East India Company accepts a subordinate office in the Moghul Empire. The British Parliament blesses the act. For full ninety-two long years, the British nation enjoys the fruits of the arrangement. All the while violating the terms of the very charter to which they owed their power. They keep on undermining the very office, which appointed them. Then they covet the very position of the Emperor himself. When he refuses to oblige them, as he had every right to, they disobey him and overthrow him by force. Finally, after all this they maintain their rule in India, their Government was established by Law. So by what process of Law, did they try the Emperor of Bharat, Bahadur Shah Zafar?

The Emperor of Bharat was tried by his own Diwan, the East India Company on the following four charges:

Charge 1

For that he being a pensioner of the British Government in India, did, at Delhi, at various times between the 10th of May and 1st of October 1857, encourage, aid, and abet Muhammad Bakht Khan, subadhar of the regiment of artillery, and divers others, native

commissioned officers and soldiers unknown of the East India Company's Army, in the crimes of mutiny and rebellion against the state.

In support of this charge, the Attorney General held that ever since Shah Alam accepted the protection of the British in 1804, he became a pensioner of the British Government. It is out of sympathy that the British paid a sum of Rs 12 lakhs per annum till this wretched man turned fangs upon those to whom he owed his very existence.

Fact

First of all, the dire straits that the Emperor found himself in 1804 had a lot to do with the embezzlement of the funds by the British. A sum of Rs 832 lakhs was due to him from the East India Company as per the terms of 1765 Firman, the terms of which accepted even by the British Parliament. The money was misappropriated by the Company.

Secondly, the protection given to him in 1804 had nothing to do with Sympathy and everything to do with self-interest of the British as we have already seen. The money paid to the Emperor after 1804 was only a partial fulfillment of the terms of the 1765 Firman. There was nothing to show that this was a pension.

Thirdly, the Emperor had not bartered away his Sovereignty at any time either between 1765 to 1804 or thereafter. So, it was he who represented the State and not the East India Company.

Finally, all those who were assisting him were only discharging their official and legal duty. Those like the East India Company, who were not obeying his legal orders, were the ones indulging in Mutiny and Rebellion against the State.

Charge 2

For having at Delhi, at various times between the 10th of May and 1st of October 1857, encouraged, aided and abetted Mirza Mughul, his own son, a subject of the British Government in India, and divers others unknown, inhabitants of Delhi, and of the North West provinces of India, also subjects of the said British Government, to rebel and wage war against the state.

The charge does not deserve an answer in view of facts already highlighted in response to Charge 1

Charge 3

For that he, being a subject of the British Government in India, and not regarding the duty of his allegiance did at Delhi on the 11th May 1857, or thereabouts, as a false traitor against the State, proclaim and declare himself the reigning King and Sovereign of India, and did, then and there, traitorously seize and take unlawful possession of the city of Delhi; and did moreover at various times between the 10th of May and 1st of October,

1857, as such false traitor aforesaid treasonably conspire consult and agree with Mirza Mughul, his own son, and divers, other false traitors unknown, to raise, levy and make insurrection, rebellion, and war against the State; and further to fulfill and perfect his treasonable design of overthrowing and destroying the British Government in India, did assemble armed force at Delhi and send them forth to fight and wage war against the British Government.

Before, we move on to facts, let us note that while elaborating on this third charge, the Advocate General himself admitted that:

“the British Government neither deprived him nor any member of his family of any sovereignty whatever..”

Fact

The Emperor declares himself to be the Emperor and the Diwan holds it as treason. If it were not so tragic, this comic concept of law would make one roll over with laughter. In 1765, the Company accepts the Office of Diwan recognizing the Overlordship of the Emperor. In 1804, it takes him into custody for it found that, Notwithstanding his Majesty’s total deprivation of real power, dominion, and authority, almost every state and every class of people in India continue to acknowledge his nominal sovereignty. In 1858, the Attorney General himself accepts that the British Government had not deprived him on any sovereignty whatever. Nor does he pretend to claim that the Emperor had willingly surrendered his Sovereignty. By extension, he agrees that the Sovereignty that stood in 1765 was valid in 1857 as well.

The issue of the Moghul Sovereignty came up for discussion in 1929, when some of the Indian States demanded to be treated as successors to Independent powers in their relation with the British crown. The Butler Committee opined on the 14th February 1929:

“It is not in accordance with historical fact that when the Indian states came into contact with the British Power they were independent, each possessed of full sovereignty and of a status which a modern international lawyer, would hold to be governed by rules of international law. In fact, none of the states ever held international status. Nearly all of them were subordinate or tributary to the Moghul Empire, the Mahratta supremacy or the Sikh Kingdom and dependent on them. Some were rescued, others were created, by the British.” Thus by implication, the Butler Committee also accepted the fact that Moghul Emperor was possessed of full sovereignty and of a status which a modern international lawyer, would hold to be governed by rules of international law.

So what was criminal about a Sovereign declaring himself as the Sovereign Emperor? The very charge shows the British perfidy in all its nakedness.

Indeed, the illegality and hollowness of all the three charges levied on the fallen Emperor can best be understood by what “The Kaye’s and Malleeson’s History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8” has to say on hanging of Tantia Tope. This brave man was the one

who had kept the flame of the revolution burning well-nigh after all hopes were lost. It was he who had given the British sleepless nights till 1859. He was caught by deceit and hanged on the 18th of April 1859. Malleon has this to say about his hanging:

“It may, I think be doubted whether posterity will confirm the verdict. Tantia Tope was no born servant of the British.” *Nor was Bahadur Shah Zafar.* “At the time of his birth-about 1812- his master was the independent ruler of a large portion of the Western India’ *Bahadur Shah Zafar was born around 1780, when his Grand Father, Shah Alam sat on the throne of the Moghul Emperor. Till, he became 50 years of age, the Government that was now trying him for treason had been minting money in the name of his father. He himself had accepted Nazar of the British Commander in Chief and the Governor General, on accession to the throne.* “He was under no obligation to serve faithfully and truly the race which had robbed his master. When that Master, unbound equally by any tie to the English, saw the opportunity of recovering the territories of the Peshwa, Tantia Tope, who was his musahib, his companion, obeyed his orders and followed his fortunes” *This is if anything even more true of Bahadur Shah Zafar, for he was the Master of all the Kings in India and least bound by any treaty or otherwise to the English.*

“ Posterity has condemned Napoleon for causing Hofer to be shot. There is considerable analogy between Hofer and Tania Tope. Neither was born under the rule of the nation against which he fought. In both cases the race to which each belonged was subjugated by a foreign race. In both cases the insurrection of the subdued race was produced by causes exterior to its own interests. In both cases the two men cited rose to be representatives of the nationality to which each belonged. In both-Hofer in one and Tanti Tope in the other-they resisted the dominant race in a manner, which necessitated the calling forth of extraordinary exertions. In both cases the leader was a hero to his own countrymen. The one, the European, is still a hero to the world. The other, the Maratha-well-who knows that in the nooks and corners of the valleys of the Chambel, the Narbada, the Parbati, his name is not often mentioned with respect, with enthusiasm and affection?”

What about the illegal deposition of Bahadur Shah Zafar. Malleon has not a word to say.

Charge No 4

It accused the prisoner of having, at Delhi, on the 16th of May, 1857, or thereabouts, within the precincts of the palace at Delhi, feloniously caused and became accessory to the murder of 49 persons, chiefly women and children of European and mixed European descent.

Fact

Yes. Indeed, it is possible that Bahadur Shah Zafar may have caused the death of these 49 unfortunate people. Though, he denied it. One has to understand that Delhi was a war zone. People living in the war zone run the risk of death. This is an unfortunate reality. Nor had the war started on the 11th of May 1857.

It had started in 1813, when the British Crown started encroaching on the Sovereignty of the Emperor. Soon Hastings refused to visit Akbar II. It had been followed up by instigating the Nabab of Avadh to disown his allegiance to the Emperor. Stopping of Nazar, minting the money in the name of British Crown, conspiring with the heir-apparent to surrender the three hundred year old lineage, the wait for the death of Bahadur Shah to shift the Royal family out of the Red Fort. It was a decades old story of deceit and intrigue. A slow and stealthy process to depose the Emperor had been set in motion and was gathering steam as the years went by. Every European person, male or female present in Delhi or elsewhere in India, was an accomplice in this slow poisoning. They were there at no one's invitation but their own. If they found themselves dead, when the process of retribution set in, they had no one else to blame but themselves. Yes! The death of the children was truly regrettable but it was not Bahadur Shah Zafar, who had carried them to Delhi from their homes in Europe.

The British were least concerned with the legality of their actions. It was in their vital interest to keep their hold over India intact. If in the process, they had to throw overboard all considerations of legality, morality and ethics, so be it. Such considerations would only be put on show, when at stake was an issue that did not deeply concern them. With this, the outcome of the sham trial of the last Moghul Emperor was never in doubt. He was found guilty of all and every part of the charges preferred against him. He was exiled to Rangoon, where he died a lonely unsung death.

The real tragedy came later. Not only Bahadur Shah Zafar but even his memory was exiled. So much so that in last 150 years, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar remains the only Bharatiya leader, who recalled the stirring fight that occurred in 1857. Way back in 1909, his book brought out the powerful symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity that Bahadur Shah Zafar represented. He was soon to find himself rotting in the cells of the Andaman Island prison. As we know, the ban on his book was to remain in force up to the dying moments of the Raj

Poor, Bahadur Shah, not only was he deposed in a blatantly illegal manner but even his own countrymen have chosen to ignore him. He may not have ruled the vast territories that his more well-known predecessors did; he had achieved something far more important. Something they had never been able to attain - to become a symbol of national unity.

In one of the first edicts that he issued after 11th May, he banned slaughter of Cows and had won over the Hindu hearts. The British were perplexed to find the Hindus and the Muslims rise as one to take up arms against them. As the Attorney General was to later note in the trial of Bahadur Shah Zafar:

“This possessor of mere nominal royalty has ever been looked upon by the Muhammadan fanaticism as the head and culminating star of its faith. In him have centered the hopes and aspirations of millions. They have looked up to him as the source of honour, and, more than this, he has proved the rallying point not only to the Muhammadans, but to

thousands of others with whom, *it was supposed no bonds of fanatical union could possibly be established.*”

One has only to read his order dated 6th September 1857, that was produced as an evidence against him in the course of the trial to understand the kind of national unity that he was trying to forge against the English. It read:

“You are directed to have proclaimed throughout the city by beat of drum, that this is a religious war, and is being prosecuted on account of the faith, and that it behoves all Hindus and Musalman residents of the imperial city, or of the villages out in the country, as well as those natives of Hindustan, who are arrayed against us on the ridge, or anywhere employed on the side of the armies of the English, whether they be men of the eastern provinces, or Sikhs or foreigners, or natives of the Himalaya Hills or Nipalis to continue to be true to their faith and creed, and to slay the English and their servants; and you are directed to have it further proclaimed that those who are now present with the English forces on the ridge...not to entertain any fear or dread of the enemy..Whenever they come over to this side, kind provisions will be made for them and they will continue to be allowed to remain in their own creed and religion.”

1857 was a truly national war for freedom. It was as the Attorney General noted:

“A struggle of the natives for power and place, by expulsion from the country of a people alien in religion, in blood, in colour, in habits, in feelings and in everything...I am obliged to infer that something far deeper and more sinister than the use of greased cartridges has been resorted to.

The machinery that has set in motion such an amount of mutiny and murder, that has made its vibrations felt almost at one and the same moment, from one end of India to the other, must have been prepared, if not with foreseeing wisdom, yet with awful craft and most successful and most commanding subtlety. We must recollect, too, in considering this subject, that in many places where the native troops have risen against their European officers there was no pretext even in reference to cartridge at all...”

He also noted the fact that months before the outbreak of the mutiny, the British had become alarmed by reports of circulation of Chapatis from one village to another. The British cut the Chapatis to discover the hidden secret message. Finding none and fearing that it was conveying the message of One Food, One Faith to the people of India, they had banned its circulation. The ban did not succeed in curbing the spread of excitement.

We have the story from the horses’ mouth, the Attorney General himself. The outbreak of 1857 was indeed a national war of independence, fed by feelings of One Food, One Faith. It was a war that the Hindus and the Muslims fought together under the banner of Bahadur Shah Zafar, who he commanded their willing allegiance. In 1857, he had no longer remained a Moghul Emperor but had truly become a Bharatiya Emperor. That we lost and the British won does not detract from the momentous nature of the fight.

The Attorney General in his zeal to prosecute Bahadur Shah Zafar had gone too far for the comfort of the Raj. The truth of 1857 had to be buried so deep that it could never again come to haunt the British. So they went about their task in their usual methodical manner, to give out a version that suited them. On 29th April 1958, the Chief Commissioner of Punjab Sir John Lawrence forwarded his side of the story to the Secretary to the Government of India.

In this he accepted that the Emperor himself had not been a prime mover in the murder of 49 men, women and children, nor had he been so inclined. He is faulted for not doing enough to save them. This is really strange for less than two months before, Bahadur Shah Zafar had been convicted of causing and abetting the murder. Now, the Chief Commissioner says otherwise.

Then, he went on to analyze the causes of the Outbreak for “A right understanding of this matter is of the last importance to the future stability of the empire”. He dismissed the concept of a deep conspiracy and held that the sole cause was the use of Greased Cartridge and nothing more. In his opinion, the Native Army stuck because they saw the British were weak and they themselves were strong united in ‘One vast brotherhood, with common fatherland, language, religion, caste and associations’

The answer to prevent the occurrence was simple. Bury the truth of 1857 and never again allow the Niggers to form One Vast Brotherhood. This they did with remarkable success. Today, even today our history books do not teach what the Attorney General had to say about 1857. They only teach what Sir Lawrence had to say and that too not fully but only partially. The truth of the existence in 1857 of a One vast brotherhood, with common fatherland, language, religion, caste and associations remains unknown.

Chapter III-5

The Flawed Approach of a Mahatma 1920 – 1939

The men and women, who fell under the spell of the Mahatma and their numbers, were considerable; Gandhiji inspired to great heights. For them, his charms were simply irresistible. As Nehru confessed: “For the moment I hear him speak I am smitten by a kind of a sacred rage..my heart jumps into my mouth and the tears start into my eyes-Oh, and not only me, but also lots of other men...I know I ought to do things he tells me to; and yet the moment I’m out of his sight I don’t care what I do to keep in with the mob. So I set off like a runaway slave, and keep out of his way as long as I can..” This extraordinary confession tells the whole story about Gandhiji’s influence on the people who came under his spell. The appeal was to the heart and not the head. The appeal was to Emotions and not to rationality. He was the ultimate answer to people looking for a spiritual Guru – an Avatar, who would lead them out of the morasses, if only they would do as he told them to do. Things he asked them to do were in any case simple and straight forward. His insistence on Truth, emphasis on the right means, deep rooted concern for the poorest of the poor complimented by his own personal life style that seemed to live up to his message, how could his magic not hold any one spell bound!

Much is written and known about this aspect of Gandhiji to once again dwell upon. Let us look at the other side.

What of the people who refused to be ‘smitten by kind of a sacred rage’? People like Jinnah, Savarkar, Ambedkar, were they somehow Sinners or simply fools, for they refused to follow the Prophet? The question does not merit an answer. These intellectual giants were well aware that destinies of nations could not be decided on emotional outbursts but required cool headed rational approach so that the welfare of the people could be assured. Spiritual, emotional approach of Gandhiji could therefore hold no charm for them.

The manner of Gandhiji’s rise to political leadership between 1915 to 1920 showed them clearly that the Mahatma also had hidden deep within him, the spirit of Prince Niccolo Machiavelli. The Spirit, which made him, do strange things that were not comprehensible even to those ‘smitten by a kind of a sacred rage’. This awareness made them very wary of the Mahatma. Ambedkar even wrote a signed article in Free Press Journal dated 14th April 1944 “Beware of Mr. Gandhi”

In the modern times, the unfortunate assassination of Gandhiji in 1948 by a devoted follower of Savarkar has somehow tarred all those who seek to reassess contribution of Gandhiji to the national polity with the same brush. If you dare to question his contribution, you must be a follower of Nathuram Godse, the self-confessed assassinator of Gandhiji, goes the reasoning. It is time we accept that many who refuse to be charmed by the Gandhi magic simply prefer the Statesman like approach of Tilak. They are in no way seeking to condone the crime of Nathuram Godse.

If the readers accept this premise underlying the analysis offered, they would be able to read on without worrying about a bias on my part.

The Legend of the Mahatma rests on three pillars. His contribution to the cause of Upliftment of the Untouchables. His contribution to Communal Harmony. His contribution to the cause of Independence.

We now know that for all the contribution of the Mahatma, the end result was a spectacular failure. Neither are the former Untouchables willing to accept him as their Saviour nor was India an ocean of communal peace in 1948. The Memo of Lord Keynes explodes the reassuring theory of Independence being the result of a British change of heart on account of Gandhiji's Satyagraha.

It could well be a case of a glorious failure for reasons beyond his control. Once again, a critical examination shows that the failure was inherent in the very approach of the Mahatma. Conclusion that one can not reach without the deepest of regret.

I took each of these pillars of the Gandhi legend for detailed examination. On an unbiased study of the history of 1920-1939, three questions arose in my mind. Let me share them with the readers but beware, these questions are not for the faint hearted.

Question No 1

Did the Mahatma's Approach Improve Communal Harmony?

Question 2

Did the Mahatma Ever Really Intend to Drive the British out of the Country ?

Question No 3

Did the Mahatma Really Work for the Welfare of the Untouchables?

I am well aware that the answer to all these questions would be a most unqualified 'Yes', in any conventional narration of history that is taught in the schools. Does this historical version pass the test of Facts?

Let us put it to a rigorous analysis of hard Facts and see the results.

Chapter III-6

Did the Mahatma's Approach Improve Communal Harmony?

On 26th March 1940, Hindu India was startled to attention as never before. It is on this day that the Muslim League formally demanded Pakistan by passing its now famous Lahore resolution. The moving force for this was none other than the once nationalist Jinnah. It is convenient to paint Jinnah as the villain of the piece from the Indian point of view. The devious Muslim, who spurned all the pious appeals of the Mahatma and demanded a new nation to satisfy his own craving for power.

It is indeed a reality that if there is one thing that Gandhiji never tired of promoting, it was the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity. From 1919, the tumultuous days of Rowlatt agitation to the resignation of Congress ministries in 1939, the entire two decade period is full of his efforts in this direction. Yet, he was rewarded by this Muslim perfidy. For all that he did for them, they ditched him. That too by a man who had once been an equally ardent promoter of the same cause of Hindu-Muslim unity. Generations of Indians have grown up nurturing this sense of betrayal.

The facts, are a little more complex than this simplistic reasoning would have us believe.

Let us first understand that the Lahore Resolution of the Muslim League was simply carrying Gandhiji's own argument to its logical conclusion. In 1920, the Mahatma had Jinnah humiliated, when he had tried to oppose supporting Khilafat movement. By insisting on supporting this dangerous movement, Gandhiji provided the cloak of legitimacy to the divisive concept that a Muslim had to look outside the soil of the nation. It would be understandable that a Muslim would look to Mecca and Medina for spiritual salvation. Khilafat was not about spiritual salvation. It was about political aspirations. The political fate of the Sultan of Turkey. By supporting the political cause of this alien ruler, Gandhiji was proclaiming that it was right and proper for Indian Muslims to treat the question of the destiny of this Sultan with the same importance as the Hindus attached to the concept of Swaraj. The difference in the political outlook was accepted and legitimized. Now, through the Pakistan resolution, Jinnah was merely demanding a separate political home for a group of people who differed in their political outlook. If Gandhiji could use the Khilafat as the vehicle to attain political power, why was Jinnah wrong in following his example?

It is time we realize that Jinnah was as wrong in demanding Pakistan as Gandhiji in supporting the Khilafat movement. The fact remains, it was Gandhiji who committed the original sin. Nor did Jinnah walk out of Nagpur Congress and immediately demand Pakistan. He waited for a good twenty years. A good part of these twenty years, he remained resolutely secular. It appears that it is only when his patience with Gandhiji and the Hindu society that had reposed such a blind faith in this Mahatma, ran thin that he crossed the Rubicon. One more thing, let us not hurry to conclusion that by demanding Pakistan, Jinnah merely wanted to repay Gandhiji in the same coin. Let us look at the ground realities first.

Communal (Dis)Harmony in 1920-1939
The Facts

The history of communal relations between 1920 – 1939 is one long tale of communal conflict in which the loss of life and property reached levels that would put any civilization in any part of the world to shame. Indeed a veritable civil war raged, interrupted by brief intervals of armed peace.

If the term Civil War sound exaggerated, look at what happened in the city of Bombay. The first riot in its history took place in 1893. This was followed by a long period of communal peace, which lasted up to 1929. In the next nine years that followed, there were no less than 10 communal riots of horrific dimensions.

Communal Riots in Bombay
1929-1938

Year	Duration	Dead	Injured
1929	36 days	149	739
1929	22 days	35	109
1930	Two riots, details not available		
1932	49 days	217	2,713
1933	One riot, details not available		
1936	65 days	94	632
1937	21 days	11	85
1938	3 hours	12	100

Thus in this nine year period, the Hindus and Muslims were engaged in a Warfare for about 210 days killing 550 people and wounding another 4,500. Nor was this situation unique in India. Let us start with 1920 itself.

What happened on the ground with the onset of Khilafat movement? Let the noted Jurist Chagla speak in his restrained judicial voice: “The alliance between Mahatma Gandhi and the Khilafatists considerably accentuated the communal and religious aspects of Indian public life.” The deadly impact of the spread of virus of communalism was soon visible for everyone to see.

1921/22

The Moplah Outrage

The Moplahs were a band of fanatic Muslims, poor and ignorant, about a million in number. They descended from the Arabs who settled in the Malbar coast, about eighth or ninth century. They lived in Malabar with about 2 million Hindus and had acquired notoriety for their religious frenzy.

During 1921, there was a great deal of excitement in the area. Fiery speeches of Ali brothers, the prophecies of the coming of Swaraj led to collection of arms. Knives, swords and spears were secretly manufactured. Preparations were made to proclaim the Kingdom of Islam. On 20th August, an encounter took place between the Moplahs and the British forces at Pirunangdi. Roads were blocked, telegraph lines cut and the railways destroyed in a number of places. Moplahs now declared that Swaraj was established. A certain Ali Mudaliar was proclaimed Raja, Khilafat flags were flown and Ernad and Wallurana were declared Khilafat kingdoms. As a rebellion against the British, it was understandable but what was cause for serious concern was the manner in which the Hindus came to be treated.

Massacres, forcible conversions, desecration of temples, foul outrages upon women, not only rape but also such heinous crimes as ripping open pregnant women, pillage, arson, rape and destruction- in short, all the accompaniments of brutal and unrestrained barbarism, were freely perpetrated upon the Hindus till the Government succeeded in restoring order. If this were a taste of Swaraj that Gandhi supported Khilafat movement, not only the Malabar Hindus, any sane person would have none of it.

By the end of 1921, the Moplahs were defeated after 3,000 were killed in pitched battles. The wave of revulsion against the Moplahs came to be seen in an incident on 19th November 1921, when seventy Moplah prisoners were packed in a closed coach, killing all of them.

Gandhiji spoke of 'brave God fearing Moplahs' who were fighting for what they consider as religion, and in a manner, which they consider religious. Khilafat leaders passed resolutions of congratulations to the Moplahs on the brave fight they were conducting for the sake of religion. There was of course no question of suspending the ongoing Disobedience movement. That decision was waiting for the Chauri Chaura incident.

1922/23

Punjab and Bengal witnessed serious riots during the Muharram. Communal situation became very tense in Multan.

1923/24

This was a tense but fortunately a peaceful year.

1924/25

Terrible riots broke out in Kohat on the 9th and 10th September leading to 155 killed and wounded. Riots became fairly widespread. Delhi, Nagpur, Lahore, Mordabad, Bhagalpur, Gulbarga, Lucknow, Shahjahanpur, Kankinarah and Allahabad witnessed Hindu-Muslim clashes.

1925/26

The year marked two rounds of savage riots in the metropolis of Calcutta. The two communities freely indulged in desecrating places of worship of the other community leading to unprecedented bitterness. Several properties were set to torch. 110 cases of fire were reported. By the time riots were controlled, 44 lives were lost and 584 lay injured. A second round of bloodletting soon followed leaving 66 dead and 391 injured. Suspicion was strong that several hooligans were hired hands and money was being freely used to keep the riots going.

United Province, Central Province and Bombay Presidency were all scenes of riots affecting in some cases small villages as well.

1926/27

As many as 40 cases of riots were registered with death toll rising to 197 and the injured being 1,598. Bengal, Punjab and united Province were the most affected areas.

Communal tensions were so high in Delhi that on 24th June, a pony bolted in a crowded market. Hot heads on both the sides assumed that a riot had started. Soon both the sides set upon each other with brickbats and staves.

1927/28

The warfare now spread to scurrilous attacks on the holy figures. *Sitaka Chinala* was written by a Muslim alleging Sita, the wife of Lord Ram was a prostitute. In reply, Hindus wrote two articles *Rangila Rasul* and *Risala Vartman* containing most vile attacks on Prophet Muhammad. No wonder, feelings remained inflamed. From April to September 25 incidents of riots were reported. The toll being 103 killed and 1,084 wounded.

After Delhi, it was the turn of Lahore this year. With tempers on edge, a chance collision between a Muslim and two Sikhs set off a murderous riot in Lahore in May leaving 27 killed and 272 injured.

The second half of the year was quieter with only four riots taking place.

A new feature of the communal disturbances was the exodus of 450 Hindu families from Peshawar, where they had lived for generations. About 330 were to return and the rest migrating forever.

1928/29

In terms of numbers, the riots declined to 22 but number of people killed rose to 204 with another 1,000 wounded. Disturbing feature was Bombay, which had remained free from the communal contagion so far became trapped in the religious frenzy. This was to haunt the city for a long time, as we have already seen.

1929/30

Passions were at a lower pitch and only 12 riots were reported. Of these, only that in Bombay was really serious. Rajpal, who had written *Rangila Rasool*, was murdered in Lahore. Fortunately wiser counsel prevailed and the city was spared a round of savagery.

1930/31

The launch of civil disobedience gave rise to riots and disturbances all over the country. The political struggle soon took communal twist at a number of places. Muslims had by far and large kept away. The Congress methodology of forcing people to close the shops and paralyse the trade came to exasperate the Muslims. The relations became extremely strained between the communities. Hindus feeling that the Muslims were not joining them in the Freedom struggle. Muslims on the other hand had serious reservations on the manner of the struggle and always apprehensive that any small pretext may be used to call off the fight. Trouble spots were spread all over the country.

Bengal

Kishoreganj subdivision of Mymensingh district on 12th July 1930. Nilphamar on 25th January 1931. Dhanbad in March 1931. All witnessed rioting

United Province

1930 was relatively peaceful except in Ballia. The tempers rose in the first three months of 1931. Rioting was widespread in Agra, Mathura, Azamgarh, Mainpuri, Dehra Dun, Bulandshahr, and Benras. The worst case of rioting occurred in Kanpur, three weeks after the signing of the Gandhi Irwin pact. For three days, the city witnessed murder and mayhem leaving more than 300 dead.

Madras

Rioting was no longer confined to Hindus and Muslims. Now the fight spread to the Christians as well. A Hindu-Christian riot was reported from Tiruchendur (Madras) on 31st October. Vellore had already seen serious disturbances in June. Salem and Kurnool became embroiled in the communal frenzy.

Bombay

In the first week of September, Bombay and Nagpur were engulfed in riots.

Punjab and Sind

On 4th August very serious outbreak of violence was reported from about 100 villages of Sakkur in Sind. Fighting was reported from Rawalpindi on 31st January 1931. In February, Amritsar went up in smoke to keep on smoldering till March.

1931-32 / 1932-33

After a long time, the communal situation remained peaceful.

1933-34

It was soon realized that the two-year peaceful interlude was only a *Comma* and not a *Full Stop* in the communal madness. Religious festivals no longer remained occasions of joy and celebration. A petty cause in any festival was enough to bring out in full the medieval savagery that seemed to be lurking just beneath the surface. Benaras, Kanpur in United Province, Lahore (Punjab), Peshawar were rocked by communal fights during the Hindu festivals of Holi. Ayodhya (United Province) Bhagalpur (Bihar), Cannore(Madras) witnessed riots during the Muslim festival of Bakri Id. Agra had a long drawn out communal riot.

1934-35

Serious trouble broke out in Lahore as a result of dispute between Muslims and Sikhs about a mosque situated within the precincts of a Sikh temple known as Shaidganj Gurudwara. Police firing left 12 people dead. The incident continued to cause anxiety throughout the year. On 19th march, Abdul Quayum, the murderer of Nathuramal, writer of the scurrilous pamphlet about the Prophet was executed. Riots broke out as his dead body was being taken out in a procession, leaving 47 people killed and 134 injured.

1935/36

Four riots took place. Firozabad (Agra), Poona, Monghyr district and Bombay had communal disturbances, leaving several dead. In a gruesome incident, 11 Hindus including 3 children were roasted alive. Savagery seemed to recognise no borders of reason.

1936/37

Many incidents of communal enmity were reported. The worst was the one on 27th march at Panipat leaving 14 people dead.

1937/38

Rioting continued unabated in Central Province and Punjab. Sikkarpur in Sind and Amritsar were also affected.

1938/39

Some eight cases of serious rioting were reported. Allahabad, Bombay, Asansol, Kanpur, Benaras and Calcutta and Sukkar in Sind were the affected places.

Riots, Communal disturbances, police firing, murders, deaths, injured after a time these words lose their meaning. A deathly chill creeps on the senses. The Warfare was sadly not limited to these horrors. In a male dominated Indian society, the women have always been treated as commodities. The raging war could then not leave them untouched. Dr. Ambedkar estimated that in Bengal alone some 35,000 women were abducted in a short period between 1922-27. The majority of them being Hindus. The less said about their fate the better. Who was more savage ? The Hindus or the Muslims. Dr. Ambedkar feels that the Muslims were the more aggressive people. This is not say that the Hindus lagged far behind.

We are talking about a time when a Mahatma was at work for twenty long years and this was the result. These heart rending facts bely denial. This was a time we like to imagine was much better than the present, when all kinds of nasty politicians are ruling us. Glibly, we yearn for the return of the Mahatma. If only, we had a Gandhi in our midst today, our lives would be so much better. Perhaps but the facts and the cold facts first. In the period 1920-39, a state of communal anarchy prevailed in the country, when the Gandhi era was in full flow. The full horror of this reality needs to be squarely faced.

As Hindustan, a Congress paper itself said in utter despair:

“There is an immense distance between the India of to-day and India a nation, between an uncouth reality which expresses itself in murder and arson and that fond fiction which is in the imagination of patriotic if self-deceiving men. To talk about Hindu-Muslim unity from a thousand platforms or to give it blazoning headlines is to perpetuate an illusion whose cloudy structure dissolves itself at the exchange of brickbats and desecration of tombs and temples. To sing a few pious hymns of peace and goodwill....will not benefit the country. The President of the Congress has been improvising on the theme of Hindu-Muslim unity...The millions in India can only respond when the unity song is not only on the tongues of the leaders but in the hearts of the millions of their countrymen.”

By end of 1939, it was clear that the Gandhi approach had miserably failed to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity. The failure was neither accidental nor foreordained. It was inherent in the very approach itself. All sections of the society harboured suspicion that Government was never serious about putting down the riots as quickly as possible. A tell-tale evidence being that that almost all riots were only in British India. The Indian states were islands of peace. Yet, he rejected the option of driving the British out – Independence, time and again.

In 1920, Gandhiji had supported the Khilafat movement, in what was an unprincipled naked power game to capture the Congress. He had sowed the whirlwind. The nation was reaping the bitter harvest.

The Communal Frenzy of 1920-39
What Went Wrong??

Hindu-Muslim unity. Very nice words but what do they really mean. No community is a monolith. There are the Good, the Not So Good and the Undesirable elements. Unity with the Good is essential in a multi-religious society like India. Unity with the Not So good is desirable from a practical point of view. To seek Unity with the Undesirable is to court disaster. Mahatma's life long quest for the so-called Hindu-Muslim unity was a desperate cry for Unity with the Undesirables and therefore led to a national disaster. If it sounds unpalatable, let us look at some of the facts.

Fact 1

It was Jinnah, who represented the Good elements of the Muslim society in 1920 and for a long time thereafter.

By Lucknow pact Lokmanya Tilak had already forged Hindu-Muslim unity, particularly with the Good and also to a certain extent Not So Good sections of the Muslim society. This was unpalatable to Gandhiji, as these elements did not care much for his leadership.

Driven with quest for power, the Mahatma chose to forge an alliance with the Undesirable section of the Muslim society longing for a return of the Caliph. It is impossible to understand his desperation for Hindu-Muslim unity in 1919 when the Lucknow pact was very much alive. There was no pressing need for Hindu-Muslim unity for it already existed by the efforts of Tilak and Jinnah. If this sounds harsh, look at what followed the Nagpur session of the Congress in 1920.

The Khilafat Conference became so powerful an organisation that the Muslim league went under and lived in a suspended animation till 1924. During these years no Muslim leader could speak to the Muslim masses from a Muslim platform unless he was a member of the Khilafat Conference. That was the only platform for the Muslims to meet the Muslims. Even then Mr. Jinnah refused to join the Khilafat Conference as he was opposed to the Indian Muslims engaging themselves in extra-territorial affairs relating to Muslims outside India. Jinnah left Congress but remained resolutely nationalist. On 30th December 1924 in the Muslim League session he explained that: "The object was to organise the Muslim community, not with a view to quarrel with the Hindu community, but with a view to unite and cooperate with it for their motherland. He was sure once they had organised themselves they would join hands with the Hindu Maha Sabha and declare to the world *that Hindus and Mahomedans are brothers.*"

He became a bitter critic of the Congress but his criticism was strictly secular. He never accused it of being a Communal Hindu body. He protested when such a statement was attributed to him by his opponents. His letter published in the Times of India dated 3rd October 1925 makes this abundantly clear.

“I wish again to correct the statement which is attributed to me and to which you have given currency more than once and now again repeated by your correspondent ‘Banker’ in the second column of your issue of the 1st October that I denounced the Congress as ‘a Hindu Organisation’. I publicly corrected this misleading report of my speech in your columns soon after it appeared; but it failed to find a place in the columns of your paper and so may I now request you to publish this and oblige.”

In 1928, Mr. Jinnah joined the Congress in the boycott of the Simon Commission. He did so even though the Hindus and the Muslims had failed to come to a settlement and he did so at the cost of splitting the League into two. Even when the ship of the Round Table Conference was about to break on the communal rock, Mr. Jinnah resented being named as communalist who was responsible for the result and said that he preferred an agreed solution of the communal problem to the arbitration of the British Government. As he said on the 8th August 1931: “I am for a settlement and peace between the Hindus and the Mahommedans. This is not a time for argument, not a time for propaganda work and not a time for embittering feelings between the two communities, because the enemy is at the door of both of us and I say without hesitation that if the Hindu-Muslim question is not settled, I have no doubt that the British will arbitrate and that he who arbitrates will keep to himself the substance of power and authority.”

In December 1931, he left for England following the tragic death of his young wife. He was to return to India only in 1934 and revive the Muslim League. Chagla pleaded with him to set up a party equidistant from the Congress and the Hindu Maha Sabha as Jinnah had a considerable non-Muslim following in Bombay. Jinnah replied that he (Chagla) was an idealist while he on his part must work with such material as he had.

Congress was not alone in criticizing the Government of India Act of 1935. Muslim League did so with a caveat that “having regard to the conditions prevailing in the country the provincial scheme of the Government be utilised for what it is worth”. This was the, by now long forgotten Tilak line that Jinnah advocated. Congress on the other hand chose to first reject the Act totally and then proceeded to participate in the Elections and make it work, contradicting its own stand.

The 1936/37 elections were contested by the Muslim League on a secular platform. The League could hardly said to have been successful in the conventional sense of the word. However, it was clear that even at this low point, the League commanded far more Muslim support than the Congress. Take the case of the United Province. Of the 228 seats in the Provincial assembly, 64 were reserved for the Muslims. Of these 64, 26 were won by the League, 28 by Independent Muslims, 9 by the National Agricultural Party and *only one by a Congress Muslim*. There seems to have been a tacit understanding before the elections that two places in the Joint Ministry would be allotted to the Muslims. Congress however now agreed to induct the League in the Ministry **only if the League decided to merge into the Congress**.

This betrayal of the Congress came to haunt the nation in the years to come.

Political power is the most precious thing in the life of a community. It is one means of sustaining its position. Yet, the Congress, knowing fully well that it was not representing the Muslims in the United Province chose to put forward terms to the Muslim League which leave one staggering at their arrogant tone. Would today, the Congress dare ask the regional parties to merge into it, if they wanted to share the power?

Even as late as in December 1938, the Muslim League had not lost the will to live together in a united India. Its resolution no. 10 passed at Patna said: "The President of the All India Muslim League to adopt such course....which will safeguard the interests of the Musalmans and other minorities in India."

Thus for long after 1920, Jinnah represented that element of the Muslim society with which an understanding was eminently desirable, nay one may even say essential for national welfare. It this element with which Gandhiji had no truck. For they were his political foes. He pursued his chimera of Unity with the most Undesirable elements of the Muslim society, for they were prepared to accept his leadership.

So long as Jinnah was a nationalist, Gandhiji chose to belittle him. When, he turned communalist, Gandhiji ran after him, now ignoring other nationalist Muslims. As Chagla complains: "One Grievance about which I feel deeply arose from the indifference shown by the Congress and even Mahatma Gandhi to the Muslim nationalists, Jinnah and his communalist following seemed all important." What a thing to do.

Fact 2

It was the Khilafat Leadership that represented the Undesirable element of the Muslim society in 1920 and ever thereafter

Let us first understand the definition of *Communalism*. It is defined in the dictionary as "strong allegiance to one's own ethnic group rather than to the society as whole." The Khilafatists were certainly the most rabid communal elements of the Muslim society. For, not only were they holding strong allegiance to their own religious group but were prepared to sacrifice the interests of their fellow citizens at the altar of their religious belief. These were the fellow travelers that Gandhiji chose in his quest for power.

What was the framework they were using to look at the events in national life? It was entirely religious in a manner that did not take into account the interests of the their fellow citizens, who did not share their religion.

The Muslim Cannon law divided the world in two parts, *Dar-ul-Islam* (abode of Islam) and *Dar-ul-Harb* (abode of war). Once the British overthrew the Moghul rule, the Muslim community was divided into two camps. One professing that India was *now Dar-ul-Harb* and therefore it was the holy duty of the Muslims to escape from this by *Hirjat* (emigration) or by engaging in *Jihad* (the holy war to establish Dar-ul-Islam).

It took all ingenuity of Sir Sayyed Ahmed, the founder of the Aligarh movement, to persuade the Indian Muslims not to regard India under the British as *Dar-ul-Harb* merely because it was not under Muslim rule. He urged the Muslims to regard it as *Dar-ul-Islam* because the Muslims were perfectly free to exercise all essential rites and ceremonies of their religion. If the Muslims and Hindus were to live together in peace and harmony, it could only be by following the lead of Sir Sayyed Ahmed.

The dangerous doctrine that India was *Dar-ul-Harb* had to be nipped in the bud, the moment it raised its ugly head. Indeed, not all the Muslims had been persuaded by Sir Sayyed Ahmed. And it had not been given up. It began to be preached by the Muslims supporting the cause of *Khilafat* in 1920-21. Gandhiji did an enormous disservice to the nation by supporting the cause of the *Khilafat* and also the doctrine of India being *Dar-ul-Harb*.

This distinction was not any exotic philosophical debate as the Hindus in Malabar soon found out. The Moplahs drove the British out established what they called *Dar-ul-Islam* and subjected the Hindus to untold atrocities. Both the *Khilafat* Committee and Gandhiji took on cudgels on behalf of the Moplahs, conveniently ignoring the plight of the Hindus.

Nor were the Moplahs alone in advocating the cause of *Dar-ul-Harb*. As inhabitants of an enemy territory, the Muslims were enjoined by their religion to call in their fellow Muslims to establish *Dar-ul-Islam* in their native land. Accordingly, some in the *Khilafat* Committee proceeded to negotiate with the Amir of Afghanistan to invade India. How far the negotiations went is not known but that such a project was entertained is beyond doubt. Dr. Ambedkar is categorical in his views: "It needs no saying that the project of an invasion of India was the most dangerous project and every sane Indian would dissociate himself from so mad a project. What part Mr. Gandhi played is not possible to discover. Certainly he did not dissociate himself from it. On the contrary his misguided zeal for *Swaraj* and his obsession on Hindu-Muslim unity as the only means of achieving it, led him to support the project. Not only did he advise the Amir not to enter into any treaty with the British Government but declared:

‘ I would, in a sense certainly assist the Amir of Afghanistan if he waged war against the British Government. This is to say, I would openly tell my countrymen that it would be a crime to help a Government which had lost the confidence of the nation to remain in power.’

Can any sane man go so far, for the sake of Hindu-Muslim unity? But, Mr. Gandhi was so attached to Hindu-Muslim unity that he did not stop to enquire what he was really doing in this mad endeavor.”

For all the *mad* support that the Mahatma was willing to extend to the *Khilafatists*, what were their views on him? In 1923, Mr. Mahomed Ali presided over the session of the Indian National Congress. He had this to say about Gandhiji:

“Many have compared the Mahatma’s teachings and lately his personal sufferings to those of Jesus....Be that it may, it was just as peculiar to Mahatma Gandhi also; but it was reserved for a Christian Government to treat as felon the most Christ like man of our time and to penalize as disturber of the public peace the one man engaged in public affairs who comes nearest to the Prince of Peace...the prescriptions that he offered to those in search of a remedy for the ills of India was the same that Jesus had dispensed before in Judea...have seen what a remarkable and rapid change he wrought in the thoughts, feelings and actions of such a large mass of mankind.”

A year later, the same Mr. Mohamed Ali speaking at Aligarh said:

“However pure Mr. Gandhi’s character may be, he must appear to me from the point of view of religion inferior to any Musalman, even though he may be without character.”

This created stir and at Lucknow, Mr. Mohamed Ali was asked if the sentiments attributed to him were true. Without hesitation or compunction, he replied:

“Yes, according to my religion and creed, I do hold an adulterous and a fallen Musalman to be better than Mr. Gandhi”

In a manifesto on Hindu-Muslim relations issued in 1928, Khwaja Hasan Nizami declared:

“The Musalmans are separate from Hindus; they cannot unite with the Hindus. After bloody wars, the Musalmans conquered India and the British took India from them. The Musalmans are one united nation and they alone will be the masters of India... They have ruled India for hundreds of years, and hence have a prescriptive right over the country...What capacity have they for ruling over men? The Musalman did rule, and the Musalman will rule.”

It is with such people that Gandhiji was trying to forge Unity at the expense of people like Jinnah !!!

Fact 3

Gandhian creed called for appeasement of the worst elements amongst the Khilafatists

The blood cuddling atrocities committed by the Moplahs in Malabar against the Hindus were indescribable. All over Southern India, a wave of horrified feeling had spread among the Hindus of every shade of opinion, which was intensified when certain Khilafat leaders were so misguided as to pass resolutions of ‘congratulations to the Moplahs on the brave fight they were conducting for the sake of their religion’. With Gandhiji describing the Moplahs as ‘brave god fearing’, even the Moderate Muslims went to extremes. A nationalist Muslim like Maulana Hasart Mohani opposed in the Subjects Committee of the Congress, condemning the Moplahs for killing Hindus, burning their

homes and for their forcible conversion to Islam. He did not even bother to deny the reality of the incidents. According to him, Malabar was Dar-ul-Harab. In this land of war, the Moplahs suspected the Hindus of collaborating with the British and therefore the Moplahs were right in presenting alternative of the Quran or the Sword to Hindus.

Anybody could see that this was too high a price to pay for Hindu-Muslim unity. A Gandhi led Congress, which invented the fiction that there were only three cases of forcible conversion in Malabar, by a gang opposed to Khilafat; paid this price.

This was not all. Many prominent Hindus were murdered by Muslim fanatics, for they had offended the Muslim susceptibilities. Swami Shradhanand was murdered by Abdul Rashid on 23rd December 1926. Rajpal, the author of Rangila Rasool on 6th April 1929. Nathulal Sharma was murdered by Abdul Qayum in September 1934. The list is long. As Dr. Ambedkar rightly points out:

“But whether the number of prominent Hindus killed by fanatic Muslims is large or small matters little. **What matters is the attitude of those who count towards these murders.** The murderers paid the penalty of law where law is enforced. The leading Moslems never condemned these criminals. On the contrary, they were hailed as religious martyrs and agitation carried on for clemency being shown on them... This attitude of the Moslems is quite understandable. What is not understandable is the attitude of Mr. Gandhi.

Mr. Gandhi has been very punctilious in the manner of condemning any and every act of violence and has forced the Congress much against its will to condemn it. But Mr. Gandhi has never protested against such murders. Not only have the Musalmans not condemned these outrages but **even Mr. Gandhi has never called upon the leading Muslims to condemn them. He has kept silent on them.**”

This spineless silence was only to embolden the Muslim fanaticism and aggression. Once again let us go back to Dr. Ambedkar:

“The second thing noticeable about the Muslims is the spirit among the Muslims is the spirit of exploiting the weakness of Hindus. If the Muslims object to anything, the Muslim policy seems to be to insist upon it and give it up only when the Hindus show themselves ready to offer a price for it by giving the Muslims some other concessions”

Muslims in India demanded the right to slaughter Cow on Id, notwithstanding the fact the Cow slaughter is not an integral part of Islam. They demanded that no music be played in front of the Mosques, a ban that other Muslim countries were unaware of.

Most regrettably, this Gandhi weakness was the cause of ever shifting Muslim demands of the Muslims in the Political field. The Lucknow pact of 1916 was full and final settlement of all the just demands of the Muslims. On one hand Gandhiji's Flip Flop show over critical issues like Independence failed to inspire confidence about his resolve in the minds of all those who were not his followers.

Moreover, his willingness to please the Muslims at any cost enabled shrewd negotiators like Jinnah to keep on enlarging their demands in the hope of getting a better and better deal for their community.

The Lucknow pact was based on one fundamental premise that a community is entitled to protection only where it is in minority. The Muslim community in Bengal and Punjab was not a minority and therefore was not entitled to the same protection it got in other provinces, where it was in a minority. In Punjab and Bengal, they could get separate electorate only by agreeing to a minority of seats.

It is only when this basic premise was thrown overboard by the Gandhi Congress that Muslim League could keep on shifting the goal post further and further all the time all in the name of that illusive Hindu-Muslim unity. It ended only when Pakistan was demanded, in other word protection in provinces, where the Muslims needed no protection in the first place.

Things had become progressively so bad that at one point, Dr. Ambedkar was forced to observe that the Undesirable Muslims even adopted what he called: “gangster methods in Politics. The riots are a sufficient indication that gangsterism has become a settled part of their strategy in Politics”

*We can now answer the first Question. **The Mahatma’s approach lead only to Communal Disharmony and nothing else.** He focussed on ignoring the Good and encouraging the Undesirable elements of the Muslim society. He did not think twice before making worst compromises with the worst of the Communalists. Thus his approach **could lead only to Communal Disharmony.***

Let us now move on to the second question.

Chapter III-7

Did the Mahatma Ever Really Intend to Drive the British Out of the Country ?

One of the articles of faith of the Indian psyche is that Independence would not have been possible had Gandhiji not come back to India. So deeply is this ingrained that there is a violent emotional reaction, the moment someone says Gandhiji is NOT the Father of the Nation. I propose to go further and even state that it is possible that Independence would have been attained earlier, had Gandhiji not abandoned the Tilak strategy of “Responsive Co-operation” that was accepted by the Congress at Amritsar in 1919

Let us recap the chain of events from 1905. The Revolutionaries, Savarkar being one of the more prominent ones, were demanding Absolute Political Independence starting from 1905 itself. Neither the hard prison life nor the gallows deterred them. In this time of revolutionary ferment, Congress dreaded the word Independence. Gandhiji at this time, considered that the British connection was beneficial to India and would no doubt have considered the fight for Independence as an immoral activity that a Mahatma could not support. The British locked up the Sinners fighting for Independence; the Congress threw out their patron Tilak from its ranks. Soon thereafter, he was packed off to Burma. Yet the Raj magic was not broken for Gandhiji. On his return, Tilak mounted a campaign to capture the Congress and further the cause of Swaraj – Home Rule. As was his wont, Tilak refrained from openly demanding Absolute Political Independence but the British were under no illusions about what the Indians led by the Lokmanaya really wanted. Chimanlal Setalvad, a member of the Hunter Commission has recounted: “During one of the discussions I had with Lord Hunter, he lost his temper and said: You people want to drive the British out of the country”. Thus by 1919, even the moderates were suspected by the British to desire Absolute Political Independence.

By 1920, Congress came around to accept Swaraj as its goal. Gandhiji defined Swaraj to mean self-government within the Empire, if possible, and outside, if necessary. Thus far, it was an important evolution for a man who had always wished the Empire well. Those, who thought that by thus defining Swaraj, Gandhiji was in favour of Absolute Political Independence, were rudely shaken to find that this was not the case.

It is this strange story that we shall now study. It makes one wonder, whatever his public postures, did he ever really give up the feeling that the on the whole the connection of the Empire was beneficial for the Indians.

Let us proceed with the story after the stormy exit of Jinnah from the Nagpur Congress. The policies of Tilak had been thrown overboard but his name carried great value. The Mahatma was not slow in capitalising on the regard that people at large had for Tilak. A fund raising campaign called Tilak Memorial Swaraj Fund was launched with the object of collecting Rs10, 000,000/-. Such was the veneration people had for this great soul that the Fund was to reach 13,000,000/-. This was a huge sum of money. To put the matters in perspective, it was more than 10% of the total annual revenue from a rich state like Punjab. Tilak Swaraj Fund came to be the backbone of Gandhiji’s various campaigns.

It would have been befitting his status as the Mahatma, if Gandhiji had refrained from the use of Tilak's name for collecting money. For the money collected was being used for policies that Tilak disapproved. A wide gulf had divided Gandhiji and Tilak's approach to Swaraj. It had never been bridged despite all the pious hopes of Gandhiji. By collecting a fund in the name of Tilak to further his own policies which had been rejected by Tilak, Gandhiji must be said to have committed a fraud on the nation.

1921 witnessed political activities on a scale that had not been seen earlier even in the hey days of Home Rule movement. As a movement in mobilising people, Non-cooperation was a great success. Boycott of legislature, law-courts, educational institutions, foreign cloth was resorted to with great gusto. Soon Government titles came to be regarded as badges of slavery. A prominent find of the movement was Subhas Chandra Bose, who resigned from the coveted Indian Civil Services, one of the very few ever to do so in the nationalist cause, on 22nd February 1921 to join the struggle. This young man was now to carry the revolutionary torch in a manner that was to dazzle the nation. This was the young man, who was to support the cause of Independence, much to the annoyance not only of the Raj but also the Mahatma. For the Gandhi magic did not work on him, unlike his senior colleague Jawahar Lal Nehru. By the time, he died in an air crash in 1945 at an age of 49; he had become the biggest threat to the Raj, far more than Gandhiji himself and joined the ranks of Tilak and Savarkar. Back in 1921, the hot headed Bose soon came to be known as a supporter of the Revolutionary cause

The scale of activity was large enough to cause serious alarm to the Raj. At a moment when the nation was roused and supported the movement cutting across the barriers of religion, the Mahatma, who had done so much to make this happen, developed cold feet. Following outbreak of violence at Chauri Chaura, a small village in UP, on 5th February 1922, he unilaterally suspended the Non-cooperation movement. Not one of the objective of the movement had been met. Khilafat, Punjab or Swaraj – all the causes remained unresolved. The nationalists, all over the country were staggered. People at large grew frustrated. The Muslims felt let down. A series of Hindu-Muslim riots were soon to rock the country. More of that later.

Nehru writes about this emotional impulsive decision: “ we in prison learnt, to our amazement and consternation, that Gandhiji had suspended civil resistance. We were angry....The sudden suspension of our movement after Chauri Chaura incident was resented, I think by almost all the prominent Congress leaders...My father was much upset about it. The younger people were naturally even more agitated. Our mounting hopes tumbled to the ground”

The popularity of the Mahatma was in great peril. Government came to his rescue. It had him removed him from the political scene with a simple imprisonment of six years, by 18th March 1922.

The suspension of the movement may have served the belief in Non Violence of the Mahatma but it was certainly nothing short of betrayal of the cause of Independence. Rowlatt agitation and now the first Civil disobedience, both the movements of Gandhiji

ended tamely with none of the stated objectives being anywhere in sight. The Mahatma could arouse the passions of the people and make them act defying the fear of the all mighty Empire but where in the name of the heaven, one is compelled to ask, was he leading them?

Chauri Chaura is well known and has been taken by an indulgent people as an eccentric act of an emotional Mahatma. What is less well known is the manner in which Gandhiji treated the question of Independence at the Ahmedabad session of the Congress in December 1921. It is difficult to be so indulgent towards the Mahatma after reading about this incident that had taken place, barely a month before Chauri Chaura.

In a long and impassioned speech in Urdu, Maulana Hasarat Mohani moved the Resolution for Independence in the Congress session of 1921. He said although they had been promised Swaraj, the redress of the Khilafat and Punjab wrongs within a year, they had so far achieved nothing of the sort. Quoting the immortal words of Lokmanya Tilak, 'Liberty is my birthright and I shall have it', the Maulana called upon the Congress to define object of Congress as Swaraj or complete Independence free from all foreign control by all legitimate and peaceful means.

One would have thought that the words '*by all legitimate and peaceful means*' would have satisfied the Mahatma and he would willingly support the cause of Independence. But no! After several delegates spoke in favour of the resolution, he got up to *Oppose the Resolution*. The reasons given by him leaves one gasping. He said: "An hour ago we passed a resolution which contemplates a final settlement of Khilafat...Are you going to rub the whole of that position from your mind by raising a false issue and by throwing a bombshell in the midst of Indian atmosphere?... Let us not go into waters whose depths we do not know, and this proposition of Mr. Hasarat Mohani lands you into depths unfathomable, I therefore ask you in all confidence to reject his proposition."

In 1921, Gandhiji was not even prepared to dream of Independence. No wonder, the resolution when put to vote was declared lost.

With Gandhiji in prison and a general level of frustration in the country following unwarranted reprieve to the Raj, the annual session of the Congress at Gaya in 1922 became a battleground for the conflicting ideologies in Congress. The Pro changers who wanted to bring back the Tilak policy of Responsive Cooperation and No Changers, who were the blind followers of the Mahatma. The No Changers won. The victory was temporary. The Pro changers set up a party of their own and launched a nationwide campaign. Finally, in a special session of the Congress in September 1923, the Pro changers were permitted to contest November elections. Swaraj party of the Pro changers was to do considerable good in the Councils, even with the limited autonomy available. The question of Independence was once again raised but once again the dream was scoffed at.

Following a major illness, Gandhiji was released unconditionally on 6th February 1924. Savarkar, who had by now served 14 years of hard imprisonment was also released. The

political atmosphere in the country deeply disturbed him but there was little that he could do. For his release was subject to the condition that he would confine himself to Ratnagiri, a small district in Maharashtra and refrain from participating in any political activity. The only thing of note that had happened in Ratnagiri was that it was the place where the King of Burma was exiled to die in frustration. Evidently, the Government hoped that Savarkar would follow the example. This was a futile hope, for far from being downcast, Savarkar tested the limits of these restrictions time and again. With the result that the conditions that were originally to last for only five years, ended only after thirteen years, in 1937. A convicted extremist and a social reformer, none could be found to even rent a small house to this 'mad' man in Ratnagiri, the conservative backyard of the country. Finally, a gentleman, Patankar agreed to give shelter. Thus housed, this long period of internment was fruitfully utilised by Savarkar in working at removal of caste restrictions in the Hindu society.

Gandhiji suffering from no constraints, remained beholden to the Raj. Presiding over the 1924 Congress session held in Belgaum said: "In my opinion, if the British Government mean what they say and honestly help us to equality, it would be a greater triumph than a complete severance of the British connection". By this time the British had ruled for well over 121 years and the equality that Gandhiji dreamt of, was nowhere in sight. Yet, Gandhiji did not stop hoping for the impossible. Truly, only a Mahatma could be so naïve.

Subhas Chandra Bose got the same hard treatment that the Lokmanya got. This was hardly surprising. Gopinath Sahai had attempted to shoot the Calcutta Police Commissioner, Charles Tragort on 12th January 1924. By mistake, he shot one Mr. Dey. The Hangman's noose welcomed Gopinath on 1st March. Bose paid public tribute to the Martyr on the next day itself in a public meeting. Gandhiji by contrast became deeply distraught, when his resolution condemning the act of Gopinath could be passed by only a small margin (73 for 67 against) on 27th June in the Congress meeting at Ahmedabad.

It was just a matter of time before the wrath of the Government would fall on Subhas, the unabashed admirer of the Revolutionaries. He was arrested on unspecified charges in October and removed to Mandalay on 26th January 1925, the same place that was instrumental in the premature death of the Lokmanya after his six-year stay. Subhas was to be released only in May 1927.

His release gave just the support that Jawahar Lal needed to *launch a coup*. In the Madras session of 1927 at Madras he got the Congress to declare that the goal of the Indian people was to have complete National Independence. The first time ever in its history. Gandhiji kept himself aloof from these developments but his silent disapproval was more than apparent. Nehru wrote: "I do not know how far the resolutions I put before the Congress met his approval. I am inclined to think that he disliked them". This dislike is surprising considering Independence resolution received all-around support. Surprising or otherwise, the dislike was real and it soon became evident for all to see.

1928 was marked by the famous boycott of Simon Commission. A great deal of tension was also generated in Congress over the acceptance of Motilal Nehru Committee report which rejected Independence and accepted Dominion status as a basis for framing Indian constitution. In fact the report did not even ask for a full Dominion status. A battle royal erupted with Gandhiji and Motilal Nehru on one side and Jawahar Lal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose on the other, bitterly opposed to a climb down from the ideal of independence. The pressure of the young lobby was far too strong for even the Mahatma to resist. A compromise was reached and the final version of the resolution said that Congress would accept Dominion status if given before 31st December 1929, if not it would demand Independence.

This was not yet the end of the story. 1929 was equally stormy. Subhas organised a boycott of British goods. A bon fire of foreign goods was made in the presence of Gandhiji at Calcutta on 4th March. By 29th March, the Government had charge sheeted 31 communists, in what came to be known as the Meerut Case. On 8th April, Bhagat Singh and Dutt threw bombs in the Legislative Council. They were caught and their trial came to be known as Lahore case. Jatindra Das began a fast unto death against the ill treatment of the undertrials, facing charges of revolutionary acts. After 63 days of fasting, he died on the 13th September. Subhas Bose organised a public meeting on the 28th October to pay homage to Jatindra Das.

Even as the year was fast drawing to an end, Dominion status was nowhere in sight. December and the fateful Lahore session, where Congress was committed to passing the Resolution for Absolute Political Independence was a mere weeks away. Viceroy Lord Irwin made a vague announcement on 31st October, about the intent of the Government. Almost with an indecent haste 'a Leaders Conference' was arranged on 1st and 2nd November. Gandhiji was one of the principle participants. A joint manifesto addressed to the Viceroy, as a reply to his declaration of the 31st October, agreeing to help the Government prepare a constitution for the country on basis of *Dominion status*, was prepared. This was a clear attempt to sabotage the passage of Independence Resolution in Lahore.

Let Nehru himself speak about this shabby episode: " And yet that joint manifesto was a bitter pill for some of us. To give up the demand for independence, even in theory and even for a short while was wrong and dangerous; it meant that it was just a tactical affair, something to bargain with, not something which was essential and without which we could never content. So I hesitated and refused to sign the manifesto (Subhas Bose had definitely refused to sign it), but, as was not unusual with me, I allowed myself to be talked into signing. Who else but Gandhiji could have talked him into signing the document. "I came away in great distress...A soothing letter from Gandhiji and three days of reflection calmed me".

Lahore Congress was held on schedule. The associates of Bhagat Singh had made an unsuccessful attempt on the life of the Viceroy Lord Irwin on 23rd December 1929. Gandhiji found it immoral to support the act. He made sure that Congress passed a resolution roundly criticising the act. Even with full weight of Gandhiji behind it, the

resolution could barely find acceptance. Finally, the golden moment could not be postponed any longer. At the stroke of midnight on December 31, 1929, the Congress passed the main resolution on Independence. It had taken a decade for the Gandhi Congress to even demand Absolute Political Independence. Those, who thought that with this the Mahatma was irrevocably committed to the cause of Absolute Political Independence, were in for few surprises. In the meanwhile Subhas Bose paid a price for his intransigence in not signing the Joint manifesto. He found himself removed from the Congress Working Committee. The wishes, likes and dislikes of the Mahatma were not to be taken lightly. By the 23rd January, the Government presented him a birthday gift. He was sentenced to one year's imprisonment in a case filed in 1929.

The historic Lahore Congress called for celebration of 26th January 1930 as the Independence Day. On this day, every Indian was asked to make a declaration of complete independence and take a pledge to support the sacred fight for India's liberty. The day was observed all over the country with great enthusiasm. No sooner were the celebrations over Gandhiji once again showed that Independence was not his goal.

He put forward eleven specific demands, which if met by the Government, in his opinion amounted to the *Essence of Independence*. However important the demands of Gandhiji, the fact remains that those who call for Independence can not ask the rulers they wish to drive away for meeting some administrative demands. This was completely inconsistent with the Congress resolution, which he had himself supported. Let alone Independence, the Government was not about to concede even the *Essence of Independence*. It promptly rejected the demand.

Now Gandhiji began his famous Dandi yatra. On 12th March, he left Sabarmati Ashram with 78 male members on foot. Covering a distance of 240 miles, he reached the sea coast at Dandi on 5th April. The foot march was extensively covered by the press and created tremendous excitement in the country. He began the Civil Disobedience campaign on 6th April by making Salt, thus breaking the hated Salt tax. An act that was soon echoed throughout the country. The master communicator, it seemed had found a practical manifestation of Liberty which was conceivable to the masses, unlike Independence, which seemed a vague concept. On 10th April, he made a special appeal to the Women of India to take up the work of picketing and spinning. They responded with such energy that left the men breathless.

The imprisoned Subhas grew restless in his cell. Not content with locking him up, the Government had him badly beaten up in the jail on 23rd April, with the help of its henchmen. A similar attempt made on Savarkar during his term in Ratnagiri had been foiled due to his alertness. A wave of revolutionary activity rocked the Bengal province. Gandhiji himself was locked up by 4th May 1930.

Devotion of his followers scaled new heights and he inspired them with messianic zeal. Consider the following incident that took place on 21st May 1930 and reported to the world by the American correspondent Miller.

“The salt-deposits were surrounded by ditches filled with water and guarded by 400 native Surat Police in khaki shorts and brown turbans. Half a dozen British officials commanded them. The Police carried lathis-five foot clubs tipped with steel. Inside the stockade twenty-five men were drawn up.

In complete silence the Gandhi men drew up and halted a hundred yards from the stockade. A picked column advanced from the crowd, waded the ditches, and approached the barbed-wire stockade, which the Surat Police surrounded, holding clubs at the ready. Police officials ordered the marchers to disperse under recently imposed regulation, which prohibited gathering of more than five persons in any one place. The column silently ignored the warning and slowly walked forward, I stayed with the main body about a hundred yards from the stockade.

Suddenly, at a word of command, scores of native police rushed upon the advancing marchers and rained blows on their heads with their steel-shod lathis. Not one of the marchers, even raised an arm to fend off the blows. They went down like ten pins. From where I stood I heard the sickening whacks of the clubs on unprotected skulls. The waiting crowd of watchers groaned and sucked in their breaths in sympathetic pain at every blow.

Those stuck down fell sprawling, unconscious or writhing in pain with fractured skulls or broken shoulders. In two or three minutes the ground was quilted with bodies. Great patches of blood widened on their white clothes. The survivors, without breaking ranks silently and doggedly marched on until struck down. When everyone of the first column had been knocked down, stretcher-bearers rushed up unmolested by the Police and carried off the injured.... There was no fight, no struggle; the marchers simply walked forward until struck down. There were no outcries, only groans after they fell. There were not enough stretcher-bearers to carry off the wounded; I saw eighteen injured being carried off simultaneously; while forty-two still lay bleeding on the ground-awaiting stretcher-bearers. The blankets, used as stretchers were sodden with blood.”

Sir Richard Attenborough has brought this blood-cuddling scene to life in his award winning film ‘Gandhi’. No one who has watched this come alive on the celluloid screen can come away without being deeply moved.

This awe-inspiring happening was real enough. What was all too real was despite all the heat and dust raised by the struggle, a key function of the Government remained unaffected. Its ability to collect salt tax against which the whole effort was directed. In 1929-30 the income from Salt tax was 67 million Rupees. It actually increased to 68 million Rupees next year, when an agitation against it was at its height. This ballooned to 102 million Rupees by 1932-33. Once again one is forced to wonder at the real and effective impact of Gandhiji’s campaign. No wonder, it could afford to be indulgent and conciliatory towards him, which only added to his image in the eyes of the poor and the ignorant.

Subhas Bose was released on the 30th September and was back in the prison, where he belonged by 26th January 1931, after being brutally beaten by the Police. The Simon Commission report was published on 7th June 1930. It led to the First Round Table Conference at London between 12th November 1930 – 19th January 1931. Congress did not participate in this. Gandhiji and other Congress leaders were released on the day Subhas Bose was beaten and imprisoned. On 16th February, Gandhiji began discussions with Lord Irwin leading to the Gandhi-Irwin pact on 4th March 1931.

This pact immeasurably increased the mystique of the saint. For the first time, the mighty Viceroy had condensed to conclude a pact with a mere mortal Saint. The act, which seemed to put Gandhiji at par with the Government, was bitterly criticised by the conservative elements in England. This much is well known. What is known and glossed over was this pact represented two things. One was that the cause of the Independence was betrayed once again. The second was that it amounted to collusion with the Government in its murder of the famed revolutionary trio – Bhagat Singh, Sukh Dev and Rajguru. Gandhiji seemed to have sold his soul to the Devil for earning some crumbs of popularity. If they sound harsh words, look at what Nehru said about this episode:

“On the night of the 4th of March, we waited till midnight for Gandhiji’s return from the Viceroy’s house. He came back about 2 a.m., and we were woken up and told that an agreement had been reached. We saw the draft. I knew most of the clauses, for they had been often discussed, but at the very top, clause 2 with its reference to safeguards etc., gave me a tremendous shock. I was wholly unprepared for it. I said nothing then, and we all retired.”

Why was Nehru so shocked? The clause 2 gave up not only the demand for Independence but also definitely and substantially receded from the demand for a dominion status. A basic national principle was compromised at the whim of one person. Nehru continued:

“ The other and vital question of our objective, of independence, remained. I now saw in that Clause 2 of the settlement that even this seemed to be jeopardized. Was it for this that our brave people had behaved so gallantly for a year? Were all our brave words and deeds to an end in this? The independence resolution of the Congress, the pledge of January 26, so often repeated? So I lay and pondered on that March night, and in my heart, there was a great emptiness as of something precious gone, beyond recall.

‘This is the way the world ends,
Not with a bang, but with a whimper.’

The next morning... we had a long talk, and he tried to convince me that nothing vital had been lost, no surrender of principle made. He interpreted Clause 2 of the agreement so as to make it fit in with our demand for independence... The interpretation seemed to me to be a forced one, and I was not convinced...I told him that his way of springing surprises upon us frightened me, there was something unknown about him which, inspite of the closest association for fourteen years, I could not understand at all and which filled me with apprehension.”

If something about Gandhiji filled Nehru *with apprehension* despite *closest association for fourteen years*, how could Jinnah be asked to trust him or the Hindu society? A society which continued to repose its absolute loyalty in such a man in preference to a frank and straightforward person like Savarkar. On one hand we have Gandhiji who kept on compromising on basic issue of Independence time and again to the dismay of his most ardent followers. On the other hand, we had Savarkar, who chose to spend a lifetime in prison rather than compromise on Independence. Yet the Hindu society kept on lionizing Gandhiji and cold shoulder Savarkar. With what face we feel that Jinnah should have trusted the fate of Muslims on the words of such a leader and his superstition-ridden society?

Betrayal of the cause of Independence was bad enough. What was worse was the manner in which the life of Bhagat Singh and his friends was bartered away in this pact. Not a word was said about them. They were hanged within a fortnight of this pact – on 23rd March 1931. Bhagat Singh was no ordinary revolutionary, if any revolutionary can ever be ordinary. As per the official history of Congress, “at that moment Bhagat Singh’s name was as widely known all over India and was as popular as Gandhi’s. As Gandhiji proceeded to Karachi for the Congress session, he was met with hostile black flag demonstration and at some places an attempt was even made to assault him. So strong were the emotions against the Mahatma. In a bid to assuage, the popular feelings a resolution was moved at the Karachi Congress on 29th March 1931, to place on record its admiration of the bravery and sacrifice of the late Bhagat Singh and his comrades. According to the official history of the Congress, “it is really a point of doubt...as to which resolution was more arresting at Karachi – that relating to Bhagat Singh or that relating to the ratification of Gandhi – Irwin Agreement.

Time had indeed taken its revenge. The man who was dismayed when his resolution condemning the martyrdom of Gopinath Sahai passed with a small majority; had to be party to resolution eulogizing Bhagat Singh. Not even seven years had passed in between. Even in this turmoil, the Mahatma could not overcome his pettiness. Subhas Bose was once again excluded from the Congress Working Committee.

With the pact, the Congress was now committed to participating in the Second round of the Round Table Conference. The general opinion was to send 15-20 delegates. Finally, it was decided to send only one. Who else could it be but the Mahatma ? After some hitches, he left for London on 29th August. He was to return empty handed four months later. Empty handed is not the right words. There was an impressive blitz of publicity. People seem to be awed by the *half-naked fakir* walking up with a bamboo stick to meet the King Emperor. In India, anything that has the stamp of approval in the West, is eagerly lapped up as the Gospel. A colonial mentality that continues to date. How much more powerful, it must have been in 1931 can only be imagined. Thus the respect that Gandhiji commanded amongst the European intellectuals immeasurably added to his stature in India. No one bothered to notice that none of those who sang his praises embraced either vegetarianism or Non Violence as a creed. In Europe, he was a good show case piece. To be admired from a distance. This is not all. He came back with something more. What was it? Let us see what Ambedkar has to say:

“Everybody was therefore looking forward to the Congress to lead the Conference to success. Unfortunately, the Congress chose Mr. Gandhi as its representative. *A worse person could not have been chosen to guide India’s destiny.* A unifying force he was a failure. Mr. Gandhi presents himself as man full of humility. But his behavior at the Round Table Conference showed that in the flush of victory Mr. Gandhi can be very petty minded. As a result of his successful compromise with the Government just before he came, Mr. Gandhi treated the whole Non-Congress delegation with contempt. He insulted them whenever an occasion furnished him with an opportunity by openly telling them that they were nobodies and that he alone, as the delegate of the Congress, represented the country. Instead of unifying the Indian delegation, Mr. Gandhi widened the breach. From the point of view of knowledge, Mr. Gandhi proved himself to be a very ill-equipped person. On the many constitutional and communal questions with which the Conference was confronted, Mr. Gandhi had many platitudes to utter but no views or suggestions of a constructive character to offer. He presented a curious complex of a man who in some cases would threaten to resist in every possible way any compromise on what he regarded as a principle though others regarded it as pure prejudice but in other cases would not mind making the worst compromises on issues which appeared to others as matters of fundamental principle on which no compromise should be made.”

Well! Well! Well! If the man regarded as the Father of Indian Constitution makes these remarks about the *Father of the Nation* and a Congress Government is forced to publish this unedited some six decades after the incident, something, somewhere is seriously wrong. As we shall see later the good Doctor had good reasons to be so critical. Worst compromise on fundamental issues, none other than Nehru has been so critical of this trait of Gandhiji, as he time and again compromised on the core issue of Independence.

For the time being let us leave behind this unsavory incident and take a look at the situation in India. We shall come back to this later.

Lord Wellington as Viceroy succeeded Lord Irwin on 17th April 1931. The new Viceroy appeared critical of the manner in which an ordinary Indian had signed a pact as a co-equal with the representative of a might empire. The Government attitude hardened. Bengal continued to be the cradle of the Revolutionaries. A desperate Government even chose to beat up prisoners locked up in Hijli Jail. Subhas Bose resigned as the Mayor of Calcutta on 18th September 1931 in protest. He was turned back, when he tried to visit his injured comrades in the Hijli jail. On 7th November, he was barred from visiting Dacca. Now he became increasingly critical of the Gandhi-Irwin pact and termed it as a trap set up to ensnare the Mahatma.

Nehru found no change of heart in the Government and was soon in the middle of an agrarian campaign in his home state, Uttar Pradesh. **The wheat prices had fallen by over 50%.** Falling prices made reduced the capacity of the farmers to pay rents rendering them liable for eviction from the land that they tilled – their only source of livelihood. Soon, the Government machinery, paying no heeds to demands for remission threw out thousands of farmers, who had nowhere to go. They flocked to the office of Congress. Nehru’s own house came to be surrounded by these poor wretched souls. In the middle of

these helpless fellow citizens, the sensitive soul of Nehru was distressed to find that he was at total loss to deal with the situation.

In the Frontier Province, as in Bengal or Uttar Pradesh, the Pact brought no peace. The permanent state of military siege continued. By the end of the year, Nehru came to the same conclusion as Bose. The Gandhi-Irwin pact was, in the eyes of the Government, a worthless piece of document. The Mahatma may have chosen to give up the core national demand of Independence but the Imperial monolith would go on relentlessly. Pact or no Pact.

The matters came to a head in December. By 3rd January 1932, Subhas Bose was put behind bars. Gandhiji, Nehru and other Congress leaders were similarly arrested the next day. From January 1932 to 17th March 1937, for over five years Subhas Bose was kept away from the political life of India. From 3rd January 1932 to 23rd February 1933, he was in various Indian prisons. During this period, he became seriously ill. No provincial Governor could be persuaded to accept this dangerous prisoner. Finally, he was put on a boat to Europe. He was to return only on 8th April 1936 to spend yet another year in confinement, before being freed in 1937. His stay in Europe was fruitful. It is to this interesting story that we shall turn in short while.

In the meanwhile, did Gandhiji realise his folly in compromising with the issue of Independence and now make amends? It would be nice to say yes but unfortunately the facts tell us otherwise.

The second phase of the civil disobedience began in January 1932. It was put down by a ruthless Government smarting under the indignity of the Gandhi-Irwin pact. Even Bertrand Russel was constrained to observe: “There has been no lack of interests in the **misdeeds of the Nazis in Germany**; they have been fully reported in the Press and have been commented on with self-righteous indignation. Few people in England realise that **misdeed quite as serious are being perpetrated by the British in India.**”

Even as the people were fighting this evil, around one hundred thousand had courted arrest dreaming of being free; Gandhiji’s gaze was fixed elsewhere. On 16th August 1932, the British Prime Minister, Ramsay Macdonald announced the ‘Communal Award’. Notwithstanding the fact that he had agreed in writing to accept the Award, Gandhiji reacted violently. From 20th September, he commenced yet another of his *Fast unto Death*. An emotional blackmail, he soon perfected to an art. He broke this on September 26 after concluding what is known as Poona Pact. Something that still rankles the very people who were supposed to be its beneficiary.

Once again, it is time to read Nehru: “And then I felt annoyed with him for choosing a side-issue for his final sacrifice-just a question of electorate. What would be the result on our freedom movement? Would not the larger issue fade into the background, for the time being at least?... Was this consistent with Non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience? After so much sacrifice and brave endeavour, was our movement to tail off into something insignificant?”

I felt angry with him at his religious and sentimental approach to a political question, and his frequent references to God in connection with it...What a terrible example to set!"

What were the views of Dr. Ambedkar who was forced at the gun point to sign the Poona Pact much against his wishes? We shall see later.

The fast marked the end, for all practical reasons, of Gandhiji's connection with the Freedom struggle for around a decade. Henceforth, he devoted his energy to Eradication of Untouchability and other social issues. Even as the captain abandoned the ship in mid-stream, the people continued their struggle. 26th January 1933 was celebrated with great gusto and belief in Independence was reiterated. People continued to harass the Government, till Gandhiji came to its rescue.

For reasons that remain obscure, Gandhiji began a 21-day fast on 8th May 1933. The reason given was that the purpose of the fast was for self-purification. Government did not want the Mahatma dead on its hand and released him. In an inexplicable move, immediately on his release, Gandhiji suspended Civil disobedience for six weeks. By 12th July, Congress had also watered down the struggle. Gandhiji's command over the Congress was total.

As was to be expected, the Government remained unmoved by the unwarranted magnanimous gesture. This was clear in the manner in which Gandhiji's attempt to meet the Viceroy was rebuffed.

A vain attempt was made to revive the struggle by Individual Satyagraha. Gandhiji was the first to be arrested on 31st July 1933. On 16th August, Gandhiji decided to go on yet another fast as he was not being given the facilities to conduct Untouchability campaign within the Jail. He was released on 23rd August 1933, as his condition became critical. By now the people had become disheartened by this 'Stop, Go' approach of Gandhiji. Passionate commitment to a cause is not like tap water to be turned on and off at will. The hard fact is that movement was dead like a doornail and soon faded into oblivion due to strange manner in which Gandhiji led the struggle. For the record, the Congress officially called off the Movement on 20th May 1934. Gandhiji now ceased being even a *Four anna* member of the Congress and now became the 'permanent super-President of Congress. Even for a Mahatma, it was not possible to relinquish his power.

Over 120,000 people in jail, 29 cases of police firing leading to 80 deaths and 329 injured. 325 cases of Lathi Charge, 633 cases of house searches and 102 cases of confiscation of properties. For what cause did the people struggle? For what reason were their dreams of Independence betrayed by none other than the Mahatma? If eradication of Untouchability was the core issue, then why was the Civil disobedience against the British launched in the first place. Curse of Untouchability is an evil that can hardly be blamed on them.

An angry Bose castigated the Mahatma as a failed political leader. Joining him was Vitthalbahi Patel; the elder brother was Sardar Patel, a devoted follower of the Mahatma. In India or in exile, Subhas Bose was always to remain passionately committed to the cause of Independence. So was Nehru but he always allowed his love for Gandhiji overshadow his passion for Independence.

In a serene unaffected manner, the Raj proceeded with its pace of reforms. By 2nd August 1935, it proceeded with the next step of Constitutional reforms by passing the Government of India Act. This was the first step after seventeen long years, the last being Montagu-Chelmsford reform of 1918. All the pressure of Satyagraha had barely moved the Raj. Gandhiji took over the reins of freedom struggle in 1920. Fifteen years of his moral leadership furthering the political awakening by way of the pure path of Satyagraha. In terms of hard quantifiable results, this was all that he had to show.

What has been forgotten is that the 1935 Act separated Burma from India to evolve a separate destiny of its own. This process needs to be understood. There was a strong current in Burma to evolve a federation with India. They saw it as the best way of ensuring that Britain would not perpetuate their hold over Burma and Singapore, by reason of presence of oil and strategic position. For this very reason, the Pro separationists were encouraged to enable the British Government to carry out their scheme of separation. The process of Indian partition had begun and not a whimper of protest was heard.

Capacity of the Raj to loot the country had remained unaffected. Independence was not mere fancy notion that the dreamers were pursuing. There were very real practical implications of great importance to the poorest of people. Much has been made of the Dandi Yatra of Gandhiji as a way of demonstrating that he knew the concerns of the poor much better than anyone else. Virtually nothing is said about the Export of Gold from India, amounting to Rs 3,000 million between 1931 to 1936. It is yet another sad tale of exploitation, which does not seem to have touched Gandhiji's conscience.

The manner in which Great Depression of 1930 was tackled by an ex colony and now Independent nation and a once Independent nation and now a colony provide glaring contrast. The contrast in the approach taken by United States, which became Independent just as Bharat was slipping into slavery, is illuminating

President Roosevelt of the United States of America took U.S. Dollar off the Gold standard and devalued it. He prohibited export of Gold and used the large gold reserve as a backing for an expanding currency, with which he reflatd the economy.

What did a slave Indian administration do? U.K. had also gone off the Gold standard. Gold appreciated by about 20%. This was the signal for the moneylenders in India to force their poor debtors to surrender their gold ornaments. Their capacity to do so, can be gauged by the fact that the agricultural indebtedness of India (including Burma) was Rs 8,600 million.

Thus almost every second person, who had any debt, was made to surrender her gold ornaments at extortionist rates. Misery that it would have caused in countless homes across the country can well be imagined.

The 'distress gold' soon flooded London. The Raj refused to intervene in what it called a Free Market transaction. Most ardent of ardent supporters of a Market economy would today be outraged at this description. This Gold flow had increased the Creditworthiness of India, making it possible for the Government to raise large-scale funds for development. Indeed such a course of action was recommended by Schuster, the Finance Member of Government of India but was turned down. The dehoarding of Gold only bolstered the position of London as the financial center of the new Sterling bloc, which emerged as a substitute for international gold standard.

Undeterred by the dilution of the ideal of Independence, undeterred by loot of the gold, Congress participated in the elections held during 1936-37. The story of its holding power in the provinces is too well known to detain us. Suffice to say that from 1934 to 1939, the Congress had taken a break in the struggle for Independence. During this period, it could have said to been aspiring at the most for the Dominion status and had seemed to kissed its own historic Lahore resolution of 31st December 1929 good bye.

It held office for over two years and then in a fit of moral pique, resigned the offices by 15th November 1939 so as to press for its demand of Independence. The resignation was god sent to the Viceroy who could now work towards harnessing the full resources of India towards the British war cause. At a time, the Congress should have stayed in office, and ensured that India was not looted, it chose to bow out and sulk in the corner.

Let there be no illusions that in 1939, it was Gandhiji who had pressed for Independence. When the war broke out on 5th September 1939, he said: "I am not just now thinking of India's deliverance. It will come, but what will it be worth if England and France fall, or, if they come out victorious over Germany ruined and humbled?"

Look at key the features of the Gandhi era. He came to power by rejecting the Tilak line in 1920 claiming to win Swaraj within a year. The cause was given up as lost due to violence in a small village Chauri Chaura. The Swaraj wing of the party did some useful work 1923 to 1929, the manner of which was not to the liking of the Mahatma. The cause of Independence was taken up with great enthusiasm in 1930. Once again, by 1931, it was severely compromised by the Gandhi-Irwin pact. By 1932, the flag of Independence was once again unfurled. Gandhiji said: "Civil Disobedience, once begun this time cannot be stopped and must not be stopped so long as there is a single civil resister left free or alive." All of a sudden, Gandhiji was to discover that the curse of Untouchability was a more important issue than the cause of Independence. By 1934, even the pretence of the struggle was given up. This forced even Nehru to conclude: "With a stab of pain I felt that the chords of allegiance that had bound me to him for many years had snapped...Of the many hard lessons that I had learnt, the hardest and most painful now faced me: that it is not possible in any vital matter to rely on anyone"

The five-year period 1934 – 1939 appeared to find Congress licking its wounds. Content to grab the crumbs thrown at it by the Raj. Elections were contested and offices taken up in 1937 with no assurance of an Independence. If this was right, what was the reason for ignoring this option in 1920? Only the Mahatma seemed to know. By end of 1939, the Congress was in limbo. It could ignore the Bose led call for an Independence struggle at the peril of losing its popularity. Gandhi pacifism would however not allow it take advantage of the British difficulties. It then found itself in an unenviable position of neither responding to the Bose call to launch a new struggle nor cooperating with the Government. It is this position that aptly sums up the Congress dilemma in these two decades and the essence of Gandhiji's leadership. He could whip up emotions and enchant his followers but he did not know where to lead them. The Great Flip Flop show that continued to hurt the cause of Independence.

*One can not study this period without coming to the conclusion that the Mahatma was willing to wound but always fought shy of even attempting to slay the Imperial demon. **He never intended to drive the British out of the country.***

By 1939, it was not the Great Flip Flop show of the Mahatma but the uncompromising support of Subhas Bose to the cause of Independence that now held sway. Gandhi era that had begun in 1920 was now coming to a close. Hence forth, it was going to be this bright star, Subhas Bose, in the firmament of the Freedom struggle, whose lead the country was going to follow. The Mahatma was soon to find that he had to match the mood of the people set by Bose or risk political oblivion. This fascinating story needs to be told but let us study the last question that remains: *Did the Mahatma Really Work for the Welfare of the Untouchables?*

Chapter III-8

Did the Mahatma Really Work for the Welfare of the Untouchables?

Much as the most Hindus would today like to forget, of all the social evils that had crept in the Hindu society, the curse of Untouchability was the worst. That the Hindus are socially organised in four castes is perhaps well known. Brahmin, the accumulator of Knowledge, Kshtriya, the warriors, Vaishya, the trader and Shudra, the provider of services. Untouchables, the Ati Shudras or the scavengers were outside the pale of this social structure. They were considered so filthy, that even their sight was considered polluting by the Brahmins. They were supposed to walk on the roads with bells in the neck to announce their presence so as to enable the pious Brahmin to maintain his purity by not looking at these wretched souls. They were encouraged to worship the same Gods as the Hindus but even the Gods could not bear their dirty presence and hence they were denied entry into the Temple. If an Untouchable girl was of some beauty, it was but in the natural scheme of things that she had to spend her first wedding night, not with her Untouchable husband but with a Brahmin, who took a fancy to her. When the Sun rose in the morning, the Brahmin who had lain night long in an amorous embrace with the girl, was now deemed to be polluted by her very shadow. By these hideous practices, about a quarter of Hindu population was kept outside its fold in virtual serfdom.

Not even the Shudras, the lowest in the caste hierarchy could ever be persuaded to do the work assigned by custom to the Untouchables. The prejudices were so deep that they would not be dropped even when the Hindus converted to Islam, which has no place for such practices. An incident in Delhi at the height of 1947 partition riots, brought this out.

Some 25,000 Muslims were huddled together in wretched conditions fearful for their safety from the Hindu attacks in Purana Qila. The same pool of water was used for all purposes – washing cooking pots, vomiting, defecating. Sanitation was by open latrine. The stink was unbearable but the Muslims would not be persuaded to clean the place. The Government had to send 100 Hindu sweepers to clean the place. They were provided with armed guard lest some mad Muslim decided to chop off their head, once they had fulfilled their duty of cleaning up the place.

Nor was this an isolated incident. The Untouchables were shunned not only by their co-religionist but by the entire society. This was the ordained fate of these unfortunate people, *not for one or two years but well over two thousand years.*

At the turn of the century, there was no sense of shame at this brutal and hideous practice. On the contrary, it was brazenly defended as being sanctified by the religion and those who took up the cause of the Untouchables were ostracized. If well-meaning Hindus today hang their head in shame at this barbarous treatment of their fellow citizens, if Untouchability is a criminal offense in India today, it is in no small measure due to the attitudinal revolution brought about by Gandhiji goes the conventional thinking.

Did the Mahatma Really Work for the Welfare of the Untouchables? This sounds as the strangest if not the silliest question to ask of the Mahatma.

Gandhiji was amongst the first to take up the broom and publicly perform the work of a scavenger. As he noted of the Calcutta Congress session in 1901:

“There was no limit to insanitation. Pools of water were everywhere. There were only a few latrines, and the recollection of their stink still oppresses me. I pointed it out to the volunteers. They said point blank: ‘That is not our work. It is the scavenger’s work.’ I asked for a broom. The man stared at me in wonder. I procured one and cleaned the latrine. But that was for myself. The rush was so great, and the latrines were so few, that they needed frequent cleaning; but that was more than I could do. So I had to content myself with simply ministering to myself. And the others did not seem to mind the stench and the dirt.

But that was not all. Some of the delegates did not scruple to use the verandahs outside their rooms for calls of nature at night. In the morning I pointed out the spots to the volunteers. No one was ready to undertake the cleaning, and I found no one to share the honour with me of doing it.”

With Gandhiji, this was not a flash in the pan but a lifelong crusade. Even before, in 1898, he had adopted the practice of cleaning chamber pots of all the visitors to his house at Durban in South Africa and made his wife do the same. The refusal of his wife in one instance so enraged him that he drove her out of the house, as he shamefacedly admitted later.

When Gandhiji came to hold full sway over the Congress, all leaders had to take to do their own scavenging work or else face his rebuke. By his private as well as public conduct, he ceaselessly sought to drive home the point that neither Scavenging nor a Scavenger was dirty. It was therefore a sin to practice Untouchability. He began to call them *Harijans* or the children of the God rather than the insulting *Untouchables*.

In 1917, he was present at the Congress session at Calcutta, which adopted a resolution, which said:

“This Congress urges upon the people of India the necessity, justice and righteousness of removing all disabilities imposed upon the Depressed classes, the disabilities being a most vexatious and oppressive character, subjecting those classes to considerable hardship and inconvenience.”

In February 1922, he was instrumental in Congress adopting a constructive programme of social amelioration, which called for improving the lot of the Untouchables, amongst the other things. On Untouchables, the resolution read:

“(4) To organise the Depressed Classes (Untouchables) for a better life, to improve their social, mental and moral condition, to induce them to send their children to national schools and to provide for them the ordinary facilities which other citizens enjoy.”

In an 'Epic Fast' that he began on 20th September 1932, he fought against a devious plan to separate the Untouchables from the Hindu society. He fought to enhance their political representation and got the Council seats reserved for them increased from a mere 78 to 151.

The Poona Pact, which achieved all this, was signed on 24th September 1932. The very next day, a movement was started, which came to be known as the Temple Entry movement and was blessed by Gandhiji. It sought to ensure that:

“No one shall be regarded as an Untouchable by reason of his birth, and that those who have been so regarded hitherto will have the same right as other Hindus in regard to the use of public wells, public schools, public roads and all other public institutions”

Temple after Temple, school after school was thrown open to the Untouchables as the Mahatma put his full moral weight behind this social reform.

On 30th September 1932, an All India Anti Untouchability League was set up:

“To remove every vestige of Untouchability...main line of work will be mainly constructive such as Uplift of Depressed Classes educationally, economically and socially, which itself will go a great way to remove Untouchability.”

Gandhiji later changed its name to Harijan Seva Sangh. To provide funds for the work of the Sangh, Gandhiji started an All India campaign. It began on November 7, 1933 and ended on July 29, 1934. Harijan Seva Sangh and Temple Entry, so preoccupied had he become with these two movements that all else became of secondary importance.

In the evening of his life, the welfare of the Harijans became a cause that was dearer to the heart of the Mahatma than even Swaraj, to the dismay of his many ardent followers. He missed no opportunity to berate the practice of Untouchability as a Sin. He lost no opportunity to live amongst the Untouchables to the eternal shame of those who continued to practice Untouchability. By his own example, he compelled his followers to undertake at least their own scavenging; laying down the principle that there is dignity in labor, even if it is labor of scavenging.

It would take anyone to make just one revolting trip to a public lavatory at any place in India to realize that this is one principle that the Indians have not learnt even on the eve of the Twenty First century. Surely, however, Gandhiji can not be faulted for this. Even a Mahatma can do only so much.

The Mahatma's contribution to the cause of the Untouchables is as real as the sunlight around us. Yet, I seek to ask 'Did the Mahatma really work for the Welfare of the Untouchables?' Have I taken leave of my senses? Show me a little more indulgence, dear readers and judge for yourself.

Congress Resolution of 1917

In 1917, as we have already seen, Lokmanya Tilak was busy forging a united national front against the British putting aside his own prejudices and biases in the national cause, the test of a real Statesman. All of us have our own private and personal outlook conditioned by our upbringing and the environment that we choose to live in. This is only all human. It is the very few of us who can set aside our own opinions in the interest of a larger cause. Lokmanya Tilak was one of these very few.

He was a political reformer. To paint him as a social reformer would be a travesty of truth. Nor is this foolish attempt necessary in any way to add to his undisputed greatness. In his time, in his opinion, the biggest evil confronting the society was the illegal British occupation of the country. He wanted no diversion of energy to fight the social evils. There was enough and more time to do so, once Swaraj was attained. His concept of ideal political rule was that of Shivaji and not that of the later day Peshwas. It is interesting to understand the reasons.

Lest anyone is unaware, Shivaji's rule was supported by all classes of the people. Indeed, his staunchest followers were from the lower social strata. So deep and abiding was their belief in Shivaji that years after his death, they kept up the fight and broke the back of the Aurangzeb led campaign to eliminate the Maratha rule. This part of the story, we have already covered. The later day Brahmin Peshwas controlled a territory far larger than that ruled by Shivaji. In terms of geography, Shivaji's rule was primarily confined to a small part of Maharashtra. The Peshwa writ, on the other hand, ran in all corners of the country. Yet, it is the rule of Shivaji that inspires pride not that of the Peshwas – even in Maharashtra. The Peshwa rule, while being far more successful politically and militarily was socially regressive. It is today remembered more for Brahminical domination of the society than for its all India reach.

Thus, the Brahmin Tilak, by choosing the symbol of Shivaji's rule over that of the Peshwas, was signaling that he wanted an egalitarian Swaraj, not that dominated by his own community. All he wanted was attainment of the Swaraj first before taking on the Cause of Social reforms.

This was his view, call it bias, prejudice, what you will. The important thing is he kept it aside. By 1916, he had already forged the Lucknow pact, thereby forging a united front with the Muslims. By 1917, the Home rule agitation had awakened the political consciousness of the Depressed Classes. A meeting held on 11th November 1917 under the Chairmanship of Sir Narayan Chandavarkar called for requesting Indian National Congress to:

“Pass at its forthcoming session a distinct and independent resolution declaring to the people of India at large the necessity, justice, and righteousness of removing all the disabilities imposed by religion and custom upon the Depressed Classes, those disabilities being of a most vexatious and oppressive character, subjecting those classes to considerable hardship and inconveniences”

Tilak was keen to ensure that the Congress-League scheme, as per the Lucknow pact, should have a national character. This could happen only if the scheme had the backing of all communities in India. The support of the now awakened Depressed classes was essential. Thus keeping aside his own views, biases or prejudices, if you will, made sure that the Congress passed a resolution as requested by the Depressed Classes. The astute readers will no doubt notice that even the language of the Congress resolution was identical to that of the Depressed Classes' resolution.

The integrity of the Tilak led Congress in adopting this resolution was never in question, even to those who were not enamoured of it. As Dr. Ambedkar notes: "As the Congress did not then (in 1917) practise-it had not learnt it then-the art of corrupting people as it does now (in 1945)...it enlisted the support of Sir Narayan Chandavarkar...and the Depressed classes agreed to give support to the Congress-League scheme"

Gandhiji had no role to play in this as his own silence over the episode shows.

Bardoli Constructive Programme of 1922

In accordance with the Bardoli programme of social amelioration, the Congress decided to set up a Committee to formulate practical measures to be adopted for bettering the condition of the Untouchables. A sum of Rs 200,000/- was earmarked for this activity. This was later increased to Rs 500,000/-. In the meanwhile, one of the Committee members, Swami Shradhanand, resigned from the Committee.

Now, who was Swami Shradhanand and why did he resign? He was in the words of Dr. Ambedkar 'the greatest and most sincere champion of the Untouchables'. Pray, then why did he resign? Therein lies a tale of subterfuge, deceit and sabotage. A testimony to the insincerity of the Gandhi Congress in its approach to the question of Untouchability.

Swami Shradhanand had been appointed as the Convenor of the Committee. His credentials were unimpeachable. He was the President of *Dalitodhar* Sabha, dedicated to the betterment of the Untouchables, which was carrying out appreciable work around Delhi. On his appointment, people from all over the country began to send him requests to visit their provinces and study the problems of the Untouchables first hand. These visits were critical for formulating practical steps for eradication of Untouchability but he found himself strapped for cash for undertaking. Congress accepted his plea that a sum of Rs 500,000 should be kept at the disposal of the Committee. The sting came in the tail. Rs 100,000/- was to be given by the Congress, while the balance was to be raised by appeals. It was given out that the Congress had very little cash to spare.

He knew the real problems of the Untouchables. He knew that for eradicating the curse of Untouchability, it was important to ensure that the following demands of the Untouchables were immediately met:

- They are allowed to sit on the same carpet as the other people.
- They get the right to draw water from common wells
- Their children get admission to national schools and colleges
- Their children get to mix freely with other students in the educational institutes

The approach of the Swami was entirely in line with the Bardoli resolution but there was a critical difference. Bardoli resolution was full of platitudes. Swami wanted clear identifiable objectives to be set for attainment. In Swami's approach, there was no scope for obfuscation. With this the Congress developed cold feet. Swami found himself removed from his position as the Convenor and he resigned in disgust as he found that "the question of raising the Depressed Classes had been relegated to an obscure corner."

The reconstituted Committee carried on its work till 1923. By May 1923, the Congress washed its hands off the issue by requesting the All India Hindu Maha Sabha to take up the work of eradication of the evil of Untouchability from the Hindu society.

Perhaps, it was the lack of funds that had compelled the Congress to abandon the cause of Untouchables. Perhaps! But the fact is that the Congress had managed to collect a sum of Rs 13,019,415, 15 annas and 7 paise by 1923 in the name of Lokmanya Tilak for implementing Gandhi policies. Or may be the Committee was not doing anything useful, so it was disbanded and some other organisation took up the cause of the Untouchables. Surely, the Mahatma would have ensured that the Congress spared at least 50% of the available funds for the cause of the Untouchables. Or perhaps 25% or a little less but certainly not less than 10% in any case. Perhaps! But the fact is a total sum of Rs 4,950,000/- was spent for carrying out the Bardoli programme. A sum of Rs 200,000 had been earmarked for the amelioration of the Untouchables. The amount actually appropriated was as follows:

• Rajamuhendry Depressed Class Mission	Rs 1,000
• Antyaj Karyalaya, Ahmedabad	Rs 5,000
• Antyaj Karyalaya, Ahmedabad	Rs 17,381
• Depressed Classes work in Andhra	Rs 7,000
• National Conference for Depressed Classes Work	Rs 3,000
• Tamil District P.C.C. for Depressed Classes Work	Rs 10,000
• Total	Rs 43,181

Congress collects Rs 13 million, spends Rs 4.95 million on Constructive programmes and has by 1923, just Rs 43,181 available for the Untouchables. Perhaps, there is something wrong. For huge sums amounting to Rs 2.6 million had been allotted to Gujrat without appropriation to any purpose without naming the guarantee. But the fact remains that by 1945, Dr. Ambedkar had not discovered anything otherwise. These findings were published without any correction by a Congress Government in 1990. So by then, even the Congress itself had also not discovered any errors in the findings of Dr. Ambedkar. Perhaps in last nine years, somebody has discovered the right figures. Perhaps! We wait with bated breath.

Where was the Mahatma? On 3rd November, 1921, he had thundered:

“Untouchability can not be given a secondary place on the programme. Without the removal of the taint Swaraj is a meaningless term. Workers should welcome social boycott and even public execration in the prosecution of their work. I consider the removal of Untouchability as a most powerful factor in the process of attainment of Swaraj.”

When it came to the crunch, his thunder became a weak squeak and the Untouchables were left high and dry. After safely handing over the burden of removing Untouchability to the Hindu Maha Sabha in 1923, his act of scavenging continued, in what the educated perceptive Untouchables now saw as a mere farce. A strange aspect of his attitude towards the Untouchables came to fore in 1924. A Satyagraha was going on at Vaikom for getting a public road in Travancore opened to the Untouchables. The large hearted Sikhs, as is their wont, opened *langar*, community kitchen for the Satyagrahis. Gandhiji objected to this.

In 1929, while Gandhiji was inactive, the Untouchables had started a movement to establish their right to take water from public wells and enter public temples. One in Mahad of district Kolaba in Bombay Presidency came to be called *Chavdar Tale* movement for drawing water from a common source. The other was in Nasik, again of Bombay Presidency for entering the Kala Ram temple.

The din and noise of the movements created an All India awareness. Thousands of men and women took part in them courting insult, injury and jail. The movement was a major land mark in the awareness campaign of the Untouchables. After thousands of years, the social outcastes were making themselves heard. No longer were they going to accept their cruel fate without a murmur of protest.

It was a movement completely indigenous to the Untouchables. *Led, organised, financed and participated by the Untouchables.* Expecting full support from the Mahatma, they went to him to seek his blessings. **Not only did he NOT give his support but condemned the Satyagraha in strong terms.** The reasoning given by Gandhiji was truly bizarre. Satyagraha was a weapon to be used only against the foreigner, he decreed. It was he, who had invented the weapon of the Satyagraha. It was he alone who knew when, where, how and against whom it was to be used. All others, who attempted to do so without his guidance, were unauthorised, illegitimate users.

By this time, Gandhiji had turned Sixty. As a true Hindu, he should have gone into *Vanprastha*, retirement from the hustle and bustle of the daily life and receded into the background for the youngsters to take over. His was to offer a sage advice, if asked for and no more.

This was not to be. Driven by Quest for Power, he soldiered on, leading the country not to Ram Rajya but to unprecedented disaster.

Political Power for the Untouchables

We shall now study the struggle of the Untouchables for Political power. Politics has today become a tainted word. Something that signifies nothing better than an unprincipled struggle for illegitimate gains that a public office affords an opportunity to earn.

It is therefore necessary to reiterate what it really means. Political power is the most precious thing in the life of a community. For it alone determines the distinction between a Ruling race and a Subject race. It is because of this that even those who believed that the British were providing Good Governance, nevertheless wanted an increased Indian participation in Governance. Good Governance can never substitute Self-Governance.

For the Untouchables, participation in political power was critical to their well-being. For thousands of years, they had been treated as a Subject race by the orthodox Hindus. The age-old prejudices against them were carried into every walk of life. Thus a Public service manned only by the Orthodox Hindus was not going to make sure that they would be able to enjoy whatever meager benefits that the existing laws provided. Dr. Ambedkar felt that this hostility could be curbed only if more and more Untouchables gained entry into the Services. This was a long drawn process. The atrocities against the Untouchables could not be allowed to go unchecked in the meanwhile. Therefore, he fought for Political Power, representation of Untouchables in the Councils and more importantly in the Provincial cabinets. This was the nature of struggle for political power that Dr. Ambedkar was involved in.

Let us now see why the mention of the Poona Pact is enough to make the Depressed Classes see red some seven decades after the event. Gandhiji was in London between September to December 1931 to participate in the Second Round Table Conference. This very act of one man attending the Conference on behalf of the entire Congress movement is itself inexplicable. Gandhiji was a leader, who inspired legions of followers, one better than the other. In the realm of Realpolitik, many of the followers were far more capable than the Mahatma himself. Neither their integrity, competence nor dedication to the cause of India was in any way suspect. Yet, the Mahatma left without anyone, leaving himself open to the charge that he could not share the lime light with anyone else. *A tendency that is also called Quest for Power.*

Be it as it may be, what did he achieve at the end of his stay in London? By his Machiavellian maneuvers, he earned himself the enmity of all other delegates. We have already seen how critical Ambedkar became of his conduct. We need now to see if his criticism was justified. What is that happened at the Round table Conference that provoked the wrath of Dr. Ambedkar?

From the very beginning, Gandhiji took a stand that the Untouchables could not be regarded as a separate entity for political purposes. This was a very queer stand for as Gandhiji was once to himself admit:

“I have endeavoured to show that there is no such thing as real minorities whose rights can become endangered by India becoming independent. **With the exception of the Depressed classes, there is no minority which is not able to take care of itself.**”

Now by his own logic, it were only the Depressed Classes that needed special protection and not anyone else. Yet, Gandhiji was bent on denying them special treatment. Muslims and Sikhs, who needed no such special treatment were not being denied a treatment that they did not need.

Why was this? Gandhiji’s convoluted argument was that the cause of the Depressed classes had been taken up by the Congress since 1920 and therefore special treatment was unnecessary. It was for their own good that he was saving them from themselves. We have seen with what sincerity the cause of the Untouchables had been served by the Congress since 1920. After having spent less than 1% of the available funds on the cause of eradication of Untouchability, after having ousted Swami Shradhanand from the Committee, after having condemned the Untouchable Satyagraha in Nasik and Mahad; the credentials of both the Mahatma and the Congress to speak in the name of Untouchables were very very suspect.

With this declaration, Gandhiji proceeded to bypass the Untouchables and close the Communal question by bringing about a settlement between the three parties, Hindus, Muslims and the Sikhs. This was really rubbing the salt in the wound. How could Dr. Ambedkar be faulted for suspecting that the special treatment for the Muslims and the Sikhs had everything to do with the fact that they both were ruling races in India, in a past, then not too distant. Whereas the Untouchables who were always trodden beneath the feet could be safely ignored under one specious plea or the other.

On the issue of the Untouchables, Gandhiji took up a most obdurate attitude and even went to the extent of trying to strike a deal with the Muslims behind the backs of everyone. In this deal, Gandhiji offered the Muslims, everything they wanted provided they would back him in his stand against the Untouchables. To their eternal credit, the Muslim delegates refused to oblige him.

Many of the people, who sat in the Round Table Conference, were intellectual giants in their own rights, having a concern for the nation that was no less genuine than that of Gandhiji. This did not stop him from belittling them for being Government nominees. He did not tire of telling them that he alone as the sole representative of the Congress had come to the Table representing the people. Gandhiji forgot that in any election Jinnah or Ambedkar could win on their own merits. The fact that they were in London as the Government nominees did not detract from their personal standing. The composition of the delegates was not a state secret, when Gandhiji decided to attend the Round Table Conference. So if he was so unhappy with the presence of the Government nominees, why, one wonders, did he decide to attend it in the first place? Was it only to show to his Hindu devotees in India, that even the mighty Raj was forced to deal with him as an equal and thereby enhance his own personal aura?

Fed up with his recalcitrant attitude, the Minorities agreed to a pact between themselves. This was submitted in the Minorities Committee meeting of the 13th November 1931. Gandhiji was furious at being ignored. He attacked everyone, who had taken part in producing the Minorities pact. He reserved his special venom for the part relating to the Untouchables. In an outpouring that is the clearest demonstration of his quest for power, his naked desire to be regarded as the Undisputed leader came out in his own voice, when he said:

“I claim myself in my own person to represent the vast masses of the Untouchables. Here, I speak not only on behalf of the Congress, but I speak on my own behalf, and I claim that I would get, if there was a referendum of the Untouchables, their votes, and that I would top the poll...and therefore I want to say with all the emphasis that I can command that if I was the only person to resist this thing I would resist it with my life.”

Gandhiji had concentrated so much of his energy and attention on the question of the Untouchables that it appeared that the main purpose for which he had attended the Round Table Conference was to oppose demands of the Untouchables.

Faced with this stalemate, the Minorities Committee was adjourned *sine die*. The Prime Minister, MacDonald suggested that the delegates put in a signed requisition authorising him to arbitrate and give his decision on the communal issue. Many delegates did so including Gandhiji. Dr. Ambedkar was one of the few who did not give anything in writing to the Prime Minister. Now, they could only return home and wait for the Award.

Thus far, it is possible to see this as a matter of genuine difference of opinion between the two titans. To a certain extent, there was also jockeying for the leadership of the Untouchables. A perfectly legitimate political power play, though not certainly befitting a Mahatma. There was hardly an issue of morality.

Things have to be seen in a different light, once the principle of Arbitration was willingly accepted. Then on, it was patently immoral to try and wriggle out of a commitment given under no duress. For Gandhiji, to do so, after giving this in writing was doubly unethical from the standards of ordinary mortals, let alone the high standards of a Mahatma. Amazingly, this is exactly what he set out to do. It is important to record this immoral, unethical behaviour of Gandhiji in 1932, as we shall later see while studying the fateful events of January, 1948.

Even as his followers were courting arrest in their fight for freedom, Gandhiji's mind was occupied by other thoughts. On 11th March 1932, he wrote to the Secretary of State, Sir Samuel Hoare, reminding him of his opposition to the claim of the Untouchables. As a lawyer, he knew, once the arguments in the open court are over, any attempt to influence the Judge as he is sitting to write the judgement amounts to an act of bribery or blackmail. This is what he did, by holding out a threat of fast unto death in case; the award did not meet his expectations. The threat was dismissed and rightly so. In a stinging rebuke, Sir Hoare replied ending with “More than this I can not say. Indeed, I do not imagine you would expect me to say more.”

The Government appointed Lothian Committee toured the provinces to ascertain the condition of the Untouchables. In what remains a shameful episode, now the caste Hindus brazenly resorted to lying. As if by magic, India seemed to have eradicated Untouchability. In the United Province, the 1931 census had estimated population of the Untouchables at 12.6 million, the Provincial Government at 8.8 million but the Provincial Franchise Committee at 0.6 million!!! In Bengal too, a dramatic decline in the population of the Untouchables was noticed. It fell from 10.3 million in the census to 0.07 million!!

On 17th August 1932, the decision of the Prime Minister on communal question was announced. In essence, it gave reserved 78 seats for them in the Councils, *in which only the Untouchables were to be entitled to vote*. A double vote was also given by which they were qualified to vote in a general constituency as well. The very next day, Gandhiji fired his salvo, announcing his intention to start a fast unto death from the 20th September unless the award was modified to his satisfaction. A more blatant piece of blackmail could not be forthcoming.

The Prime Minister responded on 8th September rebutting each and every charge of Gandhiji. He pointed out that the unity of the Hindu society was in no way affected. The Depressed classes were to vote jointly with the general electorate. A special advantage was given to them by reserving a limited number of special constituencies, where only the Untouchables could contest and vote. The right to vote in these constituencies was in addition to their normal voting rights. Moreover, these special constituencies were far less than what would have been warranted by the population of the Depressed classes. Surely, the Mahatma was not going to grudge his unfortunate brothers, this one special advantage.

This reasoned appeal fell on deaf ears. The ruthless Mahatma was indeed going to grudge the special advantage given to the Untouchables. But even as he started his fast unto death, which caused consternation all around, Gandhiji found that he had overplayed his hand. The British Cabinet refused to budge. They would not alter the Award, unless there was an agreement between the concerned parties. With this the entire burden of saving his life fell on Dr. Ambedkar's shoulders. The self-proclaimed topmost leader of the Untouchables had soon to beg for his life from this *lowly* leader. Gone was the pretence that Dr. Ambedkar did not know what was good for his community or that he did not represent his community. His position as The leader of the Untouchables was accepted as fact by everyone, placing him in the unenviable position of sacrificing the interests of his community for the sake of this scheming blackmailer.

Finally, acutely conscious of the vulnerability of the Untouchables to the attacks of the caste Hindus, Dr. Ambedkar had to bow down. Nor was his fear unfounded. After the assassination of Gandhiji in 1948, Brahmin homes were the target of vicious attacks simply because Nathuram Godse was a Brahmin. If Gandhiji was to die, the blame would have been attached to Dr. Ambedkar and the plight of the Untouchables would have been pitiable beyond compare. It is thus that the Poona Pact came to be signed.

The number of seats was increased to 151 but the Untouchables were now going to be elected by joint electorate. An arrangement that took away their right of Double vote – a vote for their own candidate as well as that for the candidate in general electorate. This right to Double vote was a priceless political asset. Dr. Ambedkar felt its loss was not compensated by an increase in the number of seats. Neither the Hindus nor the Untouchables were happy at the outcome. It was generally felt that too heavy a price had been paid for saving one life.

Apart from the merits or demerits of the pact, the whole episode shows a very unsavory side of the Mahatma. He had resorted to Satyagraha against his own kin and not against the foreigners, going against his own advice to the Untouchables in 1929. It was he who refused to abide by an Award, he was pledged to honour. It was he who decided what was right for the Untouchables. If it was he who was right and it was he who represented the Untouchables, what was the locus standi of Ambedkar to sign the pact? If it was Ambedkar, who represented the Untouchables, as he was made to sign on behalf of the Untouchables, whom was Gandhiji representing?

A more blatant case of political blackmail, lack of ethics and full of immorality is difficult to find in the entire history of the Freedom struggle and Dr. Ambedkar felt that:

“There was nothing noble in the fast. It was a foul and filthy act. The fast was not for the benefit of the Untouchables. It was against them and was the worst form of coercion against a helpless people...It was a vile and wicked act.”

No wonder then that seven decades later, the Poona Pact still rankles.

This was not the end of the story. Elections were held in 1936/37. In general, the Congress made spectacular gains. Most gratifying to it, was the fact that it won 78 seats out of a total of 151 seats reserved for the Untouchables. Thus, satisfying Gandhiji that it was he who represented the Untouchables. As a Member of the Viceroy Council, Dr. Ambedkar was later in a position to analyse the nature of this electoral victory, which was touted by the Congress as a validation of its claim that it alone represented the Indian people. Facts were:

• Total Population	272,566,150
• Total Electorate	29,874,604
• Total Votes Cast	20,500,340
• Votes in favour of Congress	9,454,635
• Votes in favour of non Congress	11,045,705

Thus in a situation, when only 11% of the population was enfranchised, when 67% of the electorate had cast vote, Congress had secured 46% of the votes. Congress thus represented the dominant voice of nationalism but it could hardly claim a monopoly when as much as 54% of the electorate had voted against it.

The number of Untouchable seats won by it was no indication of its standing in the community as is evident from facts given below:

- Total of Untouchable votes cast 1,586,456
- Votes in Favour of the Congress 290,737
- Votes against the Congress 1,295,719

It appears that Dr. Ambedkar has made a small error. He has taken into account only the votes secured by the victorious Congress candidates. The 73 Congress candidates, who lost must also have secured some votes. Even if they were taken into account, the Congress tally would not exceed 500,000; leaving more than 1 million or 66% of the Untouchables ranged solidly against it. Thus this error, if this is an error, does not invalidate his conclusion that *the majority of the Untouchables were Against the Congress, Gandhiji and the Poona Pact*. As a matter of interest, Dr. Ambedkar had floated a party Independent Labour Party, a few months before the Elections. Lacking the money and the organisational power of the Congress, it could contest only in Bombay Presidency, where 15 seats were assigned to the Untouchables. It managed to win 13 of these seats. Nor was its appeal limited to the Untouchables, as it also won 2 general seats.

The nature of this electoral victory should have cautioned the Congress but now it became drunk with the success. Its arrogance knew no bounds. It forgot its own objectives in fighting elections as explained by Nehru on 27th December 1936. He had said:

“ It seems to me that the only logical consequence of the Congress policy, as defined in our resolution and in the election manifesto, *is to have nothing to do with office and Ministry*. And deviation from this would mean a reversal of that policy. It would inevitably mean a kind of partnership with British imperialism in the exploitation of the Indian people.”

It accepted Office and thereby became a partner with British imperialism in the exploitation of the Indian people. It refused to share power with the Muslim League as we have already seen. Its insistence that it could not share power with the League unless they took the Congress pledge was a sham. For it also refused to share power with the Untouchables, when it had as many as 78 elected Untouchables in its party, who unlike the League had taken the Congress pledge.

It is not right that the Congress did not give any representation to the untouchables. One Untouchable, Mr. Agnibhoj was included by Dr. Khare in the Congress Ministry of the Central Province. For his pains, he was told by Gandhiji that it was wrong on his part to have raised such aspirations and ambitions in the Untouchables and it was such an act of bad judgement that he would never forgive him. Dr. Khare was to repeat this from many a public forum, without being contradicted.

As a matter of interest, Dr. Khare was the only Premier of Congress Ministries in the provinces to be sacked by the Congress High Command. Gandhiji was of the view that a Cabinet minister should be a topmost man commanding universal confidence by his intrinsic merit. Therefore, no reservation for Untouchables could be made in the Cabinets. They had to secure entry on their merits. If none of the 78 elected Untouchables were worthy of inclusion in the Cabinet on their merits, tough luck. Gandhiji naturally did not have the courage to extend the same principle of Merit that he applied to the Untouchables; to the Muslims as well.

What principles and what a stand! Did Gandhiji really understand the problems of the Untouchables – One can only wonder.

Temple Entry of the Untouchables

As in the case of his attitude towards Swaraj, Gandhiji started as a rank reactionary towards the issue of the rights of the Untouchables to enter Temples. He said:

“How is it that the Untouchables should have the right to enter all the existing temples? As long as the law of the caste and ashram has chief place in the Hindu religion, to say that every Hindu can enter every temple is a thing that is not possible today.”

This attitude changed after the Poona Pact and he supported the cause of the Untouchables to enter the temples. Let us grant that the Mahatma had come realise his attitude was wrong and that he wanted to make amends for his past mistakes. It is with this premise that we shall proceed to study the results of Gandhiji's Temple Entry Movement.

For all the hype that was generated once the Temple Entry Movement got a boost in the post Poona Pact days, what were the results? Far from encouraging, I am afraid. On 17th March 1939, one Mr. Gaikwad, a member of the Depressed Class in the Bombay Legislative Assembly sought to know how many temples had been thrown open to the Untouchables since 1932, when Gandhiji began his Temple Entry Movement. The answer given by the Congress Ministry was shocking. A total of 142 temples were thrown open, of these, as many 121 were wayside temples, which were ownerless. Not a single temple was thrown open to the Untouchables in Gujrat, the home state of Gandhiji.

The fate of Satyagraha in case of Guruvayur Temple in Malabar is equally revealing. It began on the very day; Gandhiji had started his fast, which led to the Poona Pact. 20th September 1932, one Mr. Kelappan also began a fast demanding entry of Untouchables into this temple. This fast was suspended on 1st October 1932, at the insistence of Gandhiji. On 5th November 1932, Gandhiji issued a statement that unless the temple was thrown open by 1st January 1933, he would himself advise Mr. Kelappan to begin a fast and he himself would join the fast. Meanwhile, a referendum was conducted in the Ponnani Taluka, where the temple was situated. The results showed a majority support to the Temple entry. The Trustee of the Temple refused to yield. The Mahatma changed his stance and declared on 29th December 1932, that the fast that was to begin on 1st January

1933 was indefinitely postponed to await decision of the Viceroy in respect of introduction of a bill for Temple Entry, in the Madras Legislative Assembly.

The permission for introduction of this bill was refused on the 23rd January 1933 but at the same time permission was given for introduction of another bill seeking abolition of Untouchability. Mr. Ranga Rao formally introduced this bill on the 24th March 1933. He managed to also introduce the Temple Entry bill on 30th July 1933. Initially, the Congress made a show of support to the bill. Meanwhile, Government dissolved the Assembly. With the announcement of elections, Congress took up plea that the bill could be discussed only after receiving mandate of the people. The real reason being, some of the Orthodox Hindus were seeking an undertaking that Congress would not support the bill. The fear of antagonizing an influential portion of the electorate proved to be greater than the zeal for the cause of Untouchables. Gandhiji fully supported the Congress move. On 31st August 1934, he issued a statement blaming the mover of the bill for the lack of Congress support.

What happened to the cause of the Guruvayur Temple entry Satyagraha? The Temple continued to bar the entry of the Untouchables in the lifetime of Gandhiji. He forgot his commitment to fast. No, no, he did not forget! The Mahatma had more important things to do.

By the way, what was the contribution of Dr. Ambedkar to this great social cause. When approached by Gandhiji for the cause, he posed a simple but fundamental question:

“That argument is argument of self-respect.... Is temple entry to be the final goal of advancement in the social status of the Depressed Classes in the Hindu folds? Or is it only the first step and if it is the first step, what is the ultimate goal? Temple entry as final goal, the Depressed classes will never support”

The ultimate goal was very clear to Dr, Ambedkar. It was, as he said:

“To purge it (Hinduism) of the doctrine of Chaturvarna. That is the root cause of all inequality and also the parent of the caste system and Untouchability, which are merely forms of inequality...Chaturvarna and the caste system are incompatible with the self-respect of the Depressed classes. So long as they stand to be its cardinal doctrine, the Depressed Classes must continue to be looked upon, as low...It is true that my right to agitate for the abolition of Chaturvarna and caste system will not be lost if I accept Temple Entry now. But the question is on what side will Mahatma Gandhi be at the time when the question is put. If he will be in the camp of opponents, I must tell him that I cannot be in his camp now. If he will be in my camp, he ought to be in it now.”

Gandhiji's reply was blunt. He opposed Untouchability but supported the Chaturvarna and the Caste System. He seemed to take Temple Entry as the final goal for the Untouchables to aspire for. This made the Temple Entry Movement entirely regressive. It is then no wonder that let alone, Dr. Ambedkar but no self-respecting educated Untouchable could support it.

Harijan Sevak Sangh

From the very start, the Sangh patrons made it clear that it was not going to be a disruptive, revolutionary organisation. It was going to be devoted to removing Untouchability by adopting Constructive work as its main line of work. Radical social reforms like abolition of the Caste System or Inter Dining were not going to be on its agenda.

With the help of Gandhiji, the Sangh collected some funds. The constructive works that it undertook were:

- Maintaining schools, running hostels for the Untouchable students and also giving them scholarships.
- Maintaining dispensaries to extend Medical aid to the Untouchables.
- Providing water to the untouchables by sinking new wells and repairing existing ones.
- Providing industrial training to the artisans.

These activities can hardly be faulted. They may be criticized as inadequate but not as redundant to the cause of the Untouchables. Yet, the Untouchables came to resent it. Let us try and understand, why this came about.

The first Central Board of the Harijan Sevak Sangh had eight members. Of these three including Dr. Ambedkar were untouchables. One by one, all three quit their positions. It can be contended that the resignations may have been due to personality clashes. What passes comprehension is that here after the Untouchables came to be excluded from the management of the Harijan Sevak Sangh as a matter of policy. As always, Gandhiji had an explanation to offer that offends sensibilities:

“The welfare work for the Untouchables is a penance which the Hindus have to do for the sin of Untouchability. The money has been contributed by the Hindus. From both points of views the Hindus alone must run the Sangh. Neither ethics nor rights would justify Untouchables in claiming a seat on the Board of the Sangh.”

Pray then, why were three Untouchables taken in the first Central Board. Really, the argument is so self serving and sickening that it merits no discussion. How can one then fault Dr, Ambedkar, when he suspected that all that the Sangh sought to achieve was to make the Untouchables a pliant tool of Congress.

Time and again, a common theme comes to fore. Gandhiji staked his life to secure the Poona Pact but ensured that the Untouchables found no place in the Provincial Cabinets. He supported the Temple Entry Movement but only as a final goal of the Untouchables. He founded the Harijan Sevak Sangh but took care to exclude the very people, who were supposed to be its beneficiary from its management.

His attitude reeks of Condensation and Pity; not Empathy. The Sangh could not but arouse hostility of the very people, it was supposed to serve.

Gandhiji and The Untouchables

There was a deep and fundamental flaw in the philosophy of Gandhiji towards the Untouchables. He considered Untouchability as a sin. He, however supported the Chaturvarna and the Caste System **based on birth.**

One can seek to rationalise by pointing out the reality that any society needs division of labour and duties. There is no society in the world that does not have such divisions. The so called socialist utopia, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic that was held up as a symbol of a Class less wonder, disintegrated like a pack of cards in our own life time.

This comparison is of course misleading. For, in no society other than the Hindu society, the division of labour and duties is so rigidly frozen by the accident of birth. In no society other than the Hindu, have a set of people been so brutally treated as the Untouchables, in the name of their own salvation. For all the while, the Untouchables were told to submit to all the heartless indignities as the only way to ensure that their past sins would be wiped away. Their hardships, they were told were the price for a better life in the next birth. No other society other than the Hindu, kept for itself an army of 60 million slaves for the service of 240 million people in the name of religion.

It is time to see, if this was a practice sanctified by religion or was a perversion of Hindu religion. Bhagwat Gita, the holy Hindu scripture does propound the Caste system but with two important riders. The first being that it makes a special point of pointing out that each man's Caste is determined by his innate qualities. The second logically being that the profession of a person shall also be as per his innate qualities.

By these reasoned religious dictum, it follows that the practice that had evolved in the Hindu society of freezing everyone's caste and profession by the accident of birth was a perversion of the real Hindu religion. As a devout Hindu Gandhiji claimed to have been deeply influenced by Bhagwat Gita. It was therefore his duty both as a man of religion and a Mahatma to point out the path of the true religion.

He did neither. He accepted the perverted practice of Chaturvarna and the Caste System based on birth and sought to introduce his own peculiar modifications. He decreed that the practice of denying knowledge to all other than the Brahmins was not correct. Everybody had equal right to education. So far so good. Now comes the peculiar Gandhi logic. He says that while everyone may learn the trade of his liking, he could not make them a way of earning a livelihood.

In other words, Dr. Ambedkar was free to learn the vocation of a lawyer but he could not practise law. He, according to the Gandhi decree had to confine himself to scavenging for earning a living; for that was his hereditary profession.

The perverted Caste System imposed some senseless restrictions. Two of them being designed to perpetuate division on a permanent basis. One was a bar on Inter caste dining. The second being a bar on Inter caste marriage.

A Brahmin was deemed to become polluted if his food was touched by a member of another caste. Gandhiji supported this concept as he was against the practice of Inter Caste dining. In support of this obnoxious ban, he went to the ridiculous extent of stating that:

“Taking food is as dirty an act as answering the call of the nature. The only difference is that after answering the call of the nature we get peace while after eating we get discomfort. Just as we perform the act of answering the call of the nature in seclusion so also the act of taking food must be done in seclusion”

On the other ban of Inter Caste marriage, Gandhiji had these gems of wisdom to offer:

“In India children of brothers do not intermarry.” Pray, what is so uniquely Indian about this, one wonders. He went on to ask “Do they cease to love each other because they do not intermarry ?” And concluded by giving his verdict:

“The Caste System can not be said to be bad because it does not allow interdining or intermarriage between the different castes, Caste is another name for control. Caste puts a limit on enjoyment. Caste does not allow a person to transgress caste limits in pursuit of his enjoyment. That is the meaning of such caste restrictions as interdining and intermarriage.”

It is difficult to argue with a man holding such views. For as Dr. Ambedkar says:

“It is not enough to say that it is an argument of a cave man. It is really an argument of a mad man.”

Gandhiji kept on saying that Caste System or Varna System, if you will, by birth was a natural scheme of things. Such divisive practices as bar on Interdining, Intermarriages were right and proper. A person had to follow his hereditary profession, irrespective of what he may have learnt. But he held that Untouchability was a Sin. In effect, he was really saying that the Untouchables or the Ati Shudras, should be treated as Shudras, who suffered many disadvantages but did not suffer from this one curse. Thus in the Gandhi scheme of things for the Untouchables, no fundamental change was envisaged. All that was to happen was that they would suffer from one disadvantage less. That is all.

We have seen how he was willing to wound the Imperial demon but never really prepared to slay it. In the very same manner, he was willing to give offense to the Orthodox Hindu beliefs but never really prepared to antagonise them to the point of making them reject his leadership.

It is worth examining if given the state of the Hindu society, was this the most a Hindu leader could do in that milieu. Is that one consideration that we can extend to the Mahatma?

Let us see what Savarkar was up to after his release from Ratnagiri jail in 1924. How did he utilise his time up to 1937, when all his restrictions were finally removed and he became a free man after 27 long years? What did he do in this interval of 13 years?

He too worked for eradication of Untouchability. His approach was far more humane. He not only supported the cause of Temple Entry but also himself led Untouchables into the precincts of Vitobha temple. Not content with this, he had one new temple built, the Patit Pavan temple, where all Hindus regardless of their caste could come together for prayers. Unlike Gandhiji, he had no hesitation in supporting the cause of Kala Ram Temple Satyagraha. Several social functions were organised where the Untouchable ladies were invited to participate.

It was in Ratnagiri, under the leadership of Savarkar that the first All Hindu public dinner was held in 1930. All castes were invited to come and eat together in one place. Savarkar also promoted the cause of Inter caste marriages. In this, he proceeded cautiously as some Untouchables were demanding Brahmin girls in marriage almost by force.

For Savarkar, there was no question of a belief in a Caste System, by birth or otherwise. He felt that demolition of the Caste System itself was an essential prerequisite for progress of the Hindu society.

He held views that were far more socially progressive than that of the Mahatma. Not only did he hold them but he also worked for their realization. Thereby demonstrating that even a man who faced several restrictions on his personal freedom could then do far more socially beneficial work. Thus, it is not possible to extend even the consideration to the Mahatma, that what he did was the most that could be then done.

In conclusion, what answer shall be give to our question: “Did the Mahatma Really Work for the Welfare of the Untouchables?”

One is left wondering, what is the Real Work that he did for the Untouchables!!

Dear readers, I have one confession to make about the three questions that I raised and the answers that I provided. I make no claim that these represent my original contribution to the Intellectual Capital of the country. These arise as a natural consequence of reading Dr. Ambedkar’s writings, published in 1990 by a Congress Government in Maharashtra.

If what Dr. Ambedkar has written is false, he can have no claim to our affection as the Father of the Indian Constitution. If what he has written is right, at the very least Gandhiji can not be called the Father of the Nation. It can not be that Dr. Ambedkar can be called the Father of the Indian Constitution, a Bharat Ratna and also Gandhiji be called the Father of the Nation. Only one can be true.

I would unhesitatingly vote in favour of Dr. Ambedkar, for he provides reasons I can understand, for his devotion to the cause of the Untouchables has withstood the test of time. Whom would you vote for, dear friends? I leave you to decide.

Chapter III-9

British Raj and Daridrarayan

You would recall, dear readers that we had embarked on a quest to see whether the British rule in India was **Legal and Good**. You would agree that this has been so far partially answered. That it was illegal occupation by a race alien in blood, in colour, in habits, in feelings and in everything to the inhabitants of the country, is a fact that I hope, has been established beyond doubt.

It is possible that notwithstanding the illegal nature of its origin, the Rule was Good. The rule of law, eradication of several social evils like Sati, Political Unity, construction of Railways, the spread of English Language are several features that are used to say that on the balance the British Rule in India was Good. If it really was Good then that would explain the half hearted attempts of Gandhiji to drive them fully away from this country.

There is no doubt that the Bharatiya society as it stood in the late eighteenth century stood to gain in several ways by an interaction with the dynamic English society. They have several good habits that we have not learnt despite a close interaction for well over two hundred years. For this, we have no one to blame but ourselves. The fact remains that any interaction between two societies can be mutually beneficial only if it happens on equal footing. The British rule in India was an interaction between a Ruling Race and a Subject Race. It could bring nothing but ruin to the Subject race.

True, before 1857, several well-meaning social measures were enacted, This zeal for social reformation ended after the upheaval of 1857. So during the period of illegal occupation that started from the 11th of May 1857, there are no social reforms to talk of.

Political unity is another much touted benevolent result that is talked about. Well upto 1857, there was at least the notion of One national Sovereign accepted universally – the Moghul Emperor. True, the British brought the Indian Sub Continent and even Burma and Aden under one administrative unit for their own convenience. When it suited them, they were quick to cut off the parts. For instance, Burma was separated in 1935. Aden in 1947. That is not all, one must not lose sight of the fact that in 1947, the British India was partitioned into two self governing domains – India and Pakistan. In addition as many as five hundred sixty five Maharajas, Nawabs, Princes and Zamindars were also given Paramountcy that they had never enjoyed. So what the British left behind were some 567 independent states. What a political unity they created!

If the newborn 565 states, the relics of 1857 did not mushroom into independent ulcers, it is to no credit of the Raj. The credit goes to the mature leadership of India and Pakistan. Nor would they have waited, if our leaders had not solved the problem fast enough. As Attlee himself had announced, they were not going to stay in India beyond June 1948 – come what may. There was one state where the Indian and Pakistani claims clashed. It is this state – the state of Jammu and Kashmir, that has remained a festering wound, contributing much to the poisonous relations between the neighbours. Imagine then, what

would have been the state of this subcontinent if we had lived with 567 Independent states, for that is what the British had left behind. The British claim that they caused Political unity of the Indian sub continent is thus demonstrably false claim

Construction of Railways. Let us get one thing straight. It was constructed out of Indian revenue without the British Government contributing a farthing. The British capitalists who invested their money were guaranteed returns in excess of the Interest that they would have otherwise got by keeping their money in London banks. The guarantees were met purely out of Indian revenue. There is more to the Railway story but for the time being let us realise one thing. The British did us no favour by constructing Railways. Would we still have had the Railways if the British rule had not been established? Well. I am typing this on 233 MHz PII computer, which came to India without the benevolent presence of the British rule. Nor was the nuclear test conducted by British scientists, neither have the Indian Satellite launches got anything to do with the British brains.

Ah, ha! The English language. Don't the Indians use this to communicate even with each other? Well – Yes, I must admit. But I also know that some of the most dynamic economies in the world, Japan, Korea and China have very low levels of English literacy. In any case, the 1941 census in India showed an overall literacy level of only 12%. Those, who knew English probably not numbered more than 1%. So even assuming that knowing English is beneficial, the benefit was restricted to a miniscule elite. That can hardly be used to say that the British rule was good.

Lest my friends jump on me and accuse me of ignoring the beneficial impact of the introduction of rule of law, that I had myself put as the first item on the list. As son of a District Judge, I can hardly forget memories of my father wearing a smart looking black coat complete with a tie and pedaling off to the Court on the single bicycle we had. The same cycle that I later used to go to the school. This sounds like another world today even to my own daughters, who go to the school in an airconditioned car. If I had even dreamt of this luxury as a child, my poor father would have been scandalized. For him, scarcity of resources was the necessary evil that an honest judge had to face- something to be proud of. Well, since I am not a Judge but a mere manager, my father, had he been alive today, would have taken legitimate pride in the little luxury that I am able to provide for his grand daughters. So rule of law is something, I would be the last person to ignore.

My contention is simply that anything and everything that the British introduced in the country was geared to meet their economic objective. If the Indians got any benefit, it was purely incidental. The Rule of Law was no exception. Before this raises a flurry of protests, let us use the criterion that Gandhiji himself used to judge anything. Its impact on the poorest of poor – the Daridrinayan.

In 1770, soon after assumption of the Diwani by Clive, Bengal was affected by a most severe famine in which some 10 million people died of hunger. In all during the entire ninety year period from 1765 to 1858, when the East India company was legally the Diwan of the Moghul Emperor, the country experienced some twelve famines and four severe scarcities, which took a heavy toll of human life. The numbers are not known but

the deaths have been large enough to have caused a check on the population. Death by hunger, these words do not convey the agony of slow and painful lingering death, one of the worst ways for anyone to die. Picture, yourself watching this:

“The young woman of twenty looked old far beyond her age. Her face turned pale as she felt life ebbing out of the baby, who was clinging to her. In desperation, she thrust the baby’s lips towards the wrinkled nipples of her shrunken breast. It made some feeble attempts to suck a few drops of milk. The breast would not yield a drop. How could it, when not a morsel of food had entered the skeleton on which it hung, during the last fifteen days? Gradually, the sucking sound stopped and with a spasm of final agony, the baby went limp. The mother wanted to cry but the effort was too much. In soundless agony, she looked at her husband, who averted her gaze and then motioned her to move on. Grief was a luxury, they could not afford. They still had two more children and their own body to feed. They had to find food.

Wordlessly, the woman got up. Her child had been so alive a few months ago. His laughter echoed in her ears. His playful gestures swam before her now empty eyes. All that remained of him was a skeleton and she was not in a position to even arrange for a decent burial. Suddenly a shriek brought her to life. In the distance, she could see her other two children grappling with a street dog for a Chapati that had been thrown out of a house. The snarling, growling dog went for the jugular vein. She dropped the dead body and ran, partly to save her children, partly animated by sight of the food.

Later, she remembered her dead baby and became desolate with the thought that his body had been devoured by the vultures and dogs. She need not have worried. There were enough dead bodies going around. The baby’s small shrunken body with hardly a piece of flesh on it, did not interest even the vultures.”

This is no piece of fiction. This was the way some 50 million, 100 million, God alone knows how many people died in the run up to 1857.

Who were these people, who died? Who but the poorest of the poor. Only the poorest of poor could die this death. They had always lived on the edge of starvation. All they could do was to work in the day and buy food with money earned in the evening. The famine robbed them of their livelihood even as the traders drove up the price by hoarding. Caught in the pincer of declining income and increasing prices, they had to, as the managers would call it, optimize their resources. In other words, stop feeding all the hands, which could not contribute to getting food. In simple English, murder the Infants.

Where was the Diwan, who had by now also usurped the function of Nizamut? He ensured that the full heavy hand of the Law fell on any one, who demanded any remission of revenue demands due to these calamities. He also ensured that in line with the principles of Free Trade, no one dared to interrupt the Market forces. Food prices had to be determined by the Market Mechanism, Law of Demand and Supply alone. Nor could of course, he provide food at lesser prices to the hungry millions. For that would have meant leakage of revenue for unproductive purposes. The most ardent of free

market forces and proponents of lessening the role of Government would today feel embarrassed by this behavior. Not so, the East India Company. Not so, those, who hold the British rule as Good. Oh, yes! It is stop this rapacious loot was that the British Crown took over the reins. Surely, the things got better. Just, how much better did the things get, can be seen from the table given below:

**Famine Deaths in India
1860 - 1920**

Year	Affected Region	Area in sq miles	Affected			Number of Deaths	
			Population	%	No.s		
1860-61	N.W.Province, Punjab, Rajesthan, Kutch	27,427	13,000,000	15		2,000,000	
1862	Deccan	N.A.	N.A.			N.A.	
1866-67	Orissa	7,649	3,015,826	27		814,469	
	Bihar	26,191	7,739,717	2		135,676	
	Ganjam	6,400	1,100,000	1		10,898	
			11,855,543	8		961,043	
1868-70	N.W. Province	29,013	10,269,200	1		62,772	
	Rajasthan	2,671	426,000	25		106,500	
	Central Province	N.A.	N.A.			250,000	
	Total		21,000,000	2		419,272	
1873-74	Bengal, Bihar, Bundelkhand	N.A.	17,000,000	7		1,253,182	
1876-8	Madras,Mysore, Bombay & Hydrabad	204,355	49,590,147	9		4,300,000	
1877-78	N.W. Province, Kashmir	N.A.	N.A.			1,250,000	
1888-9	Ganjam	3,000	<i>515,625</i>	29		150,000	
	Orissa		1,250,000	8		<i>100,516</i>	
	North Bihar	3,000	<i>886,532</i>	8		<i>71,288</i>	
			2,652,157	12		321,804	
1896-97	N.W. Provinces, Bengal, Bombay, Madras	504,940	96,931,000	5		5,150,000	
	Central Provinces, Berar, Hydrabad						
	Delhi, parts of central India, N.W.						
	Rajasthan						
1899-1900	Central Provinces, Bombay, Berar	475,000	59,500,000	7		<i>4,034,893</i>	
	Hydrabad, Rajasthan, central India						
	Baroda, Kutch, Kathiawar, E. Punjab						
1905-6	Bombay	N.A.	N.A.			235,062	
1905-6	Bundelkhand	N.A.	N.A.			N.A.	
1906-7	North Bihar	2,855	13,000,000	7		<i>881,573</i>	
1907-8	N.W. Province, Madras, Bengal, Central	N.A.	50,000,000	7		<i>3,390,667</i>	
	Province and Bombay						
			334,528,846	7		24,197,496	

Figs in Italics are derived figures based on the past trends.

By the time, Gandhi era started in India, some 24 million people had died of hunger in merciful reign of the British Crown. But even this list is not complete. For many famine

deaths were put off as death due to diseases. Take 1918, when the Mahatma was very much in India. Some 15 million people were said to have died of the Influenza. This was the year when food grain production dropped from 57 million tons to a mere 39 million, in other words a drop of 18 million tons or almost by a third. The prices of Wheat and Rice increased by 66%, while that of Jowar, the staple food of the poor increased by – hold your breath -127%. 15 million people died. Not because of hunger but because they were dirty and therefore died of Influenza. What a story and what a Mahatma, who alone knew the soul of India, who believed this tale.

Even then, did the number of famine deaths not drop dramatically? After all, some 100 million people had died of hunger in the rule of East India Company. British rule killed only half the number. What an improvement, what a good rule!! What could the Crown do, if this country was so poor? Well, for one, it could reduce the home charges, that were being debited on this country.

The Home Charges 1861-1920

	Interest on	Other	Military	Pensions	Other	Stores	Total
	Railways and	Interest			Civil		
	Irrigation						
1861-1875							
Annual in Pounds	3.5	2.2	2.6	0.9	0.2	1.1	10.5
Annual in Rupees	35.0	22.0	26.0	9.0	2.0	11.0	105.0
Total in Pounds	52.5	33.0	39.0	13.5	3.0	16.5	157.5
Total in Rupees	525.0	330.0	390.0	135.0	30.0	165.0	1,575.0
1876-1898							
Annual in Pounds	5.3	2.6	3.5	1.7	0.6	1.2	14.9
Annual in Rupees	53.0	26.0	35.0	17.0	6.0	12.0	149.0
Total in Pounds	121.9	59.8	80.5	39.1	13.8	27.6	342.7
Total in Rupees	1,219.0	598.0	805.0	391.0	138.0	276.0	3,427.0
1899-1913							
Annual in Pounds	6.9	2.5	4.2	2.3	0.2	1.6	17.7
Annual in Rupees	103.5	37.5	63.0	34.5	3.0	24.0	265.5
Total in Pounds	103.5	37.5	63.0	34.5	3.0	24.0	265.5
Total in Rupees	1,552.5	562.5	945.0	517.5	45.0	360.0	3,982.5
1914-1920							
Annual in Pounds	9.6	3.5	4.7	2.4	0.2	2.9	23.3
Annual in Rupees	144.0	52.5	70.5	36.0	3.0	43.5	349.5
Total in Pounds	67.2	24.5	32.9	16.8	1.4	20.3	163.1
Total in Rupees	1,008.0	367.5	493.5	252.0	21.0	304.5	2,446.5
Grand Total in Pounds							
Grand Total in Rupees	4,304.5	1,858.0	2,633.5	1,295.5	234.0	1,105.5	11,431.0

It was in 1909 that Madan Lal Dhingra shot Colonel Wyllie. In his statement, that is widely known to have been drafted by Savarkar, he said;

“I hold the English responsible for the murder of eighty million of Indian people.” He shot Wyllie because, “The Englishmen who goes out to India and gets £ 100 a month, that simply means he passes a death sentence on a thousand of my poor countrymen”

Was he exaggerating? We already know of the 24 million deaths by hunger, add to it those by malnutrition and diseases, such as those in 1918 and the figure would easily reach 50 million. So the eighty million figure was far closer to truth. Take Savarkar’s statement stated by Dhingra on the Englishmen who go out to India and thereby pass a death sentence on thousands, was it a statement of a mad man? Perhaps, for :

- If the British repatriated Rs 11,431 million from this poor country, it is because they did such a wonderful job in building up the infrastructure in this country such as the Railways and Canals.
- If the Crown spent Rs 1,295 million on the pension, it is because its servants did a wonderful job of maintaining peace, law and order.
- It spent Rs 330 million on Famine relief. The important thing is that it spent the money. The principle is more important than small details like the fact that this sum was only a quarter of the money spent on pensions.

What a wonderful Government. Both Madan Lal and his Guru Savarkar were stark raving mad, who were not fit to live in a civilised society. They deserved to be either hanged or locked away in Andaman.

What about those poor 24 million or may be 50 million souls who died of hunger while the benevolent Government was so busy in dealing with the mad men like the Savarkar, Dhingra duo. That was their Karma. Nothing more.

How was the karma of Bharat shaped during the British rule? Take for instance the construction of the Great Indian Railways. As we noted earlier, the Government of Great Britain did not spend a farthing. The whole project was funded by the Indian revenues. British capital was attracted by offering guarantee of 5% on the capital invested. The interest rate in Great Britain was 3% at the time and therefore a minimum of 5% was a very attractive proposition indeed.

By 1869, a total of 4,225 miles were constructed at a cost of Rs 890 million for which 44 million Rupees of interest had to be paid annually. Thus for every mile of track laid, India paid over Rs 200,000/- by way of cost and over Rs 10,000/- per year as interest. The network increased to 25,000 miles by 1900. This massive expansion left little money for other things like Irrigation projects, which could have provided a lasting protection against Famine.

The construction of the rail network that was being funded by Indian money did not lead to industrialization of the country for all items were procured from England. Between 1865 to 1945, the Railways needed some 12,700 steam engines. Of these 12,000 were imported from England.

The freight rates of Indian railways were high and had some peculiar features. There were three different types of rebates, which allowed for substantial reductions in the freight rate. These were:

- Shipments over long distances
- Shipment to or from one of the big ports
- Shipments that did not need to be transferred from one line to another (e.g. from East Indian railways to Great India Peninsular Railways)

Thus long distance grain shipment from Northern India to Calcutta or shipments of imported industrial goods from Calcutta to Northern India benefited from favourable rates, whereas short hauls in the interior would be much more expensive, as none of the rebates were applicable. The freight-rate structure therefore encouraged linkages with the world market and worked against regional integration within India.

The Railways made it possible for an increase in the export of grains, which increased from 3 million tones per year in 1880 to 10 million tones in 1900. The export of Rice increased from an average of Rs 60 million in 1870 to Rs 176 million in 1900. Even as 24 million people died of hunger between 1860 –1920, Railways allowed India to export rice worth Rs 7,000 million. Much of this was a forced sale. For the Indian agriculturists was perennially in debt. This enabled the money lender to force him to sell the rice stored for a rainy day, for the Railway provided the money lender with a easy and cheap way of transporting it out to the world market. As the moneylender was in most cases, also the local grain merchant, he could then jack up his prices, knowing well that the Farmer had to buy it, for he had none in the house. No wonder, with introduction of Railway, the prices of goods increased. The impact of Railway on the local price levels can be seen in the Table below:

Influence of the Railway Connection on Rice Prices

	Average Price (Seers per Rupee)		% Increase in Price
	Before Railway	After Railway	
Dinajpur/Sadar	30.8	20.2	52
Mymensingh/Nasirabad	20.3	13.7	48

The expansion of the Railway network greatly boosted the Indian exports. Now, that should have been a cause for rejoicing. But these were not normal exports. No country in the world that cared even a bit for the welfare of its people would export food grains, when million were dying of hunger within its borders. But that is what the British Government encouraged. For India's foreign trade was primarily a mechanism for the transfer of Indian money abroad, so that Sterling Pounds could be obtained for payment of the Home charges. This is the only reason; India under the British always had an export surplus. Indeed, the very word Export came to be associated with Exploitation.

There was one way that the Government in India could have raised resources to do something more for the purpose of famine relief. That is to have raised duties on imports. That was a taboo, for this would have hurt the economic interests of the British Exporters. On this there was a complete unanimity in the Governing Class of Great Britain. Once the Viceroy in India had been silly enough to do so. Promptly, in July 1877, the House of Commons passed a resolution *without Division* calling for repeal without delay of duties levied upon cotton manufactures imported into India. The measure called for a revenue loss of £ 200,000; a loss that could be scarcely be borne by the Indian Administration. The economic situation was so precarious that measures for protection of the country against famine had to be suspended. As Fawcett commented:

“No one for a moment will even pretend to say that in the present state of Indian finances, the idea would have been entertained of remitting these duties if the finances of India were administered in the interest of this country alone....It may be urged that India in the present state of her finances cannot possibly do without the additional revenue which is obtained from the taxes imposed for the creation of a Famine Fund. But if this be so, then it is far better at once to recognise the fact that these taxes have not been applied for the creation of a Famine Fund but that they are required for the general purposes of the Indian Government; and amongst these purpose, it is particularly to be noted that the one which is considered of most pressing urgency is to reduce duties on Cotton Goods.”

The issue created such a furore that the Viceroy found himself faced with a virtual rebellion from his Council. Undeterred, he granted the exemption under Section 23 of the Sea Custom Act. Some 5 million people died of hunger in India during this period. But that was their karma – to lay down their life for the lofty cause of the mill owners in Manchester.

The Famine Relief Fund created out of a special tax on the Indian taxpayers, was to have a chequered history. Some Rs 500 million had been put in this fund by 1924. Of this 47% were spent on direct relief, 28% on retiring public debt, 21% on irrigation and balance 4% on Railways. The Surplus of Income over Expenditure that this fund allowed the Government to show, came in very handy to remove the duty on Cotton Goods completely by 1882. A deficit forced the Government to impose some duties in 1884 but Cotton Goods remained exempt. Such was the tender care that the Government was extending to its beloved British exporters. Where was the energy or money left to take care of such small things as deaths of the Niggers by hunger?

The British did unify the law of the land and the British courts proliferated. Even in this the core objective of making money was not lost sight of. The officials collected court fees that did not only pay for the judicial establishment but yielded handsome revenue to the Government. If in the process, the Poorest of Poor got excluded from the legal process, that was their bad luck. For nothing comes free in life.

By 1881, the real face of the British Rule in India was visible to all. Dadabhai Naoroji had once welcomed the British rule in India for the safety and peace that it had created in India. On 4th January 1881, he bitterly attacked the British Rule. He said:

“From England’s own grasp, there is no security of property at all, and as a consequence no security of life. India’s property is not secure. What is secure and well secure is, that England is perfectly safe and secure, and does so with perfect security, to carry away from India and to eat up in India, her property at the present rate of some £ 30,000,000 or £ 40,000,000 a year.

The reality therefore is, that the policy of English rule as it is (not as it can and should be) is an everlasting, unceasing and everyday invasion, utterly, though gradually, destroying the country....a course which has made England the worst foreign invader she had the misfortune to have...I therefore venture to submit that India does not enjoy security of her property and life and also moreover of ‘Knowledge’ or ‘Wisdom’. To millions in India, life is simply ‘half feeding’ or starvation, or famines and disease.”

In 1881, Dadabhai, still believed that the British rule in India was UnBritish. He therefore left for England to convince its people of the terrible injustice that was being done to India. He spent 25 years of his life, only to come back disappointed. As Tilak said on 2nd January 1907:

“He has come here at the age of 82 to tell us that he is bitterly disappointed...to convert the whole electorate of England to your opinion and then to get indirect pressure to bear upon the Members of Parliament, they turn to return a Cabinet favourable to India and the Cabinet to bring pressure on the bureaucracy to yield-we say this is hopeless... We shall not assist them fighting beyond the frontiers or outside India with Indian blood and money. We shall not assist them in carrying on the administration of justice. We shall have our own courts, and when time comes we shall not pay taxes. Can you do that by your united efforts? **If you can, you are free tomorrow.**”

Absolute Political Independence became the battle cry of the revolutionaries for the simple reason that anything else was not in the interests of the Daridrarayan, the Poorest of Poor. It was not a lofty ideal that no one could understand. It was something that was of great relevance in the day to day life of Poorest of Poor. It was Absolute Political Independence alone that was going to free them from the curse of death by hunger. It was for this cause that the revolutionaries gave their all. They died with a smile on their face confident in the belief that their sacrifice would help the cause of the Poorest of Poor.

Why was Gandhiji so soft on the British? Why did he keep on resisting the demand for Absolute Political Independence? For, as we have seen by 1907, itself the moderate and truly great leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji, had seen through the British game. By 1920, when Gandhi era started, many more things had happened. The gifting of £ 100 million pounds from the Indian revenue to the British even as the Indian Government had no money to help the 15 million people, who were dying of hunger in the famine of 1918. Jallianwala Bagh massacre, use of airplanes to gun civilian population in Punjab. How could anyone be so naïve, so foolish as not to see that the British rule in India was not only illegal but also inherently evil?

The Famine deaths were not a state secret. The drain of home charges was a fact for all to see. Fat salaries being paid to the Crown servants were well known. The close connection between the deliberate British policies and the misery, starvation and death of millions of the Poorest of Poor was for anyone to see.

The tragic fact remains that a Mahatma, a half-naked fakir, who liked to believe that he alone knew the soul of Bharat, remained blind to the cause of Daridrinarayan. Or else, he would not have put roadblocks in the path of Absolute Political Independence. Or else, he would not have insisted that the true salvation of Bharat lay only along the path of Absolute Non Violence. Or else, he would not have condemned the Revolutionaries as Sinners, merely because they were advocating use of selective violence to attain the Goal of Absolute Political Independence. A Violence that was to further the cause of the Poorest of Poor. The violence that they unleashed was in any case far far less than that let loose by the tyranny of the British rule.

So who then knew the Soul of Bharat. Tilak, Savarkar, Subhas Bose and the legion of Revolutionaries who fought for the cause of Absolute Political Independence. Or was it Gandhiji, who kept on fighting shy of demanding it. The answer is all too evident.

Oh! We have left the story of Subhas Bose incomplete. The last we talked about him was that he had been exiled to Europe to recover from the dreaded Tuberculosis, that had become his companion in the British prison. He returned in 1936 to become the President of Congress in 1938. By 1939, he had become a *Persona non grata* in the very same organisation. What did Subhas Bose do? Did he sell his soul to the devil? Did he betray the cause of Independence? Did he commit a crime? We all know that the worst enemies of Subhas Bose would not dream of levying these allegations. Then what did he do? Why did the full wrath of the Mahatma fall on this immensely popular public hero? If there is one part of the Gandhi era that leaves even the die hard Gandhi followers fumbling for a coherent answer, it is his treatment of Subhas Bose in 1939. So much so that the much acclaimed film Gandhi sidestepped the issue by pretending that Subhas Bose did not exist. Movies can take these liberties with facts. We can not. Let us now take a look at this part of the story. This sorry episode shows the Mahatma's Quest for Power as nothing else does so clearly.

Chapter III – 10

Quest for Power Exposed Mahatma's Treatment of Subhas Bose

On 9th May 1933, the political elite in Congress was deeply perturbed by the stinging rebuttal of the very efficacy of the Gandhi style of leadership. The criticism cut to the wound for it came from Vitthalbahi Patel, the elder brother of Sardar Patel, a close associate of Gandhiji and himself a veteran of the freedom struggle. Subhas Bose had co-signed the letter debunking Gandhi claims that Independence could be obtained by Change of Heart of the British. With both these leaders convalescing in Europe, there was little that the Congress leadership could but gnaw its teeth in frustration.

By 22nd October 1933, Vitthalbhai Patel had passed away, leaving Subhas Bose alone to face the pain of exile. In December, Bose attended a function of the Italian Oriental Institute. Mussolini took keen interest in this young foe of the British. Subhas Bose was keen to enlist as many allies as possible in fight against the British Imperialism, which to him was inherently evil for the Indian people. Three meetings took place between them. In his trip to Europe, Jawahar Lal Nehru refused to meet the Italian dictator. He refused to sully his sensibilities by meeting a man he abhorred even if he could be of some help in the cause of Independence. Only those like Gandhiji, who were content to live in the make believe world of the utility of the British rule for India could afford to put their personal preferences before the interests of the nation. The divergence in the ways of Jawahar Lal Nehru and Subhas Bose was to become more and more pronounced as the time went by. The erstwhile comrades in pursuing the cause of Absolute Political Independence were to drift apart irrevocably.

In 1934, he published his book, "The Indian Struggle, 1920-1934". During the writing of his book, he got engaged and married to his secretary Emily. They were to have an only child, a daughter born on 29th November 1942, now a middle aged lady settled in Germany. She was named after the daughter of the famed Italian revolutionary Garibaldi – Anita. This was then still in future. For the time being, a personal tragedy awaited Subhas. His father died on 2nd December 1934, before the son could reach him. He was allowed to spend a bare seven days with his grieving family in India, bound by all kinds of restrictions before being forced to go back to Europe.

In 1935, he kept on meeting prominent people in Europe in his bid to garner support for the Indian cause. He is reported to have met Hitler in this period though this has not been authenticated. The reconstruction of a war torn Germany deeply impressed him but at no stage was he ever enamoured of its Racist ideology. Fascist Duke, the Nazi Fuherer, Subhas Bose would travel to the Devil himself if he could be of any use in freeing India. Before, we turn hyper critical of this, it is worth recalling that as late as 1938, the British themselves were bent on wooing the Germans. How could it be right when the British did this and suddenly become wrong and immoral when done by Subhas Bose, is a puzzle that is best left for the Mahatma and his devoted followers to reconcile.

Ideological differences apart, Subhas Bose remained emotionally close to Nehru. He was in Badenwayer looking after the ailing Kamala Nehru, who was in her last leg of the journey on earth. He was at hand to console the distraught Nehru and his daughter Indira at the untimely death of this brave lady on 28th February 1936.

By now, Subhas had become tired of being in exile. He had been away from his beloved Motherland for long. Right through his stay, the Congress had persistently refused to give him the approval to be considered its Official Representative. Nor did he have any reservoir of money to back up his activities. He had done what he could in Europe. Now, he announced his intentions of returning to India disregarding the medical opinion to the contrary, for he was still not too well. The announcement threw the Raj in a tizzy. It began to give out that Subhas Bose could not be allowed to return as he was closely allied with the Revolutionaries. Paying no heed to the popular outrage, Subhas was interned on the day that he returned to India – 8th April 1936. He was freed only a year later, on the 17th April 1937.

A free tiger, Subhas came to haunt not only the Raj but also the Congress. Gandhiji had renounced his membership of Congress in 1934 itself but remained its 'Permanent Super President'. Nothing of note happened without his approval. Subhas had to be tamed. What could be better than to make him the President of Congress so that the 'Permanent Super President', could keep a close watch on his activities. The man who was not considered worthy of being even a member of the Working Committee in Lahore and Karachi, a man who denied the privilege of being considered its representative in Europe, was now suddenly became fit to be its President. On 19th February 1938, he came to be anointed as the President under the watchful eyes of the Mahatma in Haripur.

Gandhiji's hope that Subhas would mellow under the weight of the throne was soon belied. The tiger would not be caged but began to roar as few Congress Presidents had even dreamt of before. The cause of Absolute Political Independence received a big boost after a long time. The War clouds in the skies of Europe could be seen by all. This was not an opportunity to be missed. Subhas Bose was soon in touch with Italy and Germany through their diplomats in India reviving his contacts made while in Europe. The moralist Mahatma was appalled. The Congress President moved fast to appoint a national Planning Committee for industrialization of the country. The Mahatma dream of a self reliant village republic came to be formally abandoned by the Congress.

Worse was to follow. Ras Bihari Bose, the famed revolutionary in exile in Japan since the late 1910s was in touch with the Congress President advising him to make Congress give up the notion of attaining Independence solely through the moral force of Non Violence. The last straw for the Mahatma must have come when Subhas Bose had no hesitation in meeting Savarkar, the arch rival of the Mahatma since the days of India House in 1905. He had been released after 27 years of confinement, on 10th May 1937 and had become the President of Hindu Maha Sabha on 30th December 1937. Fortunately, a photograph of the meeting has survived to authenticate the event.

The Mahatma well realized that Subhas Bose was made of a sterner stuff than Nehru, who could be emotionally blackmailed, into doing things that he did not intellectually agree with. This was one President, who could not be tolerated. As his term came to an end, Gandhiji made it clear that he did not favour his reelection. There was nothing in the Congress constitution or history, which made a reelection bid by an incumbent Congress President immoral. A bid that was not supported by the Mahatma was however unheard of since the dawn of Gandhi era in 1920.

Subhas Bose would not be deterred by the open opposition of the Mahatma. In the election that was held on 29th January 1939, he trounced the Mahatma's candidate, Pattabhi Sitaramayya by 95 votes. Nehru remained neutral in the contest. Gandhiji proved to be a very poor loser. The naked Quest for Power came to the fore. An atmosphere of intrigue, deception and Machiavellian cunning came to envelop the Congress for the noble aim of hobbling its own democratically elected President. The battle for unseating of Subhas Bose was fought with a ferociousness worthy of nobler causes such as throwing the British out of India. Gandhiji fired the first salvo and drafted a resignation letter for the Congress Working Committee members to sign. Of the 15, 12 toed the line. A reluctant Nehru was compelled to fall in line. In an attempt to defuse the atmosphere, Subhas Bose went to meet Gandhiji on 15th February 1939. The insulted Mahatma refused to yield. Subhas had the audacity to challenge his might. He had to be taught a lesson.

The first trial of strength took place in Tripuri session of Congress held between 10th – 12th March. A distraught Subhas Bose was severely ill. His illness was mocked at as an attempt to garner sympathy. The Mahatma shrewdly kept away. He had laid the battle plan. His trusted followers could be counted on to turn the knife in. There was no need for him to dirty his hands.

Govind Vallabh Pant moved a resolution expressing confidence in the old Working Committee, the majority of which had resigned at the instance of Gandhiji. The resolution also called for the new Working Committee to be appointed as per the wishes of the Mahatma. This rendered the position of the President of the Congress completely redundant. He was to do the bidding of a man who was not even prepared to be its ordinary member. Subhas camp naturally opposed the move. Subhas Bose was himself so ill that he could not even move from his sick bed that was within meters of the Convention hall, where his future capacity to act as the rightful President of the Congress was being undermined. Tempers were frayed and Nehru, who had not yet taken a firm stand one way or the other, found himself heckled as he rose to speak. An irate Nehru lost his cool and threw his weight against his old comrade. His weight tilted the balance against the absent Subhas and resolution was carried.

The Congress President now found his hands tied by the victorious Mahatma, who was to be satisfied with nothing, less than the resignation of this defiant rebel. He demanded and obtained the scalp of Subhas on 29th April 1939. Within three months, a mortal challenge to the authority of the Mahatma was ruthlessly crushed. So what if the cause of Independence suffered. That was a small matter of no consequence.

Nehru made a vain bid to make amends, when he refused to become member of the new Working Committee appointed by the new President, Rajendra Prasad on 1st May 1939. It was too late. Subhas refused to cow down. His dissent was snuffed out by debarring him from being a member of any elective Congress Committee for three years as from August 1939. It was widely believed that the decision was inspired, not by a sense of justice or discipline but by a personal bias against Subhas Bose, who had shown the impertinence to defy the Mahatma himself.

The conduct of Gandhiji in the entire sorry episode is reminiscent of the machinations of a power hungry politician that abound in India today rather than that of a Mahatma guiding the destiny of a nation through moral principle of Non Violence. It is this shameful behaviour that contributed in no small measure to the sorry state that the Mahatma found himself towards the end of his life. As Ambedkar said on 24th June 1945:

“ As a matter of fact the Hindus should cogitate over the question and ask: why no community trusts Mr. Gandhi although he has been saying he is a friend of the Muslims, Sikhs, and the Scheduled Castes and what is the reason for this distrust? In my judgement, there can not be a greater tragedy for a leader to be distrusted by everybody as Mr. Gandhi is today.”

Gandhiji had won the battle to unseat Subhas Bose. In the process, he lost the War to win minds of people. The Gandhi era truly ended, the day Subhas Bose was made to resign

The tide of events in the affairs of human beings were not going to wait for the machinations of a Mahatma to end. On 3rd September 1939, the World War II began. India found itself battling against Germany for a cause that had nothing to do with its own interests.

It is in this War that she was to be bled white. It is in this War, that Bharat was to lose another 50 million of its people to pangs of hunger. It is this War that was to make the British bankrupt. It is this War that finally left the British with no other alternative but to quit the country. The torch of the Freedom Struggle lit by Tilak and carried through the thick and thin by Savarkar, Subhas Bose and innumerable other patriots had already sapped the vitality of the Raj. The Jackboots of the Gestapo delivered the final kick.

The manner in which they quit the Empire, taking care of all their vital interests deserves a detailed study. Not merely to marvel at the way they turned a necessity into a virtue and earned undeserved kudos. More importantly, it is this study that can perhaps throw up an antidote to the poison that has seeped into our body polity. A poison that is holding us back from attaining our rightful place in the League of Nations. A place worthy of our great ancestors. When I say We, I mean all the inhabitants of the erstwhile Undivided Bharat.

However, before we can discover the Antidote, we must painfully come to terms at the manner in which the Great Dream of Independence was betrayed between 1939-47. These eight fateful years shall now be the focus of our attention.

Bibliography

1. PRO,Cab.129/1/04971, CP (45) 112
2. Readings in Constitutional History of India, S.V.Desikachar, Oxford University Press, 1983
3. The British Economy Since 1945, N.F.R. Crafts and Nicholas Woodward, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1991
4. The New Cambridge History of India, The Economy of Modern India, 1860 – 1970, B.R.Tomlinson, Cambridge University Press, 1993
5. India 1947 –50, Internal Affairs, S.L.Poplai, Oxford University Press, 1959
6. Our Sterling Balances, Prof. M.V. Bhatawadekar, Padma Publications, Bombay, 1944
7. Our Fiscal Policy, C.N.Vakil, D.B.Taraporevala Sons & Co, Bombay, 1923
8. Financial Burden of the war on India, C.N.Vakil, July 1943
9. Economic Crisis, C.N.Vakil, The National Information & Publications, Bombay,1948
10. Shodh Mahatma Gandhinch, Arun Sarathi, Asmita Prakashan, Pune, 1998
11. Kahani Subhaschandranchi, Y.D. Phadke, Shree Vidya Prakashan, Pune, 1994
12. Satantar, 1947, Govind Talwalkar, Mojj Prakashan Graha, Mumbai, 1997
13. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writing and Speeches, Volume 8 , Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1990
14. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writing and Speeches, Volume 9 , Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1990

The Great Betrayal 1939-1947

We have covered considerable ground so far. Our very first action was to understand the true significance of 15th August. The day when we won Independence – no substantial freedom - from the British, which we had lost on 16th September 1803. In the process, we laid to rest the divisive views on the issue that presently divide the country. The Hindus had certainly lost their Independence in 1192 but the Sword of Shivaji had won it back for them by 1707. The much-maligned history of the eighteenth century provides us the solutions of our present day problems. For it is in this period, a true synthesis took place between the Hindus and Muslims.

Our next step was to take a roller coaster ride on the time machine between 1905 to 1803 and then back to 1905 before stopping in 1920. A ride that took us through the story of Deindustrialization of India leading to War of Independence in 1857. The Herculean efforts made by Tilak to re-ignite the Torch of Freedom. The bright flame of which guided Savarkar, The Gadhar Party and countless other revolutionaries. A dizzying ride that established the reality that by 1920, India had progressed far on the path of Independence with the combined effort of all communities.

We then had to learn with sorrow the sad story of a Mahatma's quest for Power. A quest that reversed the centuries old process of Hindu-Muslim synthesis and made the Muslim turn to alien lands to find emotional succour. The Khilafat Movement which continues to spout poisonous fruits today. As if this was not enough, we have more to learn.

The Story of the Great Betrayal between 1939 to 1947. The Betrayal was all encompassing. The Bharatiya civilization itself was betrayed as Congress rushed to support British on the eve of the Second World War. A War that was being fought in the defense of an exploitative and oppressive civilization. This was compounded by the Political Betrayal of Jinnah, who finally had enough and called for division of the country. What followed was even more shocking. The Betrayal of Independence. As the Congress moved from successive phases of Age of Innocence (1939-40), to Age of Collaboration (1939-42) and finally to Age of Betrayal (1942); they were finally joined in their misdeeds by the Communists. Deliberate or otherwise, the price for this was paid by the Poorest of Indian Poor – The Daridrinarayan. In form of famine deaths and wasted lives of millions, which finally erupted in the orgy of communal violence that has left wounds that continue to fester today.

There were people like Savarkar & Bose, who tried to stem the tide. Unfortunately, their efforts went vain and the country faced ruin in 1947. It becomes my unfortunate duty to record that what passes for Independence Day in India – 15th August is nothing of the kind. At best it is a Dominion Day. Independence Day is 26th January. What we have paid for this amounts to US \$ 2.5 billion in 1950 or close to US \$ 100 billion today. A figure equal to the entire foreign debt of India in 2000. It is this chilling story that remains to be told.

Chapter IV-1

The War and the Western Civilisation

The outbreak of the Great War caused a great deal of excitement in the country. Somehow, everyone who mattered seemed to have realised that the tide of events was going to make decisive changes in the affairs of men. It is in this surcharged atmosphere the real colours of the Revolutionaries and the Congress High Command led by Gandhiji came to fore in a manner so glaringly that it is a wonder that later attempts to cloak the real intentions have proved to be so successful.

It was in April 1936, that Nehru had thundered in his Presidential address at Lucknow: "Every war waged by imperialist powers will be an imperialist war whatever the excuses put forward; therefore we must keep out of it". In its election manifesto issued in August 1936, the Congress had reaffirmed the opposition by making it clear that 'India cannot fight for freedom unless it is free herself.'

When the time came to 'fulfill the pledge' both the stalwarts of Congress – Gandhiji and Nehru proved to be sorely wanting. In the first week of September 1939, Gandhiji wrote: "I am not just now thinking of India's deliverance. It will come, but what will it be worth if England and France fall, or if they come victorious over Germany ruined and humbled?" Nehru went a step further and made it clear that in his view India should not only offer sympathy but unconditional support to Britain. Vallabhbhai Patel spoke in the same vein.

It was the redoubtable Subhas Bose, who stood firm in defiance against this emotional chatter and pointed out that the official policy of the Congress since 1927 had been to deny any co-operation to the British in the event of a War. It was now time to put the stated policy in practice. The mood of the people was no doubt with Subhas. The magic of Gandhi was not without limitations and he knew it only too well. By 15th September 1939, the Congress Working Committee took a clear stand against an unconditional participation in the War effort. By 10th October, the All India Congress Committee went a step further and demanded declaration of Indian Independence.

This turn around served to fool the people but astute leaders like Setalvad, Savarkar, Ambedkar, Jamnadas Mehta saw through the game. They pointed out that "the attitude of the Congress in the matter of the present war is on the face of it insincere and unreliable. Only a few days before the last resolution (on 15th September) of the Congress Working Committee, its prominent leaders sang a totally different tune...the resolution of the Working Committee was apparently dictated *by the desire of not being outdone by the Forward Bloc of Mr. Subhas Bose.*"

If it sounds harsh, consider the following historical facts. It was on 10th October 1939 that the AICC demanded declaration of Indian Independence but it was not until the 9th August 1942, a good three years later that it decided to launch a struggle to force the issue. Official history does not enlighten us on the reasons for this delay but we shall later

try and get at the truth. In the meanwhile, let us first see if there was any merit in the emotional outburst of Gandhiji in favour of the British at the onset of the War.

“The Indian people have no quarrel with the German people or the Japanese people or any other people, but they have a deep rooted quarrel with the systems which deny freedom and are based on violence and aggression.” Few if any would seek to contest these sentiments so elegantly expressed in the Nehru drafted Congress Working Committee resolution in that fateful September of 1939.

We shall only try to ‘Walk the Talk’ as they say. What were these systems *which sought to deny freedom and were based on violence and aggression?* Were these systems the inventions of the perverted Nazi minds? The Congress appeared to believe so. For it was quite prepared to throw the country wholeheartedly into the thick of the battle field if only the British were to declare India independent and thereby hand over the power to Congress. The consequences of participation in War of an India that was free or otherwise on the Poorest of the Poor does not seem to bothered the Congress high command. For Nehru, it was an article of faith that the British were fighting the evil forces of Fascism and Nazism and therefore deserved all help of an Independent India - ruled of course by none other than himself.

It is strange that the Irish people, who were so close to these defenders of the faith; bound to them by ties of history and blood remained unmoved by the struggle and refused to share Nehru’s enthusiasm. Considering that they were geographically next door neighbours of the British, it was indeed queer that they remained unmoved even as the Nazi bombs rained death and devastation on London and resolutely decided to remain Neutral. Perhaps they were immoral people unworthy of being a part of the civilised world. Or perhaps they were better judges of the British character than the Indian prince.

By the early nineteenth century, Potato had become the staple diet of large sections of Ireland’s rural population. A vegetable rich in vitamins and protein, it grew easily in the moist Irish earth. In the six decades after 1780, Ireland experienced a demographic explosion – an increase of nearly 300 per cent. Yet, with the exception of Ulster, she experienced little industrialization to absorb the surplus numbers. On top of this, the Irish society was clamped by a body of repressive legislation, which blocked many obvious solutions to her distress. Conditions on the land had been atrocious for longer than anyone remembered. Until 1829, Catholic Irishmen were not even allowed to buy land, and few had money to do so. Anglo-Irish landlords, often absentees, demanded high rents or deliveries in kind on pain of instant eviction. Evictions were enforced by the military, which customarily razed or tumbled the houses of defaulters. Irish peasants had no security, and little incentive to work. Ireland was the home of squalor-with large ragged families living in mud huts with no furniture – in the company of pigs.

Between 1845 and 1849 Ireland suffered one of Europe’s worst famines. The fungal blight *phytophthora infestans* decimated the potato crop in three successive years. In 1846, the prices were controlled and public works started to provide employment. Soup rations were also distributed. A Whig ministry took power in London and the relief works

were stopped, as it did not believe in disrupting the market equilibrium by state intervention. As the crop failed for the third time in 1848, human exodus out of Ireland became a flood. Ragged families garnered their last strength to walk to the ports. Many collapsed on the roads. Others perished in the overcrowded steerage holds of the ships. They landed on the docks of New York and Montreal racked with fever, stomach cramps and Anglophobia to die in droves. In the meanwhile, in Ireland landlords continued to collect rents. Even as the shriveled corpses littered the fields and children lay dying in the workhouses, grain export to England continued under armed protection.

Within a short span of four years, the island's population had decreased by a quarter. A million died of hunger, while another million had emigrated. The British Government's final relief measure in August 1849 was to send Queen Victoria and Prince Albert on state visit to Dublin. Nehru may have overlooked a small detail but the Irish people till this date can not forget that it all happened when Ireland was very much an integral part of the United Kingdom. In the mid nineteenth century, the British Empire was at its zenith of glory. United Kingdom was the very center of Europe – called the Powerhouse of the World. Yet this Catastrophe was allowed to take place within its own borders! What kind of a nation is it that allows this to happen to its own people without so much as blinking an eyelid?

Come the year 1900 and an age had arrived in which, as Kennedy says, “The global dominance of the West, implicit since da Gama's day, now knew few limits”. What is it that happened in next fifty years? The paradox of scientific progress aimed at improving material comforts together with a growing disdain for human life.

Let us look at the first fifty years. In the World War I, some 8 million soldiers lost their lives, while during the Second War, the numbers of the dead increased to 14 million. It is particularly during the Second World War that civilian population became a legitimate military target and some 27 million civilians lost their lives, almost 2 civilian death for every loss of life of a soldier. By the time Hitler finished his own dance of death, another six million innocents had paid with their lives for the crime of being Jews. In all some 55 million Europeans (Yes! Europeans! For the Asian and African deaths have not been counted in these statistics) had perished in Wars.

Move on another fifty years and what do we find? Even more material progress. Yet even less security for the human race. How many of us would be care to be reminded of the fact that one individual alone has the power of life and death over all of us - the President of the United States of America. It is comforting to deny the reality that a rogue American President can rain death and destruction all over the world at the press of a button untrammled by any forces anywhere. It is less comforting to remember the reality that President Nixon was all too aware of this aspect of his powers during the final days of his Presidency racked by the Watergate scandal.

Does the Western concept of progress necessarily imply use of systems, which make most lethal instruments of violence and aggression available to the most progressive nation. Is this how the global dominance of the West, implicit since da Gama's day, was secured?

A Dark Age Begins, 1492 - 1660

If there has been one theme that has remained constant in all the conflicts that have rocked Europe in last five hundred years, it is the bid for mastery of the continent by one nation or the other. Rather by one national elite or the other over every one else. Driven by a quest for power, every European elite has, without a moment's self doubt, made full use of every scientific discovery, every celebration of victory of reason, of intellect to suppress all those who are not a part of its charmed circles. None of the elite has shown more than a passing concern even for those who share the same nationality but fall outside its charmed circles. The output of the best of its people has been shamelessly used to emerge as The Master Race. The non-European societies were taken to be the slave tribes, whose very purpose of existence was to make the means available for the sake of the European masters. Violence, wanton cruelty and aggression were considered necessary evils for what passed for Progress. It is not surprising then that the very violence, wanton cruelty and aggression that was unleashed against the more primitive societies for hundreds of years came to haunt the Europeans themselves in the Twentieth century. What else can explain the awful dance of death and destruction that befell on the European civilization in the first half of the Twentieth century delivering death that had no reason or purpose? Or the fact that ever since 1945, Europe as well as the world has been forced to live under the shadow of Armageddon at a moment's notice. It is not without reason that Eric Hobsbawm has chosen to call this as An Age of Extremes. Nor is this being said with the benefit of hindsight. For by 1939, record of some 400 years of European disregard for other human beings was there for anyone to see. Only the most gullible or an absolute idiot could believe that the European powers could go to War against each other for such an abstract concept, as propagation of democracy in the world at large. What they were fighting were their own vital interests. All else be damned. A free or an unfree India had no business to take part in a War, in which the sole purpose of the antagonists on both sides was to exploit the resources of the world for their own benefit – paying scant consideration to other people. A desperately poor country suffering from hundreds of years of exploitation was in no position to help anybody whether it was being ruled by the British or the Congress.

Let us go back to the late Fifteenth century – the days of da Gama. The Orient had always tantalized the Europeans. The image of the East as conjured up from fragmentary tales of travelers portrayed extensive eastern empires possessing fabulous wealth and vast armies. Spurred on by these images, the Europeans dreamt of reaching these fabled places. The two dominant powers of Europe in the fifteenth century, Spain and Portugal were in a race to find a trade route to these fabled lands. Christopher Columbus was the first to set sail from Spain on 3rd August 1492. Sailing westward, he reached Bahamas on 12th October. After travelling further down to Cuba, he returned to Spain proclaiming to have found a route to India. That his claim was incorrect was known even in his lifetime but his discovery of the Americas was to prove quite lucrative to Spain. For they soon realized that Americas held an extraordinary wealth of their own. By 1519 the Aztec Empire of the Mexico was won. The Aztec leader had welcomed Spanish explorer Cortes with gifts taking him to be their returning Priest God. What the Aztec leader got in return from the European invader was imprisonment and death. Other ruthless Spaniards

conquered the Incas Empire in Peru by 1533, looting its treasure and killing the people. As the two enormous territories were won for the Spanish Emperor, colonial governments were established at Mexico and Peru. Well into the Seventeenth century, the wealth of these new lands would fill the Spanish coffers enabling it to play the role of a formidable military and political power in Europe.

The first export from Americas consisted of the Gold looted from the treasures of Aztecs and Incas. Soon silver was discovered to the misfortune of the local as well as the African inhabitants. Initially, the locals were made to slave in the silver mines. Soon brutal mining conditions, bloodshed and starvation decimated the peace loving people. More hardy factors of production had to be found. There were enough Man-animals in the jungles of Africa. A million Negroes soon found themselves chained, with little room to breathe or move, in ships bound for the New World of the Spaniards. A quarter died but enough survived to make up for the local population that had perished. Now the mines could produce Silver uninterrupted. By 1620, some 10,000 tons of Silver had been shipped to Europe.

Meanwhile their European rivals – the Portuguese were not far behind. Their own *Columbus* was Vasco da Gama, who sailed East for 4500 miles and reached Calicut on 22nd May 1498. The expedition yielded a profit of 60 times the original value of the Portuguese merchandise sent. Da Gama's next expedition was loaded with arms and merchandise. His men shattered any resistance of the infidel inhabitants to Portuguese excursion into the spice trade. With greatest brutality, da Gama ravished cities to burn and pillage whatever lay within his path; prisoners were mutilated and slaughtered. With such shining examples to follow, the other Portuguese explorers did not lag behind. With their base in India, they pushed eastwards. By 1509, they had penetrated to the Spice Islands. The capital of the Portuguese territory was founded at Goa by 1515. Trading facility was established at Macao, not far from Canton. The Portuguese successes in the East continued for a long time as bases were established not only at Goa but also at Aden and Hormuz.

As the Spanish and the Portuguese ships docked at their home ports laden with Silver, Spice and other exotic eastern goodies, the importance of possessing overseas territories was driven home to one and all contenders of powers in Europe. Each newly acquired land came to be viewed as existing solely for sending its wealth to the mother country. The local inhabitants were merely factors of production who could be substituted as and when required by new supplies from elsewhere.

In 1519, the Spanish Habsburg Empire emerged as the European super power. Emperor Charles V ascended the throne as the Holy Roman Emperor and as the ruler of Habsburg lands in Austria. Thus the twin centers of Habsburg power in Madrid and Vienna came under a common ruler. For over the next fifty years, only Portugal France and England remained outside the orbit of the Habsburg Empire. By 1580 Portugal had been annexed and the mastery of Europe lay in the Habsburg grasp but it was the Dutch revolt aided by English and the active opposition of France, that tilted the scale against this incipient superpower. We shall briefly look at these events not because there is anything new to

discover but to satisfy ourselves that none of the challengers to the Habsburg might gave any consideration whatsoever to the plight of the poor inhabitants of its overseas territories.

Of course, no study of the Sixteenth century can be complete without the story of Roman Inquisitions. It is of interest to us for it shows that it was not as if that the Europeans were particularly cruel to the inhabitants of the colonies. They could be equally so to their own people.

The Church had exercised a major influence on the affairs of state in Europe for hundreds of years but as the Fifteenth century drew to a close, the reputation of the Church was in decline. The nadir was reached during the papacies of Alexander VI (1492 – 1503) and Julius II (1503 – 1513). Alexander's passions were gold, women and the careers of his bastard children, while Julius loved nothing better than War and conquest. In 1509, Rome was visited by a young Augustinian monk from Wittenberg in Saxony. Martin Luther was shocked to the bones by what he saw.

Within ten years, he was to be the head of the first Protestant revolt. Rome to him was the seat of sodomy and the beast of Apocalypse. On 31st October 1517, he nailed a sheet of 95 arguments to the door of Wittenberg's castle church. He was summoned by the Spanish Emperor Charles V to appear before imperial diet in 1521. Luther defended himself with fortitude:

*Hier stehe ich. Ich kann nicht anders.
Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise.*

A ban pronounced by the Diet against Luther could not be enforced. Religious protest was turning into political revolt. Yet this same revolutionary had no sympathy for a peasant revolt (1524), which he condemned by publishing 'Against the Murderous and Thieving Hoards of Peasants', trenchantly defending the social order and the rights of the princes. The peasant rebels were crushed in a sea of blood.

The religious dispute continued to simmer. At Augsburg in 1530, a measured summary of the Protestant beliefs were submitted. The Emperor set a deadline of April 1531 for recantation of the confession of Augusburg. In response, the Protestant princes formed their armed league. From then on the division of the Church into the Catholic and the Protestant camp was clearly defined.

Around this time, King Henry VIII of England initiated moves, which resulted in the formation of the Church of England that recognized no authority of Rome. Driven by an obsession to have a male heir, he asked for divorce from his wife Catherine, the aunt of the Emperor Charles V. The Pope fearing the wrath of the Emperor refused to grant the annulment of marriage. An enraged King, who had once denounced Luther, now turned his back to Rome. Long before Luther first raised the call for reform, many devout Catholics had been concerned about the need to correct abuses in the Church. Luther's own call for reforms was a part of this general concern for reform but no one had

imagined starting a new Church. By 1540, the attitude of Catholic leaders everywhere was hardening. They became convinced that the Protestants had inflicted a grave damage upon the Church and concluded that the Protestants were heretics and deserved to be treated as such. In 1542, Pope Paul III was persuaded to establish Roman Inquisition. Hereafter burning the heretics at stake became an accepted way of settling theological disputes.

In England, Henry VIII was succeeded by his nine-year son, who soon died before being an adult. In 1553, Mary, the daughter of Henry and Catherine ascended the throne. Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Crammer, who had helped confirm the reformist character of the Church of England, was burnt at stake by Mary in 1556. Mary's efforts at reintroducing Catholic Church in England were annulled by her half sister Elizabeth. From 1559 to her death, she held the Protestants and Catholics at bay, consolidating the Church of England. She kept on coyly refusing the marriage proposals of the Spanish Emperor Philip II even as she hired pirates to loot the Spanish silver coming in from the Americas.

Meanwhile in France, the religious divide provoked the French War of religion, which were spectacularly unreligious. These began in 1562 with a massacre of Protestants as they were holding a service near Vassy. Horrendous bloodshed and atrocities were committed by both the sides. The most notorious was the infamous St. Bartholomew's Day massacre. Starting with murder of 3000 Protestants on 24th August 1572, some 20,000 more were butchered in next few days. These brutal murders served to save France for the Catholic Church, even as the religious Wars continued to cause devastation till 1629.

What struck a mortal blow to the ambitions of Spain to be the most dominant power in Europe was the revolt of the Netherlands, where Protestant beliefs had stuck roots. In 1560, Antwerp was the richest place in Europe. Maintaining peace here was therefore vital for Spain but driven by religious fanaticism, the Spanish authorities acted unwisely. By pressing for a stepped up role for the Inquisition, demanding further taxes and rejecting demands for religious toleration, they alienated the Dutch. In 1567, serious religious trouble erupted in Antwerp. Some 10,000 Spanish troops were called in to crack down on the heretics. The dreaded Duke of Alba was also called in to root out the Infidels. Alba established himself as the head of Council of Blood, which soon became infamous for dispatching religious suspects to being burnt at the stake with little hearing. In 1568, two Dutch Dukes from the House of Orange brought in troops from Germany but the Netherlands did not rise in revolt against the Spanish. The Dukes were defeated. Alba proceeded to impose an additional tax on the Dutch, which invited a violent reaction. The Spanish soon found themselves faced with a revolt from the whole of citizenry.

The Netherlands War of Independence took a heavy toll of the Spanish Empire. In 1584, as Antwerp was captured, the English entered the War on the Dutch side. Faced with Anglo – Dutch alliance, Philip decided to strike a crushing blow. An invincible armada of 130 ships and 30,000 people set sail to Netherlands. It was met by the English fleet off

the coast at Plymouth in July 1588. For ten days, the English relentlessly pursued and harassed the Armada. At this point, nature chose to assist the English. As the Armada was harboured in the shallow port at Calais, the English sent in their fire ships to burn the Spanish fleet. A raging gale assisted the English and ravished the Armada. A battered fleet eventually returned to Spain but the alliance had won the day.

The War was to last till 1648. The conflict tested the resources of the Dutch but did not exhaust them. From 1590, their economy was growing fast. The unsentimental approach of the Dutch to the problems of raising resources proved to be a big boon. To the disgust of their British supporters, Amsterdam traders would willingly supply goods to their mortal enemy, Spain if enough profits could be made. Taking a lesson from their enemies, they also embarked on overseas expansion. Colonies were founded at Amboina in 1605 and Ternate in 1607; factories and trading posts were established around the Indian Ocean, near the mouth of the Amazon and in Japan. With its function as shipper, exchanger and commodity dealer for Europe – including as we have seen, for its own enemy Spain – Amsterdam soon became the center of international finance. From time to time, it did not hurt the Dutch economy if it could capture the Spanish bullion, as it did in 1628. The War ended after an eighty-year struggle - with Dutch independence. The Dutch were soon to celebrate their new found freedom from the Habsburg masters with wars against their former alliance partners – the English.

Even as the Spanish war against the Dutch raged unabated, trouble broke out in Germany. In 1618 the Protestant rebels overran the Prague castle and murdered two of the officers of the Bohemian King. With this began another bout of religious wars that unleashed a fresh wave of horrors in Europe. As the fortunes of the rival religious armies ebbed and flowed, people sought explanations from the supernatural forces for their plight and witch hunting became a popular sport to the misfortune of any suspect. Religious fanaticism reached new heights as both Catholics and the Protestants employed thought police to curb the deviant in their flock. By the time the Wars ended in 1648, a third of Germany's population had been slaughtered and economic depression, political fragmentation, plague, famine and massive physical destruction plunged Germany into an abyss from which it would not recover for centuries.

Fearful of the growing clout of Spain, France attacked Spain in 1635, even as Spain was engaged in a mortal War to spread the Gospel in the heretical lands of Germany. Catholic brotherhood was more fragile than human greed; providing an additional cause to shed blood, cause starvation and untold human misery. Annexed Portugal started its own War of Independence in 1640 against Spain, which was to go on for the next three decades. England which had witnessed a Civil War (1645–1649) joined the French in 1655, finally forcing Spain to sue for peace. By 1659, the Spanish era in Europe was over.

The era of the great conflict had witnessed several scientific advances. Navigational science made great advances. Map making became refined. Development of the hourglass came to the aid of the sailors. New ideas on metallurgy and mining came to the fore. Mercury-amalgamation process lead to an efficient extraction of Silver. Galileo published his work in 1632, in which he upheld the Copernicus theory of Earth revolving

around the Sun. Other leading thinkers, Descartes and Bacon similarly advocated rejecting the authority of tradition and changing the scientific method. Even the dreaded Roman Inquisition could not hamper the spread of ideas of Galileo. The Western society came to accept that every natural phenomenon could be explained by Mathematics paving the way for secular progress.

All the progress of Science and Intellect, however failed to come to the aid of those poor inhabitants of Africa. Their export to Americas was only aided by the advances in navigational science. The slave trade increased three folds in the Seventeenth century and some 3,000,000 humans were sent in chains to work in the mines and Sugar plantations of the European masters. New mining process only increased the burden of the wretched miners. Cruelty to them became even more important to increase production of valuable silver. All the marvelous inventions of the Europeans – the firearms, ships, precision instruments had only one purpose. To subdue and conquer other people. No wonder, the Europeans were unwelcome, wherever they went. For they respected neither the local traditions, laws nor the people themselves. A society that could burn its own at stake could hardly be expected to improve the lot of those it considered Sub humans.

If there was one thing that the Europeans learnt, it was the fact that overseas territories were crucial to their own material progress and a vital factor in their unbridled quest for power. For instance, war against the Dutch cost Spain some 218 million ducats more than half of which was financed by the revenue from Indies. Indeed, the Dutch had responded to this, not only by their own colonisation programmes but also by launching attacks against the Spanish overseas possessions in Brazil, Angola and Ceylon. Thus even as it fought for its own freedom, it was actively seeking to subdue other free people. Spain may well have given up its claim to Superpower status by 1659 but there was to be no question of giving up its colonial empire. Even in 1700, it had the largest empire in the world. Its possessions included the Philippines, most of South and Central America, save for Brazil, which belonged to Portugal, Mexico, Florida and the West Indies.

Development of scientific temper in the Western world was to have its fall out in the World of Realpolitik. It can not be a mere accident that the religious warfare in Europe ended soon after the infamous prosecution of Galileo in 1632. The era when the Austrian-Spanish axis of Habsburg powers, representing the Catholic forces kept on fighting the Protestant states plus France – which appeared to be neither; was over in 1659. Henceforth, calculated Realpolitik rather than religious convictions dictated the determination of policy. The alliances were to be even more shifting and countries which were friends in one war would be foes in the next. If the European nations had one ambition in common, it was to have as many Colonies as possible. For this, they were quite willing to dine with the Devil. The days of secular progressive policy had arrived.

Anglo-French Struggle For Colonial Exploitation
1660 - 1815

With the eclipse of Spain in European affairs, France at long last got its chance to bid for European supremacy. The French rise was in no small measure due to accomplishments of Louis XIV (1638 – 1715). He established centralised system of justice, taxation and control. His policy of reducing the standing army of nobles and consolidating these into one royal army represented a major step in development of modern state. His Minister of Finance, Colbert believed that France had to be the recipient of gold and silver in exchange for domestically produced goods. To stimulate the French economy Colbert invested much of the tax revenue in building up domestic industry. Soon other European governments came largely to react to the French foreign and domestic policies; they emulated French accomplishments and came to look towards France for cultural inspiration. In the late Seventeenth century, most other European powers had seen better days. Spain, Dutch, cities of Italy, Germany, Austria - all had suffered greatly in the Thirty years of religious strife.

This left England to curb the French ambitions, just as French had acted to spike the Spanish bid in the earlier period. The English bid could not begin till it had settled its conflict with its erstwhile ally – the Dutch. Great jealousy had existed in the English commercial circles of the Dutch leading to War first in 1652, then in 1665 and once again in 1672, In these conflicts the English and the French allied against the Dutch. The Anglo – French alliance was possible in no small measure due to the fact that the English King Charles II (1660 – 1685) was in receipt of an annual sum of £ 200,000 from the French Sun King, to finance his luxuries and keep his country out of War against France. Spain, which attempted to challenge France found no English support and was roundly defeated in 1683. After the death of Charles II, the British Parliament deposed James II in an almost bloodless coup and put William on the throne. Henceforth, prerogatives of monarchy were to be severely curtailed by the Parliament.

From 1689 to 1815, seven major Anglo–French wars were to follow throwing the continent in turmoil repeatedly. It is not our intention to go through the details of each one of these, for these are better available elsewhere. Our purpose would be served by looking at the broad trends. None of these Wars had anything to do with the salvation of the sufferings of those in colonies, whose exploitation had been initiated by the Spanish and the Portuguese, since 1492. In some ways, the French and the English were far worse. For instance, it was true that the Spanish and the Portuguese sorely mistreated the native populations and imported slaves. Their methods in the West Indies differed from those of the British and the French, who never recognised the human beings or the immortal soul in these living chattels. While the Spanish and the Portuguese in Brazil acknowledged the existence of a soul and even had their slaves baptized into the Church, and in some cases even paid them wages, the English and French saw no reason to treat them as anything other than beasts which could be replaced quickly and cheaply if they could no longer work on the plantations. The records from Barbados suggest that the death-rate among the slaves outpaced the birth rate nearly six to one. No protests against such treatment were ever raised. Unlike most Spanish Catholic clergy, the English

Protestant clergymen took little interest in changing the consciences of their flock. Even the early Quakers who visited the plantations of the Caribbean never registered a protest against these indignities and lamentable conditions.

The First war that lasted between 1689 – 1697 saw a general return to prewar status quo. Tremendous cost was paid to merely blunt the French ambitions in Europe and erode its sea power. An Anglo-Dutch-German tradition of keeping France out of Flanders and Rhineland was established. Little else changed.

Hardly had peace returned, when Europe was once more plunged into war, the Spanish War of Succession (1702 – 1714). Provoked by French efforts to secure exclusive concession for its traders in the Spanish Empire and desire of Louis XIV to put his grandson, Philip V on the Madrid throne. The War once again ended in a stalemate.

Philip V was recognised as the Spanish king but with a proviso that the kingdoms of Spain and France could never be united. French nation had been chastened by horrific costs of the war, which apart from those killed on the battlefield included a sevenfold increase in the government debt. Dutch power declined with severe loss of life during wartime to a population of 2 million, which remained static during the entire period.

The real beneficiaries were the English. They gained Gibraltar, Minorca, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Hudson Bay and trade concessions in the Spanish Empire. *A valuable trade concession being grant of monopoly on slave trade.* The British were unchallenged at sea. With increasing overseas possessions and a strong navy to protect the trade, seeds of the British Empire that was to emasculate the world were sown by the end of this conflict.

An Anglo-French détente lasted for the next quarter of a century. An isolationist Britain had cautiously kept out of the continental affairs, refusing to be provoked by a French attack on Austria in 1733 and a French move into Rhineland. By 1739, the French were once again looking to recover their pivotal position in Europe. While the English had remained unconcerned at the plight of their allies at the hands of the French, they grew concerned at the clashes with the French ally, Spain in the Western Hemisphere. Conflicts over rich colonial trade and rights of their settlers were not to be overlooked. With the resultant Anglo-Spanish War, which started in October 1739, the two antagonists were once again ready to take up arms in a fight that was to last for next nine years but which produced no decisive result. Overseas possessions of the rival powers in West Indies, up the St. Lawrence River, around Madras, along the routes were considered fair game for attack without the least concern for the locals.

Even as a truce was signed in 1748, the conflict between the English and the French overseas settlers continued. By 1755, it was clear that the struggle was not merely for Ohio, Mississippi valley regions but for Canada, the Caribbean, and India but for the entire extra – European world. The stage was now set for a decisive conflict over the overseas possessions between the Franco-Austro- Russian alliance and the Anglo-Prussian combination with Spain and the Dutch opting to remain neutral.

The seven-year war was to be decisive in laying the roots of the British exploitation of the world that was to remain unhindered till the outbreak of the Second World War. The Prussian army subsidized by the British held fort on the continent, while the Royal Navy ran riot on the Seas. The superiority of British seamanship was made manifest time and again. It imposed an all weather blockade upon France's Atlantic ports, and had sufficient surplus force to mask Toulon and regain maritime supremacy in the Mediterranean. The French maritime trade was thus effectively throttled while the British trade could increase every year bringing enhanced revenue. By 1759, French colonies were falling into the British hands across the globe. French influence in India was effectively eradicated, as we have seen earlier in 1761. When Spain cast its neutrality aside and entered the war in 1762, the British gleefully helped themselves to its colonies in the Caribbean and Philippines. By the time the French sued for peace, British domination of the world outside Europe was complete, even after it returned captured territories to France and Spain.

Like animals, the people in the non-European countries found their masters changing without any regard to the local wishes, aspirations or needs. The point that they were no more than chattels that existed for the benefit of their masters was being painfully driven home time and again. No European state could afford to be so enlightened as to worry about their welfare, for as the French minister remarked:

“In the present state of Europe it is colonies, trade and in consequence sea power, which must determine the balance of power upon the continent. The House of Austria, Russia, King of Prussia are only powers of second rank, as are all those which cannot go to war unless subsidized by the trading partners.”

Thus, if you had no colonies, you could not go to War on your own. If you could not go to War on your own, you counted for nothing in the European scheme of things. For ability to go to War was the most prized national ability for the Europeans.

If the fourth Anglo-French War decided the contours of the World in the Nineteenth century by establishing the British as the dominant colonial power, the fifth Anglo-French War (1776 – 1783) was to have far more wide ranging repercussions. It was to decide the fate of the World in the Twentieth century. It is out of this war was to rise United States of America as an independent republic. Finally, it seemed that the French had hurt their rivals, where it mattered the most – possession of overseas territories. For loss of rich North America was not a small matter. Unfortunately for the French, even as America was lost to their continental rivals, the Indian possessions were taking its place. Moreover, the exports to United States remained booming and the French soon had nothing to show for their adventure but a burgeoning national debt as the cost of the War had been more than the total costs of France's three previous wars taken together.

The crisis in France came to a head when a bankrupt King summoned a long neglected Parliament, Estates-General, to his aid. After opening on May 4, 1789, events took a life of their own. Equality of men was proclaimed. Amidst ringing cries of *Liberty, Fraternity and Equality*, Bastille was stormed on 14th July. The French revolution was underway.

It would be out of place to recall the whole story of the revolution, which provided issues of liberal and radical democratic politics for most of the world. For our purpose, it is sufficient to take a look at the response it produced from the ruling aristocracy of Europe. England with its so-called emphasis on rule of law and the power of the Parliament should have been the first to side with the outbreak of this revolutionary fervour. Such naïve hopes had no place in European reality. William Pitt, the British Prime Minister, who encouraged free trade and discouraged freedom of speech outside the walls of Parliament led a coalition of Russia, Austria, Prussia and Spain against the French republic in 1793. This formidable combination was thought to be capable of overrunning a France in disarray rather quickly. What the European leaders had not reckoned with was either the fervour of the French troops fired by the revolutionary zeal or the attraction of the Revolutionary ideas to their own troops. By 1795, the first coalition had floundered much to the surprise of many. The British were shaken by their losses in West Indies. By 1797, the Bank of England suspended cash payments and naval mutinies were reported at Spithead and Nore. Yet, the British system held ground. As Spain and the Dutch joined the French, their colonies at Colombo, Malacca, in the East and the West Indies and the Cape of Good Hope, could be and were captured; providing new markets for British commerce and additional bases for its naval squadrons. The French bid to threaten route to India via Egypt and its attack on Ireland proved to be luckless. These setbacks emboldened the French enemies to launch a second coalition in 1798 against it. By now the French revolution had lost much of its luster with acquisition of territories and browbeating of its neighbours. Portugal, Naples, Russia, Austria, Turkey joined the British. Prussia remained aloof. Continental stalemate continued as the avowed aim of the coalition to bring France on its knees floundered once again. The story in the Overseas territories was however different. The French lost Malta. Their Indian ally Tipu Sultan was killed in 1799, Egypt was overrun. By the time an uneasy peace returned in 1801, the British were more secure in overseas territories than ever before.

The French revolution was the first ever genuine people's movement. Far from helping it flourish, the British had made every attempt to crush it with some of the most reactionary rulers of the time. It failed to crush the movement but succeeded in derailing it, as the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte showed. Nor was this its only success. On far more practical ground, it used the resulting confusion to grab even more territories. The French revolution had been made use of by the British jackal to enlarge its circle of prey.

The final round of the seven major Anglo-French wars was fought between 1803 to 1815 and was the most severe of them all. Midway during the War in 1810, the French domination of Europe was complete. The British were left with no ally between Portugal and Sweden. The mastery of the continent gave Napoleon the unprecedented opportunity of ruining the nation of bookkeepers. Their goods were banned in Europe. At this critical juncture, the British relations with the United States also worsened, affecting their exports. London docks were now overflowing with unshipped goods. Unemployment soared, as did the national debt.

If the British survived to live for another day, it was only due to the lifeline of the vast overseas territories in Asia, Africa and the West Indies, accumulated by the British over the last hundred years, including that most lucrative latest addition – India in 1803. The additions during the War such as Santo Domingo, which had once been responsible for 75% of the French colonial trade, did not hurt the British cause. The colonial resources played a major if often overlooked role in enabling the British to fend off their most determined foe.

By the time Napoleon was finally defeated and forced in exile by 1815, the British mastery was complete. Several of the British allies had been uneasy about the prospect of defeating him roundly for the fear of leaving the British unchallenged but his own refusal to compromise left no one any choice. In the end, not only did he destroy himself but also ensured the supreme victory of his greatest enemy for by 1815, it was said of British that:

“She is the mistress of the sea and neither in this dominion nor in world trade has she now a single rival to fear.”

From 1492 to 1660, the Spanish bid for supremacy was sustained by the flow of silver from Peru and other colonial possessions. In the period 1660 to 1815, the French bid collapsed as it failed to beat its rival in accumulation of the overseas territories. For on a straight one to one comparison, the British stood no chance. The French strength rested firmly upon indigenous materials, its large and homogenous territories, its agricultural self-sufficiency and population exceeding 20 million, yet it was bested by a far smaller opponent. True, the British were financially far more disciplined than the French but that could only help it raise loans at 3% compared to the 6% paid by French. From where did the English find money to repay the debt? The answer lies in ever increasing trade. The British markets in the West Indies, Latin America, India and the Orient were not only growing faster than those in Europe but such long haul trades were also more profitable besides having other beneficial; spin off effects as enabling London to emerge as the provider of such value added financial services as marine insurance, bill discounting etc. For in the final run up to 1815, the British exports rose spectacularly. £ 21.7 million in 1794 to £37.5 million in 1804 and finally to £44.4 million in 1815. The booming trade not only resulted in a jump in the Custom and Excise duty from £13.5 million in 1793 to £44.8 million in 1815. The growing prosperity yielded a nine-fold increase in Property taxes reaching £14.6 million by the end of war in 1815. Such sums were not inconsiderable. To put the matters in perspective, the increase in property taxes alone amounting to £13 million equaled the subsidies given by the British to their allies in 1813. As a matter of some interest to Indians, it is worth recording that cotton goods had become Britain's principle exports. What it did to the weavers in Bengal is another story, which has never bothered the European conscience.

With a faster economic growth arising out of the Overseas trade, by 1800 the British government could raise more revenue from taxes in absolute terms than could the French government from a population twice as big.

Even Kennedy, who has considerably discounted the role of colonies in the economic prosperity of England, has been forced to conclude: “the fact remains overseas expansion had given the country unchallenged access to vast new wealth which its rivals did not enjoy”. One may add, giving it that decisive edge it desperately needed to defeat a military genius like Napoleon.

So the British won. But it is clear that the struggle was without any pretence for improving the lot of the colonies. If anything, it was to exploit even more of them. The only issue being, who would have the honour of doing so. Let us take a look at the figures behind the Anglo-French struggle.

**British Wartime Expenditure and Revenue
1688 -1815**

Figs in £(000)

Inclusive Years	Expenditure	Income	Loans	Loans as % Of Expenditure
1688-97	49,320	32,766	16,553	33.6
1702-13	93,644	64,239	29,405	31.4
1739-48	95,628	65,903	29,724	31.1
1756-63	160,573	100,555	60,018	37.4
1776-83	236,462	141,902	94,560	39.9
1793-1815	1,657,854	1,217,556	440,298	26.6

What stands out is the following:

- For over 125 years, the British government could have hardly had the money for the welfare of its own people. For year after year, it had to keep on spending more money than its revenue merely to meet the costs of its aggression.
- Enormous profits must have been made but the life of workers could not have been pitiable. It therefore comes as no surprise to learn that the whole families were forced to work to avoid starvation. With working days stretching over 12 hours a day, the average workers family life could not have been much to write about.
- Such a state would have necessarily employed repressive measures to control crime for which the existing social conditions provided a fertile breeding ground. This is borne out by the fact that in 1815, some 200 crimes were punishable by death. Justice seemed to have been based an Eye for an Eye principle.
- The average cost of the first Anglo-French War was a mere £5.4 million per year. By the seventh war, it had shot up to £72 million per annum or by over thirteen times. More costs demanded over income, which meant more acquisitions and thus bringing even more people under the yoke of European exploitation.

Thus, we find that very structure of the Western World was built on a never-ending vicious cycle of violence, cruelty and aggression.

Are we running the risk of flippantly discounting the role of Industrial revolution aided by a spurt in scientific progress and innovation in the growth of England as an economic and political superpower? Before we try and answer this, let us first realise that. Spinning mills, steam engines and more importantly the scientific temper from which these innovation flowed; were no doubt crucial elements of the English progress. But they offered little competitive advantage in a struggle against another European nation as the long drawn struggle with the French showed. Indeed, as we have seen by 1810, Napoleon had succeeded in virtually driving out the British from the Continent. What tilted the balance against him was his lack of control over the colonies. Moreover, the point that we seek to make is a little different.

The English society or for that matter the entire European society used its scientific inventions to improve its material well being with no consideration to the rights and needs of the people other than their own ruling elite. The Europeans were not the first to invent the Gunpowder or even the use of canons. It is well known that the honour belonged to the Chinese. As early as 1420, the Ming navy had some 1,350 vessels. The Chinese even went on some seven overseas expedition between 1405 to 1433. The flotilla consisting of hundreds of ships carrying thousands of men, visiting ports of Malacca and Ceylon to Red sea entrances and Zanzibar. Though, they insisted on the local rulers acknowledging the supremacy of the Chinese Emperor, they are neither known to have plundered nor murdered in their voyages. Sophisticated banking and credit network was known to have existed in India for ages. Yet these societies did not launch any bid for global domination. Traditional historians have belittled this aspect rather than seek to understand the reasons for the failure of the Europeans to follow their example.

It is difficult to accept that the Europeans had a divine right to loot and plunder the world for improving their lot, merely because they had discovered the scientific tools to do so. For once, the existence of colonial empires and their limitless exploitation came to be considered an integral part of being Progressive in the European society; continual warfare could not but follow as in fact happened. Each War being fiercer than the last, each drawing into its orbit a larger segment of the society than the earlier. Each being more expensive than the last. Each preparing the ground for the next to follow. It is thus not scientific progress that set the Europeans on their path to global glory, for it could have been theirs in a far more humane manner. It is with wanton brutality and callous disregard to all that makes human life noble that they took to the center stage of the world. European hegemony of the World as it happened is a blot on the face of humanity, something for them to be ashamed of, rather than to glory in.

We have so far studied three hundred years of history to come to this inescapable conclusion. Were the developments in next hundred and twenty five years any different? Did any European nation behave in a manner befitting the noble ideals of human race before the outbreak of Second World War? Let us now examine this.

European Shadow Darkens
1815 –1870

Science and technology forged ahead as never before. Whole new continents of knowledge were mapped out. Inventions of telegraph in 1835, the telephone in 1877 and radio in 1896 was to be the forerunner of the evolution of the global village, a century later. The value of superior communication was most tellingly demonstrated by the record killing which Nathan Rothschild is said to have made on the London stock exchange on 19 June 1815, having used a special yacht to bring the news of Waterloo many hours in advance of his rivals.

Repeated conflicts in Europe ended with the ouster of Napoleon and relative peace on the Continent endured as no nation or an alliance now sought to seriously challenge the British control of the seas till the final decade of the century. The European leaders were chastened by the horrific costs of the war that had ravaged the continent unabated since 1793. They now turned their attention to the development of a transoceanic and transcontinental trading and financial network that centered around Western Europe in general and the Great Britain in particular. Colonial acquisition continued to be the key to development of an integrated global economy. Once again the scientific advances were put to great use in conquest of more and more people. The spectacular growth of global economy went hand in hand with the ever-enlarging British Empire. It is estimated that between 1815 to 1865, the empire grew at an average annual pace of 100,000 square miles. The military penetration and economic exploitation were two sides of the same coin for a polity that held profit and power, trade and dominion were inseparable. By 1860, U.K. not only had an Empire 'On which the Sun never set' but with a 2 per cent population was responsible for 20% of world's commerce. Its share in the trade of the manufactured goods was as high as 40%. By 1865, the Victorians could exult:

“The plains of North America and Russia are our corn fields; Chicago and Odessa our granaries; Canada and the Baltic are our timber forests; Australia contains our sheep farms, and in Argentina and on the western prairie of North America are our herds of oxen; Peru sends us her silver, and the gold of South Africa and Australia flow to London; Hindus and the Chinese grow tea for us, and our coffee, sugar and spice plantations are all in the Indies. Spain and France are our vineyards and the Mediterranean our fruit garden; and our cotton grounds, which for long have occupied the Southern United States, are now being extended everywhere in the warm regions of the earth”

Leave alone the wretched souls in the colonies, even their own Irish brethren, having been decimated by the Potato famines, a decade earlier; could be forgiven if they boiled in anger at this insensitive outburst of Imperial arrogance. The royal beast could be aroused to a ferocious, snarling state if its trade was interrupted by anyone. It is time; we look at the Chinese sufferings during the Opium war, a little more closely.

The Chinese had used opium as a medicinal drug for over a thousand years. With the rise of British influence in India after the grant of Diwani to Clive in 1765, the British took to

exporting Indian opium to China in a big way. They could use the opium supplied to pay for the Chinese export of Tea and Silk. Thus as more and more Chinese became addicted to Opium smoking, East India Company benefited for higher export of Opium to China meant lesser demand of Silver to pay for the Chinese goods. In 1770, China imported some 500,000 lbs. of Opium. With growing conquest of India, which was complete by 1803, the East India Company trade with China boomed. By 1830, the Chinese consumption had increased five fold and again doubled (or a ten fold increase over 1770) in less than ten years to reach 5,000,000 lbs. by 1840. The British were in the happy situation of paying marginally to the opium growers in India, whose prices and output were state controlled and getting valuable Chinese goods virtually for free. As an additional bonus, the Chinese now had to export Silver to obtain Opium for the demand exceeded the supply of Tea and Silk. A more profitable and less ethical way of commerce could hardly be devised by the Devil himself

The Chinese government understandably took alarm at the rising Opium trade, which was not only financially ruinous but was also gnawing at the vitals of their society by inducing an opium stupor on soldiers and youth. Their action of deciding to impose an absolute ban on Opium trade was no more than the similar action of Governments around the World today banning drug trafficking. Lin, a provincial official was appointed as Imperial Commissioner, who arrived in Canton in March 1839 and proceeded to impose the ban with vigour. He warned the Chinese inhabitants to stop smoking Opium and ordered the Western merchants to surrender all their opium stocks. They complied with great reluctance. Lin had the opium mixed with lime, dissolved in salt water and flushed out to sea. Lin even sent a letter to Queen Victoria appealing her to stop the dirty trade. He was neither the first nor the last to discover that the lure of profit overrode all moral considerations in British scheme of things. They chose to go to War rather than accept a legitimate demand of a sovereign government.

The European firepower overwhelmed the Chinese. Once again the scientific advances were used to trample upon considerations of humanity. By the terms of Treaty of Nanking in 1842, five ports, Canton, Amoy, Foochow, Ningpo and Shanghai were opened to foreign trade and residence. The foreigners were to be exempt from Chinese laws. Hong Kong was ceded to the British and as an added humiliation, the Chinese government had to pay for the opium destroyed by Lin as well as pay an indemnity of 21 million Mexican dollars to meet the debts of the Merchants who had been inconvenienced. All attempts to loosen the grip failed. In 1860, a multinational alliance of British, French, Americans and Russians trooped into Peking. They sacked and burned the emperor's summer palace forcing new concessions. Opium could now be imported at a fixed rate of 30 taels per Chest (125 lbs.). The Chinese humiliation was complete. Henceforth, China was to be a semi colony of the European powers

The Chinese story is not unique. It is merely a dramatic illustration of ruthless manner in which the Imperial powers pursued their hegemonic ambitions. There was no scope for harbouring any illusions. Yet, there was to be no lack of such gullible people. In the middle of the Nineteenth century, the British nation was at the pinnacle of success. Surprisingly, even in its hey days, it suffered from a crucial weakness. Even as it drew in

enormous amount of raw materials and foodstuffs and sent out vast quantities manufactured goods, it suffered from a trade gap in visible goods. This gap was as much as £30 million in the years between 1855-59. This was to keep on increasing, making the nation dependent on the earnings from Invisibles to finance the trade gap. Its ever-present need for the earnings on the Invisibles to fill the resulting void was always to remain its Achilles' heel. As we shall see later, once the Second World War was over with the Japanese surrender in August 1945, the primary concern of the British Cabinet was to keep its ship afloat in an era when the Invisible earning had dried up and the gap in the Visible Goods widened. A desperate British elite had no other option but to give up its those colonies, where the income had dried up and only the costs remained. This fascinating story of unraveling of an Empire has to wait for a later stage.

The unchallenged global domination of the British in the Nineteenth century enabled it to milk the colonies. The burden of conquering the Empire had in the earlier century had fallen, as we have seen, on the British working class, for whom the ruling elite had no money left after meeting the costs of the Wars. It was to be the lot of the unfortunate souls in the colonies to bear the cost of sustaining the Empire. The colonies were not only a source of the raw materials or markets for the British exports. They were also to provide the Capital, which their masters needed by paying for a variety of charges, the most notorious being the Home Charges. These represented nothing more than the subject people paying their rulers for the privilege of being their slaves. This imperial tribute was then reinvested abroad, mainly in the colonies in the form of loans or secured investments, where returns were guaranteed so that more earnings on the Invisibles could flow back. This is no idle conjecture but backed by hard numbers.

Capital of some £6 million was annually exported in the decade following the victory at Waterloo. This increased to £ 30 million by the middle of the century. By the time Queen Victoria was proclaimed as the Empress of India in 1877, the flow had become a torrent and increased to well over £ 75 million. By 1880, the British overseas investments were some £ 1000 million and as much as £ 4000 on the eve of the First World War. Kennedy marvels at the generosity of the British in thus exporting Capital and helping their subject nations build up infrastructure like the Railways in India, which served to lower the British competitiveness in the long run.

Such an analysis does not first of all take into account the reality, that 'In the long run, all of us would be dead anyway'; thus there are always limitations on how much of a long-range view one can keep. The British competitiveness may well have been lowered over the long run by such investments but the short run consequences were far more important. The British investments in India for Railways came at a very heavy cost to India, for a 5% return was guaranteed, which was much higher than the return available elsewhere. Such invisible earnings thus not only paid for the gap in Visible goods but also enhanced the British prosperity at India's cost.

It was Napoleon who had insisted, "My power depends on my glory and my glories on the victories I have won. My power will fail if I do not feed it on new glories and new

victories. Conquest has made me what I am and only conquest can enable me to hold my position.”

At least, he was honest. The same sentiments were etched in the minds of the British elite, who however took great pains to hide it behind the cloak of good intentions. They knew well Colonies were what had made their small island state a Great Power. If they were given up, their pretensions would be brutally exposed. Thus Ministries came and went but the British polity remained unrelentingly focussed on retention of the colonies. In securing this non-negotiable objective, they became shameless champions of maintaining the post Napoleon balance of power on the Continent. Thus the quadruple alliance of Russia, Prussia, Austria and Britain was to operate against all upstarts and new comers. The 1815 settlement was designed to prevent change and actually designed to put the clock back. The victors were terrified of the least concession. Even limited gradual reform was viewed with suspicion for one never knew when it could snowball into an unpredictable revolution. France was admitted to this conservative gang but continued to be viewed with disdain for its turbulent revolutionary character. The French style democracy with its emphasis on Republican form of government was: “the disease, which must be cured, the volcano that must be extinguished, the gangrene which must be burned out with a hot iron.”

It comes as no surprise to then find that Britain gave no support to the liberal movements of the time. It watched unconcerned as the Austrian army crushed Italian resistance in Piedmont in 1823 or did nothing to prevent the French military move into Spain the same year to restore King Ferdinand his former powers. The Russians could use troops to suppress the Hungarian revolution in 1848, with scarcely a protest. It played no major role in the fate of Piedmont in the critical year of 1859. The Indian bid for freedom in 1857 naturally invited a savage response for crucial interests were at stake.

By early 1850s, the archenemy – France had begun to cause alarm across the English Channel. It seemed strong and confident. Banking, railway and industry had seen considerable progress. Its swift intervention against Austria for the Italian cause was decisive. The French colonial empire spread over West Africa, Indochina and the Pacific was well served by its expanded naval fleet. The rise of Prussia around this time under the able leadership of Bismarck was seen to be providing a cost-effective check on the French ambitions.

As Prussia defeated the Austrians in October 1866, it was the turn of the French to grow alarmed. When it attempted in July 1870 to crush the upstart, it was simply beaten into submission by the superb Prussian war machine and had to surrender within the next two months. The English remained out of the struggle; happy to see their foe humbled; little realizing that from here on the journey to the First World War had begun slowly but surely.

New Claimants to Share of the Loot
1870 – 1939

Germany

The rise of a new powerful state in the very heart of Europe was bound to set off powerful tremors in the Continent. The sheer speed and the extent of the German growth was dazzling. As Lord Welby was to remark in June 1914 “the Germany they remembered in the fifties was a cluster of insignificant states under insignificant princelings”; now within one man’s lifetime it was the most powerful state in Europe and still growing.

As early as 1870, it had a population larger than France. Soon, it had more miles of railways, better organised for military purposes. Science and education became wide spread. The German technical education, universities, scientific establishments, chemical laboratories and scientific establishments were found to be without an equal. The resulting industrial revolution was leading to production of coal, iron and steel which exceeded the French totals in 1871 itself, creating large-scale firms such as Krupp steel and armaments combine. Soon its performance in the newer industries of electrics, optics and chemicals was well ahead of its rivals. Siemens and AEG employing 142,000 people dominated the European electrical industry. German chemical firms led by Bayer and Hoechst, produced 90% of the world’s industrial dyes. The exports tripled between 1890 and 1913 aided by a merchant navy that was second biggest in the world. On the eve of the War, it had overtaken Britain in every aspect other than colonial possessions, which remained economically negligible. If ever a proof was needed, that European economic prosperity could be attained by harnessing the power of Science and Technology and need not necessarily involve the Colonial exploitation; the German progress was a living example.

Nevertheless, if the natives of the colonies were to look at the Germany for deliverance, they would have been living in a fool’s paradise. For what were the German emotions? Admiral Tirpitz argued that Germany’s industrialization and overseas conquests were as irresistible as a natural law. The German Chancellor Buelow declared, ‘The question is not whether we want to colonize or not, but that we must colonize, whether we want it or not’. Germans were deeply resentful that the world was partitioned and they were left empty handed.

If after 1898, the German navy was transformed into second biggest navy in the world, which quite overawed the rival French or Russian Fleets – if by 1914 they were spending over \$ 442 million on army – it was not to come to the aid of people elsewhere; it was to wrest the right to exploit them. Here was a nation that had lain fragmented over centuries unable to exercise much influence either in Europe nor indeed over its own destiny. Through a remarkable burst of technological explosion, it had raced to the top rung of nations without colonial exploitation. Yet, instead of rejoicing in its achievement; it was so resentful at the denial of an opportunity to loot people that it had begun to arm itself to the teeth, to make up for the lost time.

Japan

If the rise of Germany in the middle of Europe was a startling phenomenon, emergence of Japan as a power to reckon with, from the middle of the Pacific Ocean was no less so. Let us take a brief look at this fascinating story.

Like many other Oriental societies, Japan preferred to keep itself out of the race for global domination. By an edict in 1641, the Japanese ruler – Shogun had forbidden interaction with the outside world. For about two hundred years, it had remained in a jealously guarded seclusion, keeping itself abreast of developments in the world through the regulated visits of Chinese, Dutch and the Portuguese traders at Nagasaki. In this era of ‘Great Peace’; agrarian base witnessed a remarkable expansion with an estimated doubling of cultivated land between 1615 to 1730. Remarkably for the time, population growth was consciously curtailed but had nevertheless reached about 30 million by the turn of the Eighteenth century, which was more than that of Germany or France.

Paper currencies, credit facilities provided sophisticated financial structure boosting economic growth despite the self imposed retreat from the world. A high degree of urbanization prevailed. Edo, the Shogun capital was a city of close to one million inhabitants, making it larger than contemporary London or Paris. There were two other major cities, Osaka and Kyoto with a population of about 300,000 besides some 50 smaller ones. It is this peaceful world that was shattered by the American demands that Japan open their ports to the foreigners and enforced by the Gunboats of Commodore Perry in 1853. Several unequal treaties followed but the Japanese gave up no territories nor allowed the foreigners to take over tariff administration unlike in their Chinese neighbours. Yet, the Japanese honour was hurt and amends had to be made.

Led by a political oligarchy of about 100 young men, Japan was to begin the era of Meiji restoration by 1868. Japan took to learning from the West with a vengeance. Some 3000 foreign advisors were hired between 1858 to 1890 but with a jealous concern for their own identity, each of the advisor was placed under a Japanese supervisor, whose job was to learn what the foreigner had to offer and send him packing as soon as possible.

With a relatively well-developed economic base, infusion of the western ideas served to catalyze the economic growth. Cotton spinning, using latest machinery and silk production became the prime capital producing industry. New seeds, fertilizers and equipment helped raise the agricultural production. By 1914, it had gained recognition as one of the top ten leading powers of the day.

Economic growth was not the only outcome of its interaction with the West. The other western habits followed. For a society that had remained at peace with the world for over two hundred years now was to become remarkably aggressive. With an army of 200,000 people and a navy of 28 vessels, it went to war against China forcing it to cede Formosa and Liaotung Peninsula besides paying a large indemnity. Soon Russia, France and Germany joined forces against it to relinquish its claim upon Liaotung Peninsula. Nevertheless, the power and the killing instinct displayed by this once peaceful nation

enabled it to gain recognition of England as an ally by 1902. Two years later it went to War with Russia to protect its interests in Korea. The spectacular defeat of the Russian navy in the Straits of Tsushima in May 1905 created a sensation. With annexation of Korea as a colony in 1910, the progress of Japan as a *Modern* nation was complete.

Italy

The readers would no doubt recall that the revolutionary story of Mazzini had been read with almost religious fervour by the Indian revolutionaries. Thus with history of a long and determined struggle for freeing itself from the yoke of foreign rule, an independent Italy could have possibly been the beacon of hope for the oppressed people all over the world. Alas! This was not to be.

Surely, its economic progress after winning independence from the Austrians was remarkable. It may not have been in the same league as the Germans but it was impressive enough for Italy to be considered a Great power within a decade of its independence. In the north Italy, iron and steel, shipbuilding, automobile manufacturing as well as textile industry grew. Urbanization gathered steam. There was progress in Agriculture as well. By 1914, its national income of US \$ 4, 000 million was a quarter more than that of its erstwhile master- the Habsburg empire, while per capita income was almost double.

However, the ideals of Risorgimento, hailed by the native and admiring foreign liberals had not taken roots in the Italian society despite a century long revolutionary ferment. Italy with an army of 345,000 and a navy with a Warship tonnage of 498,000 was now harbouring commercial and therefore according to the ethos of the times, expansionist ambitions in the Alps, the Balkans, North Africa and elsewhere.

The idealism of Mazzini was lost and Italy was now only too happy to line up in the company of its erstwhile masters for the sake of *Progress*.

Singling out Germany, Japan and Italy as the nations out to loot the world is apt to be misunderstood. They have been cited for being countries from whom, an aggressive, violent behaviour that had become the norm in Europe for hundreds of years was not expected. It was Bismarck himself, who had declared Germany to be a satiated power soon after the German unification. Its industry and trade had grown to be amongst the world's best; with few colonies to exploit. Japan had a historical tradition of being a peaceful nation. Italy was born out of revolutionary ferment. Yet, tragically they chose to join the Anglo-French imperial powers in the race to be the most successful exploiter of nations.

It was not on any principle of democratic freedom that the European nations clashed with each other in the two Great Wars of the Twentieth century but on the issue of the principle of freedom to loot the people unhindered by any competitive rivalry. It is this fundamental truth that Congress appeared to have not understood, when it offered to conditionally support British Imperial campaigns in 1939.

The Run up to the War and Thereafter

The creation of Germany, formidable as it was; by no means was the only legacy of Bismarck to the world of diplomacy. In 1879, he began formation of fixed military alliances in what seemed to be peace times as he established an Austro-German alliance. Italy was drawn in the alliance by 1882. This triple alliance came to be counter balanced by a Franco-Russian alliance as they worried that the great German diplomat pushed them into isolation.

The German restraint vanished after retirement of Bismarck in 1890. Bellicose German statements and its naval race forced the arch European rivals – the French and the English to come together in 1904. The alliance stood the strain of Sino-Japanese conflict in 1905. In 1907, an Anglo-Russian entente occurred. From then on, an open conflict between the two rival alliances was a mere matter of time. With a worldwide rivalry, there were enough and more flash points.

The War broke out in August 1914 in the Imperial Chancellery with Kaiser's declaration of War against Russia. It was not to end before the surrender of the Japanese in August 1945. The two decades after 1918, when the first phase ended were really not decades of peace but rather the interim period for rest and recuperation before the launch of the final assault.

The 1914-1918 saw the Bismarckian alliances largely held with the exception of Italy, which defected to the English side in 1915, while Berlin found Turkish support. United States watched the self-destruction of the European powers from the sidelines for nearly three years. Only the German announcement of unrestricted U boat campaign against their merchant shipping and secret German offers to Mexico for an anti-American alliance, made the US president cross the Rubicon and enter the War in April 1917. Later in the year, on 6th December, Russians bowed out of the conflict following the Bolshevik revolution. The first round was finally over in October 1918. By this time, four Emperors, The Tsar in Russia, Kaiser in Germany, Caliph of Ottoman Empire in Turkey and Franz Josef of Austria-Hungary had lost their thrones. The Japanese, though technically at war with Germany took no part in the European operations but merely helped themselves to the German possessions in China and the Central Pacific.

The conflict consumed over US \$ 80,000 million and took the lives of around 60 million men, women and children. Such an appalling scale of destruction had never been seen before. Strange was the nature of progress that was set off with the voyage of Columbus.

Some semblance of international order was sought to be restored by the Treaty of Versailles on 28 June 1919. But that was not to be. Its harsh terms only fuelled the German nationalism and aided the rise of the Nazi. United States of America, which was now, replaced Britain as the world's biggest creditor nation preferred not to ratify the treaty and retreated into international isolationism; it would not even join the League of Nations. This seemingly strange attitude of the Americans deserves some study.

The United States of America

Throughout our discussions so far, we have not taken into account the American factor in the international arena. The reason is simple, though sounds strange. Right through the whole of Nineteenth century and most of parts of the early Twentieth century, it had preferred to keep itself out of the world stage. The reasons were eminently sensible.

A country that had commanded less than one per cent share in the World manufacturing output, when it became independent had by 1900 transformed itself into a global colossus. By this time it accounted for a little less than a quarter of world's manufacturing output. It had exploited its rich agricultural lands, vast raw materials and the marvelously convenient technological wonders – the railways, the steam engines, mining equipment to develop its natural wealth. Its firms like the International Harvester, Singer, DuPont, Bell, Standard Oil enjoying enormous domestic market and economies of scale were often the best in the world. This was a nation that had no time to fritter away on issues that were of no concern to it.

When the occasion demanded, it had no second thoughts in enforcing its will. If the opening of the Japanese ports was necessary for its shipping, well the Japanese better do it. If someone like Spain was foolish enough to clash with it; it could only lose its colonies. It is only when its own backyard was threatened, that it participated in the War after watching the contestants bleed themselves to death for years. As can be seen from the figures, it had the clout to force the Wilsonian concerns of democracy and self-determination on unwilling European powers. It chose not to, for the issue was not of strategic concern to it.

**Key National Statistics
1914**

	National Income in US \$ million	Population in million	Per Capita Income
Unites States	37,000	98	377
Britain	11,000	45	244
France	6,000	39	153
Japan	2,000	55	36
Germany	12,000	65	184
Italy	4,000	37	108
Russia	7,000	171	41
Austria-Hungary	3,000	52	57

Unlike all other participants, the War did not damage its mighty economic engines. They only went into an overdrive accelerating the pre war process of leaving the Europeans far behind. After playing a brief but decisive role in the international arena, it opted to once again concentrate on its domestic affairs. These affairs demanded serious attention after the Wall Street crash of 1929. In 1933, value of its manufactured goods had shrunk by a quarter. Great firms like Westinghouse lost two third of their sales between 1929 – 33. Fifteen million Americans had lost their jobs and were without any support. No wonder, that the idea of intervention in the messy European affairs became even more distasteful.

United States in 1934 banned grant of loans to any foreign power that had defaulted on its war debts. In 1935, an arms embargo in the event of a war was decided upon. A little later came prohibition of loans to any belligerent nation. With 1937, neutrality legislation United States had not only decided to remain neutral but also cut the British lifeline of credit to the American markets. This did not mean that America was prepared to abandon its trade. For instance, its severe disapproval of fascism in Italy did not stop the Americans from increasing their petroleum supplies to it for commercial profit.

The rise of Hitler to power in Germany or the consolidations of fascist regime in Italy were issues of peripheral concern to a nation struggling to rebuild its economy devastated by the great recession. Hitler first tore up the peace treaties in 1935 and later moved into Rhineland. About the same time Japanese openly assaulted China. All this was found distasteful but unworthy of forcing a policy change. For at this time, the American economy had once again slumped. Germans helped themselves to Austria and Czechoslovakia, while Italy could move into Albania (April 1939) without stirring this giant to action. Even in the face of outbreak of large-scale hostility between the major European powers in September 1939, the Americans saw no reason to get involved. When it later threw the lifeline of Lend Lease to a beleaguered Britain struggling to stave of bankruptcy and defeat, it took great care of its own economic interests. For instance, no Lend Lease goods could go into exports nor could similar British made goods go into overseas market. It is difficult to see but for a direct assault on American territories, such as on Pearl Harbour in 1941; what could have provoked the Americans to actually go to War.

The American policy of isolationism had paid them rich dividends. In 1937, it had a national income of US \$ 68,000 million. By itself, it was richer than both the warring camps taken together. For the income of the Anglo-French block amounted to US \$ 32,000, while the German, Japan and Italy commanded resources of US \$ 27,000.

It is not as if the Americans were being pursuing a policy of immorality leaving the British and French to save the world from the ravages of Nazism or Fascism. It is only that they saw through the Imperial game quite clearly. The much-touted League of Nations was no more than an elaborate fig leaf for the Anglo-French imperial interests. The German threat had not prevented the break down of World Economic Conference nor hindered the Anglo-French-Americans from erecting their own currency and trade blocks. By 1935 both the British and French took unilateral steps to cover their flanks.

French concluded a pact with the U.S.S.R, while British signed a naval agreement with Germany. Mussolini's open aggression against Abyssinia was neither halted by the British nor the French for their own considerations. The French wanted to keep Italy out of the German camp, while the British did not wish to get involved in the Mediterranean imbroglio and take their eyes off the dangerous moves of Japan in the Far East.

Both the nations well knew that they could not afford another major war. They had nothing to gain and plenty to lose. They therefore desperately sought to *appease* Germany so as to establish a durable European balance of power, leaving them free to carry on with colonial exploitation. In September 1938, the British Prime Minister, Chamberlain even traveled to Munich in order to satiate Hitler and returned to a cheering nation, happy to have averted a War. No wonder, Stalin grew wary of their French connection and made a direct pact with Hitler. Right through 1939, the Anglo-French attempts to strike a deal with Hitler continued. It is only when it became clear that Hitler wanted nothing short of their hide itself, that they took to war.

In this background, where was the place for anyone in the World to delude himself with the illusion that that Democracies of the World were taking on the evil forces of Fascism and Nazism and therefore deserved help from all possible quarters? It only spoke of either extreme naivete or excessive fondness for the British. Which of the two ailments did Nehru or Gandhi suffer from in September of 1939 is best left for the readers to judge. Indeed, Nehru who was bubbling with enthusiasm on the eve of the outbreak of the War, eager to help the British had his illusions shattered. As he cooled his heels in the British prison at Ahmednagar after his arrest in August 1942, he had this to say:

“But, as the war developed, it became ever clearer that the western democracies were not fighting for a change but for a perpetuation of the old order. Before the war they had appeased fascism. Not only because of the fear of its consequences but also because of a certain ideological sympathy with it and an extreme dislike of some of the probable alternatives to it.”

It is another matter that this realisation about the nature of the conflict did not dawn for a good three years after the War had erupted. It dawned only when this international do gooder was thrown behind bars. The three years in which the Congress had, by the own confession of Nehru himself:

“deliberately followed a policy of non-embarrassment and such action as we had indulged in had been in the nature of symbolic protest.”

Thus, by its *deliberate policy of non-embarrassment*, the Congress between 1939 – 1942 had only served the British cause of upholding the old order of exploiting India. The internment certainly seems to have cleared Nehru's mind, for he says:

“Nazism and Fascism were no sudden growths or accidents of history. They were the natural developments of the past course of events, of empire and racial discrimination, of national struggles, of the growing concentration of power, of technological growth which

found no scope for its fulfillment within the existing framework of society... a time came when further expansion endangered the basis of the social structure, and then the upholders of that structure became clamant and aggressive and became organised themselves to oppose change.... And there were also they began to assert that democracy, though good as an ideal and desirable in their own home lands, was not suited to the peculiar conditions prevailing in their colonial dominions. So it was natural consequence for these western democracies to feel some kind of an ideological bond with fascism, even when they disliked many of its more brutal and vulgar manifestations.”

Viewed in the background of this candid confession, the Nehru-Gandhi led Congress in that fateful autumn of 1939 must stand convicted, at the alter of times, of squandering a wealth of opportunities, the immense cost of which continues to be paid by the country.

None of the able political opponents of the Nehru-Gandhi Congress needed a dose of the British prison to clear their minds. They were very clear. If England and France could keep on negotiating with Hitler till he left them no alternative. If the blood brothers of the British, Ireland could keep itself out of the War. If the mightiest nation with the longest history of republican form of government, the United States of America thought it wiser to keep away from the Anglo-French-German-Japanese fight over the colonies. What business did India have to offer any help to the British war effort under any circumstances, when any Statesman of the time well knew that the War would ruin the British economy and disband large parts of the British empire.

On the eve of the War, if Savarkar offered help to the British, it was, as we shall see later, with a not too hidden motive to further the cause of Independence. If Subhas Bose joined the Japanese to drive the British out of India, it was not because he was a sinner. Jinnah had offered neither help nor opposition but called for further clarifications. To gain time and advance the cause of the Muslim League. If Ambedkar joined the Viceroy's Council, it was to make sure the Untouchables were not subjected to further atrocities. All these leaders were only being as practical as any other leader of any major nation of the world. They were merely trying to make full use of the Hitler sent opportunity to advance the causes that were dear to their hearts and in their view in the best interest of the nation that they represented.

Finally, the War was also an opportunity to examine the very nature of the Western concept of progress. For what is Western Progress, if not:

“His face is turned towards the past. Where we see a chain of events before us, he sees a single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon ruin till they reach his feet. If only he could stay to wake the dead and to piece together the fragments of what has been broken! But a storm blows from the direction of Paradise, catching his wings with such force that the Angel can no longer close them. This storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris at his feet grows into the sky. This storm is what we call progress.”

Chapter IV-2

Political Betrayal Leading to Pakistan Resolution

One of the most startling developments after the outbreak of the War in 1939 was the passage of the Pakistan resolution by Muslim League on 26th March 1940. On that day, the Muslim League at Lahore demanded that:

“Resolved that it is the considered view of this session of the All India Muslim League that no constitutional plan would be workable in this country or acceptable to the Muslims unless it is designated on the following basic principle viz. That geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary, that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority as in the North-Western and Eastern Zones of India should be grouped to constitute ‘Independent States’ in which the Constituent Units shall be autonomous and sovereign.”

What did the League want – One Muslim State or more; the resolution appears to have been purposely vague. In the words of Dr. Ambedkar:

“Does the Resolution contemplate that these Muslim provinces after being incorporated into States, will remain each an independent sovereign State or will they be joined together into one constitution as members of a single state, federal or unitary? On this point, the Resolution is rather ambiguous, if not self-contradictory. It speaks of grouping the zones into ‘Independent States in which the Constituent Units shall be autonomous and sovereign’. The use of the term ‘Constituent Units’ indicates that what is contemplated is a Federation. If that is so, then the use of the term ‘sovereign’ as an attribute of the Units is out of place. Federations of Units and sovereignty of units are contradictions. It may be that what is contemplated is a confederation. It is, however, not very material for the moment whether these Independent States are to form into a federation or a confederation. What is important is the basic demand namely, that these areas are to be separated from India and formed into Independent States.”

The Original Pakistan Resolution and the explanation provided by Dr. Ambedkar is of great importance. There has been a tendency to dismiss Jinnah and his two nation theory as the work of a lunatic in India, particularly after the birth of Bangladesh in 1971. Indians should try and understand that birth of Bangladesh or even further break up of the existing state of Pakistan into several states would not invalidate the League Resolution of 1940. So long as these breakaway parts remain in existence as Independent States, away from India, Jinnah’s Two Nation Theory continues to remain valid. Now, this does not mean that India has to embark on a mad venture to try and conquer these states by force. The sheer lunacy of this project would be apparent to even the most rabid Pakistan hater in India. There is only one way that India can invalidate the Jinnah theory. It is by creating a State that Jinnah himself would have been proud to live in. What would such a State be like? Certainly not a fundamentalist state, which was never Jinnah’s ideal even after birth of Pakistan in 1947.

The present day Indians and Pakistanis need to be reminded that such a State that would do Jinnah proud would be one in which no Nationalist leader needs to turn Communal merely to ensure that he is not elbowed into Wilderness on account of his nationalist policies. A State that would have resolution of disputes by Settlement and not by Appeasement as has been the Congress credo. A state that suffers from no communal riots. A State in which no citizen suffers from any social, cultural or legal discrimination on account of his or her religion.

It is with an eye on the future that we need to study the underlying reasons behind the Ideological transformation of Jinnah from one who fervently believed in Unity of the Country to one who spearheaded the movement for its break up. The relations between India and Pakistan can not improve in the years to come, nay they are condemned to remain locked in bitter enmity unless they can understand the reasons for the Ideological transformation of Jinnah. The worst enemies of Jinnah have never suspected him of being a tool of the British, a pawn to further their policy of Divide and Rule. Nor was he ever touched by a trace of corruption. Indeed, as Dr. Ambedkar said of him:

“It is doubtful if there is a politician in India to whom the adjective incorruptible can be more fittingly applied...No one can buy him. For it must be said to his credit that he has never been a soldier of fortune. The customary Hindu explanation fail to account for the ideological transformation of Mr. Jinnah”.

If Jinnah was driven merely by political ambitions, he would not have waited for 20 years to demand Pakistan. The tragic story of the manner in which Jinnah was thrown out in the post Tilak Congress by Gandhiji in 1920, is now known to us. For years thereafter, he remained a votary of Hindu-Muslim Unity. Neither, did he fight shy of enlarging scope of his demands on behalf of the Muslims. Indeed, how could he? The Congress Policy of Appeasement meant that Jinnah would have had to commit political *hara kiri* if he was to stick to the terms of the Lucknow pact. When the Congress was prepared to concede far more than the Lucknow Pact Terms, how could he, as a leader of his community demand less than what the Congress was willing to offer. After the Lucknow Pact, which had conceded most just demands of the Muslims, the Congress needed to have followed the Savarkar philosophy of :

If you come, With you, if you don't without you, and if you oppose, in spite of you – we will continue to fight for the national freedom.

Instead, as we all know, Gandhiji kept on humiliating nationalist leaders like Jinnah and kept on appeasing the worst elements of the Muslim society. This by itself did not lead to ideological transformation of Jinnah. This was a slow evolutionary process in the mind of Jinnah driven by the antics of the Gandhi Congress. Nor was he the only one who had come to believe that given the then prevalent state of relations between Hindus and Muslims, they constituted two nations. Giving him company were leaders like Savarkar and Dr. Ambedkar. This did not necessarily mean that they had to live in Independent states. So, why did the Will to Live together with Hindus dissolve in Jinnah's mind ? There are some painful facts to first acknowledge.

The Unholy Alliance of Gandhi and the British

Before, we come to the Dissolution of the Will to live together in case of Jinnah, let us try and understand what seems to have bothered him the most. The willing and enthusiastic acceptance of the leadership of Gandhiji, a leadership that had lost all credibility in his eyes, by an Avatar driven Hindu mind set. The loss of Credibility of Gandhi leadership in the eyes of Jinnah was not a case of personal dislike. His dislike can not be understood unless we study the sad story of the Unholy Alliance that existed between Gandhiji and the British.

It was in December 1929 at Lahore, that the Congress had demanded *Absolute Political Independence* finally accepting the Revolutionary credo that had already then been in vogue for more than twenty five years. What followed was not a Congress sponsored 'Quit India Movement' with the rallying cry of Do or Die. This was not to happen till 1942, a wait of good thirteen years. As we have seen earlier, what followed was a Demand for Substance of Independence. When that was not conceded, the headline grabbing famous Dandi Yatra followed – not for attaining Independence but for breaking the Salt Law. Civil Disobedience, the pact with Irwin, Round Table Conference, efforts for eradication of Untouchability, participation in Elections, holding office, all followed as Congress programmes with the full blessings of Gandhiji. In none of these campaigns did Gandhiji demonstrate any sign of either Urgency or ruthlessness for forcing the British out of India. Indeed, how could he - for the main plank of the Gandhi campaign was the force of moral persuasion. Non violence was incompatible with such fascist techniques. It is another matter that while the British could be tolerated till their hearts underwent a conversion, a Congress President like Subhas Bose, who refused to bow down to Gandhiji could not be accepted even for a few months. An urgent, ruthless campaign had to be undertaken to force him out of the Office.

Even, if we chose to ignore the unsavory Bose episode, the fact remains that between 1929 to 1939; the Gandhi led Congress puffed and panted but failed to dent the British capacity to loot the country. This much is an undeniable historical fact in view of the facts that we now know about the British conduct in the War and thereafter. Many a misguided soul may quarrel with the choice of description of the Congress effort. My apologies to them for hurting their sensibilities. Let me be more specific. My comments are limited to that section of the Congress, which never looked beyond Gandhiji for salvation. For their activities, this description is a Charitable description. If this sounds shocking, the readers are invited to form their own conclusions, after reading what I now have to present.

First of all, it is worthwhile to reacquaint ourselves with some historical facts. Unlike, what seems to be propagated today, even at the height of the Gandhi era, there was considerable opposition to Gandhiji within the Congress. For a proof, consider the well known re election of Subhas Bose despite the well-known opposition of the Mahatma himself. Congress was an Umbrella organisation. Jockeying for its control were the Pro-Independence lobby consisting of the Congress Socialists, the Forward Block of Subhas Bose and the Communists. The so called the Congress Left. Opposing them were the Pro-Dominion lobby, seeking to largely maintain the Status quo, replacing the White British

Masters by the Brown Indians; swearing allegiance to the British Crown. The so-called Congress Right. Falling in between were the people like Jawahar Lal Nehru, who had their head in the Left and the heart in the Right. The Right Wing won the battle but not without considerable help from the British. It was not as if the British liked the Right Wing but it was, not unnaturally, far more preferable to them than the Congress Left. It is this unholy alliance of the British and the Congress Right that betrayed the cause of Independence with a leading role played by none other than Mr. Gandhi himself.

Now is the time to devote our attention to the story of this Unholy Alliance that has unfortunately been so successful in shaping our history. The story begins in January 1929. On 23rd January 1929, the Secretary of State was rather gloomily informing his Cabinet colleagues that ‘the political situation in India has swung considerably to the left in the last year.’ He had based his conclusions on the report given to him by the Viceroy on the 19th January – both in an official telegram as well as a private letter. In his official telegram, the Viceroy reported:

“Developments in the political situation in India during the last month have been very marked. The most important event was the meeting of the Congress in Calcutta attended by popular demonstrations on very large scale. The principle subject of discussion was the issue between Dominion status as recommended in the Nehru report and independence. Motilal Nehru, the President of the Congress, was committed to the Dominion status ideal by the report which bears his name. The independence movement was supported... mainly by the younger men led by Jawahar Lal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, who have converted independence from a phrase into a definite movement.”

Both - Jawahar Lal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose would have been quick to protest against being credited with, had they known this in their lifetime, converting independence from a phrase into a definite movement. They would have pointed out that from 1905 itself hundreds of people had courted death and thousands more had suffered inhuman punishment for the cause of independence. They were only forcing the Congress to follow the path already soaked with the blood, toils and tears of their more illustrious patriots. A path that was then already more than two decades old. The Viceroy went on:

“Motilal Nehru, finding himself in danger of defeat...invoked the aid of Gandhi, who drafted compromising resolution.”

So strong was the urge for Independence that the Gandhi drafted Compromise resolution also failed to find favour. This defeat forced Mr. Gandhi to introduce a resolution further modifying the Compromise resolution. The modified Compromise resolution called for full dominion status by end of 1929, failing which the Congress was committed to launch promote non violent civil disobedience to secure Independence. Yes! Independence, not substance of Independence, not abolition of Salt Tax but Full and Absolute Independence. The Country’s youth were impatient to attain Independence. Even a year’s wait to demand independence was no acceptable to them. As the Viceroy continued:

“Jawahar Lal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose had never attempted to conceal their view that even this (the modified Compromise resolution) was inadequate and finally in open Congress Subhas Bose opposed the resolution and moved an amendment repudiating Dominion status and laying down independence as India’s goal. This was lost by 973 against 1,350 votes.”

The Congress Right prevailed but just about. The Raj knew this. The Viceroy shrewdly noted:

“Though the supporters of independence profess not to have been satisfied by the result of the Congress meeting, there is no doubt that the Congress was a great triumph for extremism. An ultimatum which everybody knows can not be complied with has been given to the British Government, and the Congress have decided unanimously that if it is not complied with after the end of December next they will revive non co-operation. This is a definite declaration from which the Congress will find it difficult to go back. It may be that Gandhi and Motilal Nehru and their followers are not anxious to see these developments; but in view of the commitment they have made, they will find it very difficult to avoid participating in them without a complete break with the extremists, which they are reluctant to face. In any event the more extreme leaders are unlikely to modify their demand.”

Dear readers, read this very carefully. Mr. Gandhi had committed to *demand Absolute Political Independence* by end of 1929 if full dominion status was not given. It was well known that when this Commitment was given that there was no chance of India getting Full Dominion status by end of 1929. Thus the demand of *Absolute Political Independence* and the revival of non co-operation was inevitable. It was therefore incumbent upon Mr. Gandhi to prepare for the struggle ahead. And what did he actually do? Hardly had the ink dried on the paper, for the resolution was passed in late December 1928 and the Viceroy’s telegram being quoted here is dated 19th January 1929, Mr. Gandhi was already looking around for a way to wriggle out of his own solemn commitment. The Viceroy reported:

“Gandhi has since tried to tone down his ultimatum and explains that he would be satisfied if the British Government made some serious and sincere move to meet them within the year.”

The question was not what would satisfy Mr. Gandhi. The issue was what would satisfy the Congress. The only serious and sincere move that the British Government could make within 1929 to satisfy the Congress resolution prepared by Mr. Gandhi himself, was the grant of Full dominion status to India before the end of 1929. The Viceroy rightly went on to note that: “but this does not really get him and those who think with him out of the difficulty into which the desire for compromise with the extremists had got them. He knows no practical step could be taken which would give a plausible excuse, having regard to the actual terms of the resolution, for calling off the non-co-operation movement, and that he could not recede without breaking the Congress and stultifying himself.”

Mr. Gandhi's hide had been nailed on the wall by the *extremist* – pro Independence lobby. There was no way for him to get off the hook without making himself completely useless and ineffective as a political leader. The only honorable way out for him was to disassociate himself with the Resolution and Walt of Congress into the political wilderness. At least that was the Viceroy thought – rather naively; as it turns out. For he had not yet reckoned with the machinations of Mr. Gandhi.

It was clear to the Viceroy that the British Parliament was not going to accede to any request from him, should he be so foolish to make one, to grant full dominion status to India in 1929. He therefore now turned to looking at the ways to meet the challenge of dealing with the inevitable Congress sponsored Independence movement in 1930. The challenge could not be met unless the battlefield was mapped. So he noted:

“The result of the Congress meeting would seem to leave the Congress divided into three sections : (a) Those who desire independence and are prepared to take active measures towards goal (*the Congress left*); (b) a considerable number who have no real objection to independence as ultimate goal, or are afraid to dissociate themselves from demand (*the Congress Right*).....(c) a comparatively small number of persons, whose opposition to independence is open and genuine (*the Congress irrelevant*)”

The Viceroy then went on to explain the growth of the idea of Independence *in Congress*.

“When the idea of Independence first emerged last year, it was generally considered visionary and did not seem likely to develop into a practical issue. In the last few months, however, independence has ceased to be an academic ideal. We are now faced with a party, at present small in number, but active, who, it would seem mean to attempt to translate independence into a definite policy, and to organise themselves with a view to attaining their objective by force, or at least, to create such widespread unrest in the country that the Government will be intimidated into making sweeping concessions. Youth movements and volunteer organisations are being discussed and supported.”

So who was behind these seditious conspiracies. The answer was well known. It was the Nehru, Bose duo, who, the Viceroy knew:

" ... do not mean to stop at words, but are prepared for action. It does not at present appear that they are anxious to launch any large-scale anti-government movement in the nature of direct action until next year. Their present policy, so far as can be judged, is to spend the coming year in preparation for rousing anti-government feeling in every possible way, foster in their own words, a revolutionary mentality, organise volunteers, exploit, on lines of Bardoli, any specific grievances that may occur in any part of the country and generally create an atmosphere favourable to launch of a big mass movement against the Government next year.”

In other words, they were only being faithful to the Congress resolution. The Viceroy's problem was to find a way of dealing with these *extremists*. The typical Nazi response would have been to create a small hole between the two eyes of these troublesome duo. That would have been brutal and we all know, the British always took great care to show they were not brutal. So:

“We are at present considering in consultation with the Local Government concerned, whether it is possible, expedient to prosecute Jawahar Lal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose and perhaps one or two other leaders in respect of the recent speeches”.

Prosecution of Nehru, Bose was a troublesome matter. The Viceroy had already pointed out the difficulties in so doing, in his earlier private letter dated 2nd January 1929:

“I am very doubtful about the wisdom of doing this unless (*the Independence speeches*) .. so preached as to advocate violent methods, when, of course, it would clearly expose itself to our attack. On one side, of course, there are the evils flowing from unchecked speech-making in favour of Independence, which are doing great harm; on the other hand there is the complete certainty, as it seems to me, that you can not fill your jails with everybody who proclaims his belief in Independence.”

Thus the Viceroy admitted that the support for Independence was widespread in the country. In the winter of 1929, it was clear that those, who would attempt to stand in the way of the national fervor for Independence, were going to be swept aside like twigs in a raging torrent. It is for this reason that Mr. Gandhi had made the show of supporting the Calcutta Congress resolution, even while he was going to be satisfied with a mere move by the British towards – not independence but Dominion status. Nehru and Bose were the symbols of the national desire for Independence, were they to be prosecuted:

“..the only effect of trying to do so at this juncture would be rapidly to enhance the popularity of the cause”

The Nazi solution, was therefore, merely too inefficient and therefore not the British way of dealing with the problem. The British way, we shall study in more detail but in the meanwhile, Nehru and Bose were not the only torchbearers of Independence.

“To complete picture of extreme anti-government movement it is necessary to say something of Communist activity. The Indian Communists are perhaps not very clear about their ultimate object.”

This was being ingenious by Lord Irwin. He knew the Communist may or may not have been very clear about their ultimate objective in life – which one of us dare say, he is; they were very clear about their immediate objective. That was to send the British packing out of India as soon as possible. Their actions deserved even more serious attention than those of Nehru and Bose. The Communist threat to domination was on a global level, while that of Nehru and Bose was merely on local level. Thus, he recorded:

“What they (*the Communists*) have concentrated on with considerable success is rousing a spirit of discontent and lawlessness in the industrial labour population. In Bombay, they have succeeded in creating a situation which requires a very careful consideration, and it is believed that they contemplate trying to organise a general strike...about May next. In Calcutta, though they have not succeeded in creating the same general unrest among labour, they have been able to prolong for some months a strike at important Fort Gloster Mill, which has no clear reasoned basis. *The large demonstration of labourers under Communist auspices which invaded Congress premises during the Congress sitting in Calcutta is significant* (italics mine).....”

The readers would recall that the telegram that we are studying had started with the acknowledgement that “the most important event was the meeting of the Congress in Calcutta attended by popular demonstrations on very large scale.” Now we learn that *the popular demonstrations on very large scale* that created a pressure of their own on the proceedings of the famous 1928 Calcutta Congress were Communist led. No wonder, then that the Viceroy was worried about the growing Communist influence in India. His response was very clear. In dealing with the Communist, the velvet gloves were off. They were to be hammered out of existence.

“We believe that the most effective blow that could be struck against Communist movement would be a conspiracy case against some 20 of the leaders. No new legislative measures would be likely to be so effective as a successful prosecution of this character...We are about to take the best legal opinion available on the material collected, and if that opinion is favourable it is anticipated that the case might be launched about the beginning of April.”

For the record, the prosecution was indeed launched in what came to be known as the Meerut Conspiracy case. On 20th March 1929, 31 Communist leaders were arrested. The British were successful in putting 27 of these most important Communist leaders behind bars. An action that was to throw the Communist movement into a complete disarray for the next five years. Thus the British made sure that the most important component of the Pro-Independence lobby – the Communists, were in no position to launch a challenge to the Gandhi domination of Congress during the critical years of Civil Disobedience. The Communist led Calcutta demonstrations were not to be allowed to be repeated. It was this popular outrage that had put the pressure on the Dominion lobby to propose a Compromise to the Independence lobby and when it did not work – propose a modified Compromise. It was best to lock up these trouble makers, so that the Gandhi leadership could continue to hold sway over Congress. As a matter of interest, when the Communist leaders, who were so interned, were released and attempted to regroup; the Communist Party itself was banned in 1934. Mr. Gandhi’s leadership of the Congress continued to be insulated against the Communist threat.

In the meantime, in 1929 mere internment of the Communist leaders was not enough. The situation was worrying. Bhagat Singh and his comrade Batukeshwar Dutt threw bombs in the Central legislative assembly on 8th April 1929. An act that was widely acclaimed in the country. Huge bomb factories were discovered in Lahore and Saharanpur in May. The Secretary of State was to inform his Cabinet colleagues on 3rd of October 1929:

“The excited and unhealthy state of public opinion may be judged from the general approval given to the hunger strike of two men, Dutt and Singh, who had already been convicted of throwing bombs in the Assembly.

The Administrative outlook, therefore, is not bright. On the other hand...the older leaders of Congress (whose, influence is, however rapidly declining) are not in their hearts sympathetic with extremists plans. In view of this a statement is needed which will re-establish faith in the sincerity of the British promise.”

The British now feared that India was now on the path not only to demand Independence but demand it by force. Their only hope was to ensure that Mr. Gandhi retained his preeminence. His mortal enemies, the Communists had been safely sent behind bars. The challenge of Nehru, Bose duo was still to be met. It could only be overcome by Mr. Gandhi if he could be given a pretext, a statement, a promise – that is all that he wanted. Armed with this, he could get off the Independence hook without losing face. Without, such a pretext, Nehru and Bose would have made a mince meat of the Gandhi leadership if it persisted in opposing Independence at Lahore that was to be held in December 1929.

The problem of finding a suitable pretext for Mr. Gandhi, who was desperately looking for a way to get out of his Commitment of supporting the cause of Independence now became very urgent. The British mandarins therefore went to work. They seemed to have kept open their channels of communication with the Congress Right. In his personal letter of the 2nd January 1929, the Viceroy had spoken of meeting Motilal Nehru to;

“persuade him that, from his (i.e. from Motilal Nehru’s) point of view, the policy of the Congress Resolution is the last word in folly”

Now the Secretary of State talked of their heart not being sympathetic with the extremist’s plan. The Unholy Alliance was now beginning to take shape.

The problem was under what pretext could a Statement be issued that would be good enough ammunition for Mr. Gandhi, as well as pass the muster of British opinion. The Simon Commission appointed by the British Government on 8th November 1927, now came handy. As is known, the appointment of an all White Commission had outraged the Bharatiya opinion. The Commission had been boycotted by Hindus and the Muslims alike. A leading part in the Muslim boycott had been played by Jinnah. The Bharatiya consensus in favour of the Simon Commission boycott was so complete that even an Indian member of the Governor - General’s Council had refused to give evidence before it on grounds of principle. The members of the Commission had returned to England in 1929 after having what amounted to a completely sterile hearings.

A truly bizarre maneuvering now took place between 13th July 1929 to 2nd November 1929. Events that conclusively establish beyond a shadow of doubt, the existence of an Unholy Alliance between the British and the Congress Right led by Mr. Gandhi. The whole purpose of which was to ensure the continuation of the leadership of Mr. Gandhi in the Congress, so that the demand for Independence could be scuttled. Very strong

statement but one which is backed by incontrovertible evidence. Read on my friends, the manner in which the British went about trampling the so called Parliamentary ethics with the noble objective of ensuring the defeat of Bharatiya demand of Independence. Read on my friends, the shameless manner in which Mr. Gandhi collaborated with the British, not only to keep the reins of power in his own hands but also to sabotage the demand for Independence struggle. Read on my friends, the dark secrets that are finally coming to light after seventy years.

As you read this, no doubt the picture of Bhagat Singh and his comrade Batukeshwar Dutt, waiting anxiously for the hangman's noose, will flash before your minds, as it did before mine, when I wrote this. Young men, not yet two score and half old, in the prime of their youth staking their lives to advance the cause of Independence. You would also see a Sixty One year old man, who had lived his life, secretly conferring with the enemies of his nation, all for the sake of satisfying his own vanity. Read on my friends and make up your mind, if after reading this episode, you would chose to address M.K.Gandhi as the 'Mahatma' or 'Gandhiji' or 'Mr. Gandhi' or something else.

Let us study the narrative of events leading up to the publication of the Viceroy's Statement on 31st October 1929 submitted for the consideration of the Cabinet by the Secretary of State on 4th November 1929.

“On 13th July Lord Irwin arrived in England. He brought with him certain documents....The documents included drafts of imaginary letters to be exchanged between the Chairman of the Statutory Commission and the Prime Minister which had been prepared in India *after* the Statutory Commission returned to India.”

To cut the story short, the Chairman of the Statutory Commission, Mr. Simon was to write a letter to the Prime Minister addressing him with an Enquiry and a Suggestion:

- The enquiry was in respect of the willingness of the Government and the opposition parties to extend the scope of the Commission's report to include future relationship of British India with the Princely states.
- The suggestion was to be in respect of Government calling for setting up of some sort of Conference to consider constitutional proposals put before it by the Government. The Conference was to be attended by representatives of British India and the Princely states.

The Prime Minister was to respond agreeing to extension of the scope of the Commission's report after consulting all the parties and accepting the suggestion in respect of the Conference. The Prime Minister's reply was to contain something else. The Ammunition desperately needed by Mr. Gandhi. As the narrative put it:

“In the suggested reply from the Prime Minister to Sir John Simon (not discussed with any members of the Commission)....the opportunity was to be taken of disposing off the doubts which had been expressed....on the intentions of the British Government in

enacting the Statute of 1919. The definite pronouncement was suggested that ‘it is definite policy of His Majesty’s Government that India shall, through the realisation of responsible government, be enabled to obtain in *due season* (italics mine) recognition as a self-governing Dominion.’

Informal discussions on the subject matter of these draft letters took place between Lord Irwin and the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for India immediately after his arrival. It appears that Lord Irwin mentioned it also to Lord Reading, who, at that stage at any rate expressed no objection.”

Lord Reading was the Viceroy of India in 1920, when the first Civil Disobedience had been launched by the Congress in support of Khilafat.

“On 25th July Lord Irwin made a statement to the Cabinet. The Cabinet’s conclusion was in favour of the proposal of the Governor-General ‘that at an early date there should be an interchange of letters between the Chairman of the Statutory Commission and the Prime Minister, in the course of which that latter should make clear (1) that Dominion Status was the ultimate aim of the Government’s policy which they were trying to help the peoples of India to achieve by stages....Following this decision, further informal discussions took place between Lord Irwin, the Secretary of State for India and Sir John Simon, to consider the terms of the suggested letters to be exchanged between the latter and the Prime Minister.”

The entire correspondence that was to take place had been conceived by Lord Irwin, while being in India is of course very clear. Also clear is the very objective of the whole correspondence – to make a statement about Ultimate object of the British being Full Dominion Status for India. Otherwise, there was no point in suggesting that the Prime Minister, in his reply, make a reference to a matter that was not to be touched upon in the letter being replied. Up to this point, Lord Irwin had succeeded in getting the concurrence of the Cabinet as well as Sir Simon and Lord Reading to his proposals. On 12th August, the Prime Minister also concurred with the following comment:

“The Prime Minister is willing to sign this letter provided he is advised that it will improve the position. If it does not, it will make the matters worse. I gathered from Lord Irwin that it would make a difference. A final draft for me to sign should be prepared, provided the Secretary of State still thinks that it will be effective.”

It appears that Lord Irwin was in constant touch with his advisers in India, who in turn seem to have been in close contact with the Congress Right. Now, they informed Lord Irwin that the declaration about Dominion status should be more explicit. Moreover, the Conference that the Government was to call should have freedom to formulate its own proposals for the consideration of the Government. A parallel Simon Commission was in effect to be set up. It appears that the quality of Ammunition was being subjected to a quality check by the end user, even as it was being prepared.

Lord Irwin accepted the advice coming from India and made proposals on the lines to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State. Such was the level of British anxiety to support the Dominion Status lobby of the Congress and thereby derail the Independence movement. The draft correspondence, as now modified was sent by the Prime Minister to Mr. Baldwin, then in France, on 19th September with a view to enlist his support for the proposals. The Prime Minister pointed out that Sir John Simon would be laying the matter formally before his Commission on the following Tuesday, 24th September.

It is important to stress that at this time only Sir Simon had consented to the draft reply of the Prime Minister containing the declaration about the Dominion Status. Other members of the Commission were in the dark about it. They so far knew only about the draft letter they were supposed to send. Realising this, the Prime Minister said:

“I can not of course predict what their attitude may be. If they feel difficulty about the role assigned to them, it may be that we should have to seek other though less convenient, means of obtaining the same end. I am therefore sending these papers to you at the present stage on the supposition that the Commission will, in fact, agree to the course proposed, and on the understanding that should they fail to do so, a new situation would be created which may necessitate other treatment.”

The Prime Minister appears to have been quite sure that the Commission would agree to play the *role assigned to them* and *no new situation would be created*. Or else, he would have waited for another five days and written to Mr. Baldwin only after the attitude of the Commission was known. The thought that the Commission would dissent does not appear to have struck Mr. Baldwin either. For by 21st September, he had communicated his concurrence without having been in a position to contact his colleagues like Mr. Churchill, who was then in America.

By now, many Britons were getting angry that India could be told that the Ultimate Object of the British Raj was to see that she would get Full Dominion status. Forget Independence or Immediate grant of Dominion status, she could not even dream of Dominion status as an Ultimate Object. She was a slave race and would remain so. The opposition was voiced by Lord Reading on 20th September. On 24th September, the Commission decided it could not take part in the proposed correspondence if the Prime Minister's reply were to any reference to the Dominion Status as an Ultimate object.

The Cabinet was undeterred by the opposition. On 25th September, it decided that the declaration in respect of the Dominion Status would be made by Lord Irwin and not in the proposed reply of the Prime Minister to the Commission. Strong opposition by Lord Reading, Sir Simon, Mr. Lloyd George made the Cabinet reconsider its decision on the 7th October but nevertheless decided to hold their ground. It however decided that the word 'guarantee' should not be used. On 8th October 1929, Lord Irwin made two changes in the declaration that he was now going to make. The first change was in respect of the sentence:

“I am authorised on behalf of his Majesty’s Government to state clearly that, in their judgement, it is implicit in the declaration of 1917 *that the attainment of Dominion Status must be regarded as natural issue of India’s constitutional progress.*”

The words in the italics were to be replaced by ‘that the natural issue of India’s constitutional progress *as there contemplated* is the attainment of Dominion status.’ By this change Lord Irwin was trying to project that he was making no new statement of policy and therefore not encroaching on the territory of the Simon Commission but merely reiterating what was the declared policy of the British Government since 1917. The second change was also related to the same purpose. The sentence, ‘His Majesty’s Government have opened the door to a more excellent way’ was deleted.

The changes failed to mollify Lord Reading, who held the view that he could not see within any measurable distance of time India being put on the same footing as other self governing Dominions such as Canada. In order to soothe the ruffled feathers of Lord Reading, Lord Irwin prepared a note on his statement. This very revealing note needs a full study for it exposes the utter futility of negotiating with the British as well prove the existence of an Unholy Alliance between the British and the Congress Right.

1. “The Statement attempts to distinguish (and I hope succeeds in doing so) between *Purpose and Method or Policy*.
2. It limits Dominion Status to the sphere of *Purpose*, and, therefore, the question is whether or not it is dangerous to proclaim Dominion Status as the purpose.
3. The objection taken is that explicit announcement of Dominion Status as purpose will inevitably suggest to the Indian mind that its attainment as a practical policy is both less remote than in fact it is likely to be, and that political pressure on Great Britain from India will be intensified.
4. As regards the last point, it is axiomatic in the present Indian situation that Nationalist pressure will be as strong as the quasi-democratic equipment of the 1919 Act assisted by a Press almost entirely anti-government can make it. In these quarters this pressure will be maintained in any case. But the more important point is whether this pressure should be maintained upon the lines of demanding the *fullest development within the Empire*, or whether it will gradually become a demand for *independence outside the Empire*. A declaration of Dominion Status as our ultimate purpose will, I believe greatly strengthen the hands of those who want the first in the battle that they are waging with those who want the second; without it there is a danger of Indian opinion developing on separatist lines.”

What a battle the Congress Right was waging. Bhagat Singh, his comrades, the Communists, Jawahar Lal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose were all battling against the British. The worthies in Congress Right were waging a battle **against their own kith and kin** and **with the help of the British**. Truly fascinating is the manner in which the Congress Right had defined Patriotism.

5. As regards the objection that such a declaration as it is proposed to make will have the effect of suggesting that the *Purpose* can be earlier or more easily attained than the facts of India render probable, and that, therefore, while it is prudent to speak of Responsible Government it is rash to speak of Dominion Status, does not this argument really rest upon a reluctance to admit as *your Purpose for India* anything more than a restricted Responsible Government?.....

If, on the other hand it is sought to distinguish between full Responsible Government and Dominion Status, as your Purpose for India, I suggest the distinction is not substantial. The problems that evidently have to be surmounted by India before she attains Dominion Status have not less certainly got to be surmounted before she can attain full Responsible Government, and I suggest that *when* she has got the latter (and British India can't get it except in association with the States) she will in practice have attained Dominion Status, or at least this will be the inevitable sequence in her constitutional development.

6. It is clear that either will take a long time, and meanwhile, with an India encouraged to think politically on Western lines, the compulsory partnership between Great Britain and India is not likely to be free from difficulty and friction. I should feel it a task of even greater difficulty than in our case it is bound to be if by refusal, in face of alleged doubts, to make our ultimate purpose plain, we were to afford ground to our enemies to say that we intended India to occupy permanently subordinate place in an Empire of white nations.”

Who can doubt that the intention of Lord Irwin was to offer some niggardly concessions in his Declaration that was the subject of so much discussions. To be fair, Lord Irwin was going to make it very clear that Dominion Status was the Ultimate purpose of the Raj in India. No false hopes were going to be offered that the Dominion status was around the corner. The Statement of 20th August 1917 made by the Secretary of State that Irwin was referring to made it very clear that there was to be ‘the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.’ All that Irwin wanted to do was to substitute the words *responsible government* by *Dominion status*. There was no time frame even contemplated for this Nirvana. Indian Independence was a word that had been deleted from the British dictionary. She was to forever remain a part of the British Empire. In the meanwhile, for a long long time to come, India was to occupy a *subordinate place in an Empire of white nations*. Thus, it fell far far short of coming anywhere near the Congress Resolution of 1928 that demanded Full Dominion Status **in 1929 failing which the Congress was committed to launch a Do or Die struggle for Independence**. This could not be basis of any discussion. Yet, the discussions were on. Deals had been struck behind the back of people. Stage was being set for sabotaging the demand for Independence.

Irwin appears to have been very keen to fulfill his part of the bargain for the Lahore Congress was only a few months away. After submitting his note, which failed to satisfy Reading, he left for India on 10th October. On 27th October 1929, Reading wrote to Secretary of State pointing out: “the making of declaration now and without waiting for the report of the Simon Commission is evidence of a new policy.”

Baldwin also wrote to protest against the fact that the Prime Minister had sought his concurrence by holding out the implied expectation of an approval of the Simon Commission to the declaration of Dominion Status. He did not fail to point out that the Prime Minister had agreed that should the Commission not agree with the declaration “a new situation would be created which may necessitate other treatment”. And he went on to record: “That new situation has, in fact, arisen”

This strong protest unsettled the Cabinet. Midnight oil was burned. In the wee hours of 29th October, 3.00 a.m. to be precise the Secretary of State telegraphed Irwin. By this wire, Irwin was informed that it would be prudent to accept the request of Baldwin to postpone the proposed Declaration for a few days till the Prime Minister, who was on high seas at the time, returned. Too late, boss, Irwin seems to have replied the same day. He explained that the engines were fired, the plane was rolling on the tarmac at full speed. To abort the flight at this late juncture would be disastrous. His telling words that once again prove close co-ordination between him and the Congress Right:

“From the information which has just reached me, I have now little doubt that the Congress, as well as other more moderate opinion, will be disposed to accept it and I see a real possibility of the thing coming off as well as the Cabinet have always hoped.”

He urged the Secretary of State to take Baldwin into confidence and even show him the telegram. The Viceroy’s reply failed to move Baldwin. On 30th October, he informed the Acting Prime Minister, Mr. Snowden that the Viceroy had not been acquainted with full facts. The full facts being the proposed Declaration was completely unacceptable to the Tories, the Liberal party and the Simon Commission. He therefore pressed upon the Government to call off the proposed Declaration.

The urge to kill the Indian Independence Movement was stronger than the need to keep the Opposition or even the Statutory Commission in good humor. The Government went ahead and ‘a grave responsibility’ of Ultimately granting Dominion Status to India was assumed by the Government of the day. The Viceroy was permitted to make his famous Declaration as scheduled. On 31st October, Irwin made the completely useless Declaration that promised Dominion Status at some distant unspecified date in future. Sorry, the word Promise or Guarantee was not used. Some kind of possibility of Dominion Status was all that was indicated. The Revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh, who were in jails, facing death at this very time, would not have defiled their body by using the paper on which this Declaration was printed as Toilet paper. The Congress Right lapped it up and held it in reverence.

As we know, a Meeting of Leaders was held in Delhi on the 1st and 2nd November 1929. Mr. Gandhi was a principal participant. The result of the meeting was a joint manifesto addressed to the Viceroy agreeing to help the Government to prepare a constitution for the Country based on Dominion Status. We also knew that the Joint manifesto was a bitter pill for Jawahar Lal Nehru and he came away in great distress after signing it. Now we know that it was something far more sinister than a bitter pill. It was a cold calculated attempt to sabotage the Indian Independence movement. An Unholy Alliance between Lord Irwin and Mr. Gandhi. Why else was Irwin in such a rush to make the Declaration disregarding a 'reasonable request' from Baldwin to postpone it for a few days? Why else was the So-called Leaders Conference held immediately held a day after the Declaration? An Unholy Alliance that was to derail the Independence Movement for years and cause the Murder of thousands of patriots like Bhagat Singh. Yes! A Murder – a Murder committed not by the Raj but We all now know by Whom.

The Declaration set in motion a train of events that need to be studied. On 7th November 1929, the Director of Public Information had this to say:

“At the end of the First day’s meeting , that is, Friday, November the 1st, nobody could have predicted that such a statement would be issued the next day, signed by everybody present except rigid, extremist and opportunist, Subhash Chandra Bhosh. For on Friday, Mr. Gandhi, Pandit Motilal Nehru and his son Jawahar Lal Nehru, who has hitherto been identified with the most extreme elements in Indian politics, stood out for acceptance by the Indian Government of certain conditions precedent to their co-operation in the Conference...if they had stuck to their conditions it would have been no more than consistent with their previous actions and declarations. But on Saturday afternoon they waived these conditions and agreed to put them into the statement as recommendations. That Gandhi and Jawahar Lal Nehru are prepared to co-operate on any terms whatever is a development of highest significance....We may take it as fairly certain that the civil disobedience planned for 1st January will be postponed, and also that for the present, at any rate, the independence movement which has been gaining steadily of late months is completely immobilised....”

In the British Parliament, the ruling Labour Party did not have a majority by itself. It was dependent on the Liberal Party. The Declaration which had become the bone of contention, even prior to its issue now came to be hotly contested in both the Houses of Parliament. This forced the Government to reject the conditions that the Indian Statement of 2nd November 1929 had attached as Recommendations. On the other hand, the battle between the Pro – Independence and Anti – Independence lobby intensified. Despite, the leadership of Mr. Gandhi, despite the ammunition provided to him by the Raj, Mr. Gandhi found the going tough. The Viceroy was forced to report on 17th November in a private telegram that:

“Congress are having a committee meeting today and on Monday, and it is uncertain what they will do. But, if under the influence of Jawahar Lal Nehru and Subhash Bose they issue too uncompromising a statement against the announcement, moderates will probably break with them. I shall not be surprised if the majority of the Congress ends up

by going wrong, but I am sure there are many elements that will do their best to make it go right.”

One can sense, the element of desperation in the Viceroy’s writing. He had done his best to provide his ally – Mr. Gandhi, the best possible ammunition he could find, to enable him to control the Left. So far, it seemed, Mr. Gandhi was fighting a losing battle. The exultation that the Raj had felt, once Mr. Gandhi had signed the statement on 2nd November welcoming the crumbs thrown by Irwin had been premature. The Independence movement was far from immobilised despite all the tricks of the Raj and Mr. Gandhi. The revolutionary spirit was not so feeble as they had imagined. Their sacrifices were not to go in vain. On 26th November, the Viceroy once again sent a latest update on the SeeSaw battle that was being staged between Mr. Gandhi and his cohorts against the Congress resolution in a blatant betrayal of Independence:

“So far as Congress is concerned, decision has merely been postponed till Christmas, but issue will have to be fought out then.....Liberal and other Moderate elements appear to be quite determined to maintain their attitude of genuine co-operation...At the other extreme come Jawahar Lal and Subhas Bose depending for their position on the young men who could be satisfied by no conceivable concessions. I fancy that Jawahar Lal and Subhas Bose feel they must insist as minimum on amnesty to those whom they encouraged to violent courses. They also presumably realise that whoever weakens now will lose support of the young men.

Between these two extremes come the main body of older Congressmen represented by Motilal and Gandhi. They probably realise that if Government offer is rejected, revolutionary policy of civil disobedience &... will probably follow and this they are anxious to avoid. At the same time, they will do everything possible to avoid a split in Congress ranks. They will probably, therefore, try to avoid closing door to co-operation with Government, while at the same time uttering sufficient threats to satisfy young men. If they fail in this difficult task, they will either have to surrender to young men or split Congress. Which course they would adopt it is impossible to foretell.”

The Viceroy need not have worried. Mr. Gandhi was to manage both – avoiding door to co-operation with Government, while at the same time uttering sufficient threats. A performance that was to enable him to hijack the Congress agenda, nay the national agenda of Independence for over a decade. The consequences for the nation were tragic. How much of the loot that the British carried away in the latter years, particularly during the Second World War could have been avoided if and if only Mr. Gandhi had not betrayed the cause of Independence in 1929 and thereafter. One can only speculate.

Mr. Gandhi’s game plan included meeting the Viceroy on 23rd December along with the others to seek a definite assurance regarding the grant of Dominion status. This was out of question. Now Mr. Gandhi, wholeheartedly supported the Independence Resolution or made a show of doing so. The malleable Jawahar was co-opted as the Congress President. *The rigid, extremist and opportunist, Subhash Chandra Bhosh* was carefully kept out of the Working Committee. Civil Disobedience was duly postponed till March. Substance of

Independence, Abolishing Salt tax, Eradication of Untouchability, making the 1935 Act work, was to keep the Congress occupied over the next ten years till the outbreak of the War. Where was the time to fight for Independence or even smaller things like causing embarrassment to the British by demanding Amnesty for such trouble makers like Bhagat Singh?

The Independence Resolution was passed by the Congress on the eve of the new year – 1930. Yet, Mr. Gandhi did not make **grant of Independence as an Object** of his movement. Much has been made of the way Mr. Gandhi had his hand on the pulse of the nation. The manner in which he made the concept of Independence a real thing for the poor by linking it with something that affected them daily – the tax on Salt. Such self-serving myths fail to answer some hard facts.

It may be accepted that the Salt tax was a burden that affected the daily life of poor. Its abolishing would have certainly helped them. This should have been used as a Starting point to intensify and escalate the Movement towards Absolute Political Independence. For Independence alone could prove to be the true salvation of the Poor. This had become evident to one and all by 1930. Why then did Mr. Gandhi call off the Civil Disobedience before attainment of Independence? Forget Independence or Dominion Status, the British did not even abolish the Salt Tax. Yet, the good Mr. Gandhi called off the fight. If this is not betrayal of Independence, what else is it?

When we first reviewed these events, we attributed this to the quest for Power of the Mahatma. It is not possible to be so charitable after studying the manner in which Mr. Gandhi actively sabotaged the Independence Movement in 1929 and indeed for over a decade thereafter.

As a person, Mr. Gandhi was perfectly in his rights to concentrate his energy on the cause of Eradicating Untouchability as he did after opting out of the Independence struggle. This was such a curse that if someone decided that eradication of this curse was more important than striving for Independence, it was perfectly in order. Unfortunately, for Mr. Gandhi, this was a cause merely to get out of political difficulties. No sooner than these were over, he was back in the driving seat pushing Subhas Bose out of his position, leaving the task of eradication of Untouchability incomplete. Subhas' crime being no more than a serious attempt to direct the Congress towards the path of Independence. A path it was committed to follow since that historic Lahore Resolution on the eve of 1930.

Mr. Gandhi's action can not be truly understood unless one takes into account the Unholy Alliance he had entered into with Lord Irwin in 1929. An Alliance that never seems to have been broken as the post 1939 events, that we shall later study show. More, I do not wish to say. The readers are knowledgeable enough to draw their own conclusions.

The Two Nation Theory & The Dissolution of the Will to Live Together
Jinnah, Savarkar & Ambedkar

The story of the Unholy Alliance can now be told for it is backed with evidence. Back in 1930s, the clinching evidence may not have been available but the tell tale signs were there for all to see. As we know, Mr. Gandhi had to face popular outrage after the hanging of Bhagat Singh in 1931. An outrage that died soon enough. Pact with Irwin produced no more than a futile Gandhi visit to London. A visit that seemed to have been more devoted to taking over the reins of leadership of the Untouchables from Dr. Ambedkar than to further the cause of Independence. A post visit farce of a fast to save people who did not want to be saved is all that Mr. Gandhi had to show. A fast followed by calling off of the Civil Disobedience without achieving any of the goals. Savarkar, the old foe of Mr. Gandhi was finally released in 1937, after 27 years of internment to be virtually cold shouldered by the Gandhi led Congress. Yet, nothing seemed to shake the reverence that the Hindu mind appeared to have for this wily old fox. This is what seemed to have amazed Jinnah the most. As if this was not enough, the Congress as an organisation seemed hell bent on having monopoly over political power in the country notwithstanding its democratic pretensions.

Before we try and understand the Congress perfidy that led in no small measure to the dissolution of the Will to Live Together, we need to understand that Jinnah was not the only one who had come to believe that given the then prevalent state of relations between Hindus and Muslims, they constituted two nations. Of course, it was only Jinnah who insisted that the two nations must necessarily live apart for in his case the Will to live together had dissolved due to Congress perfidy. For Savarkar, there was no question of living separately. The views of Dr. Ambedkar represented the moderate voice. We shall first consider the views of Dr. Ambedkar.

His views appear to have been shaped largely by the Communal disturbances that rocked the country in the Gandhi era that started in 1920. He noted of instances after instances of animal passions let loose in the communal riots. The tempers on either side, he noted ruefully, were tempers of warring nations. He despaired of a solution as the Congress kept on appeasing the Muslims and they in turn kept on enlarging the scope of demands. On the other hand, when it came to a Settlement, sharing of power with secular Muslims like Jinnah, the Congress bared its dictatorial fangs. By 1940, Dr. Ambedkar was convinced that a stage was reached when 'hereafter the Hindus and Muslims must be treated as two nations.

And now for the views of Savarkar. We ought to be duly cautious in considering his views, particularly those expressed after his release in 1937. Twenty-seven years of internment had taken its toil. Fourteen years had been a term of harsh imprisonment. An unending daily routine of hard labor. Making ropes out of coconut shells from dawn to dusk, when by the time night fell the hands were full of painful sores. Nor did the night bring respite. Many a times, particularly at Andaman, where he spent eleven years, silence of the darkness was pierced by the screams of boys being raped by their warders.

When they were tired of seeking such unnatural pleasures, the warders sought to please their masters by heaping abuses on this dangerous rebel. It did not of course help that the warders were amongst the worst elements of the Muslim society. Possession of books or pencils invited harsh reprisals. His release in 1924 had brought some relief but the ban on his political activities had continued. By the time, he became a free man, he had the mortification of seeing the man, who was an unabashed admirer of the Raj in 1910, being now revered by the masses as a Messiah of the Freedom struggle. It is a wonder that on release; Savarkar could still retain his sanity and razor sharp intellect. The years of difficulties had left their scars. Certain amount of toxins could be noticed in his speeches and writings. In consideration to the hardships, he had been subjected to; we need to take into account his views after subjecting them to detoxification. Once this is done, the sheer brilliance of his arguments shine forth and which provide a useful guide even today.

The very term, Hindu was subject to various interpretations in a manner that the term Muslim was not. So first of all he set about defining the term Hindu as a person:

“..who regards and owns this Bharat Bhumi, this land from Indus to the seas, as his Fatherland as well as his Holy land:- i.e., the land of the origin of his religion, the cradle of his faith.”

This all-encompassing definition included the Buddhists, the Jains, the Sikhs, the tribals etc. by not insisting upon belief in the sanctity of the Vedas as an element in the qualification as a Hindu. As matter of interest, virtually the same definition has been placed on the statute books in Independent India.

He refused to include Muslims, Christians, Parsis and the Jews in his definition of Hindus. One doubts, if these communities were in any case, too keen to be called Hindus. Next, he defined the term Hindutva. A term in his opinion more or less akin to Hindu Polity. A comprehensive term that refers not only to the religious aspects of the Hindu people but also includes their cultural, linguistic, social and political aspects as well. Once the basic definitions were in place, in the very first address as the President of Hindu Maha Sabha held at Ahmedabad in 1937, he propounded his views on Hindu-Muslim question. He said:

“Several...politicians commit the serious mistake in supposing that India is already welded into a harmonious nation, or that it could be welded thus for the mere wish to do so. These our well meaning but unthinking friends take their dreams for realities....When the time is ripe you can solve them; but you can not suppress them by merely refusing recognition of them. It is safer to treat deep-seated disease than to ignore it. Let us bravely face unpleasant facts as they are. India can not be assumed today to be a Unitarian and homogenous nation, but on the contrary these are two nations in the main, the Hindus and the Muslims in India.”

Thus, Jinnah, Ambedkar and Savarkar were all in agreement that the Hindus and the Muslims constituted different nations. There was a difference in their respective solutions. Jinnah wanted creation of Independent Muslim States but only after being

repeatedly spurned by Mr. Gandhi and the Congress alike. Ambedkar wanted the creation of Independent Muslim States to be accompanied by transfer of population. Savarkar was firm on maintaining the Unity of the Country. Yet, he was no mad fanatic bent on suppressing the minorities. His unadulterated views on the position of Non-Hindu minorities under the Swaraj were as under:

“When once the Hindu Maha Sabha not only accepts but maintains the principles of ‘one man one vote’ and the public services to go by merit alone added to the fundamental rights and obligations to be shared by all citizens alike irrespective of any distinction of Race or Religion...But as practical politics requires it and as the Hindu Sanghathanists want to relieve our non Hindu countrymen of even a ghost of suspicion, we are prepared to emphasise that the legitimate rights of minorities with regard to their Religion, Culture, and Language will be expressly guaranteed: on one condition only that the equal rights of majorities also must not in any case be encroached upon or abrogated.”

The frankness, boldness and definiteness of Savarkar’s stand was in stark contrast to irregularity, vagueness and indefiniteness of the Congress. Savarkar had the courage of conviction of staking out his position for all to see. A position that can hardly be called anything but most fair. For, what he stood out for was a Settlement and not Appeasement. Here was a leader in the mould of the great Tilak. Here was a leader that Jinnah could have done business with in the same manner that he had done with Tilak two decades earlier. It is matter of great pity that the Hindu India chose to follow Mr. Gandhi and not Savarkar.

We can now study the perfidy of the Gandhi led Congress between 1937 to 1939 in the memorable words of Dr. Ambedkar that led to the dissolution of the Will to Live Together. In his masterly analysis, he has offered cogent reasons for development of this phenomenon in the minds of Jinnah and the other Muslims.

“What has the Congress done to annoy the Muslims so much? ...there are undoubtedly two things which have produced the clash : (1) the refusal by Congress to recognise the Muslim League as the only representative body of the Muslims, (2) the refusal by the Congress to form Coalition Ministries in the Congress Provinces.

On the first question, both the Congress and the League are adamant. The Congress is prepared to accept the Muslim League as one of the many Muslim political organisations.....but it will not accept the Muslim League as the only representative body of the Muslims. The Muslim League, on the other hand, is not prepared to enter into any talks unless the Congress accepts it as the only representative body of the Musalmans of India. The Hindus stigmatize the claim of the League as an extravagant one and try to ridicule it. The Muslims may say that if the Hindus would only stop to inquire how treaties between nations are made, they would realize the stupidity of their view. It may be argued that when a nation proceeds to make a treaty with another nation, it recognises the Government of the latter as fully representing it. In no country does the Government of the day represent the whole body of people. Everywhere it represents only a majority.... The League may not represent the whole body of the Muslims but if it

represents a majority of them, the Congress should have no compunction to deal with it for the purpose of effecting a settlement of the Hindu-Muslim question....the Congress may not recognise the League. It must, however, recognise either the National Muslims or the Ahrars or the Jamiat-ul-Ulema and fix the terms of the settlement between the two communities. Of course, it must act with the full knowledge as to which is more likely to be repudiated by the Muslims – an agreement with the League or an agreement with the other Muslim parties. The Congress must deal with one or the other. **To deal with neither is not only stupid but also mischievous.**

On the second issue, the Muslim demand has been that in the cabinets there shall be included Muslim Ministers who have the confidence of the Muslim members of the legislature. They expected that this demand of theirs would be met by the Congress if it came in power. But, they were sorely disappointed. With regard to this demand, the Congress took a legalistic attitude. The Congress agreed to include Muslims in their cabinets, provided they resigned from their parties, joined the Congress and signed the Congress pledge. This was resented by the Muslims ...

They regarded it as a breach of faith...they argue that the words ‘member of a minority community’ can have only one meaning, namely, a person having confidence of the community. The position taken by the Congress is in direct contradiction with the meaning of this clause and is indeed a covert attempt to break all other parties in the country. The demand for signing the Congress pledge can have no other intention. This attempt to establish a totalitarian state may be welcome to the Hindus, but it meant the political death of the Muslims as a free people...

The Congress reply to these accusations by the Muslims is twofold. In the first place, they say that coalition cabinets are inconsistent with collective responsibility the cabinet. This, the Musalmans refuse to accept as an honest plea.”

Who would accept this as an honest plea, one would like to know?

“The plea was even dishonest, because it is a fact that in the provinces where the Congress was in a minority, they did form Coalition Ministries without asking the Ministers from other parties to sign the Congress pledge. The Muslims are entitled to ask ‘if coalition is bad, how can it be good in one place and bad in another?’

The second reply of the Congress is that even if they take Muslim Ministers in their cabinet who have not the confidence of the majority of the Muslims, they have not failed to protect the interests of the Muslims....In making this reply, the Congress High Command seems to have misunderstood what the main contention of the Muslims and the minorities has been. The quarrel is not on the issue whether the Congress has or has not done any good to the Muslims and the minorities. Their quarrel is on an issue which is totally different...Exclusion from political power is the essence of the distinction between a ruling race and a subject race...it must be said that this distinction was enforced by the Congress while it was in saddle....Are the Hindus to be a ruling race and the Muslims and other minorities to be subject race under Swaraj?...

That the ruling community has done good to the ruled is quite beside the point and is no answer to the contention of the minority communities that they refuse to be treated as a subject people....The Congress High Command does not seem to realize that the Muslims and other minorities care more for the recognition of their self-respect at the hands of the Congress than mere good deeds on the part of the Congress....

It is no use saying that the Congress does not recognize the distinction between the ruler and the ruled. If this is so, the Congress must prove its *bona fides* by showing its readiness to recognize the other communities as free and equal partners. What is the test of recognition? It seems to me that there can be only one – namely, agreeing to share power with the effective representatives of the minority community. Is the Congress prepared for it? Everyone knows the answer. The Congress is not prepared to share power with a member of a community who does not owe allegiance to the Congress. Allegiance to the Congress is a condition precedent to sharing power. It seems to be a rule with the Congress that if allegiance to the Congress is not forthcoming from a community, that community must be excluded from political power...”

I know of no answer that I can offer to defend the Congress actions or wail against the dissolution of the Will to live together in the mind of Jinnah. Here was a leader, Mr. Gandhi, who was in an Unholy Alliance with the national enemy – the British but who continued to be revered by the Hindu Society, even when he allowed Bhagat Singh to be hanged with nary a protest. Even, when he cold shouldered Savarkar, whose sufferings for the cause of the nation were second to none. Forget about sharing power with those who were not prepared to sign the Congress pledge, he was not prepared to share power with duly elected President of the Congress itself. Yet the gullible Hindu Society treated him like a Messiah. Dear readers, picture ourselves in the shoes of Jinnah, how many of us would like to live together with such a society. The answer is not pleasant, particularly to a Hindu mind. Before, we next time wail against the Pakistan resolution of 1940, we might like to remind ourselves of these unpleasant truths.

The Outbreak of the Great War, the Pakistan Resolution that was in essence a motion of No Confidence in the leadership of Gandhi led Congress did not appear to have injected any sense of urgency in the Congress. Subhas Chandra Bose kept on goading the Congress High Command into action. But right up to August 1942, the Congress policy was not to disturb the British War effort. In other words, not to come in the way of the British loot of India. Mr. Gandhi's Flip Flop show continued to ruin the country.

Chapter IV-3

Betrayal of Independence

The truth be told the manner in which the Gandhi Congress reacted to the unfolding developments on the World War front amounted to nothing more than Betrayal of Independence. This was time to take advantage of the situation and get what was good for the nation – Absolute Political Independence. Yet, the Congress followed a policy that favoured the British interests. From 1939 to 1942, it launched no serious movement to liberate the country. Finally, when it did so in August 1942, it was done in a half hearted manner. This is what we shall come to in a short while.

Let us first of all disabuse ourself of any illusions that the British considered Indians worthy of being considered their equals, which alone would have merited the consideration that the Congress gave them in their hour of crisis by refraining to launch any serious movement to dislodge them from power. Consider for instances the farce of Indian representation that was enacted in 1942, when the British faced a life & death crisis. Even in this dark hour, they kept their most loyal Indian servants away from any real decision making; while enacting an elaborate charade of giving them entry into the War Cabinet itself.

The Farce of Indian Representation in the War Cabinet

The Nazis have been rightly reviled for the rapacious manner in which they looted the resources of the territories conquered by them. The British have not even been suspected of indulging in something as uncivilised as looting the countries they ruled. How could they be so suspected, when they were so civilised as to have their very subjects represented in their War Cabinet. The sanctum sanctorum of the Imperial decision making process. What was the reality? As usual a little different than the British would like the world to know.

Let us not worry about the non-representative character of the people who were to be nominated to attend the meetings. Let us accept that since the nomination was to be made by the Viceroy, he could not be expected to nominate any Indian with any subversive intentions. Let us accept that the nominated representatives would be as they say *More loyal to the King than the King himself*. Let us simply focus on the manner in which these most loyal British subjects were treated. For their treatment in London would be the litmus test of the genuineness of the British intentions towards India. If they were to be fairly treated, then there was substance in the claim of British sense of Justice and Fair Play. Let us not be biased in our evaluation. Let us not be hasty. Let us try and understand the facts.

On 1st February 1942 as the Japanese were on the verge of over running the British territories in the Far East and were in a position to threaten India, the Secretary of State

proposed that the number of Indians in the Governor - General's Executive Council be increased from 7 to 9, while retaining the number of Europeans at 4. He also strongly supported the Viceroy's proposal that a Member of his Council should be posted in London to represent the views of Government of India in the Imperial War Cabinet.

The proposal was discussed in the War Cabinet meeting of 5th February 1942. The British Cabinet accepted the proposal that two Indians, one representing the Government of India and the other representing Indian States, should attend the meetings of the War Cabinet at times when the War effort, with special reference to India, was under discussion, on the same general terms as Australia and other dominions. Churchill was quite happy to equate Australians with the Indians, as he said it would keep 'Australia's nose out of joint.'

At this time, Australia had already secured the right to be heard in the War Cabinet in the formulation and direction of policy. Thus, the only Cabinet Meetings from which the Australian representative could be excluded were those dealing exclusively domestic matters of U.K. Now, the Australians feared that their right to attend Cabinet Meetings were going to be curtailed; if they were going to be equated with the Indians. Indeed, the Australian representative, Mr. Bruce, went so far as to privately inform senior British officials that 'if he is treated on precisely the same terms as Indian representatives, this will make mockery of the attendance of the Australian accredited representative at the War Cabinet.'

The Australian resentment soon reached such proportions that a note had to be put up to Churchill regarding the rights of various Dominion representatives to attend the Cabinet Meetings. It was suggested on the 16th July 1942 that Mr. Bruce as well as representatives from other White Dominions should be invited to far more meetings than the Indian Representatives. A suggestion that was approved by the Prime Minister in blatant violation of the pledge given by his own government in the House of Commons on 12th February 1942 that the Indian representative shall have the same status as the Dominion representatives.

With this approval on the 19th July 1942, not only Churchill was in breach of the privilege of the House of Commons but had also accepted the contention of Mr. Bruce that the Indian representation on the War Cabinet was to be a mere farce.

If there remained any doubt about the farcical nature of the Indian representation in the War Cabinet, here is some more proof. As the time came near for the arrival of the Indian representatives in London, the British Civil Services went into a tizzy. What kind of meetings even in relation to India were they to attend, what papers were they to see, where were they to be given an office. The Cabinet Secretariat went into action and a flurry of memos were exchanged.

The question of which meetings they were to attend was soon settled. It was decided that they were to attend only the Monday meeting of the Cabinet. The Agenda of the meeting was to be so arranged as to exclude any item that was unsuitable for the Indians. There

was to be no question of the Indian representatives attending any meeting where internal Indian affairs were to be discussed. Their access to papers proved to be a thornier issue. If they were to be given secret telegrams for and from Viceroy, they would have access to information that was routinely denied to the Governor – General’s Council back home. For in India, the access to really secret information in India was given only to the Commander-in-Chief, the A.O.C.-in-Chief, and the Governor of Burma. On the other hand there were difficulties in withholding from Indian representatives’ news which would be common property to others attending Cabinets including Dominions representatives. An ingenious way out was soon found. It was agreed that as a general rule Indian questions for decisions were not to be taken at Monday meetings of the Cabinet, which were the only meetings to which the Indian representatives were going to be invited.

The matter assumed urgency as the date of the arrival of the Indian representatives in India came near. The British Civil servants burned the mid night lamp to find a way out secure in the knowledge that form and status were of utmost importance in India – not the substance. The distilled wisdom of the British establishment found its way into the pen of that great Imperialist Winston Churchill, who issued a note to the Cabinet. This note dated September 7, 1942 is a classic case of British double speak and bears reproduction in full.

“The Indian Representatives at the War Cabinet

We may expect the arrival, during this week, of His Highness the Maharaja Jam Sahib of Nawanagar and the Honourable Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar, representatives of India at the War Cabinet. The invitation was a generous gesture to loyal Indians and we should make the most of it. They must be treated in every possible way as Dominion representatives, and I know my colleagues will show them every courtesy and consideration.

But let me sound one note of warning. Though, I shall naturally invite them to attend our Monday Meetings on general war affairs, it must not be assumed that I shall feel able to invite them to Meetings where Indian affairs are to be discussed. We have already had several such meetings, and may have more, at which the presence of Indian representatives would be highly embarrassing. I suggest we should bear this point in mind in any personal conversations we may have with the Jam Sahib and Sir Ramaswami and avoid giving them the impression that they have a right to attend all War Cabinet Meetings, or necessarily to be present when Indian matters are under discussion.”

What a way of being generous with the loyal Indians. If the Cabinet had nothing but the good of India at heart, how could the presence of the loyal Indians be highly embarrassing. More was to follow:

“It will, of course, follow that they will not receive all papers circulated to War Cabinet Ministers. No doubt my colleagues will bear this also in mind. A Note is annexed indicating the classes of papers which they will receive.”

The British were meticulous to a fault when it came to maintaining form and status. The Ministers were instructed that communications to the Indian guests were to be as under:

- Lt. Col. H.H. the Maharaja Jam Saheb of Nawanagar, GCIE., KCSI.,ADC.
- Diwan Bahadur Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar, KCSI.

Letters addressed to them were to begin with “My dear Maharaja Sahib” and “My dear Sir Ramaswami”. Even as a peon in the Cabinet Secretariat was privy to more information than these revered Indians, they were to be addressed in conversation as “Your Highness” and “Sir Ramaswami”

This charade continued till the British fortunes in War improved and was brought to an abrupt end by a terse Personal Minute from the Prime Minister dated 29th June 1944:

“I think the Indians should quit about the end of July at the latest. Our numbers are very large. A little space would be valuable.”

The Indian Sahibs and Sirs were thus thrown out to make more space for the British butts. The Imperial sanctum sanctorum was rendered pure once again after years of defilement by the dirty Indians.

The Gandhi Congress Response to the World War II

The Gandhi Congress reaction to the war can be said to fall in three phases. The first phase may be described as the Age of Innocence - for all the naïve hopes which the Congress leaders seemed to harbour in their hearts. It began with the outbreak of the war in September 1939 and lasted up to the Ramgarh Congress session in March 1940. By the end of March 1940, only the most imbecile minds could still have any faith left in the British War Intentions. Yet, Mr. Gandhi persisted in helping the British. Thus the period from April 1940 to April 1942, when Sir Cripps left India can be said to be the Age of Collaboration. The third and the last phase that began in April 1942 and ended in August 1942 is nothing but the Age of Betrayal – pure and simple. Why are we being so harsh? Let us take each of these phases for consideration.

The Age of Innocence
September 1939-March 1940

A very interesting report of the British Intelligence Bureau (IB) is available that sums up, the activities of Gandhi Congress in the Age of Innocence. We shall now use the report as well as other papers available from the Public Record Office to reconstruct the story of the Age of Innocence. The IB report noted that the Congress High Command under Gandhi's leadership set to work with customary subtlety and fineness to build up the Congress case step by step to appeal to the idealist abroad as to discomfit the Leftists at home. Indeed, the covering note of the report pointed out that the outward hardening of the attitude of the Congress had been as a result of the steady and ever increasing pressure from the Left. This small sentence lays bare the Congress reality. Note the term, *outward hardening of the attitude*, is not lightly used. For when we take a peek at the behind the scene activities in the Congress, what strikes the eye is the manner in which the Congress Right led by Mr. Gandhi was forced, much against its wishes, to take an anti-British stance. This was only on account of non-remitting pressure from the Left. The steady and ever increasing pressure.

What is that the Left was demanding. Not a recourse to Violence. It's most popular leader Subhas Chandra Bose had been reminding the High Command that it was the public and stated policy of the Congress ever since 1927 that it would not take part in any imperialist War, much to the discomfiture of Mr. Gandhi who was keen to help the British. Giving him strong support were the Congress Socialists and the Communists. Let us look at the facts.

The Congress Working Committee met at Wardha soon after the outbreak of the war and on September 14th last issued a long statement. It protested against India being dragged into the War without being consulted and called upon the British Government to declare its War Aims. Unless these aims were in India's national interests, Congress was not to support the British. The Secretary of State was later to make the following caustic comments on this statement:

“ The Working Committee's statement of September 14th, with its obvious spirit of bargaining which the Congress leaders have by specious reasoning attempted to conceal, was perhaps not universally approved in the Congress circles.”

Naturally, the All-India Congress Committee at its meeting at Wardha on October 9th and 10th went further and held that any support to the British would amount to endorsement of the Imperialist policy and demanded Independence. In the meanwhile, Mr. Gandhi's genius was at work. On 15th September 1939, he was distressed to find that his view of offering unconditional support to the British was thrown out by the Congress. Later in October, he was happy that the AICC had not laid down a time limit for the British Government to act. Fortunately, for the nation; Mr. Gandhi's moves were being countered by the Leftists. We owe our thanks to the Secretary of State for informing us that:

“The Congress Socialist Party and other extremists, while trying to stiffen Congress resistance to co-operation, are restraining themselves from commitment to an open campaign of agitation until the attitude of the Congress is known, but while they are endeavouring to keep their place within the movement they express their determination not to accept any agreement for co-operation with Great Britain should that be decided by the Congress. The Communist Policy is still to have no open breach with the right wing and to use the Congress Socialist Party platform, but underground preparations are being made for an active war resistance campaign. In Bombay on October 2nd Communists called a one-day general strike as a protest against participation in the war. “The strike,” the Secretary of State cryptically noted, “was not unsuccessful.”

The British response to the Congress demand was made in the form of a Statement by the Viceroy on the 17th October 1939, which gave away nothing. The Congress Working Committee then met in Wardha on October 22nd and 23rd. It is at this meeting that the provincial Congress Ministries were advised to resign. For the first time, the term Civil Disobedience entered the Congress vocabulary. In November, 1939, Jinnah made an offer of Settlement to the Congress for the period of the War. The terms were as under:

- Coalition Ministries in the Provinces.
- Legislation not to be forced through if two thirds of the Moslem members of a provincial Lower House were opposed.
- The Congress flag not to be flown on public institutions
- Understanding about the use of Bande Mataram
- Congress to cease its wrecking tactics against the Moslem League.

He further urged the Congress to accept the Viceroy’s offer to expand the Executive Council subject to agreement in the Provinces. The Working Committee met again at Allahabad on November 19th and 23rd and some fruitful discussions appear to have taken place. But a major stumbling block was the Congress insistence on the League signing the Congress pledge. The Congress at this point rest contented with expressing readiness of the Congressmen to launch Civil Disobedience.

Jinnah had drafted his statement calling upon the Muslims to celebrate day of Deliverance after the Congress Ministries resigned but he was waiting for ministry to be formed in Assam before releasing it. By a coincidence, the article appeared when the peace talks were in the air. Jinnah was to issue a statement explaining this. A misunderstanding with Gandhi seems to have put paid to this plan and the Muslim League celebrated 22nd December 1939 as the Day of Deliverance.

In the meantime, the Congress Right emissaries like Birla were warning the Viceroy that ‘pressure of the left wing might soon get out of hand. The Viceroy reported that Birla informed him:

“We could readily, he said have defense, commercial discrimination and the like settled outside in whatever way we liked so long as the Right Wing and the Working Committee could be assisted to get away from the Left. What we ought to do is to promise a

Constituent Assembly which in actual fact would never come into being....In compliance with his main proposition he suggested that the wise thing would be for us to work things out in detail and secure the agreement of Gandhi behind the scenes before obtaining any public declaration of policy. Some concessions would be probably necessary to Gandhi e.g. over election of states' representatives. Gandhi's technique at present to accept any statement however extravagant emerging from the Left Wing and proceed to put his own interpretation on it. He was already interpreting the phrase 'Constituent Assembly' and the longer he continued to do so the less objectionable I should find the Constituent Assembly. He begged me to make an appeal to Gandhi."

The Viceroy does not seem to have been too impressed with this information and he curtly informed Birla that "he and his friends quite over-estimated the strength of their position at the moment."

The Working Committee of the Congress met again in Wardha in December. Once again Gandhi view against embarrassing the British seems to have prevailed. Thus, the Congress appeared to have been caught in the cross-fire between Gandhi and the Leftists. Gandhi would not allow Action and the Leftists would not allow a compromise. At this juncture, the Viceroy stepped in and made an announcement on the 10th January 1940. The so-called important announcement was immediately welcomed by Mr. Gandhi, who sought an appointment with the Viceroy. The Viceroy reported to London:

"Gandhi's gambit is not wholly unexpected, but I doubt very much whether it represents the whole truth. I suspect myself that Rajendra Prasad and Nehru have stiffened his mind, but if he relapses to being their mere mouthpiece it is not going to make it very easy for me to do business with him as profitably as might have been the case."

Independence, here and now was the Congress demand. The Viceroy was not even talking of a dominion status, what was Mr. Gandhi meeting the Viceroy for? To strike another Unholy Alliance with the Raj? This would not come as surprise given the history of 1929. But as I do not have any papers to back me up, I would refrain from saying so just as of now.

The Congress Working Committee which met in Wardha between 19th January to 22nd January 1940 expressed strong opposition to Gandhi meeting the Viceroy as it rightly saw nothing new in the Viceroy's Statement of the 10th January. It even refused to give him any mandate for discussions with the Viceroy.

The intrigues within the Congress knew no end. Some Misra who was travelling with Vallabhbhai Patel appears to have informed the Secretary of the Governor of the Central Provinces in Nagpur that he expected the Congress to resume office by March. He even appeared to have promised that should the British offer a proper settlement, the Congress Ministers would not hesitate to deal firmly with the Leftists as a quid pro quo.

As the battle for the soul of the Congress raged, the Independence Day, 26th January came near. Mr. Gandhi went out of his way to warn the people that forthcoming

Independence Day celebrations must not be mistaken for declaration of civil disobedience. He also advised against student or labour strikes on the day. So keen was Mr. Gandhi that nothing should disturb his proposed meeting with the Viceroy. With this the Viceroy informed the Governors against interfering with the celebrations. If all that the Congress wanted to indulge in was some Tokenism, they were welcome to have their farce, seemed to have been the Viceroy's reasoning. Thus passed unsung the 10th Independence Day celebrations.

The Raj preparations for the forthcoming Viceroy-Gandhi meeting were in full swing. On 24th January 1940, the Secretary of State telegraphed the Viceroy in connection with his forthcoming meeting with Gandhi. He said;

“I need not remind you that the preamble of the Act of 1919 always contemplates India as an integral part of the British Empire. I ought, however, to explain that the Dominions Office here are always reluctant to deny as to assert ‘right to secede’ owing to fear of trouble with South Africa and Eire.

So far India is concerned all our pledges relate either explicitly or implicitly to future development of India within the Empire. Obviously these pledges included no promise of a status outside the Empire or of a Constitution intended to take India out of the Empire. “Words Dominion Status have no meaning apart from the Empire.”

In order to be doubly sure, the Viceroy got instructions on the 2nd February 1940 laying down the parameters beyond which he was not to go without further reference to the Cabinet. The parameters included a vague promise of Dominion Status at an early date, promise at ‘some time in future, at all events after the war, consultations with Indians’. He was also advised against using the phrase ‘Independence within the Empire’. He was to use the phrase ‘Self Government within the Empire.’ Self Government within the Empire at some distant future date was all that the Raj had to offer to India in the winter of 1940 – nothing more. Undeterred by all opposition, Gandhi kept his appointment with the Viceroy on the 5th February. The Viceroy made the offer that he was authorised to. Gandhi made it clear that it did not meet his case. He went on to make the following points to the Viceroy:

- The Gap between us was still so great that further discussion would not be profitable at present. The Whole business was something that had to (? grow). He was quite sure that in due time it would develop in a direction which would make the resumption of negotiations fruitful.

An assertion that left the hapless Viceroy shaking his head in wonder. ‘I am quite frankly at a loss to know quite what underlies his attitude.’

- He could not make terms with Ambedkar, who did not represent all Mahars.

If the support for Ambedkar was so low amongst the Untouchables, how come Mr. Gandhi had accepted his signature as sufficient to conclude the Poona pact and save his own life, one may ask.

- Moslem League would not receive support of all the Moslem masses, and his own influence with the Moslems, dating from the days of the Khilafat agitation was still great.

What an astounding claim. Mr. Gandhi was not content with being a mere Mahatma of the Hindus. He also seemed to believe that the Muslims also revered him on the same lines. No wonder, there was no meeting point with Jinnah.

- He had refused to yield to appeals of extreme sections to authorise and direct action on their part and said he was in no hurry to declare war. While he could not say what would happen at Ramgrah next month, he was anxious to avoid difficulty there, with particular reference to civil disobedience, and he said he was very hopeful of succeeding in doing so.

What a leader and what a great man. The British slap him and he still refuses to feel insulted. The British are busy raping his nation and making it clear that they would continue to do so. Yet, this good man was in no hurry to declare war on them. No wonder the British have lionized him.

Enough and more efforts had been made from September 1939 to February 1940 to find some honourable way of helping the British but they had banged the door shut on the face of the Congress Right. All that remained was now to accept that the Leftists had been right all along and declare war. A point conceded by Congress President, Abul Kalam Azad on the 20th February 1940, when he categorically stated that delay in launching the movement for making peaceful settlement had been justifiable but it was not justifiable to postpone it very much longer, not at any rate beyond the Ramgarh Congress. The Working Committee met at Patna from February 28th to March 1st to review the fruitless visit of Gandhi to Delhi. By the time, the Congress went to Ramgarh for its Annual session, the official line of the Congress was crystal clear. It had categorically rejected Dominion Status of any variety and demanded Absolute Political Independence. At the same time, the fact that Great Britain was carrying out the war fundamentally for imperialists ends and for the preservation and strengthening of her Empire was also recognised. All signs pointed to the start of a titanic struggle. A struggle that was not to be. For the only worry of the Congress General seems to have been to indefinitely prolong the Civil Disobedience. Forget the tools of violence, the man did not even want to use Non-Violence. On 20th March 1940, the Congress met at Ramgarh and called for Complete Political Independence and expressed itself against being a party to the War. For all the brave talk the Gandhian sting came in the tail of the resolution. It said;

“The Congress withdrew the Ministries from the provinces where the Congress had a majority in order to dissociate India from the war and enforce the Congress determination to free India from foreign domination. This preliminary step must be naturally followed

up by civil disobedience, to which the Congress will unhesitatingly resort as soon as the Congress organisation is considered fit enough for the purpose, or in case circumstances so shape up as to precipitate a crisis.’

Pray, who was to certify that the Congress was now fit enough for the purpose. Who else but the Congress leader, Mr. Gandhi. This was made amply clear in the Resolution.

“The Congress desire to draw the attention of Congressmen to Gandhiji’s declaration that he can only undertake the responsibility of declaring civil disobedience when he is satisfied that they are strictly observing discipline and are carrying out the constructive programme prescribed in the Independence pledge.”

Mr. Gandhi was thus successful in his attempt *to avoid difficulty there, with particular reference to civil disobedience*. The promise made to the Viceroy on the 5th February was going to be kept. For now he alone was going to decide when to declare war on the British. The angry young men of the Left Wing, who were anxious to begin the struggle for Independence were given a unique penance for their urge to stop the British loot of the country. These naughty children were told to sit quietly in a corner and spin Khadi. If they did it well enough, perhaps Mr. Gandhi would permit them to go ahead. The IB report aptly summed the situation. It said:

“The dominant voice has been Gandhi’s; his is the master mind in control of the Congress machine. The technique is skillful...the ‘leftists’ are led to believe that direct action is inevitable while the ‘rightists’ are warned that in the absence of perfect discipline and implicit obedience to Gandhi’s doctrine such action is bound to end in disaster.’

Truly the Age of Innocence ended in Ramgarh on 20th March 1940

The Age of Collaboration
March 1940 – March 1942

The Congress and the Hindu society may have been in the thrall of the Gandhi magic. Others were not going to be taken for a ride. The resolution brimming with fire on intentions and completely vague on action must have seemed to be the final proof of the Gandhi perfidy and gullibility of the Hindu Society to Jinnah. He crossed the Rubicon and demanded Pakistan four days later.

Let us put ourselves in Jinnah's shoes and look at the things. He was faced with the prospect of living in a society, where the majority community seemed to be placing a very high premium on the antics of a hypocrite. One who demanded Independence but was not willing to launch a struggle for the same unless his own leadership was secured against the Leftists threats. One whose hold over the Hindu mind was complete. So much so that even the Leftists felt bound to follow his utterly directionless lead. Why should Jinnah allow his community to fall prey to the tricks of this wily fox, or any such similar person, who may later follow in his footsteps. The only way of securing the interests of his community appeared to be to demand Independent Muslim states. This was his conclusion – right or wrong but one not arrived on an impulse. One arrived at after nearly twenty years of exploring all other avenues.

No wonder, thinking men in 1940 termed the Pakistan Resolution as a Counsel of Despair. The British were naturally jubilant. Indeed, on 18th April 1940 in the House of Commons, Mr. Benn explained that:

“In the Congress resolution and in Mr. Gandhi's speech there is reference to civil disobedience...The civil disobedience that may come out of this might not be Mr. Gandhi's passive kind at all. The last time our party's Government were in office we had to face civil disobedience, but the Moslems were in it then. It was a vast movement and very difficult to handle. Now the Moslems are not in it and are fiercely resisting it. What is likely to happen if Congress take this misguided step will be that what begins as a protest against the British rule will finish as fight between Moslems and Hindus. I had a bitter experience of that. There was in 1931 a movement to boycott British goods. It started with a small disturbance in Cawnpore between some pickets at shops and some demonstrators. That was intended as a demonstration against British goods but it ended in a first class Hindu-Moslem clash in which about 300 people were killed and 1000 injured.”

Nor was Mr. Benn alone. Dire warnings were also expressed that in the event of any struggle against the British, India would witness civil war on a scale not seen in India for hundreds of years.

We need to keep these views in mind and return to them in studying the events of August 1942. Did this prophecy come true and if not who deserves the credit thereof ?.

The two year period that followed Ramgarh Congress to arrival of Sir Cripps in India is singularly barren in terms of any effort by the Congress to secure Independence despite the British having made it all too plain that they considered the Congress demand beyond the pale of reason.

The War seemed to tilt towards the Germans, particularly in the period starting from April 1940. Germans overran Denmark and Norway. The British troops had to conduct humiliating retreat from Dunkirk in France across the channel. Some 335,000 British troops, who were sitting ducks for the German Airforce were finally taken to safer shelter in Britain between 20th May to 5th June. An operation that became a by-word for an Ignominious Retreat. Churchill assumed powers as the Prime Minister on 10th May but could only helplessly watch the French capitulation to the Germans on 22nd June 1940.

The Gandhi, Nehru chatter about helping the British in their hour of distress assumed shrill notes. According to these worthies, Civil Disobedience as an action, was not even an option to be considered under these circumstances. It did not disturb them that the British even in their hour of defeat were not prepared to consider giving up the Indian loot. How could they, for it was so vital for their own existence!

Now, Mr. Gandhi came up with another red herring. He insisted that the War was inherently evil and the Congress or India could not participate in it under any circumstances. This insane plea was too much even for the Congress to accept and it chose to publicly disassociate itself from Mr. Gandhi on this issue in July 1940. Around this time, his dislike for Jinnah came out in the open. As he realised, that he could not emotionally blackmail Jinnah into accepting his tantrums, in an article on 15th June 1940, he accepted that: "It is an illusion created by ourselves that we must come to an agreement with all the parties before we can make any progress." He seemed to have finally accepted the Savarkar logic; *With you, Without you or In spite of you, we will fight for Independence*. But it is really too much to expect that he would have also publicly accepted that he was wrong and his foe was right.

Hitler continued his offensive in Europe. On 8th August 1940, he began relentless pounding of London in a bid to bomb the British into submission. The War raged in Europe as well as North Africa. By end of 1940, the Germans had conquered Rumania, Hungary and Yugoslavia. For the first time since the days of Napoleon, had a single nation held such an unchallenged sway over Europe.

In India, the Congress finally decided to launch Civil Disobedience. Typically, it was a muddled approach. Mr. Gandhi chose the issue to be, not independence of India but the right to preach openly against the War. Moreover, it was to be a token effort. Individual leaders were to court arrest after making Anti-War speeches. From 17th October 1940 to over a year later this mockery of a struggle went on. It came to be severely criticized by many as it was seen to be driven by the twin desire of not creating any real problems for the British as well as to dampen the national enthusiasm for the efforts of Subhas Chandra Bose.

1941 came and went. The Gandhi Congress remained firm in its resolve to help the British cause and not start any major struggle for national Independence. The British had offered no hopes, no change in its position, no slackening of the loot, which had been in fact intensified. But our champions of World Peace and a Just International Order refused to lose their illusions.

1941 was however to witness three major events that were to cause a significant change in the fortunes of nations and of course decisively influence the pace of events in India. These three epoch making events, listed in the order of their occurrence were:

- The Escape of Subhas Chandra Bose from his internment in Calcutta in January 1941.
- Invasion of Russia by Germany on 22nd June 1941
- The Japanese attack on the forces of United States in Pearl Harbor on 10th December 1941.

It is well known that the Russians came to provide the Men and the Americans Money; which caused the decisive defeat of Germany in the Second World War. What is less known is the manner in which these three events interacted with each other to cause dismantling of the British Empire in India. We will take up the implications of these events on the fortunes of India, as we go along. For the moment, it would suffice to understand the British views regarding emergence of India as an Independent nation. We already know that in January 1940, all that the British were willing to concede was a vague promise of Dominion Status sometime in future. Even as they took the American Lend –Lease money to sustain their bankrupt economy, they continued to maintain that Americans keep their hands off the Indian issue. Churchill went so far on 9th September 1941, as to assert that the Atlantic Charter that had been jointly issued by the British and the Americans in respect of Sovereign rights of people all over the world did not apply to India. An assertion which profoundly shocked those like Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, who had been greatest champions of unconditional aid to the British War efforts. As Majumdar noted:

“If Britain had made a deliberate resolve to antagonize all sections of public opinion of India, she could not devise anything more suited to the purpose than this speech of Churchill.”

It is another matter, that even this failed to move Mr. Gandhi to launch Mass Civil Disobedience. One and a half years had passed since the Ramgarh Congress but the Congress had yet not become Fit Enough for this grand project. That seems to have been the verdict of its Mahatma.

Let us now come to the Prime Minister’s Minute of 13th December 1941 that we had briefly looked at earlier. It is this Minute that lays bare the British Intentions towards India in all its naked glory. The readers would no doubt note that this is what Gandhi, Nehru had to show for their two year old policy of not embarrassing the British in prosecution of War.

Prime Minister's Personal Minute

SERIAL NO M 1103/1

10 Downing Street
Whitehall

Secretary of State For India

Sir E. Bridges

The Viceroy should be warned that no change in our policy can be made without full Cabinet discussion beforehand, and that he should in no way lead himself to any of these overtures at this stage.

The ex-Premier of Madras had the whole Government of that vast province in his hands. At the order of the Congress caucus, he threw it down and deserted his post in the heat of war. The dangers of bombardment and invasion are now very near India. The Japanese are at the gates. Let Mr. Rajagopalacharia resume his responsible duties before prating about 'real power'.

Personally I would rather accord India independence than that we should have to keep an Army there to hold down the fighting races for the benefit of the Hindu priesthood and Caucus.

I do not see any prospect of changing the declared policy on which we have agreed during the war, and I should not myself prepared to take the responsibility of throwing India into confusion or burdening the House of Commons with legislation of a highly controversial character.

W.S.C.
13.12.41

The less said about the essential goodness of the British intentions after reading this Minute, the better it would be.

The same Churchill was to change his colours in 1942, as the Japanese captured his beloved possessions in the East. Singapore, which was hitherto considered Impregnable was overrun with ease on 15th February 1942. Malay followed suit and they entered Burma. On 7th March Rangoon fell. On 11th March 1942, in a remarkably blunt statement, he announced in the House of Commons that:

“The crisis in the affairs of India arising out of the Japanese advances has made us wish to rally all the force of Indian life”

There was to be no illusion, it was only due to Japanese advance that the British wished to rally all the forces of Indian life. It had nothing to do with the Gandhi Congress Policy of not embarrassing the British.

The Age of Collaboration had also ended.

Age of Betrayal

April 1942 –August 1942

“Every man is free to go to the fullest length under *Ahmisa* by complete dead-lock, strikes and all other non-violent means. *Satyagrahis* should go out to die and not to live. It is only when individuals go out to seek and face death that the Nation will survive. *Karenge Ya Marenge*. (We shall do or die)”

This was the stirring message that Mr. Gandhi sent out to his countrymen shortly before he was arrested. The nation wide fury unleashed once the Congress leaders had been locked up, shook up the British as never before. It did not bring them to their knees but left them badly shaken. So shaken were they that after the War, they took the earliest flight back home. Such has been the legend of the Freedom Struggle that the Indians have been brought up in. Naturally, the Communists, the League, the Maha Sabha and their leaders together with Dr. Ambedkar, who kept away from the Struggle, have come to be branded as traitors.

How much of this legend passes the test of truth? The national fury, the disquiet of the British has been all too real. No less real has been the lasting impact left on the British mind that a restive India could henceforth be kept down only by application of force on an unprecedented scale. Nevertheless, many uncomfortable questions remain. The first relates to the fact that after the War the British did not certainly take the first flight back. They took their own time. Not less than two years passed after end of the War before the British left after securing all their interests. 1942 could have left them shaken but does not seem to have dented their resolve to rule India.

The second is the unaccountable gap of two and a half years after the Age of Innocence ended at Ramgarh in March 1940 to the launch of the Quit India Movement of 1942. In this period, the British had made India spend the following sums for their sake in addition to spending an equal amount on its own defense in relation to the War, which had nothing to do with her national interests. Now is the time to tabulate the costs of this delay:

Recoverable War Expense

1939	Rs 40 million
1940	Rs 530 million
1941	Rs 194 million
1942	Rs 1083 million (on a pro-rata basis for four months)

Thus, India had given out a loan of Rs 1,847 million (about US \$ 555 million) to the British by the time Mr. Gandhi got around to starting the struggle. To put the matters in perspective, the sum represented 2.2 times the total revenue of the country in 1938. Take another comparison. On 22nd July 1941, the Chancellor of the Exchequer told the House of Commons that the President of United States had authorised a loan of US \$ 425

million bearing an interest of 3% p.a. repayable in 15 years. This was against a collateral of British investments in securities of US Corporations listed on the New York Stock Exchange worth US \$ 205 million, Unlisted Securities worth US \$ 115 million and capital stock of 41 British owned US Insurance Companies worth US \$ 105 million. The first charge on the income from these securities was for repayment of loan. This arrangement was considered as Generous. Consider, the Indian terms, less than one percent interest, repayment term uncertain, collateral zero. This was not Indian generosity. This was British loot, a point we have already dealt with earlier. It can be argued that the British would have made India lend this money, even if Civil Disobedience had been launched after outbreak of the War. This is probably true. But the fact remains, the British made India lend this money to them even as the Gandhi policy was not to embarrass the British. This makes him as well as the Congress which danced to his tune an accomplice in the loot.

In order to understand the depth of the national fury that the British had to face during this period, let us look at the telegram dated 30th October 1942 from the Viceroy;

“Though there have been no major incidents, isolated interference with communications by cutting telephone wires, removal of fish-plates etc continues and there is a disturbing (not yet confirmed) from Central Provinces that a gang of skilled saboteurs operating on the main railway line is probably inspired by the enemy agents. Calcutta has been quiet and districts of Bengal appear to be settling down. In Ahmedabad mills have not yet resumed work and firing with minor casualties was necessary on two occasions. In North West Frontier following picketing of courts Red-Shirt leader, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, has been arrested. **So far the country appears to have taken bombing in Assam and Bengal very calmly..”**

Earlier, on 8th October 1942, the Secretary of State, Mr. Amery had admitted in the House of Commons that mobs were machine gunned from air on 15th, 16th, 21st and 22nd August and 6th September. Bombing, spraying machine gun bullets from airplanes on unarmed civilians in order to impose the British Raj, surely the British were giving the Nazis a run for their money in the contest for the Most Brutal power in the world.

What we need to examine is not how much the Quit India Movement succeeded in shaking the British but something far more fundamental. If the people were so angry that they had to be cowed into submission by use of airplanes, how come they failed. Mr. Nehru provides a truly bizarre explanation. According to him, “India had failed in that final test when strength and power count and all else is mere quibbling and irrelevance. She had failed not only because of British armed might and the confusion produced by the war situation in people’s minds, but also because many of her own people were not prepared for that last sacrifice which freedom requires.”

By official records, 1,028 people had been killed in the disturbances. Nehru himself felt that close to 10,000 people were murdered by the Raj. So the lament of Nehru in respect of people not being ready for that last sacrifice, is completely incorrect in case of people at large. Or perhaps, his lament is addressed to the Congress leaders. In their typical

fashion, they had coined the fiery slogan of Do or Die but neither Did nor Died. Let us pursue our inquiry further and understand the reasons for the failure of the Quit India Movement of 1942 to dislodge the British from India. Let us start with the visit of Sir Cripps, who came in March 1942 and left in April after the vague promises that he had to offer were unanimously rejected in India. Once, we have read the British Prime Minister's Personal Minute, which seems to have aroused no opposition in the Imperial Establishment; we can easily see that the failure of the Cripp's Mission was preordained. In the meanwhile, something very strange was happening in India. The rapid advances of the Japanese in the East particularly the fall of Singapore had caused a tremendous stir in the country. The strongman of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew has vividly described the psychological impact of this epoch making event in the servile East Asian community:

“The looting of the big houses and warehouses of our British masters symbolised the end of an era. It is difficult for those born after 1945 to appreciate the full implications of the British defeat as they have no memory of the colonial system that the Japanese brought crashing down on 15th February 1942. Since 1819, when Raffles founded Singapore as a trading post for the East India Company, the White Man's supremacy had been unquestioned.....There was no question of any resentment. The superior status of the British in government and society was simply a fact of life. After all, they were the greatest people in the world. They had the biggest empire that history had known, stretching over all time zones, across all four oceans and five continents. We learnt that in history lessons in school. To enforce their rule, they had only a few hundred troops in Singapore.....The British put it out that they were needed in Malaya to protect the Malays.....A small number of prominent Asiatics were allowed to mix socially with the white bosses, and some were appointed unofficial members of the governor's Executive Council or the Legislative Council. Photographs of them with their wives appeared in the papers, attending garden parties and sometimes dinners at Government House, bowing and curtsying before the governor and his lady, the woman duly wearing white gloves, and all on their best behaviour. A few were knighted, and other hoped that after giving long faithful service they too would be honoured. They were patronised by the white officials, but accepted their inferior status with aplomb, for they considered themselves superior to their Asiatics.

This was the Malaya and Singapore that 60,000 attacking Japanese soldiers captured, together with more than 130,000 British and Indian and Australian troops. In 70 days of surprise, upsets and stupidities, British colonial society was shattered, and with all the assumptions of the Englishmen's superiority. The Asiatics were supposed to panic when the firing started; yet they were the stoical ones who took the casualties and died without hysteria. It was the white civilian bosses who ducked under the table when the bombs and shell fell. It was the white civilians and government officers in Penang who on 16 December 1941, in the quiet of the night fled the island for the 'safety' of Singapore, abandoning the Asiatics to their fate. British troops demolished whatever installations they could and then retreated. Hospitals, public utilities and other essential services were left unmanned. There was no fireman to fight fires and no officers to regulate the water supply. The whites in charge had gone. Stories of their scramble to save their skin led the Asiatics to see them as selfish and cowardly. Many of them were undoubtedly

exaggerated in retelling and unfair, but there was enough substance in them to make the point. The whites had proved as frightened and at a loss as to what to do as the Asiatics, if not more so. The Asiatics had looked to them for leadership, and they had failed them.

The British built up myth and their inherent superiority so convincingly that most Asiatics thought it hopeless to challenge them. But now one Asiatic race had dared to defy them and smashed that myth.”

60,000 Japanese soldiers were all that took to bring the British to their knees, even when they were outnumbered two to one. Whatever, Lee Kuan Yew has said about the Malay society was equally true of the Indian society. There was however a big difference. The so called India elite were no doubt in a race to out serve the Malaysians. However, the masses led by a vocal and restive middle class needed no Japanese victory to convince them of the hollowness of the British myth of superiority. Over four decades had passed since the Great Tilak had lit the torch of liberty in India. The fires of the same torch were now in the hands of Subhas Chandra Bose, who was breathing fire from the Berlin radio calling upon his countrymen to overthrow the yoke of British Imperialism. Now, in the post Singapore Fall era, it would have been politically suicidal to be seen to help the British. The barrenness of the Individual Civil Disobedience had become visible to one and all. The Gandhi Congress had to do something or yield to the Leftist lobby.

A change in the tone and tenor of Mr. Gandhi’s writing was apparent. On 26th April 1942, he demanded that the British withdraw from India and not worry about what would be its fate. An AICC meeting was held in Allahabad from 29th April to 2nd May, where it passed a resolution demanding British withdrawal from India and preached the novel theory of non violent resistance to Japanese invaders, who were now coveting Delhi from their bases in Rangoon. Nehru, who had been advocating Armed resistance to counter a possible Japanese attack also fell in line.

The Leftist lobby had already been weakened by the departure of Subhas Chandra Bose in 1941. Once Russia had become a British ally, the Communist had come under a great deal of ideological pressure to fall in line and abandon their struggle against the British in India. Their inclination became public when on May Day, the top Communist leaders in Punjab accepted their release from the British jails. The Leftist threat to Gandhi leadership was now in disarray. Only the Congress Socialist Group remained. They were not to rest content unless the Congress began a struggle. They were voicing the aspirations of the People and could therefore not be silenced easily. The old fine tuned technique of ‘Running with the hare and hunting with the hound’ came handy. On one hand Mr. Gandhi breathed fire. From May onwards, the tone of Gandhi’s outburst became more and more shrill. On 7th June, he confessed:

“I waited and waited until the country should develop the non violent strength necessary to throw off the foreign yoke. But my attitude has undergone a change. I feel I can not afford to wait any longer... That is why I have decided that even at certain risks which are obviously involved I must ask the people to resist slavery.”

On the other, there was to be No Preparation, No Action Plan; nothing but mere rhetoric. Consider what Azad, the Congress President himself has to say has to say:

“I reached Wardha on 5 July and Gandhiji spoke to me for the first time about the ‘Quit India’ movement. I could not easily adjust myself to this new idea....I had been in favour of organized opposition to the British at the outbreak of the war...Gandhiji had then not agreed with me. Now that he had changed, I found myself in a peculiar position. I could not believe that with the enemy on the Indian frontier, the British would tolerate an organized movement of resistance...”

The poor Congress President knew that this was possibly the worst moment to launch a Non Violent Mass movement. But his pleas fell on deaf ears. He pleaded with his Mahatma to let him - the Congress President, know the plan of action. What preparations was the Congress to do in what was bound to be Struggle of Life and Death. Even a child knows that a Cornered Cat is a dangerous animal. Here the Congress was being asked to take up an unarmed fight against a badly wounded Imperial animal. It was being asked to give the very food – the Colonial Loot, which had sustained it over centuries. It was bound to be ruthless. The People at large were not deterred by the thought of fighting the animal but they had a right to be armed – if not with Arms, than at least with a well thought out co-ordinated plan of action. This was the least that they were entitled to. The Congress President knew that the Congress was under an obligation to prepare the people for this fight. But the Mahatma was unmoved by such considerations. Azad records:

“When I pressed him to tell us what exactly would be the programme of resistance, he had no clear idea.”

Nor was Azad alone in being perplexed. He had the excellent company of his friend Nehru, the heir of Mr. Gandhi. Even he says:

“Neither in public nor in private at the meetings of the Congress Working Committee did he hint at the nature of the action he had in mind.”

What kind of a General is this, who was leading his troops into the battlefield without any plan, without any preparations with nothing but a Prayer on their lips at the very moment when the enemy had nothing but the Devil in his heart. If the Government of India really believes in this Sainly approach, it should order some Prayer books and not Guns, the next time when a conflict breaks out in a place like Kargil. The Government of India may or may not choose to follow the Gandhian approach but the Congress certainly did. On 14th July, the Working Committee demanded that the British rule in India must end immediately.

On 24th July 1942, the Government revoked its eight year old ban of the Communist Party of India, after it publicly vowed to help the British War Cause. The Communist Tiger had been tamed. It had turned into a domestic cat. A sin for which it has never been fully forgiven by the Indian people. Never were the chances of a Non Violent struggle succeeding lesser. Any challenge at this time had to be ‘a foolish and inopportune

challenge, for all the organized and armed force was on the other side, and in greater measure indeed than at any previous time in history. However, great the numbers of the crowd, it can not prevail in a contest of force against armed forces. It had to fail unless those armed forces themselves changed their allegiance.’ Not my words friend but those of Nehru himself.

Never was the Left Challenge to the Gandhi domination of the Congress more feeble. The restive Indian people could let their steam off without threatening the hold of Mr. Gandhi on reins of Congress leadership. The moment to strike had arrived. And the General did not falter. Late in the night, on 8th August 1942, the long awaited ‘Quit India’ call was given by the Congress. As Mr. Gandhi said:

“Every one of you should from this moment onwards consider yourself a free man or woman and act as if you are free... I am not going to be satisfied with anything short of complete freedom. We shall do or die in the attempt.”

According to Nehru’s estimate some 10,000 people died. Not one of them was a prominent leader of the Congress. I am wrong of course, one Prominent Congress leader, its past President, who was thought to be unfit for the post, did die in the attempt to free his motherland - Subhas Chandra Bose, whose inspiring story we shall turn to in a short while. What exactly did Mr. Gandhi meant to do on the 9th August 1942, if he had not been taken into the protective custody of the British? We do not have to speculate. His very own heir can enlighten us.

“Neither in public nor in private at the meetings of the Congress Working Committee did he hint at the nature of the action he had in mind, except in one particular. He had suggested privately that in the event of failure of all negotiations he would appeal for some kind of non-cooperation and one-day of protest hartal or cessation of all work in the country, something in the nature of one-day general strike, symbolic of a nation’s protest. Even this was a vague suggestion which he did not particularize....In their concluding speeches, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the Congress President and Gandhiji made it clear that their next step would be to approach the Viceroy, as representing the British Government, and to appeal to the heads of the principal United Nations, for an honourable settlement.”

This appeal would have no doubt failed. So what was Mr. Gandhi to do next?. A Day’s Hartal – is that all – is that a Life and Death Struggle for Freedom – Is that *Karengé Ya Marengé* ? Mr. Gandhi was spared the embarrassment by the protective custody of the British. After all for three years, he had caused them no embarrassment. They had a debt to repay and they did. What of the People? As Nehru says:

“But those crowds had not prepared for the contest or chosen the time for it. It came upon them unawares and in their immediate reaction to it, however unthinking and misdirected it was, they showed their love of India’s freedom and their hatred of foreign domination.”

The Communist had played into the hands of Mr. Gandhi. Their folly had enabled him to launch a movement that he dared not as long as they were in it. There is otherwise no rational explanation for the two and a half years gap between the Ramgarh Congress of March 1940 and the Quit India Movement of August 1942. A delay in which the Gandhi Congress became a willing accomplice in the British loot of India, all for the sake of ensuring that the left Lobby of the Congress does not take over the reins of Congress from Mr. Gandhi.

Some 10,000 people died in the Foolish and Inopportune bid that Quit India Movement was. But the legend of the Mahatma became Immortal for leading a Movement that was foredoomed to failure. What did Mr. Gandhi do once he was in the British protective custody. Did he fast unto death for the cause of Complete Freedom – for was he not pledged to Do or Die ? He does seem to have been stricken by the sight of the blood of some 10,000 people on his hands. He began one of his most inexplicable fasts. A fast of 21 days for Self Purification. The fast began on 10th February 1943 with Gandhi in good spirits but by 17th February, his condition had become critical. Candy and two other Government doctors reported that he would not last beyond February 21st and might collapse suddenly even before then. A considerable agitation started for his release but the Government would not relent. Arrangements were even made for his funeral and to deal with the resulting disturbances. On 21st February, Gandhi was on the death's door but suddenly took better and by 25th, he was out of danger. He completed his fast on 3rd March without causing any further anxiety. The phenomenon greatly added to his stature as a Mahatma but did little to convince the medical fraternity. It remained convinced that one of his attendants surreptitiously added Glucose to his water without his knowledge. The fast, completed with or without the Glucose may have added to his aura as a Mahatma but did nothing to further the cause of Independence for which 10,000 people had laid down their lives since 9th August 1942. He failed to win any concession from the Raj. The outcome of the fast was a personal triumph for the Viceroy Linlithgow, who had stood firm and even refused to release him despite a clamour for the same.

The Quit India Movement has one aspect that has been ignored so far. This was the first Gandhi led Movement that was actively opposed by the Muslims. In 1920, they were in it. In 1930, they were indifferent to it. Yet, the communal disturbances on considerable scale had become an integral part of the Indian society. If the Communal Disturbances could occur in 1920 and 1930 then it was legitimate to fear that in 1942 widespread disturbances bordering on Civil War would erupt. People like Mr. Benn had already expressed such apprehensions. Yet the reality is nothing happened. Communal peace remained unbroken. It can not be a coincidence that for the first time the Muslim leadership was in the hands of Jinnah unlike in 1920 or 1930.

Half a century and more has passed since the time the Communists wrote themselves out of history books of Indian Freedom struggle. It is difficult to today visualize that their challenge to Gandhi leadership in 1942 was for real. Let us therefore now examine this aspect of the Indian history.

Rise and Fall of Communism in India

Communism took roots in India in early 1920, when Russian trained Indians came back to spread the gospel of the new revolutionary doctrine. By 1924, the revolutionary plans of the Communists resulted in trial of their leaders at Kanpur. The Raj ensured conviction of four leaders. But it was to ruefully note later that:

“The importance of the case ...lies more in the fact that the public thereby became accustomed to hearing openly what the Communists leaders had hitherto only dared to whisper. Faith in Communism was established as no offense, and the fear of law against Communism was largely removed; the immense power of mass action as a political weapon became recognised by nationalist intellectuals of advanced views....Communism began to earn appreciative comment in questions which could not be dismissed as irresponsible.”

The Communists on their part learnt the folly of some of their methods. They began to propagate the cause of nationalism as distinct from their earlier espousal of Internationalism as a panacea for all the ills. The slogan ‘Workers of the World’ acquired a more acceptable local meaning. The new approach enabled the Communists to spread their tentacles far and wide. Nor was this the only reason. The British were aware of the real source of their strength. They realized that the Communists source of strength lay not only in their inexhaustible energy but also in the capacity of their leaders of middle class up bringing and the party workers to identify themselves completely with the classes whose cause they sought to uphold. Their acceptance of a frugal, even squalid, standard of living was the counterpart of the Congress approach to masses based on Gandhi’s mysticism and the homely appeal of Khaddar and the spinning wheel. A secret British report on their activities noted:

“From their unimpressive headquarters the Indian communists are making their bid for national power in India. Padding about barefoot through the dingy halls...they go about the other multifarious activities of an Indian political party. They certainly have no front of prosperity in the material sense but I believe, they suffer no inferiority complex on this account. They have a very go-ahead air.”

By the end of 1927, communist agitators brought about simultaneous upheavals in several of India’s Industrial centers; in three years Communist theory was translated into practice in Bombay, Bengal and Upper India, which continued to be the hotbed of revolutionary activity – both the Communist and the non Communist variety but united in the love for Independence; for a long time thereafter. The efforts of the Communists succeeded in bringing about simultaneous upheavals in several of India’s industrial centers. As the spread of Communism continued unabated in public utility services and industries, the Raj, by the end of 1928; was alarmed to see the Red flag of communism flying in the nerve centers of its organisation. Communism with its strident demand for Indian Independence and abolition of every vestige of feudal and imperial interests in India was a cancerous growth that had to be cut off.

The growing clout of the Communists was amply demonstrated by storming of the Calcutta Congress in 1928 by these red flag wavers of Independence. The public outpouring of intense desire for Independence, which we have seen earlier unnerved Motilal Nehru and Gandhi. Gandhi had to tie himself in knots to somehow postpone the day of reckoning. As the wily Gandhi bought time up to 1929, the Raj went into action to eliminate their common enemy.

The heavy hand of the Raj fell on the Communists with the start of the Meerut trial in March 1929. The trial gained them wide sympathy of nationalists. Nehru and Ansari joined the committee set up arrange for the defense of the Meerut detainees. Even Gandhi paid a visit to them in the jail.

The removal from the scene of all the capable and experienced leaders caused a serious set back to the Communist movement, leaving Gandhi leadership unchallenged on the national scene during the crucial years following the passage of the Independence resolution by the Lahore Congress in 1929. This proved to be a temporary if crucial respite both for the Raj as well as Gandhi. The Communists soon bounced back.

In March 1934, a comprehensive Communist thesis was prepared by Dr. Adhikari, one of the ablest of Meerut convicts. It laid down that individual strikes were to be transformed into general strike; this was to be accompanied by a peasant campaign against the payment of rents, by a nationwide agitation in favour of complete independence, and by the spread of revolutionary propaganda amongst the police and army; the second stage was to be the overthrow of British imperialism, the princes and landlords by means of an armed insurrection. As was their wont, the Communist proceeded to implement the doctrine. A general textile strike was called on 24th April 1934, which received overwhelming response all over the country particularly in Bombay. Spread of revolutionary propaganda in the Army was sought to be done by striking an alliance with the Gadhar Party of the Sikhs, which had proved to be such a great headache to the Raj during the First World War.

The situation became alarming for the Government and it banned the Communist Party of India on 23rd July 1934. Thus, the British did in India what the Nazi were out to do in Germany. Ruthlessly stamp out the Communist influence. Imperialism and Nazism seemed to have a common Enemy. Nor was the banning of Communist parties in their area of influence, the only thing they had in common. The Nazis had disfranchised the Jews on the ground that they were an inherently inferior race. The British insisted on ruling India by insisting that the Indians were inherently incapable of governing themselves. Sensitive Britons like Mr. Sorensen had warned against advancing such puerile arguments, rightly holding in the House of Commons on 26th October 1939 that:

“We are putting forward a proposition which will eventually land us into the position now occupied by our enemies.”

A comment that was too true to be discussed and was therefore heard and forgotten.

In October 1939 the Second World War was already underway. The Nazis were openly recognised as enemies. This had not always been the case. In the same debate as Mr. Soresen, Mr. Gallacher pointed out:

“The Prime Minister and his supporters in this country tried to get history to go in a particular direction but it refused to do so. They gave submarines to Germany to use in the Baltic against the Soviet Union. Now they are being used against Britain. Germany had no submarines five years ago. It was the policy of the National Government that provided them. The whole idea of arming Hitler and strengthening him was to turn him against the Soviet Union.”

The antipathy against Communism was Ideological and therefore of the highest order. With the Nazis, it was merely a question of Competing for the bigger share of Colonial loot. There was no difference in the goal. What else can explain Arming of Nazis by the British against Soviet Union. No wonder then that the Raj in India came to look at the Communist Party as its most potent enemy. Nor did the Communist Party in India help the matter by refusing to be a paper tiger.

The ban on Communist Party only made it change its tactics and made it even more dangerous. A three week strike of the Calcutta Dock Workers was organised in November 1934 to mock at the ban. A railway strike planned for May 1935 miscarried but the British were astute enough to note by May 1935 that not withstanding the ban, the havoc wrought by the Meerut proceedings was being repaired and the Communist Party was regaining its momentum.

In 1935, the Communist party decided to overcome the limitation imposed upon its activities by the legal ban by infiltrating Congress. It decided to send its most committed and capable cadre as individual members into the local units of the Congress. These Communist agents were to aid the process of crystallization of a national revolutionary wing within the Congress. The shelter provided by Congress enabled the Communist to carry out their Independence struggle relentlessly. In March 1936, they were able to organise a strike in Calcutta which lasted for six weeks and involved more than 170,000 workers. The Raj was horrified to note that the Communists had skillfully concentrated their attention on workers in key positions, whose absence from duty brought the factory or mill to a stand still.

In the beginning of 1937 they opened a United Front with the Congress Socialist Wing giving a flip to their activities. Leading lights of the Congress like Jay Praksh Narayan, Jawahar Lal Nehru were sympathetically inclined towards the Communists. The Left wing inclinations of close associates of Nehru were so extreme that the Congress Right Wing choked in horror. By October 1937, the Communist influence had spread far wide. United Province, the Bombay Presidency, Punjab and the province of Bengal went Red. The Bombay leaders were practically defying the Congress Ministries in arranging strikes in the cotton areas, even as they nominally operated within the ambit of Congress. Spreading unrest amongst the industrial workers to propagate the cause of Independence was not the only thing the Communists were after. They also took to organising Agrarian

unrest as well. The alliance of the Communists with the Gadhar Party took concrete shape in the form of Kirti Lehr Group headquartered at Meerut. The underground Bombay headquarter of the Communist was very active in supplying it with propaganda material. The Meerut center became the focal point from where the Communist activities radiated far and wide under the benevolent eyes of the Congress Ministry in U.P. Most dangerously for the British, it also made contacts with the serving Indian soldiers.

The Communist within the Congress became bold enough to openly try and wrest the control of the Congress Socialist Wing in 1938. They were barely beaten back. The attempt unnerved the Congress Right Wing. Four Congress Socialists resigned in July 1938 from the Executive who declared that the Communist Infiltration had gone very far. They were now in a position to control the Congress. Jawahar Lal Nehru made the same point in 1939, when he warned that :

“There are a few, somewhat new to the Congress, who while apparently agreeing, plan differently...The proposed policy is to embed themselves in the Congress and then to undermine its basic creed and method of action. In particular, the continuance of the technique of non violence is to be combated, not obviously and patently but insidiously and from within.”

Nehru seemed to confuse Basic Creed and Method of Action. His objection for the Communist activities related on the face of it to the Method of Action i.e. the technique of non-violence. One presumes the basic creed of the Congress since the Lahore resolution of 1929 was to wrest *Absolute Political Independence*. The Communist were in no way prepared to compromise on the Basic Creed unlike the Right Wing and therein lay the conflict not merely over the Method of Action.

Within a short span of four years, the Communist had made their presence felt in the Congress. As the British realized with a growing sense of despair that a surprising number of Provincial and local Congress Committees were either Communists or their sympathizers. They were now in a position to dictate the actions of Congress. The One-Day strike organized in Bombay in October 1939 had been forced by the Communists elements. A very strong element within the Congress was in a position to act on the fiery rhetoric of the Right Wing. It was only bidding its time. As a matter of strategy, it had decided not to launch any struggle unless it was authorized by the Congress Working Committee. This was an eminently sensible strategy as the division of nationalist pressure could only be to the detriment of the cause of Independence. Of course, once the struggle began, it considered itself free to adopt the most suitable Method of Action to fulfill the Basic Creed i.e. attainment of *Absolute Political Independence*. If the Method involved use of Violence, so be it. Nor were they alone. Their enemies knew that in 1939, the Forward Block of Subhas Chandra Bose, the Communists, various terrorist organizations like Anushilan Samiti, Jugantar, Hindustan Socialist Republican Army were so closely inter connected and inter-mingled as to make any defined distinction in Left Wing of the Congress virtually impossible.

The Left Wing united in its objective of attainment of Independence by Armed Violence undertook detailed preparations. The programme included collection of arms and ammunition, the arrangement of safe hiding places for Arms and shelter for underground workers, collection of information in respect of police stations, the names of arms licensees and wealthy residents, the timings of the trains carrying Government money. British knew the outlines but had to wring their hands in despair as the details eluded them.

The Communist now took to openly taunting the Gandhi Congress leadership over its reluctance to launch Civil Disobedience after the outbreak of the War. The Communists rightly pointed out that the Right Wing leadership was fully conscious that once launched, the Mass movement would be slip out of their control. Unlike in 1930 or 1932, the Left Wing was in a dominant position and capable of transforming the Civil Disobedience into a revolutionary movement that would accept no compromises. It is this fear of losing control over the Method of Action that Gandhi was even prepared to delay the fight for attaining the Basic Creed of the Congress *Absolute Political Independence* - until such time as he was in a position to control the flow of events.

When the Ramgarh Congress met in March 1940, the battle for the soul of the Congress was on. Revolutionary pamphlets including banned Communist literature was being distributed in large quantities. Absconding Communist leaders like P.C. Joshi were moving about in secrecy at Ramgarh. Hectic Left Wing activities continued to ensure that the Right Wing was not in a position to offer any Compromise deal to the British. The Communist Party had made up its mind to continue their efforts to force the Working Committee into mass movement but not take any precipitate action. A mole confidentially reported to his British Masters that according to P.C.Joshi, Gandhi wanted the militant elements i.e. Bose, the Socialists and the Communists out of the way before starting any movement.

The outcome of the Ramgarh Congress was a well known stalemate. The Left Wing successfully stalled any compromise over the Basic creed but Gandhi continued to hold the Congress and the nation to ransom by his obdurate insistence on *Absolute Non Violence* as against the national demand for *Absolute Political Independence*. The Communist continued to vigorously propagate the cause of *Absolute Political Independence* while Gandhi continued to hold fast his belief in *Absolute Non Violence* He had to resort to all kinds of machinations to ward off the pressure to launch the Mass Movement sanctioned by the Ramgarh Congress. The British continued to suck the economic vitality of the nation in no small way due to the Gandhi policy of not embarrassing the Government.

It is in this atmosphere that 1940 gave way to 1941. By January 1941, Subhas Chandra Bose had flown out his cage temporarily easing the difficulties of Gandhi but a crippling blow on the national cause was dealt by Hitler's invasion of Russia. The British had tried their best and failed to curb the Communists influence in the country. Now, the Communists proceeded to do exactly that for the British. In an act of *hara kiri* they

proceeded to help the British and fell from the pedestal they had occupied for two decades. A fall from which they have not recovered half a century later.

The Communists had always suffered from the criticism that they took orders from their masters in Russia, orders that could even be detrimental to the national interests. The Communists had strenuously denied the allegation as baseless. They maintained that if the 'Workers of the World could Unite', it would only further the national interests. Hitler's attack on Russia in June 1941 placed them in acute dilemma. As the Russians allied with the British, the Communist International propounded the thesis that what had been so far a War to further the cause of Imperialism had suddenly become transformed into a 'People's War'. A War that demanded the participation of the Communists all over the World to further the cause of Allied forces. In simple English, the Communists in India were now being told that the British were no longer an enemy but a friend. Their War effort in India therefore deserved help and not hindrance. The tiger, which had been stalking its prey, waiting for a chance to pounce on its prey was suddenly told that it was not supposed to hunt the prey but instead provide it with fodder, A more complete turn around could not have been asked for.

A secret message to this effect was carried to India from Russia by one Achar Singh in late November 1941. The Home Minister wanted to set him free so that he could make a public appeal to his underground comrades. The Intelligence Bureau warned against such a naïve move. It insisted that Achar Singh be sent to jail in Punjab, where he could discuss this message with his jailed comrades. The British knew that the jailed communists maintained their line of communication with their comrades outside. They rightly felt that a message coming from within the jail would carry more conviction than one delivered by a person, who would seem to have purchased his freedom for the sake of the highly controversial message. This dubious policy soon yielded results. As early as 10th January 1942, the Home Department knew that the Communist Directorate in Bombay had decided with obvious reluctance and after severe disagreement within the Party ranks to renounce their 'Anti War' policy. This Directorate had been the bane of the British. Churning out propaganda material with vigor, dispatching it all over the country and managing to remain untraced despite the best attempts of the Government. It was not the British power but the Communists themselves, who managed to stop their own activities.

The British remained wary despite the official change in the party policy. It was aware that those who genuinely believed in the new policy were in a minority. The party as a whole remained hostile to the British War effort. Mian Iftikharuddin, President of the Patna Student Conference had deliberately left the chair when the resolution for unconditional support to the War effort was passed. Fact remained that amongst many of the revolutionaries in India, love for Indian Independence overrode their loyalty to the Communist ideal. They were in no way interested to start helping the British merely because of the Nazi attack on Russia. The British were therefore in no great hurry to revoke the ban of the Communist Party imposed in 1934. They were in the meanwhile delighted to see that the Communists had started losing ground in several provinces as a result of their new official policy.

The Congress Socialist Party, the allies of the Communists in the Congress Left Wing continued to follow the more rational policy that the best way of helping Russia was to ensure that the British Imperialist interest do not gain ascendancy. They therefore remained resolutely Anti War. The violently antagonist attitude of the Left Wing groups led to pitched battles in the Pro War meetings. In a particularly unfortunate incident, S.C.Chanda was stabbed to death at Dacca in March 1942, in one such a conflict. From the Sublime to the Ridicule, the Communist journey had begun.

The British were not the only one to be encouraged by the disarray in the Left Wing. Gandhi, who had been fighting shy of launching the Civil Disobedience since March 1940, was similarly emboldened. His writing grew firmer and tone strident. He was at last free to take steps without overtly worrying about a Left Wing threat to his leadership. On May Day, the Punjab Government released several important Communist leaders. Release of other important leaders followed. The ban on the Communist Party was removed on 24th July 1942. It was now firmly Pro War and therefore Pro British. The dramatic turn-around of the Communist tiger into a domestic pet was an opportunity not to be missed. This was the time to strike and ensure retention of the reins of leadership. The Army was not prepared, the challenge was Foolish and Inopportune, defeat was sure. But these were small considerations. The army may be defeated. Independence could not be attained but the important thing was the Army would not ever think of changing its general. With this, the Quit India Movement was launched within a fortnight of the removal of the Communist threat.

Undaunted by the unnerving odds, the people gave full vent to their anger against the British rule. This was to be no picnic. Whatever Gandhi may have planned, a token one day strike was out of question. The prominent leaders neither Did nor Died but thousands certainly laid down their lives. The British repression made even the Congress Socialists abandon their line of Non Violence. Even as the Communist as a Party opposed the Quit India Movement, the rebels in its ranks broke the party discipline. The struggle soon assumed titanic proportions, one which could not be put down without use of such war weapons as bombing and machine gunning the crowds demanding Independence. The situation which developed is best described by the Statement published by the Government of India in March 1943:

“On the morning of August 9th Mr. Gandhi and other Congress leaders were arrested in Bombay and simultaneously throughout the country a round up of important Congressmen took place.....First reactions to the arrests were surprisingly mild. On 9th August there were disturbances in Bombay, Ahmedabad and Poona but the rest of the country remained quiet. On August 10th disturbances occurred also in Delhi and a few towns in United Provinces; but still no serious repercussions were reported from elsewhere. It was from August 11th that the situation began to deteriorate rapidly...in almost all cases these were directed either against communications of all kinds (including railways, posts and telegraphs) or against the Police. Moreover, these outbreaks started almost simultaneously in widely separated areas in the Provinces of Madras, Bombay and Bihar, and also in the Central & United Provinces. Finally the damage done was so extensive as to make it incredible that it could have been perpetrated on the spur of the

moment without special implements and previous preparations; and in many instances the manner in which it was done displayed a great deal of technical knowledge. Block instruments and control rooms in railway stations were singled out for destruction; and the same technical skill appeared over and over again in both selection of objects for attack-on the railways, in P& T offices and lines, and on electric power lines and installations-and also in the manner in which the damage was carried out. On the other hand-and this is a significant fact-industrial plant and machinery, even where it was fully employed on Government work, escaped any serious injury.

The position was at one time extremely serious in the whole of Bihar..and in the eastern parts of the United Provinces. In these areas the trouble soon spread from the big towns to the outlying areas...For a considerable period, Bengal was almost completely cut off from Northern India, while communications with Madras were also interruptedIt was indeed significant that the areas in which the disturbances took the most serious form were also the areas of greatest strategic importance. Not only did they contain the center of India's coal supplies, stoppage of which would have immediately paralyzed all transport, trade and industry but also lay immediately behind those parts of India which were obviously exposed to enemy attack.....

Everywhere the Congress creed of non-violence was ignored...there were no communal clashes-and the whole picture was much more one of calculated venom directed against selected objectives than of indignant people hitting out indiscriminately...Bombs made their appearance in Bombay, the Central Province and the United Provinces...some of a highly dangerous type, were in use on a fairly extensive scale, particularly in Bombay..."

Such meticulous planning and execution could be the work of only one organisation, the Communists. No one else had devoted so much time and energy to the violent overthrow of the British in India. Most unfortunately, it was not the Organisation as whole that was participating in the Struggle. Only the Communist rebels were in the battle field together with the Congress Socialists leaders such as Jay Prakash Narayan. These brave unsung warriors were fighting a battle on two fronts and therefore losing. It was not only the British who they were fighting. Incensed by the activities of the rebels, the Communist leaders who toed the Party line were busy helping the British hunt their own comrades.

From March 1940, it was Gandhi who blocked the Independence movement. From August 1942, the infamy belonged to the Communists. There is no getting away from this blunt painful reality. They had a golden opportunity to prove that they took orders from no one outside India but they not only squandered it but also proved their critics right. Even now, it is not too late to apologise for their actions and own up their mistake. It is not too late to acknowledge the glorious role of the Communist Rebels who defied their part line and nearly brought the British to their knees. This is the least that can be done for these long departed souls. The Communists in India only need to look at the fortunes of their comrades in Vietnam to realise what an opportunity they missed in India. Even as the Communist in India fell from their lofty heights in 1942, Ho Chi Minh went from strength to strength.

The Communists came to prominence in Vietnam in late 1931, when they unleashed a fierce well directed struggle to throw out the French colonial power. The attempt came within an inch of succeeding. But in the end, the Colonial power regained its dominance and meted out harsh treatment to its foe. The able leadership of Nguyen Ai Quoc-Nguyen, the Patriot or as he later came to be known as Ho Chi Minh; stood it in good stead. While, he was not able to stave off the virtual decimation of the Party in the short run, he was able to ensure that French victory was not complete. The Communist structure within the country remained intact.

The Communist ideals attracted leading cadres from middle class background and within an astonishingly short time, they had succeeded in creating a truly mass movement. The Party was able to bridge social and regional barriers. No less important was the fact that they had come to view modernisation of Vietnam not merely as a national necessity but also an important part of the revolutionary transformation of the entire colonial world. Ho Chi Minh was very clear that the Communist Internationalism and National Interests could not be contradictory. As he said:

“The French imperialists...have resorted to every underhand scheme to intensify their capitalists exploitation in Indo-China....They increased their military forces, firstly to strangle the Vietnam revolution, secondly to prepare for a new imperialist war in the Pacific..thirdly to suppress the Chinese revolution, fourthly to attack the Soviet Union because the latter helps the revolution of the oppressed nations....(If) *we give them a free hand to stifle the Vietnamese revolution, it is tantamount to giving them a free hand to wipe our race off the earth and drown our nation in the Pacific.*”

If only the Indian Communists had also understood this basic truth, they would not have allowed their love for Russia to come in the way of Indian Independence. During the War, after the fall of France, the colonial power in Vietnam was exercised by the French Government in Vichy which was beholden to the Axis power. The Japanese did not therefore need to occupy Vietnam, unlike the Dutch controlled Indonesia. The French and the Japanese coexisted in Vietnam during the War as allies. They bid to instill respect for the Colonial power by seeking to subject the urban youth to persistent propaganda and indoctrination. This was a futile attempt for the youth were already under the spell of the Communists. The French opened the doors of the University of Hanoi to the Vietnamese youth. The education only served to make them radical nationalists. The collapse of the pro Axis French Government forced the Japanese to resurrect Bao Dai from his French imposed exile and install him as the nominal Emperor of Vietnam.

Banned both by the French and the Japanese, the Communists laid the groundwork for their comeback across the border in China. With a far better grasp of the declining fortunes of the Japanese, Ho Chi Minh strategically placed the Viet Minh military force in the northern part safe from the reach of the Japanese garrisons, after the French power dissolved in March 1945. When Japan surrendered in August, his was not only the best organised force but was also the only one untainted by collaboration with either French or the Japanese. From here on his eventual triumph was a matter of mere time.

Chapter IV-4

Betrayal of the Daridrinarayan

We have thus far seen how the Bharatiya Civilization itself was betrayed by the Gandhi Congress as they rushed to defend the British cause with the onset of the World War II. They took no notice of the fact that in their anxiety to help the British, they were rushing to perpetuate a Civilization that for centuries had done everything it could to exploit people all over the world. We then turned our attention to the Political Betrayal that led to the Pakistan Resolution. As if this was not enough, we also had to examine, the manner in which the cause of Independence was betrayed between 1939 – 42.

I am aware that there would be some people, who would argue that this was not Betrayal. It was simply the choice of wrong tactics by well meaning people, who were overwhelmed by events beyond their control or even understanding. Even, if we take this Charitable view; one can not ignore the fact that the price for this Betrayal or Wrong Tactics was paid by the people, who were in the most vulnerable position. The Daridrinarayan or the Poorest of Poor. Let us now study their plight, for was it not Gandhiji himself who said:

“Let me give you a Talisman. Whenever you have a doubt or when you become very selfish, remember the face of the poorest and the weakest person you have seen and ask yourself if your proposed actions will be of any use to him. Will he benefit in any manner. Will it make him capable of controlling his own life & destiny. In other words, will it show the path of Swaraj to the hungry and spiritually deprived millions.”

Let us now subject the actions of Congress during the War to this talisman. The impact it had on the Daridrinarayan. Once we do this, it will be easy to understand why use of seemingly harsh terms like Betrayal is justified in the context of their actions. It is not my contention that they did what they did being fully aware of the consequences of their actions. Like all of us they were human. It was easy to be completely overwhelmed by the events taking place in the World at this time. They were hardly alone in being so.

Nevertheless, the fact remains – Betrayal took place. By accident or design. That hardly mattered to the people who paid for the consequences. If they were lucky, they paid with their life. If not, they paid in the form of wasted lives – of their own and their Children

If it sounds like the raving of a fanatic, please give me some time to recount the Story of the British Auschwitz, which resulted directly from the Great British Loot. Once you are familiar with the Modus-Operandi of the Loot, you would realize no word other than Loot can be used in for the manner of the financial drain of the country. This was a time when the life of a Pig in United Kingdom was more valuable than the life of human being in India. Truly sometimes Truth can be more bizzare than fiction.

The British Auschwitz

It was in late 1942, some knowledge of the Nazi death camps became available in the West, when the exiled Polish Government in London published information supplied by its underground couriers. The identification of Auschwitz II as the unknown destination to which Jews from all over Europe were being deported, was confirmed from the accounts of five escapees in July 1944.

Auschwitz in the post war period has rightly become infamous for cold and deliberate murder of hundreds of thousands of Jews by the Nazis. The Nuremberg trials nailed the guilty down and managed to punish some of the perpetrators of the dastardly crimes against humanity. It can come as consolation to no one nor the guilt of Nazis be toned down merely because in 1990, the collapse of Communism made available more credible estimates of the numbers actually killed at Auschwitz. The records released by the State Museum of Oswiecim, the Polish town which had played host to the Nazi horror story, indicate that the victims of Auschwitz numbered about 1.2 – 1.5 million of whom probably 800,000 – 1,100,000 were Jews. The original estimate of more than four million victims, which has become inscribed in the folklore of the Jew persecution, was based on an ambiguous telegram from Moscow responding to the requests of the Western governments after its troops had liberated Auschwitz on 27 January 1945. That the actual figure was much lower could not have been unknown earlier. It suited the Jews to have the higher number floating around as it could only aid their quest to have their own nation in Palestine. The Western governments were too busy keeping the limelight away from their Wartime apathy to the Jews.

On 31 May 1944 that a British ‘Mosquito’ reconnaissance plane of 60 Photo Squadron had taken photos of the Auschwitz. One photograph taken on 25 August 1944, a month after the horrors of the Auschwitz were public knowledge; even showed the roof vents of the gas chambers, the chimneys of the furnaces, and groups of prisoners. Yet these photographs were not even developed. They were found unprinted in the archives of US Defense Intelligence Agency thirty years later. Nor was this an isolated act. Repeated appeals by the Zionist groups to disrupt the operations of Auschwitz by bombing the place fell on deaf ears. One official of the British Foreign Office minuted: ‘a disproportionate amount of time ...is wasted....on these wailing Jews.’

No wonder, they found it prudent to not try and correct a statistical error. After all, murder of one million is no less heinous than that of four. It does not matter if Hitler killed three million or six, the fact remains that the mass murder had an effect that was completely unintended by Hitler. The fires of this disaster steeled the Jews who were finally able to form a nation of their own; ending two thousand years of wandering in the Four Corners of the world.

The Nazis got their just deserts, the Western governments succeeded in hiding their apathy. The Jews got their own nation; surest guarantee that their race would never again be subjected to a holocaust. The German Auschwitz did serve a purpose.

Let us now turn attention to the British Auschwitz in the Second World War. Wait a minute, did I say a British Auschwitz ? In the Second World War!!! Never heard of it, would be the common refrain. This is the tragedy. The German Auschwitz has been well documented and quite rightly reviled. In this case, as we have seen, even the wildly exaggerated number of deaths have been accepted as the gospel. The British Auschwitz has remained uncommented upon. Let us get to the point. By the term British Auschwitz, I am referring to the Bengal famine of 1943, where the dance of death has merely been sought to be explained away by glib and self-serving explanations.

Before, we try and understand why these explanations would not stand a moment's scrutiny, let us try and understand the extent of this tragedy. The victims of the German Auschwitz at least had the pleasure of seeing their tormenters get their just punishments. They were to see the rise of their nation from the black smoke of the furnaces of Auschwitz. Their sufferings were not entirely in vain. The lot of victims of Bengal famines was to remain forgotten, with the world not even caring to take a count of their dead corpses. So just how many people died due to that terrible famine in 1943? If one were to believe the figure admitted by the Secretary of State for India, Mr. Amery in the House of Commons during the Consolidation Fund (Appropriation) Bill, Second Reading debate Commons on 28 July 1944, some 700,000 people had died of famine related causes in Bengal Famine. Consider that this was still wartime. Censorship prevailed and there was no television to beam the heart rendering images of men, women and children dying of hunger, it will take a brave man to accept the figure of Mr. Amery at its face value. The Cambridge Economic History of India, talks of some 1,500,000 deaths; almost double the number admitted to by Mr. Amery. Mr. Dieter Rothmund in his book 'An Economic History of India' has rightly pointed out that the figure of 1,500,000 famine deaths can be accepted only if one were to account only for the immediate deaths. If one were to take into account premature deaths of the famine ravished bodies succumbing to the epidemics, the total toll of the terrible Bengal Famine would rise to as high as 3,000,000. A figure as high as the total Jew victims of Hitler during the whole of Second World War, when one takes into account the later estimates of Auschwitz tally of victims.

I can already see the tide of protests rising at this comparison. Actions of Hitler were deliberate, while the Bengal famine deaths were merely the foreordained lot of these ignorant Indians, best described as: *"Men and women, plague-ridden and hungry, living lives little better, to outward appearance, than those of the cattle that toil with them by day and share their places of sleep by night."* And therefore what else could befall such people except that: "Such Asiatic standards, and such unmechanized horrors, are the lot of those who increase their numbers without passing through an industrial revolution"

The British had provided a safe and secure administration eliminating the age-old check of War on population growth. The ignorant Bengali peasants did not take advantage of the benevolent British administration to increase their food production but started breeding like rats. They could not but die when the crops failed. The factor of safety in India was nil. What could His Majesty's Government in Britain engaged in a mighty effort to save the world from the depredations of Nazism do? It was all the fault of these wretched animals.

Such have been the insidious arguments put forward to wash the blame of these large-scale deaths from the lily-white British hands. So what was the reality?

A good starting point to understand the reality is to study the debate in which Mr. Amery had admitted to the death of 700,000 people. For once the British hypocrisy had been replaced by a refreshing candor. No longer was there any more pretence that the British rule lasting over one hundred and eighty five years had improved the lot of the Indian people. At the very onset, Mr. Pethick-Lawrence admitted that people of India “are desperately poor, malaria ridden, living on impossible standards of life, with an immensely high rate of mortality.” Yet these desperately poor people had somehow brought about an economic miracle. For Mr. Lawrence pointed out that “When the War began, India was indebted.....to an amount running into several hundred million pounds. The position has been entirely reversed**India has become one of the greatest creditor countries of the world.**” This reversal of fortunes ‘was one of the greatest problems (for Britain).’

This is strange, is it not? Some of the poorest people of the world manage to pay off their loans running into hundreds of million of pounds and turn into one of the biggest creditors of the world. This should have been a moment of rejoicing. The final proof that the British rule was indeed good for India. All that was now necessary was to ask the Debtors to pay up, use the money for improving the lot of the Indian people. For hundreds of millions of pounds that were now owed to India was a huge sum of money in 1944. To put the matters in perspective, it had been envisaged that an expenditure of £ 1,000 million was enough to finance the entire first five-year plan of India. Why did Mr.Pethick-Lawrence consider that emergence of India as one of the greatest creditors of the world was a *Great Problem* and not a *Great Opportunity*. We need to examine this but first let us get back to the debate.

Following Mr.Pethick-Lawrence was Lieut-Colonel Elliot who bemoaned the fact that “population of India is increasing by about 6,000,000 a year....the factor of safety in India, as a whole, the margin above survival level of the average inhabitant, is very low.” He then went on to remind the house about the great famine of Ireland a century ago, which had followed a 50% increase in Irish population between 1801 and 1841. His focus on population growth in Ireland as the sole cause for famine, was amazing. For he himself later admitted, that during the famine, George Bentinck and Disraeli had come to the House asking for an expenditure of £ 16,000,000 for industrial development. The House had been kind enough to approve an expenditure of £ 620,000 i.e. a mere 4% of what the British Government had itself felt necessary. Mr. Elliot was nevertheless pained that despite this British generosity “Over 4,000,000 people left the country (Ireland) in the second half of the 19th century – 4,000,000 devil’s advocates against this country.”

It was Mr. Schuster, who drew attention to the often overlooked but one of the most important changes that were taking place in the War. “Millions of Indians are in the Armed Forces, and they will come back with new ideas of life and an appreciation of the realities of the present world which may not be fully shared by those whose attention had been turned inwards all the time to India’s domestic problems. No one can say what influence those millions will have on the course of Indian national opinion.” Mr. Schuster

was bang on the target as the events in 1945-47 were to prove. Once again, let us first get back to the debate.

Mr. Price was amongst those who recoiled in horror at the population explosion that seemed to be then taking place in India. As he said: "What is to be the problem when the population of India is 730,000,000 is a terrible nightmare at which all of us in this House can be frightened." Well! Mr. Price may have been a little surprised to find that the Indian population which was around 400,000,000 when he spoke has by now crossed 1,000,000,000. India does suffer from many ills but Famines death is not one of them. Let us not be unfair to Mr. Price. For he did call for an raising of the productivity of Indian agriculture by initiating Land Reforms as well as making an investment of about £750,000,000. He seemed to be one of those naïve fellows who felt that as "India has now a large credit balance and the financial question will not be as difficult as it was."

What was the Indian agriculture situation? India had 610,000,000 acres of cultivable land. Of this a mere 360,000,000 acres were being actually cultivated i.e. only 59%. We are talking about Cultivable land and not Irrigated land. And what were the yields. As pointed out by Mr. Sorren: "average yield of rice is only 800 lbs. per acre against 1,400 lbs. in China, 1,450 lbs. in United States, 2,000 lbs. in Egypt, 2,300 lbs. in Japan and finally 3,000 lbs. in Italy"

Was an investment of £750,000,000 a pipe dream for India? Well, by this time the Indian debtors owed India a little over £ 1,000,000,000. So not only the required investment of £750,000,000 within her reach but she had money to spare if only her Debtors were to pay her the amounts due to her promptly but were they going to do so ? Mr. Sorren had these gems to offer.

"Reference has been made to the £ 1,000,000,000 that has been accumulated in this country since the beginning of the War." Oh! So India was now the Creditor for Britain and that too by over One thousand million pounds. No wonder, Mr.Pethick-Lawrence saw this as a Great Problem. And what were the British intentions regarding repayment. Again let us turn to Mr. Sorren:

"If the Tata Plan (for economic reconstruction of India) itself partly depends on the realisation of the sterling balances accumulating in this country, we have to be very careful how we deal with the matter...we should be careful what we say about these balances."

Let alone talk of repayment, Mr. Sorren seemed to indicate, there was something vulgar and obscene about India even thinking of using the money she had lent to Britain to improve the wretched lot of her people.

While Mr. Sorren would have no doubt drawn a number of approving nods, Professor A.V. Hill nearly caused the entire British establishment to choke in horror as he pointed out that: "We have heard about communal difference leading to bloodshed and physical violence. The total number of people killed and injured in communal disturbances is a

very small percentage of those we kill on the roads. That, I think gives a true picture of the importance of communal differences in the Indian countryside.” He then went out to deliberately set out certain facts in a manner designed to make people’s flesh creep for “that needs to be done”. What were these facts that the good Professor set out. Let us turn our attention to them:

- “The average new born child in India has even chance of living to 22; in Britain and America, the same child has an even chance of living to nearly 70.
- This is not, as is commonly suggested, solely a matter of a high infantile death rate; it is due to a mortality which is 4 to 8 times higher than ours right up to the age of 55.
- There are millions of people who are ill fed. Even among those who are comparatively well fed the standard is much lower than we ourselves would tolerate.
- Many of these things will depend mainly for their solution on the woman... (whereas) only 8% of the female population of India over 5 years of age can read or write.”
- The fundamental reason for the Bengal famine of last year is that the factor of safety in India is almost zero.”

So starving, illiterate millions living forever on the edge was the Indian reality in 1944 after close to two century of British rule. Perhaps, the Professor was a rabble-rousing communist out to tar the British achievements in India. Surely, his ‘flesh creeping facts’ were rebutted. Well! Mr. Clement Davies who rose to speak after the Professor had this to say:

“I have been a Member of this House for over 15 years and I have listened to every Debate on India and Indian affairs, but I do not remember such a note of unanimity as I have heard to-day, or such a single current of opinion running through all the speeches.”

Nor was Professor disputed on his Facts by any one later in the debate.

Mr. Davies’ was kind enough to seek to provide for an explanation for the Bengal Famine. He was unlike Mr. Reed, who sought to prove that “there has been no famine in Bengal-not in the recognised Indian sense.” The explanation of Mr. Davies ran as follows:

“As has already been pointed out, the margin of safety, if it can be so called, in India is so thin that any cataclysm, any change whatever, brings with it inevitably some tremendous disaster. Two hundred million out of the 400,000,000 people in India do not get enough to eat in any event. They are all the time on the verge of a bare existence. Then come bad harvests, a tremendous storm, the loss of 1,500,000 tons of rice from Burma, the taking away of the boats from fishing, the congestion of traffic because of the military situation and needs. All these coming together brought about this tremendous disaster...It was

followed by epidemics, which always follow under nourishment and malnutrition, and which took as heavy a toll, if not heavier, than the famine.”

It was this explanation of the Famine that was endorsed by Mr. Amery in his concluding reply. He said :

“The causes of the Bengal Famine were fairly and eloquently stated by my hon. And learned Friend the Member for Montgomery (Mr. Davies).”

A nation that owed hundreds of million pounds repays the entire debt, goes on to lend over a thousand million pounds but neither Mr. Davies nor Mr. Amery even bother to refer to this huge drain on Indian resources as being in any way responsible for the Bengal Famine.

Bad harvest, storm, loss of Burma, traffic congestion due to war killed 700,000 Indians of hunger as per the admission of the British themselves. Yet, miraculously these debilitating constraints spared the British and American soldiers stationed in India, who remained well fed even as the Bengalis dropped dead, like flies all over. By the own admission of Mr. Amery, “the immense increase in the Armed Forces, more particularly from this country and the United States, has added, in effect, another province, a consuming but not a producing province, to the problem of India’s food supply.”

India seemed to have money to repay the British as well as lend them huge sums of money but when it came to arranging for food for her own consumption, it had no money. Once again in the words of Mr. Amery:

“The House has been informed that 800,000 tons of wheat will have been shipped to India in the year ending this September. I fully realise that the Indian Central Food Advisory Council has expressed disappointment with these figures as compared with their own standard of 1,000,000 tons a year of imported grain for current consumption with 500,000 added for reserve. That disappointment is natural in view of India’s own grave anxiety. The preoccupations of His Majesty’s Government over an even wider field, are no less anxious and critical...All I can inform the House is that question of finding ships for further consignment of grains to India is under active consideration”

India needs a million tons of food grains, which would only partially feed its four hundred million people. It begs to have a reserve stock of a bare half a million and all that Mr. Amery has to offer is platitudes to the nation which is one of its biggest Creditors.

One million tons of food grains and a reserve stock of half a million for a population of 400 million, so by the same logic the British should have been scouting around for ships to import a hundred thousand tons and a reserve stock of about fifty thousand tons for its own population of some 42 million. Yes! We know, the British were better fed than the Indians, so may be figures should be import of two hundred thousand tons of grains and a reserve stock of a hundred thousand tons. Keep these figures in mind, dear readers, for they will come back to haunt us later.

What a perfect system. India has all the money in the world to play the perfect host to the Allied troops as well as keep on lending money to the British. When it comes to her own requirement, suddenly the British Government realises there is neither money nor ships to meet even the minimum requirements of India. The Indians better do with 20% less not to talk of building any reserves. Then they bemoan the fact that the factor of safety in India is zero. If the Nazis thought that they knew everything that was there to know about Exploitation, it was only because they went to their graves blissfully unaware of better systems devised by their smarter enemies across the Channel.

The Indian reality that emerges from a study of this debate is very very disturbing. For this was a debate that took place on the British soil, in the House of Commons, the Mother of Parliaments – not in some rabble rousing street corner meeting. What else can one conclude but that by 1944, India had sunk to the lowest possible level of economic existence under the much touted British rule. It was no more than a very pale shadow of nation that was a leading Industrial nation of the world in 1750. The country was not in a position to produce food to sustain its citizens beyond the ripe old age 22. A small tremor could send shock waves ripping its social and economic structure as had happened during the Bengal famine. No Indian had any reason whatsoever to thank the British for anything. For what were the Indians to be grateful to the British. For its starving millions, for its illiterate population, for its zero factor of safety or for the fact that there was no food security. For those, who blamed the breeding habits of the Indians, Mr. Amery had himself some chilling facts to offer. During the period 1924 – 44, Indian population had increased by 27%. The increase in acreage under crops was 10%, whereas the increase in acreage under food crops was only 1%.

If this imbalance could be corrected India could grow its own food. If India could grow its own food, then His Majesty's Government, which had much more weightier issues than the hunger of Indian people to worry about, could be safely divested of its responsibility of finding Ships to transport grains in the middle of a War. All that His Majesty's Government had to do was to direct the Viceroy to invest some £ 750,000,000 in the Indian agriculture. It did not have to fund a farthing. The money could have come entirely from the Indian revenues themselves. For, if India could lend over 1,000 million pounds to the British, surely a far better use of this money was to invest the 750 million pounds necessary to guarantee a decent meal to her own people. But then of course, this was a big 'IF'. The British were fighting for Democracy, against Fascism and Nazism. Their claim on this money was far far more important. If this meant sacrificing lives of a few million Indian niggers, the price was well worth paying.

Let us now come to the strange phenomenon of this pauper nation emerging from the War as one of the largest Creditor nations of the world. First of all let us understand the true implications of what India had foregone by not only repaying some imaginary debts of hundreds of million of pounds but also lending a thousand million pounds to the British. Were these small sums of money? Let us put the figures in perspective.

- India's 700,000 villages could be connected by constructing 400,000,000 miles of roads at a cost of £ 340,000,000
- Universal education for all boys and girls from 6 to 14 needed an expenditure rising from £ 7,500,000 to an eventual total of over £ 200,000,000 a year
- We already know about the £ 750,000,000 necessary for ensuring food security.

We all know that neither the roads were constructed nor was the money spent on spreading education. The price of denying investments in Agriculture was paid for by the inhuman deaths of millions of Bengalis. This is the price paid by India for the noble cause of fighting a War to maintain the British hegemony in the World.

Secondly, where did the money come from? Take for instance, the Second War Budget of the Central Government presented in the Legislative Assembly on February 28, 1941. It estimated revenue for 1941-42 at nearly £ 80 million pounds and an expenditure of £ 95 million pounds, with defense expenditure alone accounting for £ 63 million. How could a country with an annual revenue of a bare £ 80 million raise enough finances to complete a financial transaction of repaying and lending hundreds of million of pounds within a short period of five years i.e. between 1939 – 1944. This bit of financial engineering is something that we will take for detailed study a little later.

For the moment, it would take a brave man to suggest that anything but financial ruin awaits a country that attempts embark on such a mad venture as trying to lend an amount equal to twelve times its normal annual revenue within a span of five years, for a cause that had nothing to do with the welfare of its own people. If this lending is a forced process thrust upon it by another country, then what else can it be called but a loot that would put all Chengis Khans of the world to shame.

And what if the process of this forced lending on such a massive scale continues uninterrupted even as a severe famine stalks the country? Surely, then every death occurring due to hunger is a sheer case of murder by the country which is availing this forced loan.

As we shall see, the British did force India to embark on this mad venture with no let up even at the height of Bengal famine. **The Bengal Famine is therefore the British Auschwitz.** The British War Cabinet is as guilty of War Crimes against humanity for the death of millions of Bengali peasants, as were the Nazis for the murder of the Jews. It is to this grisly story that we shall now turn.

The Great British Loot

Much has been made of the fact that in 1947, it was Britain who was indebted to India and not the other way around. The popular British sentiment is best captured by:

“After having been accused for decades of exploiting India, Britain was going to wind up her Indian adventure five billion dollars in debt to her supposed victims”

Five billion dollars continues to remain a huge sum of money even on the eve of the twenty first century. So if it was Britain, which owed India this money, surely India can not accuse her of exploitation. So far we have only looked at the possibility of this money being used for such beneficial activities as investments in agriculture to ensure Indian food security rather than lend it to the British. But then all the apologists for the British rule in India would quickly jump to offer the perfectly ingenious argument that without this money the menace of Hitler could never have been fought.

We know well enough from our study of the European history right from the days of Vasco Da Gama that every war that the European states fought and they were fighting all the time; was a war to advance the cause of their own nation by grabbing more and more colonies. No war was fought to advance the cause of Humanity. Neither the First nor the Second World War was an exception to this. It is only when this fundamental truth is realised that one can understand the nature of alliances in the War.

Take for instance Japan. It had emerged as a Colonial power by the First World War erupted. A brutal colonial power, the Koreans would add. This did not prevent U.K. from accepting it as an alliance partner. By the time Second World War started, Japan had begun to have ambitions of devouring the British colonies in the Far East. The nature of Japanese rulers did not change. The change was only in their intent. The Japanese goal now was not Korea but India itself, changing it from an ally to a sworn enemy of the British. The welfare of either the Korean or the Indian people had nothing to do with this. Or Ireland for that matter. By the admission of the British Cabinet, Ireland was bound to it not only by acceptance of ties to a common Crown but much more. So much so that even after it renounced the sovereignty of the British Crown, it could still not be called a foreign country for it was bound by “many ties of blood, history and the intermingling of peoples”. Yet these ties did not prevent Ireland from adopting neutrality in the Second World War. Nor the refusal of Ireland to help them, dim the British enthusiasm for their Irish brethren. As a matter of interest, the sentiments about Ireland were expressed in the British Cabinet on 18th November 1948.

The case of United States is no less illuminating. It had become the most powerful nation in the World by the turn of the century but had chosen to keep out of the First World War for years till the Zimmerman telegram forced its hand. The fact that it maintained neutrality in the Second World War till a direct Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour compelled it to enter War is well known.

Each nation was looking at its own national interest. Thus the argument that India had to lend money to the British to fight the Hitler menace on moral grounds does not stand a moment's scrutiny. The Indians were not alone in offering assistance to the British. The Americans did so too.

Indeed, their assistance predated their entry into the War. They offered assistance to a bankrupt British Government struggling to keep its head above the German onslaught by the famous Lend-Lease Act. By this act, the American Congress authorised the President of United States to 'Sell, transfer title to, exchange, lease, lend, or otherwise dispose of ..any defense article.' The initial funds earmarked for this purpose were US \$ 1,300,000,000. This was to rise to an eventual sum of US \$ 11,000,000,000 by the end of the War. The very preamble of the Act made it clear that this was to be no act of charity. It read, "Be it enacted that this Act may be cited as "An Act to Promote the Defense of the United States." Nor was this a mere use of semantics as the British were soon to find out. In the words of Kennedy:

"Lend-lease provided succour, but at a cost. Like any bank manager, the United States government felt it necessary to dictate conditions before proffering benefits upon a needy customer. Britain's gold and dollar reserves were to be rigorously controlled in order to prevent them from rising above the level thought desirable in Washington. No lend-lease goods could go into exports nor could similar British made products be sent to overseas markets lest this provoke resentment in United States business circles. Not surprisingly, the British exports tumbled further; as Keynes later admitted, 'We threw good housekeeping to the winds'. In addition, the American perception of the post-war world and the pressure from Washington to arrange Britain's place in it could not but add to the unease which London felt about its long-term economic future. The American desire to break up the Sterling Block and have full convertibility of that currency; the dislike of the preferential tariffs instituted within the Empire at the 1932 Ottawa Conference; the enhancement of the American share of Middle East oil; and the constant reference to the need to have access to the raw materials and markets of the European colonies, all caused a dubious London to postpone compliance with such requests. Being in such a weakened position – by December 1943 Britain's sterling liabilities were seven times greater than its gold and dollar holdings – this was not always possible. More and more, the British piper played the tunes required by his American paymaster. The terms of lend-lease demanded by Washington, notes one critical historian, rendered the British economy 'ill-equipped to resist American objectives at the end of war'. But did London have any other choice than to accept this aid, despite its unwelcome conditions?"

Measured in absolute terms, the financial assistance offered by the Indians was significant even when compared to that given by the Americans. The important point that should not be lost sight of is that the American help came with strings, no strings is too mild a term – came with chains attached. Nor did the American Government offer a cent's help if it were not to be beneficial to their nation. For every cent they offered, they made sure that the British did a fox trot, any time they so desired. How does Indian help measure against the criterion of its implications for Indian welfare?

But first, let us see something else. Its use by the British. Let us go to the famous memo by Keynes that we referred to earlier, 'Our Overseas Financial Prospects', written on 13th August 1945. It started in a brutally frank and refreshingly candid manner Keynes said:

1. "Three sources of financial assistance have made it possible for us to prepare our domestic man-power for war with an intensity not approached elsewhere, and to spend cash abroad, mainly in India and the Middle East, on a scale not even equaled by the Americans, *without having to export* in order to pay for the food and raw materials which we were using at home or to provide the cash which we were spending abroad.
2. The fact that the distribution of effort between ourselves and our Allies has been of this character leaves us far worse off, when the sources of assistance dry up, than if roles had been reversed. If we had been developing our exports so as to pay for our own current needs and in addition to provide a large surplus which we could furnish free of current charge to our Allies as Lend-Lease or Mutual Aid or on credit, we would, of course find ourselves in a grand position when the period of providing the stuff free of current charge was brought to an end."

Well, who else but Keynes knew that the 'if' he was talking about was a big 'IF'.

3. "As it is, the more or less sudden drying up of these sources of assistance shortly after the end of Japanese war will put us in an almost desperate plight, unless some other sources of temporary assistance can be found to carry us over whilst we recover our breath-a plight far worse than most people, even in Government Departments, have yet appreciated.
4. The three sources of financial assistance have been-
 - (a) Lend-Lease from the United States;
 - (b) Mutual Aid from Canada
 - (c) Credits (supplemented by sales of our pre-war capital assets) from the Sterling areas....
5. In the present year, 1945 these sources are enabling us to overspend our income at the rate of £ 2,100 million, made roughly as follows..:

	£ millions
• Lend-Lease (munitions)	600
• Lend-Lease (munitions)	500
• Canadian Mutual Aid	250
• Sterling Areas	750

In the summer of '45, Keynes was worried that Americans being Americans, were bound to ruthlessly cut off the Lend-Lease with the surrender of the Japanese. So would the Canadian Aid cease. The credits from the Sterling Areas were he hoped 'more durable' The so-called Credits were after all what the Sterling Area countries had "been induced to lend to us."

Thus, we have it from the horses' mouth itself – no less than Keynes himself, that the Credits from Sterling Area, more popularly known as Sterling Balances, were a vital part of financing of the current expenditure of the U.K. Unlike the Lend-Lease, they had more uses than to overcome Hitler or the Japanese menace.

Nor is there any particular need to take Keynes at face value. The History of Reserve Bank of India (1935-51) informs us that the Sterling Balances which stood at Rs 15,070 million at the end of August 1945, when the War ended increased to Rs 17,240 million by end of March 1946 or an increase of Rs 2,170 million. The Cambridge History of India informs us that there was a fresh increase in Sterling Balances during 1946/47 by Rs 516 million. Thus India was asked to contribute to war cause a sum of Rs 2,686 (2,186 + 516) million, long after Hitler was dead and Japan was nuked into submission. Rs 2,686 million or over 200 million pounds or over 800 million dollars of free money. For what, if not to meet the current consumption of the United Kingdom.

The Americans were not going to be so generous. Once they finished bringing Japan to its knees, they turned the Lend-Lease tap off. If the British were to need any more money, they would have to crawl on their knees – hands folded, head down in reverence. Am I being melodramatic? One can hardly accuse me of this after reading the details of the Anglo-American Financial Agreement that Keynes negotiated in December 1945.

His memo 'Our Overseas Financial Prospects' had convinced the British Cabinet that apart from everything else, forced Credits from Sterling Area Countries, possible sale of gold, increase in exports; they still desperately needed a grant of US \$ 5,000 million from the United States. Soon Keynes was off to Washington with his hat in the hand. The Americans soon made it clear that there was to be no question of any grant. The best they could look at was a loan of \$ 4,000 million. It is from this loan that they would have to set aside \$ 750 million for liquidation of Lend-Lease. Thus the total new loan was not to exceed \$3,250 million and carried an interest of 2% p.a. The British hopes of a Grant or at least an interest free loan had been belied. Moreover, the loan carried stiff conditions. Sterling was to be made completely convertible. A transitional period of fifteen months was all that was offered. The Sterling Area countries were to have a freer trade with United States than had been hitherto allowed by the British. Tariff reductions had to be agreed to.

The British Ministers were incensed. A suggestion was even made that it would be better to borrow from the United States at 3, 4 or even 5 percent than to accept the humiliating conditions. It was even contended that the need of the Americans to lend the money to the British was far more than the need of the British to borrow. This was mere bravado and political posturing and the Cabinet knew this.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs pointed out that he had considered the possibility of obtaining a loan at a higher rate of interest free from conditions but two things came in the way. The first was that the burden of such a loan would be beyond the British capacity. The second being that the Americans were not interested in giving any loan without conditions even at higher rates of interest. The Chancellor of Exchequer joined in by asking his colleagues to face the unpleasant truth that the failure to reach financial agreement with the United States would be disastrous for the United Kingdom.

What a contrast! America had freed itself from the clutches of the British at about the same time India fell into her orbit. When America became independent, it ranked nowhere amongst the League of Nations. When India lost her freedom, she was amongst the leading industrial nations of the world. Some hundred and fifty years later, she was a pauper. Yet she was made to provide 800 million dollars free of any interest, free of any conditions even as her millions went hungry. America was now the most powerful country in the world. Even as the Americans lent money, they made sure that not only their own interests were secured first but that the British knew their place in the world.

My die-hard British friends would no doubt like to point out that there was no more accretion to the Sterling Balances after 1947. If there was some increment after the War ended, it was probably due to expenses which could only be gradually reduced. They may therefore still like to contend that the Sterling Balances were the British need to combating the evil forces unleashed by Hitler and his cronies. For the benefit of such gullible Imperial fans, I would like to reproduce an interesting table.

**Sterling Balances
1945 –51**

Figs in £ million

United Kingdom sterling liabilities to:	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	Increase during 1945-51	
								In Value	In %
Sterling Area	2453	2417	2297	2365	2353	2732	2789	+336	+14
Dependent Overseas Territories	446	495	510	556	583	754	964	+518	+116
Other Sterling Area	2007	1922	1787	1809	1770	1978	1825	-182	-9
Non- Sterling Areas	1210	1284	1306	1055	1064	1011	1018	-192	-16
Total	3663	3701	3603	3420	3417	3743	3807	+144	+4

First of all, years after Germany and Japan were tamed, British continued to extract money in the memory of having defeated them. The Sterling Balances or the Credits U.K. extracted continued to grow. I can not bring myself to use any other word than 'Extracted' for the simple reason that this so called Credits were completely forced with no consideration to its impact on the people who were being so forced to lend money. The Sterling Area countries like India which escaped the British control after 1947, not only stopped giving any new credit but also managed to get some money repaid. The manner of repayment is also a fascinating story that we shall dwell upon later. The Non-Sterling Area countries were more successful. They managed to get a 16% repayment as against a mere 9% in case of Sterling Area countries. Miserable was the fate of the countries which the British continued to control.

The African and Malaya peasants continued to toil so that they could sell their produce at the British determined prices to Britain for which all they got were paper securities issued by Bank of London that neither carried any interest nor were encashable anywhere. The U.K. thus took out goods worth £ 518 million from its colonies long after the War ended under a so called pro-poor Labour Administration offering no payment in return. Nothing but a promise of payment in future. An interest free loan exceeding two billion dollars without any conditions whatsoever. Oh! They did offer something in return. The British were very proud of the fact that they had made available £ 41 million during this period for Colonial Development and Welfare. It is another matter that bulk of the so called development funds was to be invested in such projects as production of Ground Nuts in East Africa on some 100,000 acres of land so that Britain's deficit in fat rations could be reduced.

What were the needs of British that needed to be financed by the Asian and African? We have some more interesting figures. On 8th February 1946, the Chancellor of the Exchequer submitted a memo on the Balance of Payments for 1946 to the British Cabinet. He pointed out that the picture of the British economy was bad. The overseas income from all sources was projected at £ 700 million while the expenditure was expected to exceed £ 1,500 million. The Import programme required £ 1,126 million while £ 400 million were required for Overseas Military expenditure (£ 300 million) plus other political loans. The resulting deficit was far too large even after accounting for the American loan and the colonial credits. He therefore roped in Keynes to once again try and drill some sense in the heads of his colleagues. The Keynes memo 'Political and Military Expenditure Overseas' was circulated to the Cabinet by the Chancellor of Exchequer with the following terse comment:

"I asked Lord Keynes to state, as clearly as he could and as frankly as he chose, the facts of our Overseas Deficit, and their implications for future policy. This he has done, and I circulate his paper to my colleagues. The detailed application of the suggestions is a matter of discussion. But the broad conclusion is unmistakable, and demands urgent action." As usual the razor sharp intellect of Keynes flowed into his pen offering withering criticism that brooked no dissent.

1. “From a study of the import programme for civilian purposes the most impressive fact which emerges is the high proportion of it which consists of products which are truly essential to our economy. Of the proposed total of £ 1,075 millions, no less than £ 1,030 is classified as essential and only £ 45 million as supplementary easements. To devote a further £ 40 million to easements or take it off exports would make a susceptible difference to the standard of life. In this context, an amount of relaxation such as £ 20 million or £ 30 million is a significant figure and far from negligible.”

Without wasting time, Keynes had already pointed out, ‘listen dummies, the time for fun and games is over. What may have once seemed small figures as £ 20 million or £ 30 million were no longer small but big numbers.

2. “This makes it all the more striking that when we turn to political and military expenditure overseas, we seem ready to spend vastly larger figures. It will be seen...we are in danger of spending in this way an aggregate which is high in relation to our total expenditure on imports and enormous in relation to economies we can obtain by depriving civilian of his small luxuries and conveniences...”

Keynes seems to plead, “Accept the fact that we are no longer a global power, we are in no position to maintain our pretensions without asking for big sacrifices from our people.

3. “The figures given below are indeed extremely shocking and show that the position is rapidly getting out of hand. Ministers should not remain unwarned that they are going down the drain at a great pace, unless they can consider before it is too late whether a drastic and early change in policy may not be preferable....”

For God’s sake, act and act till we still have time to do so or we are courting disaster. Start dismantling the Empire.

4. It will be shown that the gross political commitments abroad already accepted and the similar demands already in sight, together with the prospective military expenditure overseas on the present basis, may considerably exceed the whole of the projected American Credit, which is expected to cover us for the six years 1946-51 (namely £ 937 millions).
5. It would considerably upset the hard-pressed British public if they were to become aware that (reckoning our overseas statistics globally) not a single bean of sustenance for themselves or of capital equipment for British manufacturers is likely to be left over from the American credit; and that we shall require the whole of it and unless we change our ways.....to maintain our military prestige overseas and generally speaking to cut a dash in the world considerable above our means.

6. In short, current developments abroad need to be reconsidered without delay especially those which are being undertaken before the American credit is actually in the bag.”

It must have been galling in the extreme to Keynes, who had worn himself out in the nerve racking negotiations with the Americans and was soon to die of over exertion; that the politicians were merely going about in their make belief world as if Britain still ruled the Seas and was a mighty economic power. In the process ignoring the reality that their nation was biggest Debtor in the world. He warned:

7. “Our resources are strictly limited. Any one use of them is therefore alternative and not additional to some other use. We have reached the point when no commitments should be undertaken without our at same time deciding what to forgo. If the maintenance of a Polish army involves the same burden on our overseas finances as the Ministry of Food’s annual programme of additional desired easements, Ministers, if they prefer the former, should do so consciously and deliberately....it is a principle which applies to all the objects of expenditure which are to be reviewed in what follows. Another example is the suggestion that the reduction in our forces overseas should be postponed until after the Peace Conference. The good reasons for this are obvious. But the cost should be worked out in terms of the cost of the bacon ration. If the Foreign Office argument prevails, then the bacon ration should be appropriately cut. We can not have both without running into a hopeless position later on. Each item of the expenditure, before it is accepted should be regarded as a choice which is deliberately preferred to a clearly envisaged alternative. This is obvious; but is seldom acted upon.

How very true, Lord Keynes! How very true it continues to be! Some things, it appears never change.

Keynes then went into the financial details of the various British commitments and concluded that:

19. Altogether, without a drastic change of policy, political and military expenditure in the three years 1946-48 might run us into up to £ 1,500 million gross, whilst the minimum net figure in sight on present lines plainly exceeds £ 1,000 million.
20. We have, of course, no margin of overseas resources approaching £ 1,500 million. Nor should we have, even if the figure was brought down to £ 1,000 million. The utmost provision allowed for in the calculations we made during the Washington negotiations was £ 600 million for the three years 1946 – 48.
21. What can be done about it? It is obvious that any proposal sufficiently drastic must encroach on the political sphere. But it is not easy to see that there can be any solution which does not involve the following:

- (a) A virtual cessation of further political loans. We must try and face the fact that we can not lend the money we have not got.....
- (b) A reconsideration of our economic policy towards Germany. It seems monstrous that we should first de-industrialise and thus bankrupt the Ruhr to please Russia and then hand over the territory, or at any rate the industries, to an international body to please France, but that we should alone responsible for feeding the place.....

Do not say 'we alone', Lord Keynes, for the burden was really being borne by the colonies.

- (c) A reduction in our military forces outside Europe to 250,000 at the earliest possible..."

As a matter of interest, on the V-J day, the forces outside Europe had numbered 820,000. The implications of this for holding an increasingly restive India were too obvious to be stated.

"Take the case of Egypt. How do we propose to reply to the Egyptian demand that we should take our troops out of Egypt ? Is it appreciated that we are paying the cost of keeping them there by borrowing it from Egypt? What is the answer if Egypt tells us (as, of course, she will) that she is no longer prepared to provide us with the necessary funds? Has this hard fact been faced and answered?....

- (d) In the Far East Burma obviously needs looking at again on a realistic basis, and we must try to see whether we can get some free rice from Siam in the future, though Cabinet decided recently that, for the time being at any rate, we should not ask for free rice."

Once again the perseverance to get free rice. The British did seem to think, even those like Keynes, who knew better, that they owned the world. Nevertheless, he concluded:

- 22 ...Nothing but waste and humiliation can result from not looking ahead and keeping within our long-run capacity. For there is not the faintest prospect, on any hypothesis, of our being able to carry on our present practices.
- 23 The above summary being limited to our political and military expenditure overseas, takes no account of such claims on our overseas resources as:
 - (a) Subscriptions to the Brentton Woods Fund and Bank
 - (b) Withdrawals of existing sterling balances by liberated countries

- (c) Any net cost of releasing Sterling Area Balances in the period 1946-51. We can expect to accumulate some further balances during the early part of 1946, and that is why the monetary position in respect of overseas finance is not acute in spite of the delay in the American credit. But we are likely to have to make at least corresponding, and perhaps greater releases in 1947 – 51. In this connection it should be emphasised that our political and military expenditure overseas reduces correspondingly our ability to sustain the sterling Area countries both currently and later on. Thus the result of not curtailing this expenditure must be to make inevitable still harsher treatment of the Sterling Area balances than the severe treatment which will be unavoidable in any case....”

It is interesting to see that here was Keynes making it plain that the British were not going to repay their credits in a hurry or perhaps even repudiate their debts either fully or at any rate partially, for it is difficult to see what severe treatment was he otherwise talking about. On the other hand, the Indians had sought to make ‘Assistance to multilateral clearing of accumulated war balances’ as one of the purposes of the International Monetary Fund. Their attempts though supported by Egypt were thwarted by U.K. Nevertheless, the History of Reserve Bank India edited by no less than C.D.Deshmukh, the first Indian Governor of the Reserve Bank records:

“Although the Indian request was rejected, the delegation was able to obtain a valuable assurance from Lord Keynes, the leader of the British delegation, to the effect that his country would ‘settle honourably what was honourably and generously given.’”

Such naïve faith in the British sense of what the terms Honour and Generous meant!! Or did Mr. Deshmukh have other reasons to be so kind to the British in anything concerning the issue of Sterling Balances? We will never know but perhaps we will be able to guess.

In the meantime, let us get back to our story. This was the early part of 1946. The Cabinet had only recently been warned by the Secretary of State for India that India was heading for a grave Famine. Lord Keynes had pointed out in August 1945 that they were bankrupt. He had then gone to Washington in December and arranged for an American loan to enable them to swim for some time. Nevertheless, the situation remained grim. He had now done his utmost to knock some sense into their thick political skulls that as things stood even £ 20 million was a big sum of money for them. It represented the dividing line between providing what was essential in the British diet and what could be considered a little luxury in these times of emergency. The situation was so bad that he was compelled to virtually demand the systematic dismantling of the British Empire while it was possible to do so.

What was it that was so grim about the British situation that even as they compelled the colonies to lend them money, they were being asked to consider giving up those parts which till yesterday were *Crown Jewels* of the Empire. Perhaps they were living on a diet of 1400 calories like the Indians. Perhaps, they too faced a Famine. Perhaps!! Let us take a more detailed look at the Import Programme of 1946 that was considered so essential.

Import Programme of 1946

Figures in £ million

	Initial Proposal	Essential Programme
Food		
Basic	500	500
Supplementary	89	40
Raw Materials		
Basic	350	350
Extra Paper	2	
Machinery	24	24
Industrial and Consumer Goods		
Basic	20	20
Additional	5	5
Tobacco	46	46
Seeds and Store Cattle	20	20
Total	1,056	1,005
Allowance for Prices	70	70
Grand Total	1,126	1,075

What is considered as an Essential Import programme by the British Cabinet is shocking. Even as the Indians remained haunted by the specter of a famine, the British Cabinet was not willing to compromise on the need of importing Tobacco. If the British were spending their own money, at the worst one could have accused them of being insensitive. But we know, they were not. They were extracting money from all over the world. Wherever they could, they were pressurising the nations to supply them goods with nothing more than an empty promise of payment in future. In 1946, they were to extract Credits worth £ 49 million from their dependent overseas territories. In other words millions in Africa were denied a meal merely so that the British could smoke good cigars.

From the Non sterling areas such as Argentina, they managed to get hold of another £ 74 million, whereas we have already seen that India contributed some £ 200 million to the British cause. How were these £ 274 million used? Let us look at the Food requirement a little more closely.

**Food Import Programme
1946**

figures in £ million

	Basic	Supplementary	Total
Wheat and Flour	83		83
Maize, barley, oats	18		18
Other Cereals	9		9
Oil Seeds and nuts	37		37
Other Oils and Fats	15	3	18
Sugar	25		25
Tea, Coffee and Coca	44		44
Starch and glucose	1	1	2
Milk	7	2	9
Caracase and corned meat	82	6	88
Bacon and ham	24	3	27
Other Meat	16		16
Fish	21		21
Butter	35		35
Cheese	21	4	25
Eggs	39	1	40
Dried Fruit	14		14
Citrous Fruit	9	3	12
Apples	1	1	2
Bananas		2	2
Tomatoes		2	2
Canned Fruit		3	3
Canned Vegetables	1	2	3
Other Fruits and vegetables	9	5	14
Beer, wines, spirits	10	2	12
Miscellaneous	7		7
Total	528	40	568
Includes allowance for price increase			

Consider first the essentials. The Indians would have been too happy if all their people could get the cereals, milk, tea, coffee, cocoa, sugar, oils and other fats, vegetables etc that a human body in a tropical climate needed. This would have been a positive luxury for them. If the British had confined their needs to Indian standards of luxury, all that they would have needed was something like £ 250 million worth food imports and no more.

The implications of this for the toiling masses in Asia, Africa and South America would have been staggering. For they would no longer have to see their hard earned money disappear into the bottomless British coffers. They could have instead used the money for themselves and lived like human beings. More specifically, there would have been no need to extract another £ 275 odd million from countries like India and Argentina during 1946.

How could the British live without eating meat, fish, cheese, butter and fruits or survive without drinking beer and other spirits? And of course, the British tradition demanded that a good supper be rounded off with a decent cigar. The very suggestion that they do without any of this, would have amounted to a blasphemy.

If the British themselves had no money, that was no problem. For there were millions around the world for whom the biggest pleasure in life was to see a contented White sahib. They would do anything for this. They would send goods and accept non-encashable paper securities that carried no interest. Who would dare to accuse the Sahib of bad faith, when he was not taking the goods for free but giving them stamped receipts carrying the seal of the all mighty, if bankrupt, Bank of England. The payment would come. It was a small matter that in the meantime, generations would be born and grow up without ever finding out what butter looked like or how the cheese smelled. The sight of fruits was to remain forbidden to them. This was a small matter for the White Sahib had to have his morning tea with just the right amount of milk and sugar with properly done bacon fried in butter and served with cheese to be followed by meat for lunch and a dinner with fish and wine.

Let us get back to the real world. In 1946, India as well as many other countries under British rule were barely to provide even one meal to most of its people. The British Cabinet knows that India now faced with the prospect of not being in a position to do even this. It is at this juncture that the British demand and get from it goods worth over £ 200 million **without any current payment** so that its own people could eat the bare essentials like meat and butter. If this kind of an interest free forced credit is not called Loot, I dare any one to explain what else can it be called.

Hitler was a fool of the first order. He openly propagated the concept of racial supremacy and invited his own doom. He should have been subtle like the cunning British fox. Always ready to talk at the drop of hat, noble concepts of Freedom, Equality, Humanity and all the rest blah, blah, blah. Then he could then proceed unmolested to do exactly what he believed in. The racial supremacy of the White Man in general and the Aryans in particular.

‘If people can not eat bread, let them eat cakes’; the French queen is reported to have said during the famed French revolution and had her head guillotined for her effrontery. The British went miles ahead, ‘If your people can not eat bread, it does not matter, we still need your money so that our people can eat butter’. The only difference is like the foolish French queen, they never openly said this.

The Modus-Operandi of the Loot

As I tried to understand manner in which India's status changed from that of debtor nation to being one of the world's biggest creditor nation, to my great surprise I found any coherent account of this financial transaction very difficult to come by. Most traditional books of the story of how India finally got rid of the British (or was it the other way around) do not so much as even mention this even in the passing. The British have been happy to paint the process of whoever got rid of whom, as an act of their generosity. They could claim that it had always been their intention to one day relinquish the possessions, they had so inadvertently acquired. In 1818, Hastings had noted: 'A time, not very remote will arrive when England will, on sound principals of policy, wish to relinquish the domination which she has gradually and unintentionally acquired over this country.' It is another matter that this 'not very remote time' to give up the domination over India had not even arrived on the British horizons as late as 1937. Nehru was to recount in 1947, 'exactly ten years ago, in London, I had a fight with Linlithgow, the Viceroy. I got so mad I shouted "I will be damned if we don't have our independence in ten years". He answered "Oh no you won't, India will not be free in my time Mr. Nehru, nor in yours either."' On the Indian side, Congress has been too happy to appropriate the entire credit. There have been many political advantage of turning Gandhi into an icon to be worshipped for having delivered us the gift of independence through his unique non-violent struggle. It has been left to a German, Dieter Rothmund to point out the unpleasant truth while commenting on the consequences of the financing of the War.

"Thus India had turned from a debtor into a creditor of Great Britain. This was of major political importance for the process of decolonisation. It is easier to grant independence to a creditor whose account one manages than to a debtor whose liabilities one may have to share".

If today, there is ignorance about the manner in which the financing of War contributed to the process of freedom, the situation in 1947-48 was far worse. Many politicians imagined that the Sterling Balances, which were only one part of the total money raised by India for the War, represented War debts that India needed to repudiate. The Indian Finance Minister had to repeatedly issue statements clarifying the nature of these Balances 'for removing the misunderstanding that still seems to persist in certain quarters which have periodically pressed for scaling down of the Sterling Balances on the ground of their being a war debt'.

Had the Indians made a demand for scaling down the balances, Keynes, who as we know had called for a severe treatment of Sterling Area balances would be have been delighted. The British Chancellor of Exchequer, Dr. Dalton, would have been too happy to oblige. It was he who had thundered before the Brazilian Chamber of Commerce in London in May 1947 that Britain should refuse to take on 'fantastic commitments which are beyond her strength and beyond all the limits of good sense and fair play', that the war debts amounting to 'nominally' more than £ 3,000 million were an 'unreal, unjust and unsupportable burden' and further that they 'must be very substantially scaled down'.

We shall now attempt to try and clear the mist, no mist is natural and beneficial – a more appropriate word is smog; the smog surrounding the manner in which Britain imposed an ‘unreal, unjust and unsupportable burden’ on the Indian, Egyptian and many other economies compelling them to ‘take on ‘fantastic commitments which were beyond their strength and beyond all the limits of good sense and fair play’.

Let us first be thankful to Dr. Dalton for supplying us the right terminology for describing the Cash that all countries were made to spend during the war. In 1947, **Britain had spent no money**. What Dr. Dalton was fuming and ranting against was the fact that the countries, who had been forced to spend the money against the promise of a future payment, were merely asking the British to make good the promise. If it was so unacceptable for the British to pay for the goods that they had taken, it becomes difficult to understand any logic which can be advanced to support the fact of forcing these poor countries to spend the money in the first place.

Perhaps, we should be so nice and kind as Mr. C.D. Deshmukh, the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India who felt that the Chancellor’s speech might well be merely ‘part of a war nerve’; there was no information officially that the UK’s attitude to the Indian debt was any different from that expressed earlier. What a strange case of ‘War nerves’ that should affect someone two years after the War had ended. ‘There was no information officially’, the classic phrase of the bureaucracy to deny the existence of any unpleasant reality. One of the most important Minister of the British Cabinet makes a public statement and that is not good enough to understand the true intentions of the British. What was the Governor waiting for – a sworn affidavit on a stamp paper testifying that the British Government had indeed changed their mind.

The second point to keep in mind is the fact that the British claim that they had to compel their colonies to spend cash to assist them to fight Hitler does not stand a moment’s scrutiny. We have already seen that they continued to make their colonies spend their money long long after Hitler was safely a part of the history. A detailed examination of the state of British balance of payment in 1946 and their Import programme has already laid bare the unspoken but nevertheless ruthlessly implemented British philosophy. ‘If your people can not eat bread, it does not matter, we still need your money so that our people can eat butter’

Take the case of Egypt for instance. It was one of the biggest holders of the Sterling Balances. For what cause was Egypt spending money. We have it on the authority of Keynes that the Egyptians were paying for maintaining British troops on Egyptian soil after the War had ended. The Cabinet had no answer to Keynes when he posed: “How do we propose to reply to the Egyptian demand that we should take our troops out of Egypt ? Is it appreciated that we are paying the cost of keeping them there by *borrowing it from Egypt?* What is the answer if Egypt tells us (as, of course, she will) that she is no longer prepared to provide us with the necessary funds?

The case of Egypt bears some understanding. In 1936, the British government had forced an unequal defense treaty on Egypt permitting them to station their troops in Egypt for the defense of Suez canal. They were forced to agree that the British could involve them in war at any time, if it so suited them. A provision that the British well knew they could not force upon even their self-governing dominions like Australia. This had reduced Egypt to the state of a nominally independent but for all practical purposes, a colony of the British. As if this was not enough, as even the British Cabinet admitted, "During the war we had enjoyed facilities far in excess of these and we still maintained (on 6th June 1946, an year after the War ended) in the country a large headquarters organisation and air bases for long range attack. ...We could not pretend that the existing Treaty entitled us to all the facilities we now enjoyed". Do not forget my friends, the cost of the facilities, far in excess of the treaty obligations, being enjoyed by the British was being borne by the Egyptians. So naturally, the British had nothing to complain about.

Not surprisingly and as anticipated by Keynes, the Egyptians grew increasingly restive. They demanded that the British pack their bags and leave. They were never welcome in the first place. Now they were in no position to have their way by force.

This did not prevent them from trying hard. The Foreign Secretary could not agree with the Egyptian demand as he felt that it was essential that British bases were maintained in Egypt to protect the British interests in the Middle East. His cunning response was to work for such an arrangement that would enable the British to make extensive use of the Egyptian man-power in workshops and ancillary services, and thus bring about a much needed reduction in the British expenditure or rather more accurately a reduction in Egyptian subsidies for the British. When this did not work, they conceded that that the British troops would indeed leave Egypt but contended that a minimum of five years was required before the withdrawal could be completed. This was soon scaled down to three years. They even agreed to shift the British Army headquarter out of Cairo so that the ever present sight of the British troops would not antagonise the local people. The Foreign Secretary went so far as to suggest that the British should agree to bear the cost of building the necessary temporary accommodation for the British troops even though the 1936 treaty demanded that Egypt should have built this. The impossibility of insisting on this in 1946 was far too plain for even the Chancellor of Exchequer to see, who agreed to this. At the same time, he warned the Cabinet that "Egypt was the second largest holder of sterling balances about which there would have to be negotiations later on. We should not, therefore, be unduly generous in these negotiations."

The sly British maneuvering angered the Egyptians. They made it clear that they were perfectly ready to consider any proposal for a treaty between equals. There was no way they were going to agree to accept any provision that would appear to place Egypt in an inferior position.

Our purpose here is not to follow through with the negotiations which continued into 1947. We are only seeking to understand the manner in which the British went about making other people pay for their needs as long as they could with no consideration what so ever for the people who were being so made to pay.

The Rapacious Loot of Bharat in the War

The conventional wisdom about financing the British War efforts, as blessed by the Reserve Bank of India runs something like this:

“The fundamental principle of war financing is to divert such portion of the Gross National Product to Government as might be necessary for the defense effort; the community has to make sacrifice”

It is of course a matter of little consequence that the financing was for defense of British interests and the community being asked to make sacrifices consisted of Indians.

“The problem of war finance which India had to face were not materially different from those of other countries, although the country was not, by far and large, an actual theatre of war. As a dependency, it was called upon to make a substantial contribution to the war effort of the U.K. and allies. This very circumstance, however, also imposed limitations on the ability of the British rulers in India to maximise the mobilisation of resources in a non-inflationary way...While inflation did occur in a substantial way, it was of far less serious magnitude than it looked likely at one stage”

I rubbed my eyes in disbelief. Was this a document prepared by the Bank of England or the official history of the Reserve Bank of India, I wondered. Consider the implications of what is being said here. On one hand, the author accepts that India had to enter the War because it was a dependency, not because it was a theatre of actual war. It had to finance the War not because this was in her interest but because UK, her master so demanded. On the other, he contends that circumstances made it imperative that the financing be done in a manner that had to be inflationary. But he goes on to pat the fiscal managers of the time, who by the way included the author himself, that the inflation was far less serious than what had looked possible at one stage.

Let us take the very first statement - *The problem of war finance which India had to face were not materially different from those of other countries.* Well, the first material difference was as the author admits: “It was the responsibility of the Government of India to find the resources not merely for the Government of India’s own defense expenditure but also for the requirement of the Allied Governments, in particular the U.K. It turned out that the requirement of the Allies were in the aggregate almost as large as those of the Government of India.”

If one ignores British Colonies or nominally independent states like Egypt, there was no free country in the world that had not only to meet its own (?) expenditure but also make similar sums available to others with no consideration for the hardships it imposed on its own people. The United States did pass the Lend-Lease Act but a President who would have asked his people to accept a tenth of Indian sufferings for the UK cause would not only been impeached but may well have been lynched. **Before we try and understand the hardships, the war financing imposed on the Indian people, let us first take a look at the extent of Indian contribution in cold numbers.**

Budgetary Position of the Government of India

figures in Rs millions

Fiscal years (April- March)	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1940/ 1945
1 Revenue Account									
(i) Revenue	840	950	1080	1350	1770	2500	336	3610	13660
Of which tax Revenue	740	810	770	980	1250	1710	2540	2820	10070
(ii) Expend.	850	950	1140	1470	2890	4400	4960	4850	19710
(iii) Balance	-10	-	-70	-130	-1120	-1900	-1610	-1230	-6050
2. Aggregate Outlay on India's Account (Revenue and Capital Accounts)									
	940	990	1210	1480	3670	5040	5780	5420	22610
3. Overall position (including Capital Transactions)									
	20	30	-20	10	20	659	1830	2639	5138
4. Recoverable War Expenditure									
	-	40	530	1940	3250	3780	4110	3750	17360
5. Total of items 2+4	940	1030	1740	3420	6930	8820	9890	9170	39970
6. Budgetary balance on Indian and Allied Accounts combined (3-4)									
	+20	-10	-550	-1930	-3230	-3120	-2280	-1110	-12230

These are the cold numbers as authenticated by the Reserve Bank of India. They tell a story that for too long been has not been heard. This is the tale of wringing the last drop of any resource that India still had left in 1939 after close to a century and three-quarters of the British exploitation. If we look closely enough at the numbers, we shall see the desolate eyes of the hungry mothers who helplessly watched their babies give the last dying spasm after days of living on empty stomachs in the sun baked plains of Bengal in that year of death - 1943. They will also show the blank faces of generations of Indians, who grew up and died a wasted life without ever having a full meal. Cheese, butter, fruits, oils that were so vital to the British people were forever to be denied to them. If we listen carefully enough, we will also hear the screams of women being raped and murdered before their families, when bitterness bred and nurtured by years of hunger and malnutrition exploded in an orgy of communal violence in 1946 and 47.

So what do the figures tell us. First thing first. Let us for the time being make the fantastic assumption that India needed to get into this mad struggle for supremacy between the Germans and the British on some moral grounds. Or that the British were the lesser of the evils and we needed to fight by their side so as not to suffer the fate of the Jews in Europe at the hands of Hitler or the Chinese in Asia at the hands of Japanese. We would of course, knowing what we know now, have to take complete leave of our senses to make such an assumption. But, let us do that and assume that India needed to get involved in the war and spend money for her defense. What would this have meant?

It would have meant during the war years, she would have incurred a revenue deficit of Rs 6,050 million. On the other hand, War is known to provide opportunities for economic advancement as well as the Americans had shown in the First War. This is an opportunity that was available to India as well. Indeed, we find that, when we take into account the aggregate outlay on her account and set it off against the position of overall availability of finances, we find that the overall position indicates a surplus of some Rs 5,130 million. Thus the War had provided an opportunity to India to better her lot and India had taken advantage of this.

Yet, the reality is the War devastated India. The reasons are not difficult to seek. Just take a look at the item number 4 of the above Table. Not only was India asked to find money for its own defense in a fight that did not concern her the least, she was asked to find money for others to be able to do so. An enormous sum of Rs 17,360 was spent by her on behalf of others. This money was spent by her as a loan, a loan that earned an interest of less than a percent or to be precise; 0.8101 percent through an ingenious financial arrangement devised by the cunning British brains. More of it later.

Dear readers, please look carefully at the table. What do we find? **The fact that this spending for the benefit of others continued unabated during the 1943, when millions died of hunger in Bengal.** India had no money for its own hungry people but seemed to have all the money for her masters. Dare we say that bad harvest or not, storm or no storm, there need have been no famine deaths if and only if India had concentrated on the plight of its own people instead spending money for the sake of others. How dare we say that? How dare we equate the lives of Indians to the needs of the British ?

Under the absurd arrangement forced upon India by the British, we had the truly ludicrous sight of India lending money to the global super power, the United States of America. India was an indirect recipient of the American Lend-Lease aid through UK. The arrangement being that the UK received goods on her account. India in turn provided goods and services, up to the value of goods received on her behalf by the UK, to the US forces stationed in India. By the end of the War, India had supposedly received goods worth Rs 2,000 million. In turn she had to provide food, clothing and other necessities of an equal amount to the American troops on the Indian soil. The Lend-Lease from United States ceased on the VJ day (September 2, 1945) but the reverse Lend-lease by India to the United States continued up to May 31, 1946.

We have already seen the unanimity that existed in the British House of Commons in the debate on 28th July 1944. We have seen how the British politicians cutting across party lines had agreed that India was a desperately poor country. How come, it did not cross any one's mind that one immediate way of lessening her poverty was to make sure that she did not have to lend money to others that she herself did not have. Keynes was to argue so eloquently that '*We must try and face the fact that we can not lend the money we have not got*'. When it came to the Indians, he seemed to have lost his good economic sense and insisted that a severe treatment of money lent by that Indians was inevitable in the British interests. What else can one conclude that the British considered the Asians and Africans as sub-humans, who were mere pawns in their Imperial game.

Let us now take a look at some financial wonders. The first - a country that had a normal revenue of merely Rs 840 million before the War managed to raise Rs 13,660 in the six years of War i.e. an average annual revenue of Rs 2,277 million representing an average increase of 171%. It is not difficult to imagine the ruthless measures adopted by the colonial power to raise its revenue so drastically in so short a time or the consequences of these brutal measures on the general population. The expenditure on the other hand increased by an average of 286%. If any one imagines that that the Government had suddenly decided to spend more money for the welfare of the people, he had better wake up. More than two thirds of the expenditure was on defense alone.

Now the second financial wonder. Not only does the country manage to increase its own revenue and expenditure, it seems to pluck out of air a total resources of close to Rs 40,000 million for meeting not only its own war time needs but to lend Rs 17,360 to meet the needs of the others. Considering that its own revenues were a mere Rs 13,660 during this period, its lending of an amount that was a quarter more than its revenue must rank as the most bizarre act in the world. The very suggestion of doing something remotely similar would have caused the British Cabinet to collectively choke in horror. Yet, this is what was demanded of India. When asked for a repayment, all she got was a *most valuable assurance from Lord Keynes, the leader of the British delegation, to the effect that his country would 'settle honourably what was honourably and generously given*. It is always easy to be generous with other people's money.

Leave the immorality, lack of ethics or sheer financial madness of this venture. How was this great Indian rope trick performed? One obvious way for the government was to embark on a large scale-borrowing programme. Charged with the mission of providing necessary resources for the Master in his time of great need, the Reserve Bank cracked the whip and all fell in line. Indian businessmen who wished to curry favour with the Government. Several made a show of making a contribution to later quietly sell of the bonds for a small loss which was more than made up by the pleasure of the rulers in granting them lucrative contracts. The Indian princes no less anxious to be in the good books of the Viceroy, who had the power of what amounted to matters of life and death over them, also fell in line. Boosted by inflows from all and sundry, who wished to please the British, the final results of the borrowing binge were as tabulated below:

The Borrowings of the Government of India During the War

figures in Rs Million

Year Ended March	Gross Borrowings	Loans Redeemed	Net Borrowings
1939-40	160	200	(40)
1940-41	1,120	190	930
1941-42	740	110	640
1942-43	1,040	Negligible	1,030
1943-44	3,160	150	3,010
1944-45	2,220	Negligible	2,220
1945-46	3,290	430	2,860
Total for six years 1940-45	11,570	890	10,680

Of the total borrowings of Rs 11,570, the contribution from the State and Central Governments, the Reserve Bank and other banks amounted to Rs 4,820 million. Thus 42% of the total borrowings, being lending from right hand to the left, was Inflationary in nature. **As a matter of record, the average cost of the borrowings was around 3%.**

The financial wonders under the British never cease. What would a financial wizard have to do to attain something similar? Target an increase of 171% in revenues. Increase costs by 286%. Borrow an amount almost equal to the increased amount at an average cost of 3% - half of it from within the family. Now proceed to lend an amount equal to 125% of the increased revenue. Get a return of 0.8101 percent on the borrowed amount, thus extend an interest subsidy to the borrower. Proponent of such a fantastic scheme would straight away be packed off to the lunatic asylum. The British made India do this and more.

For even after the increase in revenue and the borrowing programme, there remained a huge gap, some Rs 12,230 million as is seen from the item number 6 of our table. The answer to this was fairly straightforward. The currency note press went into an overdrive, producing all the money that the Government needed.

It is not as if one had to wait for the end of the war to understand that the impact of such lunatic policies must inevitably lead to a disaster. A number of leading Indian economists realised the seriousness of the situation and issued a joint statement on April 12, 1943.

“The Government seems to act as if it is enough for it to take care of its budget deficit while meeting the needs of the British Government by printing more notes. This is a grave misreading of the whole situation and has resulted in an ever-increasing expansion of currency unrelated to the needs of internal production and trade. As a result, the **inflation spiral is already at work in India**....The inflation in India is therefore, a deficit-induced fiat money inflation. It is the **most disastrous type of inflation**....we propose the immediate initial steps of a blanket control of all prices...”

The Government shrugged off the warning. In the end, the official Wholesale price index which stood at 100 in the week ended August 19, 1939 rose to 241.5 by end of the war in August 1945. The major increase took place in 1942 and 1943. The wholesale price index increased by 22.6% in 1942 and 51% in 1943. 'The official index' admits the Reserve Bank 'no doubt underestimated the extent of the rise...the prices used for compilation of the index did not fully reflect the true level of prices which had to be paid.' A confession that was completely unnecessary for any ordinary Indian housewife, who had struggled and often failed to make both ends meet.

Proof of the validity of this statement, if any is required is provided by Rothmund by providing figures for the years when Bengal was to witness the dance of famine deaths. Between 1942 -43, the price of rice in Madras increased from a little less than Rs 6 per maund (37.5 Kg) to about Rs 11. In Bengal, the price of the rice jumped from about Rs 5 and a half to over Rs 14 per maund. Faced with such a massive price increase, what could the poor, who were surviving on a diet of around 1300 - 1400 calories, do but drop dead like flies all over.

It will now take a brave man to argue that it is Hitler, who was to be blamed for the war induced inflation. The price increase was inherent in the manner in which the British chose to finance the war in India despite clear and timely warnings to the contrary. Or perhaps, they would like to explain, how they themselves managed the war with only a 74% increase in prices as against 186% in India.

Let us turn to the Recoverable War expenditure. An amount of over Rs 17,000 million had accumulated against this head. This was over and above a similar amount spent by India for its so-called defense. The correct word for describing the Recoverable War Expenditure would be the Sterling Securities of the Government of India that were lodged by its Bankers, the Reserve Bank of India with the Bank of England. In March 1946, they amounted to Rs 17,240 million or £ 1646 million. One has to take into account the fact that during the War, by 1946, the Government of India had retired paid off a Sterling debt of £ 323 million. Thus, the total Indian Sterling earnings amounted to £ 1969 million.

What does this figure represent? In US \$ terms, it was equal to around \$ 7,876 million. A sum more than double the loan of US \$ 3,750 that the United States was to offer to the UK after the end of war and cessation of the Lend-Lease. Not only had the United States made the British to dance to their tunes, impose humiliating terms and wait on tenter hooks, watch from the sidelines - an acrimonious debate in the Congress before its final approval. They had despite all cringing requests from the British, insisted on being paid a 2% interest on the loan. India was on the other hand getting a return of 0.8101 percent **and** was paying at the same time a 3% interest on the money she had borrowed to lend it to the British. Thus by making this loan available to the UK at 0.8101 percent, India was in effect providing an interest subsidy of over 4% to the British. For a second, just for a second, let us we ignore the big cost that India was paying in terms of running down its infrastructure, not being able to provide for the welfare of its people, not being able to make the investments for securing the basic necessity of food security for its people; all

for making this loan available to the British. Even, when we ignore this vital aspect and look at the mere accounting aspect of the transaction, we find that India was paying an interest subsidy of Rs 690 million per year or £ 52 million. Please note that in this calculation we have ignored the cost of repaying the Sterling debt of £ 323 million . This in an era when Lord Keynes was warning the British Cabinet that *an amount of relaxation such as £ 20 million or £ 30 million is a significant figure and far from negligible.*

Nor had the good Lord lost his mind. Take into account the fact that the weekly offtake of grains in India was 166,000 tons or 8.6 million tons on an annual basis. Take a cost of Rs 15 per maund given by Rothemund as basis to see that a ton of rice would have cost about Rs 400. In other words, the total cost of the annual rations for the whole of India was not more than Rs 3,440 million or £ 258 million. Now, let us understand the true cost of the interest subsidy of £ 52 million that India was paying. It meant that but for this subsidy India could have made free, yes free rations available to one fourth of its total population eligible for rations. Confront these facts in all their naked glory for they smash to smithereens the myth that the famine deaths in Bengal were inevitable due to severe natural calamities compounded by the abnormal conditions of war. The same war had imposed terrible physical destruction on the U.K. even as it had largely left Indian borders untouched. Yet amidst the bombed out ruins in London, the British government had succeeded in meeting 100% of the physiological needs of its own citizens fully conscious of the fact that millions were dying in India as a result of its own policies.

How did India come to lend such huge sums of money? There were three sources of this. The first was the financial settlement of 1939. The British had always considered Indian revenues as their ancestral property which was available at their whim and fancy. During the First World War, they had even gifted to themselves a princely sum of £ 100 million representing an amount in excess of annual revenues of the Indian Government. Now an increasingly restive Indian population made such an outright loot impossible. In November 1939, the British Government concluded an agreement with the Government of India. According to this India was to bear the following costs:

- A fixed annual sum representing the normal net effective costs of the Army under peace conditions.
- An addition to allow for rise in prices
- The cost of such war measures as could be regarded as purely Indian liabilities by reason of their having been undertaken by India in her own interests, and
- A lump sum of payment of Rs 10 million towards the extra cost of maintaining India's external defense troops overseas.

Any expenditure which was not covered by any of the four points above was to be recovered from the British Government. As can be seen, the agreement is subject to an elastic interpretation to the advantage of the rulers. Nor, did they desist from so doing. As Bhatwadekar pointed out in 1944 itself that there grew a clamour in UK for revision of the terms of the settlement. In the summer of 1943, the Finance Member of the Viceroy's Council paid a visit to London, wherein it was decided not to disturb the settlement but

adjust new items by an elastic interpretation of the principles of the settlement. With this new interpretation, the Government of India's military expenditure grew from Rs 500 million in 1939/40 to Rs 1828 million in 1943/44.

The second source was on account of the fact that Government of India had taken on the additional task of acting as the agent of British Government for making their purchases of goods and services in India. An agent who charged no commission. An agent, who paid for his local purchases in cash and accepted payment in form of securities which were not accepted by any one other than Bank of England, who would also not give any commitment in respect of when it would honour them.

The third was the fact that all export earnings of India were lodged in London. Some £ 500 million were so acquired on account of purely commercial, non-government transactions during the war years. Any hard currency dollar earnings were promptly converted into Sterling security under the guise of conserving the hard earnings of the Empire for the prosecution of war but in reality to meet the current consumption needs of the British. It was no wonder that all colonies were net contributors to the Dollar pool. India was a net contributor to the Dollar pool during the war by a considerable sum of US \$ 300 million. There is no prize for guessing who was the biggest dollar consumer

A novel mechanism was evolved to settle the claims of the Government of India for reimbursement of the expenditure incurred by it on behalf of the Allied powers. A mechanism that ensured that the payment was made, yet not made. In effect making a virtually interest free credit available to the Government of U.K. free from any conditions, with an unspecified date of payment. It is this mechanism that was to give rise to the Sterling Balances. We shall now seek to understand this in greater detail.

The Government of England would settle the claims of the Indian Government by issuing it Sterling securities. The securities would then be given by the Government of India to its banker, the Reserve Bank of India. It is against these securities that Reserve Bank of India would issue Rupee funds to the Government of India. In such a case, the Reserve Bank held such securities in its Banking Division. Such securities were considered liquid and could be deployed in the purchase of Treasury Bills of the British government, yielding some returns. However, the Reserve Bank could issue Rupee funds in this manner only if its own cash reserve did not fall below Rs 100 million.

As we have already seen, the requirements of the Government of India for Rupee funds were huge. It soon became impossible for the Reserve Bank to keep issue Rupee funds to the Government of India while maintaining its minimum cash reserve. What now? The answer was of course not that the Government of India would not get Rupee funds to pay for the defense needs of all and sundry. The answer was typically ingenious.

When the Reserve Bank had no cash in its till, it had to transfer these securities to the Issue department. Such securities were lodged with the Bank of England, who then permitted the Reserve Bank to print currency against the security of these paper payment

of the Government of UK. In turn, the Bank of England froze these securities. In other words, they could not be used to make any investments and thus earned no return.

Soon the sterling securities in the Issue department far outstripped those in the Banking department and the average yield on the securities of Reserve Bank of India dropped below one percent. As Bhatwadekar noted that in 1944 merely £ 200 million were in the Banking department whereas as much as £ 800 million were in the Issue department – frozen and earning no return.

What was to happen if the Government of India had no sterling securities but still needed Rupee funds? It was not possible to issue currency against Rupee security of more than Rs 500 million. This safeguard had been instituted after the experience of hyperinflation in Europe after the First World War. This was simply a problem that required no brains. The offending sub section (3) of section 33 of the Reserve Bank Act was suitably amended by an ordinance issued in February 1941. Now, the Reserve Bank was free to print as many notes as the Government of India against the legal fiction of security of the Government's Treasury bills. Eminent economists like C.N. Vakil were horrified. This was Inflation in its naked form, they warned.

Who had the time or the inclination to listen to them? Once again complete lack of concern for the welfare of Indians came glaringly to the fore. All that was important was that the prosecution of war should go on unhindered. If it meant that the millions of Indians had to go hungry, it was not worth losing sleep over.

By any stretch of imagination, meeting the Allied expenditure of War in India could not be considered a responsibility of the Government of India. Even if we consider that India was in some way so beholden to the British that she had to take on this responsibility, the question remains was this the only way that financing of war was possible in India. Considering the state of Indian poverty, even if the British Government were to look for rupee finances by themselves in India, it would still have meant exploitation of India. For, why should Indian money have been spent for the British defense and not for its own development? In any event, a suggestion to this effect made by C.N.Vakil was rejected out of hand. His other suggestions that payments be made to India in form of durable goods and not paper securities or that India make proper Rupee loans to the Government of UK were angrily dismissed. Suggestions along these lines were also made in a resolution passed by the Board of Directors of the Reserve Bank of India in April 1944 to meet the same fate. How could they consider these suggestions? The supply of Goods to India would have harmed the British economy. Rupee loans would have come with an interest tag much higher than 0.8101 percent that the Sterling Balances carried. The last suggestion of Vakil that the British liquidate their assets in India was almost seditious. The British overseas investment stood at £ 3,535 million in 1938. By 1945, a third had been liquidated and only £ 1,960 million worth of overseas investments remained. Not one of the investments in India was so liquidated.

Repeatedly, the British Cabinet was warned that the mode of war financing adopted by the British in India was disastrous to the larger interests of the country. Repeatedly, the Cabinet ignored the Indian warnings. I use the word British Cabinet knowingly and deliberately. We have already seen how little the Indians in the Viceroy's Council or even those supposedly in the Imperial War Cabinet counted. The so-called autonomy of the Government of India was a myth. The decision making remained with the British Cabinet. We have this from the pen of the British Prime Minister himself. Once, the Viceroy had stepped out of line. The reprimand was swift and brutal. We have already seen the Prime Minister's Personal Minute dated 13th December 1941 addressed to the Secretary of State Minute, in which Winston Churchill had growled:

“The Viceroy should be warned that no change in our policy can be made without full Cabinet discussion beforehand.”

This very interesting Minute, we have already studied. At this moment it is enough to note that the Viceroy, the supreme British Officer in India was so much lower down in the British hierarchy that the Prime Minister would not address him directly. The rebuke was delivered through his boss, the Secretary of State, who himself did not get to attend all the Cabinet meetings. In the meantime, what other conclusion can be drawn than that the welfare, nay the very survival of millions of Indians was knowingly and deliberately sacrificed by the British Cabinet for the sake of British interests. In what way is this action any different from that of sending the Jews to the Gas chamber so that the German interests remained secure, one would like to know.

Demanding that India contribute to the War cause that was far beyond the country's financial capacity, ridiculing any call for lessening the tempo of war financing as absurd, rejecting contemptuously any other alternative mode of financing, repeatedly ignoring the warnings in respect of the havoc they were wrecking, confiscating export earning; the story is not yet complete. One more horrifying tale is yet to be told. The Colonial policy towards Gold and Silver.

In the early part of the war, the world endeavored to get gold as it could be freely used in any possible emergency. The Reserve Bank as we know used the Sterling, Indian exports earned to pay off debts ignoring suggestions that it acquire gold. Far from acquiring gold, it actually exported gold. During 1939-42, net gold exports from India amounted to 4.435 million ounces at an average rate of Rs 111 per ounce. When the inflation reared its ugly head due to the British mode of War financing in India, the Government devised a novel scheme. It took to selling gold on behalf of the government of UK and USA under the pretext of controlling inflation. The authorities were well aware that the limited sale of gold could in no way curb the inflation arising out of large budget deficits. Undeterred by such considerations, for the goal in any case was merely to drain money out of the country for use by the British and their patrons, the Reserve Bank sold some 7.2 million ounces of gold. The average price realised in the sale was Rs 192 per ounce as against Rs 111 per ounce when India sold Gold. The difference of Rs 81 per ounce being once again the subsidy provided by Indians when the Gold was sold. So let us tabulate the cost to Indian economy on account of the Gold sale.

- Subsidy provided when India sold Gold – Rs 81 per ounce on sale of 4.435 million ounces of gold sold by India during 1939-42 or Rs 360 million.
- Profit made by the British and the American government on sale of 7.2 million ounces of gold during 1943-46 of Rs 81 per ounce or Rs 583 million. Ethiopian and Australian governments also made inquiries about selling gold. The Bank was prepared to allow such a sale but on the basis of license fee amounting to 50% of the likely profit. No such fees had been levied on the American or British gold sale. Not surprisingly nothing came out of these proposals. Thus the Indian Government lost out on revenues of at least Rs 291 million.

Thus, taken together, the Gold sale cost the Indian economy at the very minimum Rs 651 million

The story of Silver is similar. The Government sold some 131 million ounces of silver between 1939 to 1943 at market prices, which went on increasing. At the same time, it exported 199 million ounces of Silver to London at a fixed price of Rs 50 per tola. In June 1944, under a guarantee provided by the British, the United States supplied 226 million ounces of Silver to India under Lend-Lease. The Indian Government sold 50 million ounces of this in the market. The balance silver remained in bullion form and was later returned back to the United States. What were the financial implications of this?

- Silver Subsidy provided by India in exporting 199 million ounces (530 million tolas) of Silver at Rs 50 per 100 tola.

	Average Price (Rs/ 100 tola)	Sale Price (Rs/ 100 tola)	Subsidy/ 100 tola in Rs	Total Subsidy in Rs million
1939-40	55.33	50.00	5.33	7.00
1940-41	62.48	50.00	12.48	16.50
1941-42	66.70	50.00	16.70	22.10
1942-43	94.18	50.00	44.18	58.50
Assuming an average sale of 132.5 million tolas per year				
Total				104.10

- Now the profit made by the British Government on the Silver sold by it

	Average Price (Rs/ 100 tola)	Quantity Sold in millions of tolas	Profit/ 100 tola in Rs	Total Subsidy in Rs million
1939-40	55.33	7.98	5.33	0.42
1940-41	62.48	47.88	12.48	5.97
1941-42	66.70	250.04	16.70	41.81
1942-43	94.18	42.56	44.18	18.80
Total				67.00

Thus, the total cost to the Indian economy on account of this silver sale amounted to Rs 171 million. The final bill for the gold and silver sale for the Indian economy came to Rs 822 million or about £ 62 million or US \$ 247 million. What does this figure represent? Let us follow the good advice of Lord Keynes and count the cost in terms of bacon rations or rather rice rations. The price of Rice in Bengal in 1946 was about Rs 15 per maund (37.5 Kg). Thus Rs 822 million would have enabled the Government to procure about 2,055,000 tons of rice. The readers would recall the desperate plea of the Secretary of State for India in January 1946 that India needed to have at least 2,000,000 tons of cereals to avert a famine. There was of course no suggestion that India should be given this free. Now, we find that if only the British were to take into account the profit that had accrued to them on account of their Bullion policies in India, not only they should have made this available but made it available **free**.

The sordid manner in which the British devoured the Indian economic vitality would put any self-respecting vulture or even a hyena to shame. The story has been so long that it is worth recapitulating it.

- In 1939, the British dragged India into a War without even a pretence of consulting Indian people. A War that had nothing to do with its interests or welfare in any manner.
- Not only was India made to pay for the cost of its own defense but made to provide for finances necessary to defend the British and their patrons. Sale of gold and Silver, confiscating hard currency earnings, any and every possible method was adopted to drain wealth out of the country.
- The manner of financing the defense of others was done in a manner most injurious to the Indian interests despite repeated warnings and various suggestions of other less evil alternatives. This was on account of cold-blooded deliberate decisions of the British War Cabinet.
- The Indian representation on the British War Cabinet amounted to no more than a farce.
- The manner of financing led to India extending a loan of Rs 17,240 million at an interest cost of only 0.8101. This meant denial of free rations to a quarter of its rationed populations resulting in a wasted life for God alone knows how many Indians.
- The very fact that India was made to pay for the costs of others, even as its own people died of hunger meant that the people who so died were as deliberately sent to their death as the Jews by Hitler.

Hopefully, enough evidence has been presented to convince my juries, the readers; of the existence of a British Auschwitz. I feel no joy as I come to this the conclusion. A numbness pervades my being and I feel dull and listless.

What is more horrifying? The fact that the British were so unfeeling and inconsiderate towards the Indian life that they did not hesitate to construct their own version of Auschwitz in Bengal. Why for that matter Indian life alone. The very fact that they accumulated Sterling Balances from all parts of Asia and Africa meant that they were completely indifferent to any human life other than their own.

Or the fact that the British have so successfully hidden the existence of their Auschwitz for so long?

The Revolutionaries needed no secret documents of the British Cabinet as I have been so kindly provided by the Public Record Office of the U.K. They knew India rather Bharat far far better than anyone else including that great champion of the poor- Gandhiji. They knew the truth. The only good British was one who had nothing to do with the governance of India. They were not going to be satisfied with Dominion Status- half or full. Their battle cry was *Absolute Political Independence*. If in the process of fighting the British, they had to sleep with the Devil, so be it. He could not be worse.

Were they wrong? Who would dare say so now ?

Yet this is not all. One more sordid story remains to be told. The value of Indian life in the eyes of the British. It was less than that of a British Pig. Unfortunately, I am merely sticking to documented facts and not exaggerating. I wish, I were.

Oh! To Be a British Pig

Bad harvest, storm, loss of Burma, traffic congestion due to War, these have given out as the reason for the terrible famine of Bengal by the British establishment. An explanation that has been swallowed by a gullible Indian public. The truth is a little different.

By 1946, a victorious British nation had every reason to be grateful to India. Not only had it repaid all its loans, lent money but had also made significant contribution to the War effort. This was lauded by Mr. Amery in the following words: “ India’s army has expanded from a nucleus of some 200,000 to 2,000,000 – the largest voluntary Army in the world...Indian Divisions in this war have fought their victorious way from the mountains of Abyssinia to the Appennines, from the waters of Damascus to the Arno. Those who fought with them, and those who fought against them alike, have acknowledged their quality.... I wish time would allow me to go to any length into the immense contribution which India has made to the Allied cause in munitions and military equipment of all kinds-in military equipment of all kinds-in military stores, in textiles, cottons and woolens, leather goods, parachutes, steel, in fact every conceivable element that enters into modern war. I would only sum it up by saying that, measured in terms of money, that material contributions of India has already amounted to some £ 500,000,000.

So let us take a look at the manner in which this debt of gratitude was repaid by the British after the War. 1946 was a bad year in respect of food availability through out the world. The importing countries needed supplies of some 19 million tons of wheat in the first six months of the year, whereas the available supply was about 12 million tons, leaving a shortage of some 7 million tons or some 37%. It is in this tense atmosphere that on the 30th January 1946, the Secretary of State submitted an alarming report on the Indian Food situation to the British Cabinet. Let see what this report says:

“There has been a further grave deterioration in India’s food position owing to widespread failure of crops as result of the continued lack of normal winter rains in most of the Provinces. Hitherto the Government of India have asked for imports of food grains (wheat and rice) in 1946 of 1.5 million tons. Since this figure was calculated, losses were reported up to December of 1 million tons of cereals, offset by an improvement of 1 million tons in Bengal in Bengal. A further deterioration of another 1.3 million tons has now been reported, involving a net overall deterioration of 2 million tons since the Government of India estimated their import requirement. The Government of India have accordingly asked for an additional 500,000 tons of imports making a total requirement of 2 million tons in 1946.”

Let us do some elementary grade arithmetic first. Government of India asked for 1.5 million tons and then found to its horror that there was a further deterioration of 2 million tons after they had estimated their import requirement of 1.5 million tons. Now if 1.5 million tons was original estimate and there was a further deterioration of 2 million tons, the revised requirement should have been 3.5 million tons and not 2 million as stated in the Memo. Unless, the English and the elementary grade arithmetic that I have learnt is fundamentally flawed. If so, I seem to have company, for the person who originally read

the memo seems to have been as surprised as I have been, as is evident from his pencil noting in the margins.

After taking a look at the position of availability of food in each of the Provinces, the memo went on to explain:

“3. Imports of food grains into India during the last few years have never been sufficient to enable the Government to build up the working stocks which they have always regarded as essential to make their position tolerably secure. As a result the Indian Food Department now find themselves without the minimum stocks which they urgently require in order to prevent the occurrence of shortage...Only an acceleration of imports from abroad can enable the Government of India during the coming months to feed the cities and prevent not merely local food shortages, but widespread starvation....”

Thus even as India continued to lend money to the British, it had no money to buy food for its own pressing needs. The same drain of money had prevented investments in Agriculture leading to need to depend on imports.

5. The Government of India have examined the possibility of a reduction of ration scales all over India. Certain reductions are being made, but there is little room for effecting much savings in this direction. The actual off-take of rationed cereals in India is at present under 60% of the potential total on a per capita basis, owing to the fact that the poorer section of the rationed population do not consume the whole ration because of the high prices of the food grains. It is felt that any attempt to reduce the ration substantially on an all India basis would create panic, thus causing the off-take to increase and seriously aggravating procurement difficulties. I should emphasise in this connection that, although the calory value of the cereal ration in India is 1600 calories a day, the average calory value of cereals actually consumed in India is only 1,100 calories a day per head of the rationed population. In India cereals form at least 80% of the diet.”

Let us get our calculators out and see what is being said. If the cereals form 80% of the diet and if the cereals consumption amounts to 1,100 calories, it would not take a genius to realise that the calory value of an average Indian diet could not exceed 1,400 calories under the normal situation. Thus by the confession of the Secretary of State himself, the daily diet of an average Indian under the British rule consisted of a lower caloric intake inferior to that given to the inmates of Hitler’s death camps. Now, the draught threatened even this meager rations. No wonder, he warned that :

“6. We are thus forced to the conclusion that only imports from abroad can save the situation...Unless assistance can be made available from abroad on a much wider scale the Government of India believe that India will be involved in a famine of a dimension and intensity greater than in 1943...**the reoccurrence of famine condition would inevitably provoke widespread disorders all over India....**”

- 7 I think that the situation calls for action on the following lines:
- (a) His Majesty's Government should continue to make every effort to accelerate shipment to India of the 400,000 tons of wheat already allotted to India...so that as much as possible of this wheat may arrive in India before the end of April. Steps should be taken to ensure that supplies are not held up by shortage of shipping.
 - (b) The wheat exporting countries should be invited to increase their flour extraction rates to 80% at the earliest practicable moment, thereby releasing more wheat for export...I should support action...to raise the extraction rate in this country.
 - (c) H.M.G. should endeavour to secure a larger allotment to India of the world supplies of wheat available during the second half of 1946.
 - (d) As soon as availabilities of rice during the second quarter of 1946 can be estimated considerations should be given to India's special claims to receive a large allocation of rice during this period.
 - (e) H.M.G. should welcome the proposed visit of the Indian Food Member's delegation to London and give the delegation every possible assistance in their task of presenting India's case in Washington.

This memo is a revelation in itself. India was faced with a Famine, there was a serious food shortage in the world and hence virtually no hope of any additional food grain availability for India. If anyone could make food available to India, it was United Kingdom for its own demand was estimated at 2,515,000 tons. The supplies were expected to be about 2,200,000 tons. Moreover, it always maintained reserve stocks of about 1,000,000 tons. Thus, even if it made 500,000 tons of food grain available to India, it would still have been left with some 200,000 tons of food grain in reserve. Remember this would not have been an act of charity but a merely a small repayment of India's loans. Well! Paying off loans does not seem to have been a major concern for the British. Moreover, it was quite all right for India to deny herself the need to meet its own requirements forget about the luxury of building any kind of a reserve stock. It was far more important to lend money to the British but for U.K. to operate without a reserve stock of anything less than a stock of one million tons was unthinkable. Naturally there was not even a suggestion that some food grains meant for U.K. should be sent to India.

There was one more possible source of supply of rice to India. At this time, Siam (Thailand) had a surplus rice of 1.5 million tons, which was not available for export due to the insistence of the H.M.G. to supply them rice free of charge. If it did not want to divert any food grain from U.K., it could have at least paid up some of the Indian loans, so that India could have bought the necessary rice from Siam instead of going to Washington with a begging bowl. This line of action was not even considered in the British Cabinet.

The memo was considered in the British Cabinet Meeting of 31st January 1946 and expectedly the H.M.G. decided to welcome the proposed visit of Indian Food Member to Washington and did no more for India. By 25th March 1946, U.K. had been successful in persuading United States and Canada to release in full its own requirement. Indian quota continued to be short of its requirement. Now the Cabinet deliberated the possibility of securing export of ground nuts from India even as India continued to be threatened by Famine. The Minister of Food saw nothing wrong in this for he had been advised that the extent to which Indians could use ground nuts as a food stuff to replace cereals was limited. By 10th April, the British Cabinet had devised the means of shifting the responsibility of averting widespread starvation in India to the United States. The British continued to maintain that it was highly dangerous to allow its stock to fall below 800,000 tons, which represented 8 weeks of consumption. Its meeting of the 10th April was important in one more respect. H.M.G. reiterated the principle that its responsibility was not confined to assuring wheat supplies to the United Kingdom alone. It was also responsible to prevent food shortages on other parts of the Commonwealth.

By the 12th April, 1946 it became clear that the U.K. might have a shortfall in supplies between July – September 46 to the extent of some 600,000 over its stated requirements of 2,515,000 tons. Yet, H.M.G. decided to divert 100,000 tons of food grains to countries as desired by the United States during the months of April and May. Once again, the glaring contrast in its reaction to the U.S. pressure and the desperate pleas of India becomes vividly clear. In January, despite being quite comfortable with its own stocks, it did not even consider diversion of food grains to India. Now when the U.S. turned the screws, it suddenly discovered that it had not eight weeks of stocks but something close to twelve weeks of stocks after taking into account stocks in shops and on farms. Once this discovery was made, H.M.G. took the additional precaution of securing the guarantee of the President of the United States and magnanimously made available 100,000 tons of grains meant for it for the sake of other countries. Well, the Indians can take heart from the fact that the H.M.G. was to insist that India was to get some small part of this diverted grain.

The Food situation continued to be grave. With this the British conservativeness scaled new peaks. By the 17th April, the Minister for Food shocked his Cabinet Colleagues by insisting that a minimum stock of some 1,300,000 (representing over 12 weeks of consumption) tons of food grains was absolutely essential. He therefore proposed to introduce rationing of Bread from July. The proposal was deferred. In the meanwhile, the British continued their attempts to please the Americans. They even agreed to raise the grain diversion from U.K. in April – May from 100,000 tons to 200,000. Certainly, it seems that the prospect of death of millions of Indians hardly dented the British stiff upper lip. On the other hand a crease on the brow of the American President could make them jump through the loop.

The Minister of Food continued his battle for higher levels of stocks but for once the Cabinet was firm. On 24th April, it ruled that in view of the grave situation in the world, the U.K. could live with stocks of 800,000 tons of food grains or some eight weeks of consumption. The Cabinet continued to fight shy of introducing Bread rationing but

accepted other measures of economy such as reducing the weight of Bread loaf, ban on serving Bread with the main meals in the restaurants, increasing extraction rates to 90%.

By May 1946, the Americans had grown tired of the British attempts to palm off their responsibilities on to them, while maintaining large reserve stocks of food grains in their own island fortress. Indeed, the Americans accused the British of holding on to stocks of grains that were considerably higher than any other importing country and even higher than the stocks of the Americans themselves. They now insisted that they would undertake to meet the entire requirement of the British occupied Germany and half the requirement of India only if the U.K. accepted a cut of 200,000 tons in their grain allocation. The British Cabinet had no go but to give in to the American ultimatum. Now, the Minister of Food finally got the support to proceed with the preparations for introducing Bread rationing. The Cabinet approval for the Bread rationing was given on the 27th June, when the Minister of Food informed the Cabinet that the food stocks in U.K. were going to fall to about 513,000 tons in August or just a five week supply. Bread Rationing was to take effect in the United Kingdom from 21st July 1946.

Thus, we find that at no stage was the British Cabinet prepared to accept a food stock of anything less than five weeks of consumption. If it agreed to divert any food grain, it was only against iron clad guarantees. The concern shown by the British Cabinet for the British lives is really touching, when viewed against that shown for the Burmese lives. In the same Cabinet Meeting of 31st January, where the Indian plea fell on deaf ears, the Minister of Food indignantly protested against the insolent refusal of the British Governor of Burma to export 400,000 tons of rice. All that the poor fellow had done was to ask for a guarantee for replacement of the exported rice in case Burma itself was to later face a local famine. The Minister of Food was livid for “it would be impossible to concede this claim for absolute priority, since no one could foresee what the world rice situation might be in the second half of the year”. He even accused Burma of not taking into account the even more serious situation in other parts of Asia. In this he had the full support of the Cabinet. Burma was made to export more rice than it could afford with no firm guarantee of replacement, even if this exporting country was to itself later face famine.

In the British scheme of things, it was time to announce an emergency if there was any danger of its own stocks falling below a six-week consumption level. If others so much as thought of building up any reserve stocks, they were promptly hauled over the coals. And woe betide those like Siam, who refused to supply free rice to these saviors of the world. On the other hand if Malaya had no money to buy rice, then it was only a matter to be considered as part of the general problem of providing financial assistance towards rehabilitation of Malaya – not something fit for the British Cabinet to lose sleep over. It was another matter that it was Malaya, India, Burma that were providing Dollars to the U.K. enabling it to buy its grain allocations from the U.S., Canada etc. It was not out of charity that the British Cabinet had accepted the principle that it was responsible for ensuring food availability in other parts of Commonwealth. This amazing part of the story is already known to us. Let us therefore confine ourselves to the sheer availability of the food grains in that fateful year.

As the date for introduction of the Bread Rationing Scheme came near, it became clear that the projections of the Minister of Food in respect of availability of food grains had been alarmist. The low point of stock availability was expected at end of August. In July, it was clear that even in August, the availability of stocks would be at least a 100,000 tons more than the earlier projection of the Minister of Food. The availability of the food grains after August was expected to be comfortable. Now the Cabinet was vertically split on the Scheme. Even the Prime Minister's intervention did not settle the issue and opinions against the introduction continued to be voiced. What seems to have carried the day in favour of introduction is a fear that failure to do so was bound to increase pressure to divert even more grain away from the U.K.

In the meanwhile, the acute Indian problem would not simply disappear. "The Government of India" noted the Secretary of State in his letter to the Minister of Food of the 8th August 1946, "have indeed perhaps been lucky to have got so far... The situation", he warned, "is therefore very serious and must inevitably lead, unless measures can be taken to counter it, not merely to local breakdowns but to widespread disaster and large scale famine..... The Government of India feel that their main hope of tiding over the disaster lies in augmenting shipments to India from the U.S.A. and they have suggested that this might be achieved by an all around cut of 15 per cent in the programme of other claimants on United States supplies during August, the United Kingdom giving a lead to the rest by offering to reduce their own programme by this amount for diversion to India". Famine or no famine, the U.K. was not going to divert any grain. The Secretary of State could not even bring himself around to even repeat the suggestion of Government of India.

As desired by the Prime Minister, this letter was circulated for the consideration by the Cabinet on 10th August 1946. Why was he once again being a prophet of gloom and doom? A look at the Note on the Food situation in India during the period August to October 1946, sent along with the letter to the Minister of Food; would be of help.

"According to the latest figures provided by the Government of India the total stocks available in India on the 1st August for maintaining the rationing systems for food grains in the deficit Provinces and States were estimated at 1,190,000 tons... the estimated stock position in India... is as tabulated below:

**Estimated Stock Position of Food Grains in India
1946**

figures in thousand tons

	Stocks on 1 st	Internal Supplies	Imports	Total Supplies	Offtake
August	1,190	137	261	1,588	720
September	868	111	288	1267	717
October	550	110	251	911	717
November	194				

2. The Government of India calculate the minimum stocks which they require in order to prevent a breakdown in their rationing at six weeks supply, which is equal to about one million tons.”

One million tons of food for a population of 400 million Indians amounted to six weeks consumption, while the same quantity amounted to a ten weeks of consumption for 42 million citizens of the U.K. What kind of scale is this? As if this is not enough, look at the apologetic manner in which this meager stock said to be representing six weeks of requirements of 400 million Indians is sought to be justified.

“In view of the vast territories for which they are responsible, which are comparable with the whole European continent rather than with any individual European country, and bearing in mind the difficulties of communication in India especially during the monsoon, an average level of stocks of six weeks supply, which normally involves a much lower margin in many areas, is not at all an unreasonable requirement.

It will be seen, however, that average stock position on 1st September will fall below the minimum safety level of six weeks of supply; that on 1st October average stock will be sufficient for about three weeks’ consumption and that by 1st November they will have been so seriously reduced that only about one week’s supplies will be available. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that the above calculations assume that supplies from abroad will arrive according to schedule, whereas past experience has shown that for one reason or another, the fulfillment of shipping programme is invariably subject to considerable delay. It is obvious that the Government of India will inevitably be faced with a very serious situation from the middle of September onwards.

3. The figures show that in order to maintain the Government of India’s stocks at the level of six weeks’ supply, it would be necessary to ship, so as to arrive before the end of September, over and above supplies now in sight, an additional 500,000 tons of cereals from abroad, and a further 350,000 tons for arrival before the end

of October. This is clearly impracticable to, and we must face the fact that, whatever measures are taken, it will probably be impossible to avoid at any rate local breakdowns of rationing in India from about middle of September onwards. It is suggested, however, that we should at any rate aim at maintaining stocks in India at a level – say of one month’s consumption (about 717,000 tons) – which should enable the Government of India at least to keep food situation generally under control and to avert a widespread calamity of the dimensions which seem inevitable on the basis of the imports from abroad at present in sight.

First an apologetic pleading for maintaining stocks of six weeks consumption, then giving it up to settle on four weeks or 717,000 tons, on grounds of practical considerations. 717,000 tons which as per the British standards of consumption represented a mere FIVE days of stock.

4. It will be seen from the figures in paragraph 1 above that in order to provide the government of India with one month’s stock, it would be necessary to ship in addition to present programmes a further 167,000 tons of cereals for arrival in India before the end of September and yet another 356,000 tons before the end of October, or a total of 523,000 tons over the two months.
5. What measures are open to us to secure the arrival of the additional imports...
6. In view of the time factor, it seems unlikely that any of the measures suggested in paragraph 5 above can have much effect on the situation in India during September....The only further expedient which seems to be an appeal to the United States to make further supplies available for India this month in addition to the 80,000 tons of wheat and flour which they are already providing, but if additional supplies from America are to arrive in time to help in September they must be shipped at once, or at any rate during the next fortnight. If a further 100,000 tons could be obtained this month or early next month from the United States, it might, in conjunction with all the other measures indicated above, enable the Government of India to tide over the situation and prevent a major disaster until the end of October, after which the improvement in internal procurement in India from November onwards as a result of the autumn harvests in Southern India may enable the Government of India successfully weather the storm.”

All that was being sought to provide a ration to Indians that the inmates of Auschwitz may have found inadequate, was 100,000 tons of food for the nation which was *One of the Biggest Creditors in the World*. Was it forthcoming? We move on to 14th August 1946, when it was discussed in the British Cabinet.

By now it was clear that the August end stocks in the U.K. would be in excess of 600,000 tons as against the alarmist forecast of less than 500,000 tons made on the basis of which the decision to introduce Bread Rationing had been taken. The expected availability for the rest of the year was in line with demand. The Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Transport confirmed that Ships were available. Would the British Government now

respond to the frantic pleas of its own Minister and agree to diversion of some wheat to India?

Only the most foolish or the utter naïve would have dared to hope. Quite expectedly, the Minister of Food insisted on increasing the already comfortable reserve stocks of the U.K. Let India be damned and the Cabinet concurred. Now that the Americans had become wise to the British game, attention was turned to Argentina. They were accused of holding back export permits for 238,000 tons of maize that India had purchased in order to influence their trade negotiations with H.M.G. The United States was just too big to ignore and attempts to rope them in continued. In the meantime, there was no question of allowing any grain meant for U.K. to go the India way.

Try as it may, the British Government could not get rid of the Indian food problem. Once again on the 2nd September 1946, the Secretary of State was to inform the Cabinet:

“In spite of every effort which has been made during the last three weeks to tap new sources of supply and to expedite shipment of cereals to India there will be a gap on present estimates of 153,000 tons during September and October between supplies at present in sight and what would be required to maintain an average of five weeks’ working stocks in India...What is at stake is not only the lives of millions, but also the whole of India’s political future and her relations with the British Commonwealth.

2. The main possibility which I see of making further contribution towards tiding over the most critical period in India up to the end of October, after which with the cessation of the monsoon internal procurement in India may be expected to improve, would be to divert to India, say 100,000 tons of wheat out of September shipments from Canada at present destined to the United Kingdom. I fully realise the political and other difficulties of any such decision in present circumstances, but a famine in India would have such grave consequences that I must ask the Cabinet to consider most seriously whether – apart from any humanitarian considerations – this would not be the wisest course to take from the point of view of this country’s own long – term interests. I need hardly point out the political impossibility of taking any steps in the direction of abolishing bread rationing or of reducing the extraction rate in the United Kingdom at a time when millions in India may be forced with starvation.”

This is the third time, a very senior member of the British Government brought before it for urgent consideration, the extent of Indian Food problem. In essence, it was the issue of making food available to Indians at a level which would have been considered starvation diet in any decent country. Nothing, as we have seen, came out of the first two attempts. Let us see if the Indians were to be lucky the third time around. For, now he was appealing not for the sake of humanitarian angle but the long term interests of the United Kingdom itself. First the details to understand for ourselves the gravity of the Indian situation.

“Indian Food Situation

The stocks of cereals likely to be available to the authorities in India for meeting the ration in the deficit Provinces and States are estimated to be as follows....

figures in thousand tons

	Opening Stock	Internal Supplies	Imports	Total Supplies	Offtake
August	1,278	154	251	1,683	666
September	1,017	173	249	1,439	683
October	756	139	394	1,289	662
November	627	211	480	1,318	667
December	651	600			

- It will be seen from the above that the average of the stocks of deficit Provinces and States will fall to under 5 weeks’ offtake on the 1st October and to about 4 weeks’ offtake on the 1st November and again on the 1st December. Though there is some improvement (due largely to earlier procurement) since the Cabinet last reviewed the position, (on 14th August) the situation remains grave. The Government of India estimate that an average stock level equal to 6 weeks’ offtake (about 900,000 tons) and a minimum stock level equal to one month’s offtake in each deficit Province and State are necessary to avoid local breakdowns in rationing arrangements. Owing to the size of India it is impossible to get stocks level in all Provinces and States and stocks in some of them will fall much below the averages quoted above. The Government of India judge that they must expect local breakdowns in September, the number of which will go on increasing as the time passes unless larger imports are received. They consider that larger supplies in October may make all the difference between local breakdowns and a general breakdown. The danger spots seem likely to be Travancore, Cochin, Bengal and Madras where rice is the staple diet of the population. In order to bring average stocks up to a level equal to 5 weeks’ offtake, i.e. one week less than that for which the Government of India ask, it would be necessary to ship an additional 153,000 tons for arrival in September/October....If this additional quantity can be provided the position could probably be held generally....In so far as they cannot be provided the period of acute crisis will extend into November and December.
- In a personal appreciation of the situation the Viceroy has emphasised the danger of the stocks in the hands of any local administration in India falling below one month’s offtake...He warns us that if a breakdown occurs shortly after the new Indian political Government assumes power, it is inevitable that the blame would be laid on His Majesty’s Government and on the Government of the United States. To the consequent bitterness and recrimination would be added the real danger of breakdown in administration and the creation of a difficult law and order situation at a time when the communal position is at its most menacing.”

For years, the Indians had been living on subsistence diet. Now from January onwards, we have it on the authority of the Secretary of State that a grave Famine was stalking India making it difficult for the Government to provide even the incomplete ration of food to the people. In the very first memo of the year on the subject of Indian Food situation, the Secretary of State had warned “the reoccurrence of famine condition would inevitably provoke widespread disorders all over India....”. If in September, “the communal position was at its most menacing”, it could not be anything other than the Secretary of States’ warning coming true. For it would not take a Social Scientist to understand that a body racked by pangs of hunger is much more susceptible to being infected by the virus of communal anger. Thus the persistence refusal of the British Government to make any sincere attempt to provide even the starvation diet to Indians was a major factor in disturbing the social fabric of the country. Did they now make amends or carried on in their Imperial arrogance with least consideration for Indians. Time to go further in our quest for a better understanding.

“4. The Government of India have considered with the Provincial and State Administrators at a conference at Delhi the question of a further reduction in the basic cereals ration of 12 oz. a day. The Conference decided unanimously against this course on the grounds that the **12 oz. ration is itself inadequate under Indian conditions**Already the ration has had to be reduced locally where it cannot be met, and this tendency is likely to increase. For example, the ration in Travancore is at present 4-4.5 oz. of rice plus 2.5 oz. of wheat and in Bengal as result of the dislocations caused by the disturbances the cereal ration has been temporarily reduced to 6 oz. a day.

The Government allocates a ration that itself is inadequate, then at places cuts this inadequate ration to half and high prices prevent the poor from buying their quota, the life of the animals in the jungles would have been better than that of the millions of poor in British India.

Getting back to the memo, it looked at the possibility of getting some supplies from Burma, Siam and Indonesia but pointed out that there were several difficulties involved. United States had done more than its bit and could therefore not be expected to do more. It noted that during the period May - September the total grain shipments to U.K. were expected to be 1,850,000 tons which was 200,000 tons more than what had been expected in May. It felt therefore that

“The most substantial and reliable of the possible means of relieving India’s crisis would be a diversion to India of 100,000 tons of wheat destined for the United Kingdom from North America.”

By this time the British granaries were bulging with grain. The Minister of Food informed the Cabinet that by end of September, he expected to have stocks of about 1,000,000 tons of wheat and flour. Now there were three claimants for the grains:

- The Indian people, whose plight was being highlighted by the Secretary of State.
- The British people, who were being inconvenienced by the Bread Rationing scheme. Their cause was taken up by the Minister of Food, who now pressed for discontinuing Bread Rationing from 14th September i.e. within less than two months of its imposition.
- The British swine, whose cause was taken up by the Minister of Agriculture. He feared that the increase in extraction rate was making less feed stuff available, which would lead to a large-scale slaughter of the pigs. A loss that would not be made good for a long time.

Guess who won in that fateful meeting of the British cabinet on 9th September 1946? Who else but the British Pigs. The Minister of Food lost out on political reasons. And Indians, since when did they count as humans ?

If this was isolated decision, it was bad enough. What was far worse was this decision was no accident. It was the Policy of the Raj. To pay least possible attention to the very people, who were responsible for their welfare. They were merely considered less worthy of attention than the animals. This is the sorry conclusion, I had to draw when I pursued the story further.

The pesky Indians were back again before the end of September. Once again, the Secretary of State wrote a memo on the 30th September 1946. Perhaps hoping now that the British Pigs were taken care of, the Indians would stand some chance. As he said:

“I regret that I must yet once more bring the Indian food situation to the notice of my colleagues. Since the Cabinet last reviewed the position on 9th September the situation has deteriorated disastrously owing to the shipping strike in the United States and to a failure to obtain export licenses from Argentine Government for any further supplies....It is now expected that the average of Government – held stocks in India will at the end of October sink to less than four weeks’ offtake and to less than three weeks’ at the end of November as compared with the Government of India’s estimated minimum requirement of six weeks’ offtake to prevent breakdown in rationing. It is estimated that in order to keep Government-held stocks at five weeks’ offtake it would be necessary for arrivals to be increased by 213,000 tons in October or 333,000 tons over October / November in addition to those in sight. It is difficult to see how famine conditions extending over wide areas can be averted in October, November and early December. Any recrudescence of shipping strikes in the United States would make the position even grimmer.

2. As I see it, the only remaining possibility of materially alleviating this disastrous situation would be the early diversion to India ...of a substantial quantity, say 100,000 tons, of Canadian wheat out of shipments at present destined for the United Kingdom. I would urge most earnestly that from the point of view of our future relations with an independent India, it would be well worth while for the United Kingdom to take this course even at the cost of some domestic sacrifice. I

must again emphasise the very grave political repercussions which would inevitably result in India if H.M.G. should decide in the near future to abolish bread rationing in this country at a time when millions in India will be facing starvation. The inference inevitably drawn by Indians from such action would be that though it was in our power to help India materially we have been unwilling to do so; and this would have a most embittering effect on our future relations with India.....”

As usual the plea was backed by hard-hitting facts as can be seen below:

“The Indian Food Situation

The stocks of cereals likely to be available to the authorities in India for meeting the ration in deficit Provinces and States during the next three months are now estimated as follows:

	figures in thousand tons				
	Opening Stock	Internal Supplies	Imports	Total Supplies	Offtake
October	800	155	291	1,246	684
November	562	216	350	1,128	685
December	443	600			

2. ...On the basis therefore of the above figures average stocks at the beginning of October will amount to a little over five weeks’ offtake (775,000 tons) but will be reduced to between three and four weeks’ offtake on 1st November and to less than three weeks’ offtake (465,000 tons) on 1st December. This disastrous position is almost entirely attributable to the sharp decline in expected arrivals of United States wheat and Argentine maize in October and more especially in November. It should also be emphasised that the figure of 350,000 tons estimated for arrivals in November assumes that about 100,000 tons of cereals can be shipped from the United States between the time when the strike ended and the middle of October so as to reach India before the end of November. Very little has been shipped up to date and it is extremely doubtful if this target can be attained. The gap between estimated supplies available to the Indian authorities and the amount required to bring average stocks up to a level of five weeks’ offtake has now widened to 213,000 tons at the end of October and to 333,000 tons at the end of November.

3. Cases of inability on the part of the authorities in India to meet the ration in full have recently been increasing, especially in Southern India, and it has also been necessary in the rice eating areas to make all-round reductions in the rice content of the 12 oz. cereals ration, for example from 12 ounces a day in Bengal and from 10 ounces to 8 ounces a day in Madras. In Travancore the basic cereals ration is now 9 ounces a day, of which only 4.5 ounces can be drawn in rice. It is

reported that in Bengal stocks will fall on 1st November to 20,000 tons of rice and 50,000 tons of wheat against an estimated monthly offtake from Government stocks of 125,000 tons. The Government of India have told the Government of Bengal that it is not possible to augment their supplies from outside the Province during October and November and that their only hope lies in the maximum procurement from the Bengal rice crop which is now coming to market. This crop is subsidiary to the main winter (aman) rice crop and is normally consumed locally in the districts. The Government of India are quite definite that unless further steps can be taken to increase imports, a breakdown in food distribution over wide areas in India in the later half of October and in November can not be averted.

4. The following is the present position in regard to supplies of cereals....
5. It is too late to take any steps which could materially affect the position in India in October. But the position in November will be even worse than in October and the period of acute crisis in India will continue into December. The following appear to be the only possibilities of alleviating the situation:
 - (a) To arrange for more wheat to be shipped from Canada to India for November or early December arrival, say 100,000 tons presumably by diversion of supplies at present destined for the United Kingdom. It is understood that more than 600,000 tons of wheat have been programmed for shipment from Canada during October, mostly to United Kingdom

Shipment of 600,000 tons from Canada, mostly to United Kingdom, which already had close to 1,000,000 tons in stock and all that India was being considered for was just 100,000 tons.

- (b) To make a diplomatic approach to the United States Government...but their reactions have not been very encouraging. The Americans apparently think that Canada is programming her exports with a view to her post-war trade and leaving the United States to carry alone the burden of relief for famine - stricken countries.....a few shipments from Canada to India in early October would influence the Americans a great deal in India's favour and convince them of her need..."

The memo was reviewed by the Minister of Transport who informed the Cabinet that if it decided to divert 100,000 of wheat from Canada, he could ensure that about 65/70,000 tons would reach India by November and the balance by December. Further even if India got the export permits for the remaining 130,000 tons of maize, it was not possible to arrange for its arrival in India before January.

The Minister of Food appears to have been livid at the suggestion to divert 100,000 tons of grain meant for U.K. to India. He curtly recorded that:

“if no diversion be made to India will still have cover for three weeks and this is certainly no less than the position which obtains in our Far East Colonies, Ceylon, Malaya, Hong Kong and Borneo”

What he seemed to be saying was that ‘So what are you Indian niggers cribbing about, look around you, since you have the privilege of being our Colony, you shall remain as hungry as any other part of Empire. That is your fate’.

He went on: “It is true that we hope to obtain comparatively large quantities of Canadian wheat during the coming quarter, but every ton of this wheat is urgently needed for the United Kingdom and the territories directly dependent upon us in order to raise our stock to a level which would enable us to go through the winter months, with their more difficult navigation with safety.”

By Indian standards of consumption, the U.K. had not ten weeks but close to HUNDRED weeks of stock. India had just THREE weeks of stocks, yet the good Minister would not relent. The lives of the British citizens were far more precious than millions of Indians, who were only meeting the fate of those who increase their numbers without passing through an Industrial Revolution.

He was especially riled at the suggestion about postponing abolition of Bread Rationing. “I can not possibly accept the position that this country cannot abolish bread rationing because of unfavourable international reactions” said he and unsurprisingly concluded with “I therefore can not recommend the diversion of 100,000 tons of Canadian wheat from the United Kingdom at this juncture.”

The recommendation was accepted by the British Cabinet in its meeting on 3rd October 1946. The Cabinet agreed that the needs of Ceylon and far Eastern territories, which had no stock at all, where rations were lower than in India and which were virtually living from Ship to Mouth; would have a higher priority than the Indian needs. Whatever that meant for no grains were diverted to these countries either.

One must admire the tenacity of the Secretary of State. Despite being repeatedly rebuffed, he kept on pressing for making available food for India. He once again warned the Cabinet that there was now every prospect of a serious shortage of cereals in India in November and December, and that famine was likely to develop over wide area. This forced a Cabinet discussion, which took place on 25th October 1946. The Ministers were clearly irritated. Several Ministers suggested that the food shortage in India was likely to last for a considerable time. Food consumption in India had increased without any corresponding increase in production. They therefore graciously suggested that long-term solution need to be found.

Few would quarrel with that but what about the immediate problem. India was a house on fire. It needed water there and then. This was no time to suggest that the long - term solution to the problem of wooden houses catching fire was to build houses of brick and mortar. As a matter of record, for the short-term solution, the Cabinet did not even

discuss diversion of any grain to India. Nor would it even agree to make an immediate approach to the United States. The general view in the Cabinet was it would be better to delay such an approach until it could be made as a part of the general case, which the Foreign Secretary was to place before the United States.

A house is on fire. The local Fire Brigade which has water refuses to use it. It claims that were it to use the water now, it would have difficulty if the King's palace were to catch fire. Nor would it call in another Fire Brigade. All it would tell the unfortunate inhabitants of the house was that it was drawing up a general plan to tackle the problem of houses catching fire for the consideration of the other Fire Brigade!!

As if this was not enough, the Ministry of Food had persuaded the Government of India to refrain from purchasing Turkish wheat through trade channels. So even while, the British Government itself did not agree to divert any food to India, it also prevented India from commercial purchases despite being face to face with a grave famine. All that was offered by a way of assurance was that India would get a substantial part of any further wheat or barley which the Ministry of Food may obtain from Turkey.

In November 1946, the Ministry bought 125,000 tons of wheat and 24,000 tons of rye. Minister of Food now proposed to use the entire wheat for the U.K. and allot only rye to India. In the Cabinet meeting of 8th January 1947, the Secretary of State strongly protested against this. Finally, a compromise was made and it was agreed that the 125,000 tons of wheat should be equally divided between India and U.K. This was not all. It was agreed that most of the **expensive** Turkish wheat would be sent to India. The U.K. quota out of 125,000 tons was to be fulfilled by diverting equivalent amount of **cheaper** U.S. or Australian wheat meant for India to the U.K.

Let us take a stock of the situation. The 'normal' daily diet of Indians was as we have seen around 1400 calories per day. Throughout 1946, in many areas of India, the very ration availability was reduced by half. Thus, the Indian diet during 1946 could not have exceeded 1000 calories. Nor was India alone in this miserable state. This was the state of affairs in all parts of British Empire.

The British had forced India and many other countries to lend them monies they did not have. In case of India alone, we have seen that even half the money so lent would have been sufficient to make all the investments necessary in Indian agriculture to ensure food security. Under these circumstances, the consistent refusal of the British Cabinet to send food grains to India or elsewhere in Asia, where people were surviving on a daily diet barely more than a 1000 calories a day was nothing short of slow and deliberate murder of millions of Asians. As deliberate as the murder of Jews by Hitler in his Gas Chambers. The readers are invited to go through the same and form their own opinion on the consequences of British action on the people in Colonies. Contrast this with the tender care lavished by His Majesty's Government on its own people, where a caloric intake of less than 2650 was considered too low. Nor is this a flight of imagination. Consider what the Minister of Food had to say on 20th October 1947, when the British

Cabinet had to institute cuts in its Import programmes. The reason being as mundane as simply having no money. The Cabinet minutes record:

‘These cuts, taken together, would reduce the average daily calorie level of the people’s diet to between 2,650 and 2,725 calories a day. He was advised that this level of food consumption would result in undernourishment and even hunger, which would seriously prejudice industrial output. Moreover, he feared that it might undermine the whole rationing system, which was already over – strained, with dangerous consequences in national demoralisation and social bitterness.’

The good Minister had every reason to fear *consequences in national demoralisation and social bitterness*. India had not witnessed millions of famine deaths 1946 as had been feared by the Secretary of State. But the British Cabinet knew that though there were no official famine deaths, the Indians were surviving by the skin of their teeth – on a daily diet of no more than 1000 calories a day. They were easy fodder for agents of Anger and Hate; much more easy prey to communal animosity and cruelty than those living on a diet of 3000 calories a day. The communal fires stoked by the mass killings of Hindus on the Direct Action Day – 14th August 1946 in Calcutta; were still raging in October 1947 consuming men, women and children in its wake.

The Minister of Food well knew that the January 1946 prophecy of the Secretary of State in respect of widespread disorder, in the event of adequate food not being available, had come true. He had every reason to be very very wary of any cuts in food rations in the U.K. After all, at stake were not sub-human Indian lives but precious British souls.

The fact that they were completely indifferent, bar a few honourable exceptions –who did not count, to the fate of hungry millions in Asia, I hope has now been conclusively established. These are the actions that were taken by a supposedly pro-poor Labour Administration and not some die hard capitalist Tory leaders. Though, I doubt if the hungry peasants toiling away on half empty stomachs would have noticed any change in their fate simply because a Churchill had been replaced by an Attlee as the master of their destiny.

Chapter IV-5

The War of Independence

Savarkar and Bose

So far, we have only seen the manner in which the cause of national Independence was betrayed first by Gandhi and then amazingly by the Communists. I refuse to include Jinnah in this list. He may have demanded Pakistan in despair but did not demean himself by being servile to the British. A review of the era of 1939 – 42 that we have so far undertaken only fills us with despair. But there is no reason to be despondent. There were also people whose activities would make us proud.

Let us look at them. First and foremost we shall proceed to look at the activities of that old war horse – Savarkar. He was now one of the few leaders left on national scene, who had carried on the torch of freedom even in the prior war. His experiences with the Raj had firmly convinced him that while all efforts against the Raj were welcome, in the final analysis, it was only an appropriate use of Force that would compel the British to relinquish their control of India. His study of Mazzini's techniques had led him to the conclusion that it was a Great War provided two major opportunities to a slave nation seeking to be free.

In a conflict of life and death, the Occupying power had no choice but to enlist as many people as possible, even those from the slave countries, in persecution of war. Thereby providing an opportunity to the youth of the slave country to learn the vital art of using firearms. An art that was otherwise sought to be denied to them. An art that could not be made to be unlearnt merely because the hostilities had ended. This rare opportunity had therefore to be seized. It was important to learn the use of guns and making of bombs. Even if at a first step to further the cause of the master nation. Once people knew how to pull the trigger, changing direction of the barrel of the Gun was then a simple process.

The other opportunity during the Great War for the Slave nation were the designs of enemies of the Master nation with whom it was engaged in a struggle. As practitioners of Realpolitik, such nations were on the look out for every opportunity to advance their own cause. Nations who in normal times would not dream of helping Slave nations, were in such War times more than willing to do their bit. Such a help could be made use of by the Slave nation to escape the tyranny of bondage. The enemy of the Master nation was doing no favour to the Slave nation by helping it. Nor was the Slave nation in any way indebted to it for extending help. It was a simple matter of 'Enemy's enemy being one's friend'. Nothing more, nothing else. A real world revolved around such hard facts.

Italy had become a free nation after hundreds of years of slavery once Mazzini and Garibaldi followed such practical considerations. So could India. Ever since, he had begun to carry the torch of Freedom from the turn of the century, nothing had happened to shake this conviction of Savarkar. If anything, the events in the world had only reinforced his beliefs. He had watched helplessly from his cells in Andaman, the

Opportunity pass him during the First World War. Nothing would come in his way now. Of this, he was determined.

Savarkar had been a great proponent of Hindi-Muslim unity. Indeed, it his assertion that the events of 1857 marked the end of Hindu-Muslim War that was in no small measure responsible for the inhuman treatment he got. His book proclaiming that the Hindus and Muslims were blood brothers in the post 1857 Bharat remained banned in 1939. However, much water had flown in the Ganga since 1910, when he was packed off to the British jails. A state of intense communal disturbances had prevailed in India after the Khilafat movement led by Gandhi in 1920. This had placed people like Jinnah and Savarkar in a peculiar position.

A secular, nationalist Muslim leader like Jinnah had been driven to demand more and more protection for his community after despairing of the hold of a wily and cunning Gandhi on Hindu minds. After having studied the facts presented so far, even the die hard fans of Gandhi will not be in a position to lightly dismiss Jinnah's opinion of him as being baseless. Savarkar was no Mahatma. Had anyone called him so, he would have been appalled. He was as much a practical politician as Jinnah. In the surcharged atmosphere, he knew whatever, the compulsions behind the change of Jinnah's stand; he had to play the Power Equalization Game. If it meant, his being branded as a Hindu Leader and not a national leader like Gandhi, so be it. He was for a Settlement with the Muslims. The Congress policy of Appeasement left him cold. Settlement was possible only when any one community was not unfairly disadvantaged. In 1939, the Hindus were unfairly disadvantaged in a crucial matter – Representation in the army. Something that did not worry a pacifist like Gandhi but was a major cause of concern to a practical person like Savarkar. Why Savarkar alone, Dr. Ambedkar was equally worried.

The British had always insisted on keeping politics out of the army. What they did was natural. By keeping out politics, what they meant to do was keep out national aspirations. Where would they be if the Indian soldiers turned disloyal? The War of 1857 had taught them crucial lessons. We have seen earlier, how Sir John Lawrence held that the *Mutiny* was result of the Native Army being united in one vast brotherhood, with common fatherland, language, religion, caste and associations. The question that haunted the British minds was how to ensure that such a thing could not occur again. The need for a Native Army itself was indispensable but how to ensure its loyalty. In other words, eat the cake and have it too. The solution was, as always, ingenious. Even as the British cried themselves hoarse about the need to keep Politics (read national aspirations) out of the Army; they themselves proved to be master politicians.

The pre-1857 army of Bengal was essentially a Brahmin and Kshatriya army of the Ganges basin. The so called martial tribes of India – the Sikhs, Gurkhas, Punjabi Muslims, Dogras, Pathans, Garhwal, Rajputana had furnished few recruits. It is with this army that the British had conquered India. There was no official restriction on the enrollment of any particular tribe or caste or region. The only exception to this were the **Punjabis and the Sikhs**. Their recruitment was placed under a severe restriction by the Government. The number of Punjabis in a regiment were not to exceed 200, of whom not

more than 100 could be Sikhs. The Sikhs could hardly be accused of not being fit for military service since they were amongst the last to be subdued by the Imperial power. Indeed therein lay the rationale for the restriction. Up to 1857, their loyalties were not yet proven. A single year changed all this. People who had been militarily found competent, indeed whose exploits had laid the foundation of British Raj were declared as Non Martial. People not fit enough to be Soldiers. The tribes that had played their part in upholding the Raj now came to be favoured. The Imperial intentions were as usual cloaked behind some fancy doctrine. In 1879, Lord Roberts held that ancient military spirit had died down in people of Bengal, Madras and the Maharashtra. Thus was born the mischievous doctrine of the so-called Martial and the Non-Martial tribes of India. The doctrine was rightly held to be arbitrary, artificial and as foolish as the Hindu Caste system by Doctor Ambedkar.

Punjab and the North West which together with Nepal, Garhwal and Kumaon had provided less than 10% of recruits in the pre 1857 Bengal army accounted for no less than 53% within one year i.e. by 1858. On the other hand the people of Ganges Basin who had been more than 90% of the 1857 found their share dropping to less than 50% in the same period. Only those who demonstrated loyalty could find a place in the native army. So called martial traits of the tribes had nothing to do with this.

1857 was not the only time the Communal composition of army underwent a change. Sikhs who had proved to be so loyal in 1857 became somewhat suspect after the revolutionary activities of the Gadhar Party. In 1914, they occupied the pride of the place in the army accounting for about 20% of the strength. Once Punjab was rocked by the ferment of revolution, the Imperial policy reoriented itself. By 1930, Sikhs who had as late as 1914 had the highest share of army recruits found themselves in the third place with their share dropping to 13.58%.

By 1930, the Muslims from the North West were being favoured by the Raj. They had accounted for 17% of the army in 1919 before the outbreak of the Khilafat Movement. The abrupt withdrawal of the Movement by Gandhi and the subsequent disillusionment of the Muslims with the Congress was soon reflected in the army intake. By 1930, their share had grown to 29%.

The information about communal composition of the army was freely available till 1930. Thereafter, it came to be cloaked in secrecy. The reasons were not far to seek. Once again the Raj was involved in a mammoth exercise to change the nature of the Indian army. The change was comparable to that in 1857, when the representation of Ganges basin was halved. Between 1930 and 1939, the Government consciously more than doubled the share of the Muslims from Punjab from about 22% to something in the region of 60 to 70%. The real figure remained hidden as the Government stone walled all attempts to get this information. But the preponderance of Punjabi Muslims in the Indian army was a well known public fact even as exact percentage remained unknown.

It is obvious that either the Punjabi Muslims were considered the most loyal Indians or at least the least disloyal. Otherwise, it is impossible to explain this phenomenon. A unique

one since 1857. For after the outbreak of the *Mutiny* the British had taken great care to see that the Indian army was so organised as to perpetuate the provincial and religious divisions so that they could never once gain become infused with one common sentiment.

Given the fact that the Punjabi Muslims were an important element of the Pakistan scheme, such a preponderance in so vital a wing as the army could not but be a source of great anxiety to anyone who had any common sense. Jinnah was alive to the advantages offered by this. After the outbreak of the War, he demanded that the increased army intake due to War should not affect the existing Muslim representation.

The Gandhi Congress as usual preferred to be blind to the dangers posed by this situation. It fell to the lot of Savarkar to rectify the matters. He undertook whirlwind tours to preach the cause of Hindu militarisation. Undeterred by being called a Recruitment Agent, he relentlessly advocated that the Hindu youths should join the armed forces. As he said:

“Forces beyond their control have compelled the British Government to trust you with arms and ammunition. Formerly youths had to rot in cells for being in possession of pistols, but today the Britishers are placing rifles, guns, cannons and machine guns in your hands....do not worry about bonds and agreements...You can write new bonds and agreements on it when the time comes. Mind, Swaraj will never come to you, although you may cover the entire earth with paper resolutions. But if you pass resolutions with rifles on your shoulders, you will attain it.”

In this programme, Savarkar met with great success. The Indian Army which was 200,000 strong at the outbreak of the War rose to a strength of 2,000,000. Not only that by 8th of July 1943, the communal composition of the Indian Army had once again undergone a change. The Muslims now had a share of 34%, while the Hindus together with Gurkhas and the Sikhs had a share of 60%. This was more in line with the overall share of these communities in the Indian population than in 1939. Power Equalisation had been successfully attained. This was the public part of his activities.

Criticized by the Muslim League for its very success. Damned by the short sighted Congress as aiding the British. These 2,000,000 Indians were to contribute in no small measure to the national cause as we shall see shortly. Along with this public part, Savarkar was actively pursuing a secret agenda. For once dear readers, permit me the luxury of telling a story which is backed by no papers or documents but only by the fading memory of an old man, my neighbour – Savarkar’s son. The story he told me is fascinating. Some of it is known, some remains unknown to-date. Fortunately, I have been to have this corroborated by an even older man - Mr. Gokhale, a very close associate of Savarkar, who had heard it first hand from Savarkar himself.

First of all, let us take up the known part. Ras Bihari Bose was as we know an old associate of Savarkar. One who had sought to avenge the harsh treatment of revolutionaries by throwing a bomb on the Viceroy himself on 23rd December 1912. Despite the dragnet spread by the British, he continued to outwit the Police. He had even sought to direct the Gadhar Party revolution in Punjab caring two hoots about the fact

that if he was caught, hanging was his fate. After failure of the attempt, he had retreated to Japan, where he spent his time in exile. When Savarkar was finally released, this old friend was most happy and he wrote a public letter to him. This much is known.

Now the unknown or rather the less known part. As the war clouds gathered in Europe, the revolutionary blood in Ras Bihari Bose's veins asserted itself. He wrote a secret letter to Savarkar. The letter was delivered through a Japanese Buddhist monk who was residing in the Buddhist temple at Worli in Mumbai. A temple that has survived the onslaught of urbanisation and can be seen even today. In this letter, written sometime in 1939, Ras Bihari informed his comrade that Japan was soon to enter the War. This was a golden opportunity to rally the Indian cause. Ras Bihari had made use of his extensive contacts in the Japanese society to win sympathy for the Indian cause. But his Japanese friends wanted a proof that revolutionary fire was still raging in the hearts of the Indians. They therefore wanted a prominent Indian to come to Japan seeking such a help. They had promised Ras Bihari to help the Indian cause militarily in such an event. Savarkar was therefore urged to play his part in the new revolutionary plot hatched by this old rebel. The letter was kept in a trunk under Savarkar's bed. In the War times, possession of such a letter invited certain death on charges of treason. Very few of his associates were therefore privy to this information.

It was out of question for Savarkar to attempt to leave the country. For one, the age was not on his side. A fifty eight year old body which had suffered much abuse for over fourteen years was in no position to undertake this rigour. More importantly, a convicted revolutionary like Savarkar was under a close watch by the British. Any attempt by him to leave the country during wartime for a destination remotely in the direction of such a country as Japan would have immediately aroused suspicions. Savarkar therefore looked around him. One potential candidate appeared to be Hegdewar, the founder of the R.S.S. He had been involved in the Bengali revolutionary activities earlier. Apparently an approach was made on these lines but Hegdewar turned it down as he felt that the work of consolidating the Hindu society was more important than this unlikely scheme.

The only other suitable person was Subhas Chandra Bose. In 1940, after the Ramgarh Congress was over, Subhas was busy consolidating his Forward Block. In June, he came to Bombay to meet Jinnah. The meeting with Jinnah was futile as Jinnah plainly told Bose he was not prepared to have any discussion with him since he had no national standing. The Forward Block was an organisation that was restricted to Bengal. Subhas could not represent Congress, which had imposed a ban on him. Nor could he represent the Hindus for that position belonged to Savarkar as the President of Hindu Maha Sabha. Subhas therefore decided to meet Savarkar, whom he had met earlier as the Congress President. The meeting took place on June 22, 1940 at Savarkar Sadan in Mumbai, the very place where I am writing this.

It is in this meeting that Savarkar informed Subhas of the approach made to him by Ras Bihari Bose and pleaded with him to flee to Japan and take up the mantle of liberating India with the Japanese help. The only programme which Subhas had in his mind at this time was to launch a struggle to remove the statute of Holwell, the famous narrator of the

story of the Black Hole of Calcutta. Savarkar took pains to dissuade Subhas from wasting his energies on such futile causes which were sure to lead to his imprisonment and thus deprive him of the much needed freedom to pursue higher goals. Subhas politely heard out his senior revolutionary colleague but made no commitments. The Japanese plan appeared to have intrigued him but no more. He went back to Calcutta and as was his wont threw himself fully in the agitation to get the offending statute of Holwell removed. The youthful emotions had triumphed over the cold calculations of the senior revolutionary. The British Government was too happy to find an opportunity to lock up this dangerous rebel. Soon Subhas found himself cooling his heels in the British jails. Now the words of Savarkar started ringing in his ears. Gandhi Congress had in the meanwhile launched its sterile programme of Individual Disobedience. Now Subhas made up his mind to leave India but Japan was an unknown land. Europe, where he had established several useful contacts during his earlier exile, beckoned him. The added attraction in Europe was the presence of Emily, whom he had secretly married earlier.

Once the resolve took shape in the mind of Subhas, there was to be no looking back. He began a hunger strike on 26th November. As he became serious, the Government was forced to release him on the 5th December. He was allowed to go home but nevertheless continued to be under confinement. Subhas had earlier made some tentative preparations to leave India via Peshawar. These now came in handy. In a thrilling escape that made him a legend, Subhas flew out of the British custody. In the manner of Shivaji seeking to escape from the custody of Aurangzeb, some three hundred years before, he gave out that he was ill. Then he appeared to be renouncing the world and busy in solitary meditation, where no one could disturb him. On 26th January 1941, his family announced that Subhas was missing. By this time, he had crossed over to Afghanistan and was on his way to Kabul. His travails did not end for Kabul was infested with British spies. After remaining hidden for two months, he was able to fly to Berlin via Moscow in March 1941. He was lucky that Hitler had yet not attacked Russia and this route was therefore still open.

The high drama of his escape and his eventual reappearance in Berlin created a stir in India and increased the prestige of the Left Wing amongst the people making it even more difficult for the Gandhi Congress to reach any agreement with the Raj which fell short of Independence. This can not obscure the reality that his stay in Berlin from March 1941 to February 1943 was singularly unsuccessful in materially advancing the cause of Indian Independence. Soon after he landed in Germany, the Japanese began their rapid advance in the East while the German army seemed to overrunning Russia with ease. With all aces in their hands, the Axis powers had little use for Subhas, who was made to cool his heels having little to do except make some anti-British broadcasts on Berlin radio. The quick march of the Germans in Russia came to an end by December 1941. The Soviet began their winter counter offensive and recovered a considerable territory. With the War in Europe evenly poised in summer of 42, the Axis powers finally found time to see this Indian visitor. Subhas was able to meet Mussolini on 5th May 1942 and then Hitler himself on 29th of the same month. Neither Italy nor Germany paid any heed to his demands that they should make a declaration in support of Indian Independence. Subhas found his hopes of winning any support for his plans to form an Indian National Government in Exile being dashed to ground. His efforts to enlist the Indian prisoner of

wars to the national cause did not bear any fruit. Nor were the Germans in any way being supportive of his plans to go to Japan. He seemed to have merely changed places from a British to a German prison, albeit one that was more comfortable.

In this dark hour of despair, if Subhas could hold on to his sanity, the credit goes in no small measure to his wife Emily. It was she who nursed him and kept his hopes alive. Her tender care kept this great revolutionary alive in body and spirits. It is during this stay that she gave birth to Anita. This was the last time Subhas was ever to enjoy marital bliss. Barely was the child two months old that Subhas finally got an opportunity to be free from his enforced stay at Berlin.

By end of 1942, the tide of War seemed to slowly shifting in favour of the Allies. The full weight of the American muscle was making life difficult for the Axis powers. Japanese expansion in the East had reached its zenith and was now under defensive pressure. The British were meeting their first success in North Africa, where Rommel was roundly defeated in October 42. Russia was proving to be the nemesis of Hitler in the same way as it had proved to be of Napoleon hundred and forty years before. By mid September 1942, the German forces were at the gates of Stalingrad. But the Russians held their ground despite overwhelming odds. By November, they had launched a counter offensive encircling the Germans. The hunters had become the hunted. Cold, hungry and demoralised, the German army at Stalingrad surrendered, in what was a humiliating defeat for Hitler, on 31st January 1943.

By now, it was more than clear that Germans had no conceivable use for Subhas. With reverses in Russia, it was clear that the Germans were not going to be in a position to threaten India via land. It was better to send him to Japan, where he could be used more profitably by the Japanese to hurt the British. Subhas on his part was only too happy to leave. It meant leaving his wife and child behind but that was a small price to pay for the cause of his nation. On 8th February 1943, Subhas boarded a German submarine at Kiel after bidding farewell to his teary eyed Emily and a smiling two month old Anita, too young to realise the happenings around her. He was never to see them again.

The submarine travel in wartime was a dangerous and hazardous affair. Death hovered around but fought shy of devouring Subhas. He was transferred in mid sea from a German to a Japanese submarine off the coast of Madgaskar on 27th April 1943. This took him to Sabang in May. From here he was flown to Tokyo, where he finally met Ras Bihari Bose for the first time in his life. By June the news of his presence in Japan shook India. On 2nd July 1943, he flew to Singapore along with Ras Bihari. Here on the 4th July Ras Bihari formally handed over the command of Azad Hind Fauj or the Indian National Army to Subhas amidst thundering applause. *Netaji* – the leader had arrived.

From Calcutta to Kabul to Moscow and then on to Berlin and Kiel. From Kiel to Madgaskar via Cape of Good Hope to Sabang and then to Tokyo. From this heart of Japan to Singapore. All in wartime. Each step of this journey was full of hazard. Death a whisker away. At Calcutta, he left behind his family. At Kiel, he left behind Emily and Anita. All of them for ever. Something, he knew all too well. Only the bravest of brave,

only the most committed could even dream of embarking on such a venture. Here was Subhas, who not only dreamt of doing so but turned into a reality. No wonder, Netaji of July 1943 was now the Greatest Living Indian Legend.

Only a gnawing thought remains. If only Subhas had listened to Savarkar in June 1940. Subhas could not only have begun his struggle three years earlier but saved himself a lot of trouble. Compared to the journey he undertook, travel from Calcutta to Singapore was more akin to travelling to the backyard. But then Subhas was a romantic revolutionary and not a cold calculating strategist. This was both his strength as well as his weakness. Savarkar was no different. If only he had not traveled to London from Paris on 13th March 1910 to court a sure arrest and a political exile of 27 years! It is perhaps in the nature of a revolutionary to be an emotional fool, if he stops being so, he ceases to be a revolutionary. A man saner than Subhas would no doubt have traveled to Singapore directly from Calcutta and not via Berlin. But then a man saner than Subhas would neither have come within 100 kms of a convicted criminal that Savarkar was in the British Raj. So let us put these thoughts of armchair experts like us aside and proceed with the story. But before we do so, it is important to understand the efforts taken by Ras Bihari Bose to create an organisation capable of delivering a death blow to the British and hand it over to a younger, more capable colleague on the 4th July 1943.

Sometime during the latter half of the First world War, Ras Bihari Bose had fled from India after the Gadhar Party revolution failed under a false passport issued in the name of P.N.Tagore. Using this, somehow he was able to reach Japan but his troubles were not yet over. The British spies got a wind his presence in Japan. At this time, Japan was a British ally. It therefore appeared a simple matter to extradite this exile, a dangerous criminal who carried a big award for his capture. Ras Bihari was no easy game. He stuck an alliance with a Japanese underground organisation – The Black Dragon. Its leader Toyama stood firm against any attempt by the Japanese Government to capture Bose. Eventually, Toyama got Bose married to Toshika, the daughter of his devoted follower Ezo Soma. Thus Ras Bihari became a naturalized Japanese citizen and there was no more question of handing him over to the British. The marriage did not dim his vigour for Indian Independence as was clear from the paper ‘Voice of India’ that he started. By the outbreak of the Second World War, he had developed enough contacts within the Japanese society to be in a position to push for a military assistance to the Indian cause. The insular Japanese rulers whose disdain for other Asiatic people was well known, could not take this pressure from within lightly. But it remained a case of two steps forward and one step backward. Forward under the pressure of Bose lobby and backward due to the inherent disdain for all societies other than their own. This was to change only after the arrival of Netaji.

Meanwhile, the other members of the Gadhar Party were not idle. Some of them like Amar Singh were released after serving a twenty five year term. He formed Independent India League at Bangkok with Pritam Singh, another Punjabi exile from the Gadhar Party times. From October 1941, the activities took shape. On 4th December 1941, Pritam Singh concluded an agreement with a Japanese military officer, Fuzihara in which Japan agreed to recognise Indian Independence as well as make efforts to bring Subhas to the

Far East from Berlin. On 9th December 1941, the day after Pearl Harbour, Pritam Singh announced the formation of Independent League of India. As the Japanese overran the British possessions in the Far East, several Indians became prisoners of war.

One of them was Captain Mohan Singh, a nationalist Indian army officer who hated his arrogant White superiors. Pritam Singh was able to convert him to the national cause by 1st January 1942. Azad Hind Fauj, Indian National Army (INA) now began to shape. The fall of Singapore on 15th February led to capture of 40,000 Indian prisoners. It is from these that Mohan Singh was able to seek recruits to the INA. On 9th March a conference was held in Singapore for Indian representatives Malay and Thailand. This was a precursor to another conference in Tokyo to be held on 28th March 1942 under the Chairmanship of Ras Bihari Bose. Pritam Singh unfortunately died in an air crash while on his way to Tokyo. Finally a summit Conference was held in Bangkok from 15th June 1942. This was attended by representatives of Indians from all parts of the Far East as well as political representatives of Japan, Germany and Thailand. A message from Subhas was read out at this meet. The Conference marked the pinnacle of the achievement of Ras Bihari Bose. Indian Independence League was formally inaugurated with a definite constitution. The object of the League was complete and immediate attainment of independence of India. Fittingly, he was elected by the Conference as its head. Meanwhile, the work of forming of INA had proceeded apace. It was formally established on 1st September 1942 with Bose as its President and Mohan Singh as its Commander in Chief.

The conclusion of the Bangkok conference was marked by the efforts of the League to obtain a formal acceptance by the Japanese rulers of Indian Independence. This they fought shy of doing. It would be churlish to attribute this only to the desire of Japanese to dominate all other Asian societies. The fact remains that no *Contemporary Prominent* Indian had so far left India for Japan to seek their military help for the Indian cause. Subhas was in Berlin and therefore an unknown element. Mohan Singh's credentials were suspect as a former POW could not be expected to command much respect merely because he had turned against his previous employers. Ras Bihari Bose was more of a Japanese than Indian and now commanded little following in India. For the Japanese, it was reasonable to doubt if the Indians really wanted their Independence badly enough. It appeared to them India was a Slave nation and deserved to be one.

The Officers of the INA were not prepared to tolerate arrogant behaviour of the Japanese. If no prominent Indian leader was joining them, it could hardly be their fault. Matters reached a head in December 1942. The Japanese refusal to hand over the Indian POWs to the INA - the defense wing of the League; was bitterly resented by Mohan Singh and his friends. They disbanded the INA and were soon arrested by the Japanese. Like his friend Savarkar in India, Ras Bihari Bose had to face a peculiar situation. He could see the logic of Mohan Singh's arguments but this was war. Japan had the power to help them fight the British. It was foolish to antagonize them. With a heavy heart, he accepted the resignation of Mohan Singh and revoked his order to disband the INA. From January 1943 to June 1943, he was in the unhappy situation of being man solely in-charge of keeping the fire of freedom going in the Far East. And this he did resolutely.

Like Savarkar in India, who was taunted as Recruitment Veer, Ras Bihari Bose had to suffer the burden of carrying the cross of being called a Japanese collaborator. In a narrow sense their detractors were right. But their actions were driven by unadulterated love of their motherland. Their personal reputation mattered little to them if it came in the way of their service to the motherland. That was their greatness.

With arrival of Netaji in Japan, the revolutionary fire became bright. His elder, Ras Bihari had given him everything he could have wanted – on a platter. On hand was an organisation dedicated to the cause of Absolute Political Independence of India – The Indian Independence League with activists all over the Far East. There was the INA – its' armed wing capable of striking a decisive blow to the British. Moreover there was the support of a major military power in the world – Japan. More he could not have asked for. No doubt there were plenty of problems. The League had suffered in prestige due to the Mohan Singh episode. INA was poorly equipped and was being primarily used as a propaganda material by the Japanese. The support of Japan was far from complete with an eye on ensuring its own dominance. Subhas was never the one to be afraid of problems. There was one thing he feared and that was Idleness. Ras Bihari had ensured that whatever else he may suffer from, Idleness would not haunt Subhas. Now in his avatar as the Netaji, he was going to strike terror in the British heart. This was one Congress leader who really acted on its resolution of 'Do or Die'

Netaji as Subhas was to be henceforth known was quick to carry out a comprehensive reorganisation of the INA. Intensive training of six months was made available to all newcomers before being absorbed in INA. Taking inspiration from the legendary queen of Jhansi – Laxmibai who had made life miserable for the British in 1857, he opened a regiment for the women. They were not to be considered as the Weaker Sex in INA. Defying gloomy predictions, 156 dedicated girls came forward to enlist. Today, all kinds of beauty contests are being conducted to select the so called Miss Universe or the Miss World – who then become role models for the young impressionable minds. It is worthwhile to remember if the Real Miss Universe is to be selected, it would have to be from the ranks of these 156 girls or those of similar stock. Those willing to court death for the cause of their nation – not those willing to parade half naked in front of a leering audience parroting glib answers.

The British Indian Army took great care to organise their regiments along regional and religious lines. This had nothing to do with military logic but had everything to do with the British need to perpetuate divisions amongst the Indians. Such divisions ensured that they could never unite against their British masters. Unity of purpose was of paramount importance in the INA. Netaji well recognised this and therefore made sure that such artificial divisions do not plague the Indian National Army. Nor did he stop with this. The food served to all was the same. The Sikhs ate only the flesh of an animal killed in one stroke while the Muslims maintained that they could eat flesh of only those animals which had been bled to death. Netaji made sure that the nationalist feelings overrode such communal differences in eating habits. In an era, when the Indian mainland appeared heading towards a Communal divisions, the Muslims and Sikhs of the INA were overcoming their religious concerns and eating together. An army however dedicated

could not live on empty stomach. Netaji knew this well enough. He therefore took to appealing to the patriotic sentiments of the Indians settled in the Far East. An appeal that received an overwhelming response across the regional and religious divisions. One of the biggest contributors was a Muslim – one Habib, who donated all his wealth amounting to more than Rs 10 million.

With a better organised League, Netaji was now in a position to demand that the Japanese now recognise it as the Provisional Government of India in Exile. A public meeting was held at Cathay Hall in Singapore on 21st October 1943. A hysterical crowd thronged to cheer the formation of the Provisional Government. This Government won diplomatic recognition of nine countries. Prominent amongst them being Japan, Germany and Italy. On 6th November, the Japanese Premier announced that Japan would hand over the Indian Islands of Andaman and Nicobar to the Provisional Indian Government. Netaji paid a visit to these islands on 29th December 1943 and paid his homage to those unfortunate revolutionary comrades whose bones littered the precincts. He also paid a visit to the cell where Savarkar was incarcerated for over ten years. Netaji named these islands as Shahid and Swaraj. The Indian mainland was now within the eyesight.

Unrelenting pressure by Netaji led to Japan opening a campaign to attack the Eastern India. The extreme north eastern Indian cities of Imphal and Kohima were to be the goal of the military expedition authorised on 31st December 1943 by the Japanese Premier. The launch of the attack had in many senses come too late. The Japanese influence had been checked in 1942 itself and was clearly on the wane in 1943. This was to be its last ditch attempt to extend its Far Eastern influence into the mainland India. Nevertheless, the attempt came close to success. Too close for the British comfort. The Japanese who reached the outskirts of Kohima were beaten back by the overwhelming air superiority of the American planes. By 22nd June 1944, the Japanese were trekking back home, squarely defeated. With them went back the Netaji's hopes of military conquest of India.

The Japanese were not alone in this fight. The INA was by this time 20,000 strong but only 10,000 were sent on the front. The Japanese refused to allow more than 6,000 to be actually involved in fighting but even these were not allowed to fight together as a Unit. They were split into 12 divisions and placed under the Japanese command. Some of them fought with ferocious bravery and even succeeded in planting the Indian tricolor flag on Indian soil on 21st March 1943. Not all were so committed. Of the 6,000, some 2,600 returned from the front. 1,500 died of hunger and diseases. 800 were captured as POWs where as 715 deserted to the British ranks. The rest 400 died in the War. The Japanese losses exceeded 50,000 soldiers as against 16,700 of the Allied forces. From outskirts of Kohima in June 1944, the INA was forced to retreat first to Rangoon and then to Bangkok with the Japanese, fighting, losing, suffering desertions and heavy losses along the way. In the Japanese society with its preoccupation with victory and defeat to the exclusion of everything else, the Imphal campaign did not enhance the reputation of the INA. Neither did the failure of Indians to rise in revolt against the British, when the INA was at its gate fail to leave its mark. The enthusiasm for the Indian Independence that was never too great, touched its nadir.

The debacle of Imphal was closely followed by serious reverses in the Pacific, where the Japanese lost 480 aircrafts, most of them with crews and three aircraft carriers in June 1944 during the battle of Philippines Seas. Faced with such defeats, General Tojo's Government resigned on 18th July 1944 to be replaced by General Koiso. The new government was too busy to stave off defeat to pay any heed to Netaji's plea for reopening the Imphal front. In any case the British offensive in Arakan that began on 31st December 1944 put an end to such dreams. Poor Ras Bihari died a heart broken man on 21st January 1945.

Defeat stared in face but Netaji refused to give up. Even the surrender of Japan refused to kill his spirits. He made new plans. Of seeking refuge in Russia and continuing the struggle. He remained convinced that the unity between British and the Soviets was unnatural and motivated only by the fear of Hitler. With Hitler dead, they were bound to fall apart. Accordingly, he took off from Bangkok on 16th August 1945. He is said to have died in an air crash on 18th August at Taipei.

The British had taken the INA threat very seriously fearing with good reason that its appeal might entice its front line troops to change their loyalties. The INA infiltrators were considered serious security threat – again with good reason. Counter propaganda had to be concocted but the British could not take liberties like the Americans, who had promised victory over Japan would bring Burma peace and freedom. The British anxious to maintain their Empire wanted to make no such promises. The Colonial Office even protested against this promise of Independence but found it overruled by the Foreign Office which was anxious to keep the Americans in good humor. The British therefore rested content with talking of Josh (Zeal) programme for the Indian army designed to encourage positive spirit in the troops. Thus steer away from the need to make any comments on the post war political developments. Even excessive vilification of Germans was not done to avoid backlash against the white race in general. References to war being waged for freedom and democracy were deliberately circumspect.

At the end of the War, the British found themselves having 23,000 INA troops on their hands. All could have technically been shot for desertion. Stupidity was never a British vice. These POWs were therefore carefully examined. 4,000 were found to be innocents. Those who intended to escape from the INA as soon as possible. This still left 19,000 – a sizeable number. 13,000 were therefore considered the 'Greys' – who believed in the cause of INA by being misled. Some misleading this to make these people keep on being loyal to a cause that was facing sure defeat since June 1944. They were left off with a light punishment. Try as they may, the British found no ground to whittle the hard core believers in INA below 6,000. These dirty Indians had to be hanged and made a horrible example. As they tried to do so, they suddenly realized that Netaji may have been no more but his legacy remained to haunt them. His spirit remained alive and kicking. The Congress came to the same realization and moved quickly to appropriate him.

Destiny was taking its revenge on the Gandhi Congress. Subhas alive could be spurned, thrown out but a Dead Netaji had but to be revered – for people would not tolerate anything less. A fascinating story that we shall now study.

The Indian National Army (INA) and Bharatiya Independence

The outbreak of the War in 1939 had made it clear to the British that once the War ended, there was no way they could hold on to power in India in the same manner as before. India had become far too politically restive. The first debate in the House of Commons on India on 26 October 1939 following the outbreak of the War had speakers openly voicing views that real power would need to be transferred to Indian hands **within 12 months** of the end of War. A position that His Majesty's Government itself accepted in the Cripps Mission proposals of April 1942 which envisaged setting up of a Constituent Assembly immediately on cessation of hostilities. An offer that was hedged with too many Ifs and Buts to be acceptable to any shade of popular opinion in India but the point was driven forcefully home. In 1929, Irwin had spoken of Dominion Status for India as the *Purpose* of British presence in India, carefully keeping it away from the realms of *Policy*. By 1942, the British had been forced to concede that Dominion Status for India would be the *Policy* of His Majesty's Government in the post war era.

If there were any illusions left, they were shattered by the intensity of popular anger in 1942. The Quit India Movement had not been confined to One Day token strike envisaged by Gandhi. His ringing words – Kareng or Mareng, Do or Die had been taken to heart by the people if not by his own Congress High Command. With all odds stacked against success, the people had cast their fear aside in a manner that had been truly frightening to the Raj and sobered the Congress High Command. Hence forth there was to no way anyone in India could dream of carrying out the struggle against the Raj in a leisurely manner by Token Strikes. People were going to hit and hit hard. Realizing this the Gandhi Congress was now going to make efforts to contain the popular outrage against the British and not seek to fan it. Well aware that the Fire could well devour them along with the British.

This was evident in the utterances of Gandhi upon his release on 6 May 1944. Giving up the call for Do or Die, he now spoke of not offering Civil Disobedience since 1944 was not 1942 – whatever that meant. He called upon the British to hand over power to the Indians by formation of a national government responsible for civil administration. The Gandhi demand was contemptuously rejected without a squeak of protest. For the Gandhi Congress, *Kareng or Mareng* had died with the martyrs of Quit India Movement.

The British were too painfully aware that the spirit of *Kareng or Mareng* may have died for the Gandhi Congress but it lived on in India. The fire may have died down but the smoldering embers could burst into flames at any moment. The events of 1942 had shown how tenacious their hold on India had become. Now the wretched Bengali who had caused them no end of trouble ever since his refusal to join the coveted Raj services, Subhas was lurking across the border. The Japanese may have been driven back from Imphal in June 1944 but the Netaji led INA had captured the minds and hearts of ordinary Indians. Their aura grew even as they trekked further and further away from Indian borders. The sufferings and privations they endured enhanced their popular appeal.

INA may have been in a military terms a rag tag force of 20,000 men and women. It may not have passed the Samurai code of honour calling upon those who were defeated to commit *hara kiri* but their threat to the British Raj in India was very real. In sheer numbers, they represented as much as 10% of the peace time strength of Indian army. To the British, they were the scoundrels, who had overcome every taboo in the Indian society, every division that had helped them to rule India. Even as Jinnah and Gandhi bickered over the terms of Hindu-Muslim settlement, the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims soldiers in the INA dined and died together. Savarkar had spoken of 1857 as the time when the Hindu-Muslim War had ended. Now there was no need to look so much back in time. Even in 1944, quarter of century after Gandhi injected the venom of Khilafat politics in the Indian polity, the Hindus and Muslim were fighting together against the British. Joining them were the Sikhs, who had since the days of Gadar Party had wiped clean the stigma of 1857. The numbers of the INA, sizeable as they were, were not the only concern of the British. The very idea they represented that the Hindu, Muslims and Sikhs could join together in vast brotherhood was the very antithesis of what constituted the foundation of the British Raj in India. INA was no longer a mere idea, it was a living reality. Netaji had seen to that.

Alive to the danger of an explosive situation that could eradicate the British interests in India, the Viceroy fully supported by the Commander-in Chief, the Home Member, the eleven provincial governors represented to the War Cabinet in September 1944, on the need to make an early move to satisfy Indian aspirations, at least in a small measure. The Viceroy, Lord Wavell was proposing that :

- A Conference of Leaders be called to discuss the formation of a national government.
- Establish in near future, a national government in India with representatives of major political parties.
- The national government be a step towards Dominion status for India.

The simple minded soldier that Wavell had apparently taken the Cripps proposals at their face value and sought to improve them in a bid to make them more palatable to the Indians. The proposal appeared to have no scope for maintaining any residual British influence in India. Their loyal pets, the Indian princes were being thrown to the nationalist dogs. Nor had the stupid soldier taken care to ensure that the best British minds be also an integral part of the Indian Government being *Racial minorities* in India. With such major lacunae, no wonder that the proposals were rejected out of hand by the War Cabinet. For my innocent friends, the Deputy Prime Minister, Clement Attlee fully supported the Cabinet and was in fact one of the principal actors in rejecting the Wavell recommendations.

The dogged Wavell refused to take a No for an answer and insisted on being heard. He therefore pressed the Cabinet to allow him to return to London, a suggestion that was not welcomed.

In India, political maneuvering continued unabated. Gandhi encouraged the Congress leader Bhulabhai Desai to come to terms with Jinnah regarding formation of a

Government at the Center in which the Congress and the League were to have a 40% representation each with the balance 20% being kept aside for other minorities. The proposal meant that the Congress was to repudiate its August 1942 resolution of Quit India. Desai's bid for power came to a naught when both Gandhi and Jinnah disowned their support. This story is best read elsewhere. What is interesting is that Desai had insisted that his colleagues then in Jail be released only **after the Government was formed**. Such was the depth that the Congressmen were now willing to sink to.

The British reactions to these proposals were no less illuminating. When the Viceroy forwarded the outline of the Desai-Jinnah proposal, the British establishment in London saw red. They were horrified to find that Wavell was proposing that in future the Viceroy was to rest content with accepting in his Council, the persons that the Indians nominated. The Cabinet appeared unanimous in their view that this would result in their accepting the principle of Parliamentary Executive at the Centre in India – a prospect that was clearly unwelcome.

Wavell became increasingly impatient at the delay in being invited to London. On 12th March 1945, he sent a telegram to the Secretary of State commenting:

“I really must know soon when H.M. Government is prepared to receive me. I see no occasion to wait for Jinnah's recovery (**he is said to have pleurisy**) and I have (?decided) in any event not to see Desai again before coming home.”

The so called best kept secret of Jinnah's terminal illness was a fact that was well known to the British establishment *since March 1945*. The telegram seemed to have annoyed Attlee and he informed the Secretary of State that the Viceroy could not be called home till about June. It appears that the soldier in Wavell threatened to resign, whereupon an ingenious solution was found. He was invited to come back immediately but made to cool his heels till May. Wavell, who finally got to visit London on 23rd March 1945, returned to Delhi on 4th June and finally made an announcement about holding a Leader's Conference in Simla for the purpose of forming a national government, one in which the British would continue to hold decisive power.

Netaji was as yet still alive. From Singapore, he pointed out in a broadcast on 20th June that the Wavell Declaration made no mention of Independence. Swaraj, he angrily reminded his Congress colleagues was not limited to Indianisation of the Executive Council of the Viceroy. He therefore called upon Indians to protest against the Wavell scheme on 5th July 1945. The Gandhi Congress had no answer to the biting question that he raised - ‘Why were they (the Congress) prepared to attend the Simla Conference. What happened to Do or Die Resolution?’ The voice of Subhas always very inconvenient now became intolerable. He had to be silenced and quickly. This is exactly what happened in next two months. Very very conveniently!

The cruel hand of death was to remove this brightest star in the Indian polity from the center-stage. For too long the Indians have refused to accept that Netaji died on 18th August 1945 in air crash and kept pining for his return. It is time that we look at another

aspect. Not whether he died in this accident but something far more serious. Did he die or was he murdered? It appears that a British spy, Agent 1189 had penetrated the INA's high Command and even accompanied him on his last journey. According to this agent, the destination of Netaji was Yunnan in China, where he wanted to set up a base with the assistance of Chinese Communists. This agent's report appears to have convinced the British that their dreaded foe was indeed dead. If the British could plant their agent so close to Netaji that he could even accompany him in the last journey, it is not difficult to imagine that they could also silence his very inconvenient voice. It is after all not very difficult to arrange for a bomb to fitted under an airplane engine. Who was this agent 1189? It can be only one of the twelve people who flew with Netaji in that fateful flight. Ten were Japanese, two including Netaji were Indians. The other Indian was Habibur Rehman, who is known to have survived the crash.

Accident or murder, death or as the folklore goes imprisonment in Russia, what ever was the truth; the fact remains a Voice that was full of unadulterated Patriotism, A Voice that was most inconvenient to the Gandhi Congress was heard no more after 18th August 1945. This was a tragedy of the highest order – of this there can be no doubt.

By 14th July 1945, the failure of Simla Conference stared at the face of participants. Wavell's efforts floundered at the defiance of Jinnah and his contempt to have anything to do with the Gandhi Congress. Jinnah has been roundly criticised by all and sundry in India for his obdurate attitude. Wavell has similarly been rebuked for giving Jinnah a veto. No doubt there is some truth in this.

What passes comprehension is the lack of debate at any great length on the decision of Gandhi Congress to attend the Simla Conference. Once it had crossed the Rubicon and demanded that British should Quit India on 8th August 1942, it had no business to attend any meeting with the British to discuss anything other than grant of Immediate Independence. This certainly was not on offer at Simla.

Much had happened since August 1942. Not the least of which was the manner in which the millions had been done to death by hunger in Bengal by the British. The cruel deliberate policies by which the financing of the war was done in complete disregard to its impact on the local population. Leave alone anything else, not even an apology for the Bengal famine deaths was on offer at Simla.

There was alone one reason other than grant of Independence that needed any discussions with the British and that was the early repayment of the Sterling Balances, India's loan to the British. Even this was not on the Simla agenda.

So what were our friends in Gandhi Congress worthies doing at Simla in the first place? They were there only to make a grab for power. To set in motion the process of Betrayal.

Now, we will follow through with the developments right till the time Nehru was successful in grabbing the reins of power on 15th August 1947. We have at our disposal, every single paper that was placed for consideration of the British Cabinet. Every single

record of discussions on the subject in the British Cabinet. We will use only two simple criterion in making evaluation.

- Were the British under a Labour Administration making any real effort to give India Absolute Political Independence? For nothing else was ever acceptable to the revolutionaries. For the Indian people themselves were now not willing to settle for anything less. Every drop of blood that any revolutionary shed anywhere in the cause of his/her nation in the long saga of freedom from 1857 to 1945 now demanded retribution. No person, however great could come in the way of Indian Independence. Dominion status that in 1928 was acceptable to Congress was a Dirty and Dead word.
- Were the British under a Labour Administration making any amends for the bad old ways of their Tory predecessors? The famine dead in Bengal demanded justice. They demanded that their deaths should not be in vain. How could this be ? One real way was to ensure that the British debt to India be immediately settled on a commercial basis. Let us concede for a second that India needed to be generous in her settlement with the British. Surely she could not be more generous than the Americans, the richest country in the world. So what could India accept in case of her forced lending? The amount at this point was, the readers would recall a sum of Rs 15,070 or £ 1,130 million. The most India could do was to be as generous as the Americans had been or:
 - The forced lending had to stop immediately in the same manner as the American Lend-Lease had on 2nd September 1945 with cessation of hostilities
 - The loan had to be denominated in US \$ terms, as Sterling was now a worthless currency. Thus the Indian loan was actually US \$ 4,520 million.
 - The loan had to carry an interest rate of 6% p.a. Since Indian government itself was paying a 3% on the money it borrowed to lend to the British, the British obligation was to pay at least an additional 3% interest.
 - The loan needed collateral. In other words, the British investments overseas worth US \$ 4,520 needed to be pledged to the Indian Government with it (India) having first charge on the income of such securities towards repayment of the loan principle.
 - The duration of repayment could be spread over 15 years.

The astute readers would recall that the British Chancellor of Exchequer had been overcome with joy on 22nd July 1941, when the United States of America had given a loan of a mere US \$ 425 million on precisely these terms. Here was India prepared to be as generous in respect of an amount 10 times greater. The British should have been kissing the feet of Indians in gratitude. What a hope!!

Any real British move towards Political and Economic settlement on the lines outlined above needed discussions with the British on details. Communal settlement would follow. If these were not on offer, forget discussions, there was no question of even entering a room where the British were sitting. British obduracy on these matters could be fought only with Do or Die struggle. In the same manner as 10,000 people, who had laid down their lives in 1942. In the same manner as Netaji and his INA soldiers done. There was no room for prevarication. No room for compromise. It is on these parameters that we shall judge the actions of Gandhi Congress during the period that followed up to 15th August 1947.

Did the Labour Party ever make a Real and Sincere offer to settle the issue with the Indian leaders ? A Real and Sincere offer had to pass the twin test of Political and Economic Settlement as defined earlier on. Let us see.

Following the failure of Simla Conference which took place as the British electorate was in the middle of giving the boot to Churchill, the first time the Indian matter came up for discussions before the Labour Government was on 20th August 1945. The Secretary of State had recommended that Viceroy be authorised to hold Provincial and Central elections be held as a step to formation of the Constituent Assembly. This Assembly was an essential part of India being granted Dominion Status. Independence was not even mentioned.

The Cabinet agreed to hold the elections but refused to talk about the formation of Constituent Assembly. Wavell was called back to London on 24th August for consultation. On 11th September 1945, the Cabinet grudgingly agreed to announce the intention of the HMG to convene the Constituent Assembly, the authority of which was to be limited by drawing up of a treaty between Great Britain and India. Thus, the British appeared to be in hurry to even consider the grant of Dominion status to India at an early date. The leisurely pace could have continued as in the past but now it was not Gandhi, who set the pace. It was the spirit of Netaji which in charge. That made all the difference. The realization rudely dawned on the British Government in its cabinet meeting of the 27th November 1945.

The announcement to hold elections and the decision to hold the trials of INA prisoners came more or less at the same time. Neither Nehru nor Congress had ever expressed much enthusiasm for the INA. Nehru had gone to the extent of saying that he himself would lead an armed resistance to Subhas should he succeed in reaching India with the Japanese. Now, the Congress, as indeed all other parties realised that INA had become a national symbol. To support the British INA trials was to invite political oblivion. All the political parties duly jumped into the fray for their defense. To the growing horror of the British, they found that an ill trained, ill equipped INA was easier to take on in the jungles of Burma. The public trials of its officers in the famed Red Fort was quite an another matter. It was giving rise to emotions that no one could control. Emotions that threatened to destroy the Raj. The British, the Gandhi Congress, the League all struggled to contain the fall out of the INA trials for their own petty purposes. None to promote the cause of an independent secular India.

The INA trials began formally on the 5th November 1945. The popular outrage forced the major political parties to call for an INA week to be celebrated in protest. At stake were the lives of three INA officers, Shah Nawaz Khan, a Muslim, Prem Sehgal, a Hindu and Gurubax Singh Dhillion, a Sikh. The Bharatiya people saw through the crude British game of appearing to be even handed forcing their quarrelling political leaders to join hands. The popular agitation reached dangerous levels when for the first time in the history of freedom struggle, the Forward Block, Congress, the Muslim League and the Communists joined hands to participate in street level agitation. This miracle took place in Calcutta on 21st November. Anthony Read had thus described what followed:

“A lathi charge was met with brickbats and stones, whereupon the police opened fire, killing two students and wounding 33. Calcutta Corporation employees were already on strike for more pay and many of them, especially Communist-led transport workers took to the streets in support of the students. Sikh taxi-drivers and workers at many factories joined in. Cars, buses and lorries were set on fire, barricades thrown across streets, trains stopped by crowds. It took two days to restore order, by which time police had been forced to open fire 14 times, killing another 33 people and injuring some 200. Seventy British and 27 American soldiers were also injured and 150 police and army vehicles were destroyed.”

The events in Calcutta came as no surprise to Wavell. They only corroborated his assessment communicated to the Secretary of State on 6th November that:

“We are now faced in India with a situation of great difficulty and danger....they (Congress) have now passed to a disclosure of their programme, which is briefly, to contest elections, to serve an ultimatum on His Majesty's Government, and, in default of its acceptance, to organise a mass movement on the 1942 lines but on a much larger scale....either there is a secret policy which includes use of force or the more extreme leaders are out of control...Patel said: ‘Congress was not going to sit quiet after the elections and wait for the convenience and pleasure of the British Government. The Congress would demand immediate and final solution..’, Nehru said a day earlier that: ‘revolution is inevitable’....I believe that the Congress are counting on the INA as the spearhead of their revolt...The object of the rising the Congress leaders have in mind would be the expulsion of the British....**I must accordingly, with the greatest gravity warn His Majesty's Government to be prepared for a serious attempt by the Congress, probably next spring but quite possibly earlier, to subvert by force the present administration in India....**The main Congress demand would, I suppose be the grant of immediate independence to India....”

The Viceroy therefore asked for an assurance that HMG would not surrender to the Congress Ultimatum for grant of Independence. He also sought approval to use heavy hand with such measures as declaring martial law over greater parts of the country, which he felt were necessary to crush the Congress revolt. At the same time, he cautioned HMG against moving to prematurely curb the Congress as he felt that in the inflamed atmosphere prevailing in the country, it would prove to be a case of Cure being worse than the Disease.

In this report there is something that is quite revealing. He recorded his conversation with Nehru on the 3rd November 1945. The INA trials were to begin on the 5th November. Nehru was personally a member of the defense lawyer team but INA did not seem to be on his mind. For the Viceroy laconically noted:

“He did not mention the INA nor did I”

So much for Nehru’s professed concern for the INA. The Viceroy’s letter was reviewed by India and Burma Committee on the 19th November. The Committee advised the Secretary of State that the Viceroy should be instructed to rope in the services of Mr. Gandhi in the hope that he would be able to ‘exercise a moderating influence on the Congress leaders’. Never had the Unholy Alliance of Mr. Gandhi with the British been put on the paper with more brutal honesty than this. Moderating influence to seek what? Dilute the demand for Immediate Independence!! The Committee also felt that while there was to be no question of giving in to a Congress Ultimatum, the Viceroy had to take into account the fact that:

‘Congress after the elections in all probability be the majority party and it would not be possible to treat them an irresponsible party claiming power’.

Never was Independence so near. The trials of the INA had changed the mood of the country totally. The Iron frame of the Raj, the coveted Civil and Police services were now largely in the Indian hands, who were increasingly worried about the prospect of facing new national political masters after the British were expelled. They were in no position to curb the popular anger. It is this realisation that forced the Viceroy to tread gingerly against the Congress. All that the Gandhi Congress was to do was to issue an Ultimatum and the anger of the people would have ripped apart the Raj. A reality well understood by the India and Burma Committee which was forced to conclude that Congress which it knew was demanding immediate Independence, preaching violence was not to be treated as an irresponsible party.

The grave situation brought to the notice of the British Cabinet was discussed in the Cabinet on 27th November. The contents were considered Top Secret, so secret that the records of discussions were not circulated even to the Cabinet members but recorded in the Secretary’s Standard File of Cabinet Conclusions. The discussions were quite acrimonious but no one had any better solution to offer. HMG had no choice but to announce in the House of Lords on 4th December 1945 that Dominion Status for India was an Immediate Goal.

It had taken nearly ten years, from 1929 to 1940, for the Dominion Status to move from *Purpose* to *Policy*. All it took was less than a month of the INA trials for the *Policy* to become an *Immediate Policy*. Netaji’s soul could not have been happy. His fight was for Absolute Political Independence not Dominion Status of any variety. This was still not forthcoming.

The Congress has a lot of explaining to do to the nation. First the criminal delay from the resolution at Ramgarh in March 1940 to finally launching Quit India Movement in August 1942. Two and a half wasted years. Now from November 1945 to August 1947. What was the Congress waiting for? Why did the Congress fight shy of restarting the Quit India Movement? The Congress duo, Nehru and Patel breathed fire but failed to act in keeping with their own pronouncements. How come Gandhi's moderating influence so successful that the Congress kept on compromising on the basic issue of *Absolute Political Independence*?

The results of the elections to the Central Legislative Assembly were held. The results shattered whatever illusions that the Congress had about its support base amongst the Muslims. Riding on the crest of popular enthusiasm generated by the INA trials, the Congress secured 91.3% of votes cast in Non-Muslim constituencies. The Muslim League won 86.6% of the Muslim votes. The so called nationalist Muslims were routed. The two nation theory accepted by Savarkar, Jinnah and Ambedkar was vindicated. What was needed was a Netaji to point out that while the Hindus and Muslims had many differences, there were also issues that united them in defense of their common motherland. Even if they constituted two nations, it did not necessarily mean that the Will to Live together had dissolved. What was needed was pragmatic handling, acceptance of fair share of power. What Congress offered was moralistic preaching, intense personal dislike of Jinnah, a compliment he returned in full measure and less than honest struggle to achieve its own stated goal – Absolute Political Independence. Neither was it honestly fighting the British to achieve its own stated goal – Absolute Political Independence nor was it honestly trying to make a settlement with the Muslims.

Tilak, whose memories Jinnah even now cherished was long no more. Savarkar was ailing and did not command popular backing. Netaji who could have effectively united the two warring nations, had been removed from the national scene. The seeds of a gigantic tragedy were being sown. Partition was becoming a distinct reality but the horrors of accompanying communal holocaust were not yet foreordained.

By January 1946, the Indian problem had assumed serious dimensions. Ever since the start of the INA trial, the British were living in dread of the possibility that they would be expelled from India by force. How long could they count on the 'moderating influence of Mr. Gandhi to hold their position? HMG had to take matters in their own hands. It had after all never been the British policy to depend on any one individual. On 22nd January 1946, the British Cabinet decided to send three ministers of Cabinet rank to visit India and work out a settlement of the Indian question in a manner most consistent with the British interests.

The primary British interest was very clear. It was clear to them by now that the days of the Raj were over. The Indian people were not going to tolerate them any longer. Now, the choice was only between a Dignified retreat, making a virtue out of a necessity or an Ignominious ejection. The British were naturally most keen to avoid a debilitating reverse. For if, they were to suffer such a reverse, their day of reckoning in Egypt, Palestine, Middle East, Burma, Ceylon, Malaya; indeed in all parts of the world where

the British were present; would have arrived all too soon. Not only was India one of their biggest Creditors but also home to a major portion of their remaining Overseas investments. Its revenues were paying salaries and pensions of a large number of Britons. The social implications of such an expulsion on the domestic society were issues of serious concern. If it meant tying up the time of three of its most senior ministers, it was well worth the trouble.

1946 was a trying time. Not only was India threatening to go up in anti British flame but the spectre of famine also haunted the Raj. In the meanwhile Lord Keynes was once again pointing out that the British coffers were empty and called upon the Cabinet to deal with this reality that would not go away.

India exploded in February 1946. Massive demonstrations were held in Calcutta on 11th February 1946 following conviction of an INA officer- Abdul Rashid. The student alliance representing the entire spectrum of political ideologies, the Congress, the Muslim League and the Communist once again took to the streets. Communist Labour Unions also joined in. A virtual Martial Law was proclaimed in the city. By 14th February, more than 200 people had been killed in police firing. Dacca witnessed strikes from 13th to 18th February. A wave of unrest, a feeling of intense anger against the British was rippling across the nation. The long simmering unrest in the Indian armed forces broke out with naval mutiny in Bombay on 18th February which later spread to Karachi. Union Jack was torn down in ports across the country and the Congress, League and Communist flags were flown in its place. The Airforce stations also witnessed serious disturbances. In the five days that the ratings held out in defiance in Bombay, it was now the turn of the civilians to turn violently anti British. Strikes were organized through out the city to demonstrate sympathy with the Mutineers. In an attempt to bring the situation under control, the Police and Military went beserk. Over 200 people were mowed down in the city. Repercussions of this brutal action were felt across the nation.

It now appeared that the end of the Raj was in sight. Events seemed to prove the prophecy of the Viceroy on the 6th November 1945 that the Congress would make a serious attempt to attain Independence at the earliest by the Spring of 1946. The nation waited with bated breath to hear the call to renew the Quit India Movement struggle. If there was a moment to make amends for the *Foolish and Inopportune* Challenge of August 1942, certainly February 1946 was the moment. The nation waited in vain. The moment came and went unheeded. Where the Viceroy seems to have gravely erred was in his assessment of the inner working of the Congress – the capacity of Gandhi to ‘exercise a moderating influence on the Congress leaders’. Thus it was true that a section of the Congress was certainly most anxious to demand and attain Independence fully supported by the people. It was also true that this section did not constitute the Congress High Command led by Gandhi, which in fact appeared to be working at cross purposes with those demanding full and immediate Independence. The Muslim League seemed to be suffering from the same disease.

The explosion of popular outrage over the continuing British rule in India seemed to have a curious impact on the principal political parties, the Congress and the League. They appeared shaken to find that their influence over the people seemed to count for little. To their eternal shame, they seemed to join the ranks to curb and not promote the popular enthusiasm for Independence. Jinnah told the Muslim seamen to lay down the arms, while Gandhi chided them for setting a bad example to the nation. For once, the famously antagonist duo seemed to be of one mind.

The Raj continued to exercise power in India but for how long would it be able to do so was something that was not clear – not even to itself.

Chapter IV-6

Mother of All Betrayals

The Cabinet Mission (March 1946-June 1946)

The British Cabinet started making preparations to send its three Cabinet Ministers to India as had been decided on the 22nd January 1946, in what has come to be known as the Cabinet Mission. Proposed Directives to the Cabinet Mission were circulated to the Cabinet on 7th March 1946 under express instructions that no Cabinet Minister was to retain a copy after the meeting took place on the 8th March. The Secretary of the Cabinet had been directed to recover all the copies. What has been so secret that none outside the charmed circle of the British Cabinet of 1946 was allowed set his eyes on this document for fifty years? The reason is easy to see once we acquaint ourselves with this document. For it also contains the explanation on the genesis of the conflict between India and Pakistan that continues to this very day. Let us get straight to the facts.

It has been the corner stone of the Indian belief that it was Jinnah, who was given the power of Veto to block all progress towards Independence, a veto that he so skillfully used to ensure formation of Pakistan. Paragraph 2 of the proposed directive explodes this myth straightaway. It reads:

- 2 “You should pay every attention to the claims and anxieties of minority parties, and do your utmost to obtain their consent to any agreement. But you are authorised to come to an agreement within the terms of this Directive with those whom you consider to represent best the views of the major political parties and provinces, and the Government will be prepared to take the necessary steps to give effect to the arrangements so come to.”

Poor Jinnah. Far from being given any Veto, the British were quite prepared to ditch him. They knew well, he had no love lost for them. He may have hated Gandhi but that did not mean, he wanted to perpetuate the British rule in India. The dislike it appears was mutual. This part of the proposed Directive was evidence of British acceptance of the fact that at this time, it was Congress which held all the cards. It alone had the organisation capable of reaching out into the nook and corners of the country. The deal, if any had to have the consent of the Congress even if that from the minorities was not forthcoming.

What was the deal that could be of any interest to the Congress. One that included Absolute Political Independence and Commercial settlement of the Indian loan. In 1946, there was one more factor – the pressing need to avoid reoccurrence of the famine. We have already seen the callous manner in which the British treated the matter of avoiding the famine. Let us see the manner in which the Cabinet Mission was to deal with the other two issues. Paragraph 5 is illuminating.

- 5 You have the liberty to say that His Majesty's Government will be prepared to recommend to Parliament any constitutional arrangement for granting of independence and self-government to India, provided that it incorporates the following cardinal points:
- (a) Some form of protection must be included either by constitutional or treaty provisions for protection of religious and racial minorities.
 - (b) Satisfactory provision must be made for the defense of India and the Indian Ocean area.
 - (c) Paramountcy must not be handed over to an Indian Government.
 - (d) Satisfactory means must be devised for winding up the financial position of India and Great Britain arising out of the present regime."

The British did not leave anything to chance. So during the discussions on the proposed directives, which were approved in toto; in the Cabinet on 8th March 1946, the Cabinet Mission was left in no doubt in respect of winding (not winding) of the financial position.

The Secretary of State clarified that the financial settlement covered issues like payment of civil and military pensions and disposal of India's accumulated sterling balances. The Prime Minister made it amply clear that 'there was no question of offering at this stage any concession on the financial side in order to secure a political settlement'. He need not have bothered. The thought of asking for such a linkage did not cross the minds of the Indian political elite, far removed from the pangs of hunger that racked the shriveled bodies of their fellow citizens. This included that Great champion of the poor – Gandhi.

It is with this mandate that the Cabinet Mission came to India. The exact nature of mandate may have been unknown but the essence could be gleaned from their actions. We now need to appreciate if by the mere fact of their visit to India, did anything change? Did the Congress have to call for a break in the struggle for Independence? In the anti INA trial phase, Patel had thundered that the Congress was not going to sit quiet after the elections. Nehru had called for complete liquidation of the British rule in India and insisted that India must not wait for next move of the Labor Government. Pant had exclaimed that Freedom would not be a gift from the Labor Government. Patel, Nehru, Pant; three of the senior most Congress leaders had taken a firm stand against further delays. Complete Independence, here and now was the national mantra. What did the Mission have to offer ?. First the financial matter.

The British concept of a satisfactory means of winding up the financial position can be understood very easily. It meant making more and more money available to them without demurring. The American Lend Lease was terminated once the hostilities had ended on September 2, 1945 but the Colonial tap continued to remain open for the British. In the period, September 1945 to March 1946; the British had made India extend to it, an interest free loan of Rs 2,170 million or US \$ 650 million.

There was to be no discussion on these issues. The Prime Minister had himself been very firm. Thus on the financial front, the Cabinet Mission had nothing to offer.

Now on the issue of Absolute Political Independence. On this front, also the position was far from satisfactory. The British were prepared to grant Independence but subject to four major riders. Namely, they wanted British representation in Indian Government for that is what racial minorities were all about. Nor is this a mere conjecture. In a note to Attlee on 5th January 1945, R.A. Butler had made this very clear. He said:

“There is no need at all why the best British should not be treated as a minority and included in the interim central government. They would not be there of course(!), as cat paws of Whitehall, but be those who represent some interest in the country.”

The concern for Indian defense is touching till one understands what is really meant. Once again thanks to the wonderful British habit of documenting their thoughts, we do not have to speculate. The British view on the subject was spelt out in great clarity by the Chiefs of Staff in their report to the Defense Committee of Cabinet on 12th June 1946. They said:

“In considering the military implications of our future policy with regard to India, we must bear in mind that in any future war our strategic requirement in India are that she should be a main support area (i.e. we should be in a position to have recourse to her industrial and man-power potential) and that we should be enabled to use her territory for operational and administrative bases and air staging posts. It is therefore important that India should be secure both from external aggression and internal disorder. For defense purposes it is essential that she should remain a single unit.”

Little wonder that Jinnah had no veto any longer. India had to remain one so that its men, money and material could be available to the British in their emergencies. India had to remain one so that it could protect British interests in Middle East and the Far East.

And now the issue of Paramountcy. For this was going to determine the fate of 100 million Indians who lived in the so called Indian Princely states. The Paramount Power in India from whom the British seized power in 1857 was the Moghul Emperor, Bahadur Shah Jafar. The princes and petty kings who survived 1857, were the ones who either remained neutral or actively opposed the commands of the Moghul Emperor. Given that the very source from which they derived their legitimacy to rule was abolished, these surviving petty kings and princes had no *locus-standi* to exist except at the sufferance of the usurper of power – the British. The British themselves were ruling India by force, a fact plainly conceded by the Indian Viceroy Linlithgow in a moment of unguarded candor. His telegram to the Secretary of State read:

“The Cabinet will I think agree with me that India and Burma have no natural association with the Empire, from which they are alien by race, history and religion, and for which as such neither of them have any natural affection and both are in the Empire because they

are conquered countries which had been brought there by force, kept there by controls....”

If the British themselves were ruling by force and therefore had no legitimacy how could the creatures who existed at their mercy – the petty Indian Kings and princes have any ? Whatever pretensions, they may have had to rule had vanished the moment they supported the Usurper of power – the British in defiance of their national sovereign, the Moghul Emperor.

The Congress had always maintained that they were leading an agitation for Independence of India as a whole. They refused to sanctify the British division of the country into British India, the part which was ruled directly by them and had a population of 289 million spread over eleven provinces covering two third of area of the country. The other being the so called Indian States which was ruled by the British through their henchmen – the petty Kings and princes, which had a combined population of 98 million spread over 565 petty kingdoms covering one third of the country’s area. One of the reasons for the Congress rejecting the Cripps proposals in 1942 was the unsatisfactory nature of its proposals in respect of the Indian States. The Congress Working Committee had passed the following resolution on 11th April 1942:

“The complete ignoring of ninety millions of people in the Indian States, and their treatment as commodities at the disposal of their Rulers, is a negation both of democracy and self-determination. When the representation of an Indian State in the constitution-making body is fixed on a population basis, the people of the states have no voice in choosing those representatives, nor are they to be consulted at any stage while decisions vitally affecting them are being taken. Such states may in many ways become barriers to the growth of Indian freedom, enclaves where foreign authority still prevails, and where the possibility of maintaining foreign-armed forces has been stated to be a likely contingency and a perpetual menace to the freedom of the people of the states as well as of the rest of India.

The British on the other hand made a great show of following the Treaties and Sanads that they had exchanged with these imposters to keep the Congress influence out of the Indian States. They insisted that such Treaties and Sanads were inviolate, even while knowing the untenable nature of their arguments. R.A.Butler’s note of 5th January 1945 submitted to Clement Attlee had this to say:

“I proceed from the basis, though go further than the Simon Report... I have always felt that some form of repartition of the Indian provinces is essential in order to create units consisting of both British-Indian and Indian State territory and inhabitants, which can the create a form of Government all-embracing within themselves that comparative religious quiet may be obtained and that the units created may be economically viable....The states may well be anxious about these proposals, but I frankly feel that many of the small states are anachronisms and must find their salvation by coming to an understanding with their British-Indian neighbors. This is particularly the case where

parcellations of territory is most complicated...I do not see why the States should not be brought to the idea of coming to an understanding with British-Indian units...'

Absolute Political Independence demanded that the successor Indian Government needed to assume the powers of paramountcy in respect of the whole of the country. A third of the Country area could scarcely be kept out as a British relic. The same Attlee who had acted on the part concerning the representation of the British in the Central Government in the note he had received from Butler on 5th January 1945, took no note of the part concerning the proposed integration of Indian Princely states with the British Indian territory. The Cabinet Mission was expressly forbidden to offer the Status of full successor government to the Indians by denying it the power of paramountcy over the princely states. The entire scope of The Cabinet Mission Plan was to exclude any hint of a suggestion to integrate the Princely states with British India and thus remove these anachronisms. Moreover, there was to be no talk of election of the representatives of the Indian States. Thus 100 million people, living on some 1/3rd of the country were being kept out of the scope of democratic process, keeping the power of their autocratic rulers intact.

The British motive could only have been to ensure that some residual British influence could still be maintained in India. Once again let us stick to hard facts and not speculate. In an appreciation of possibilities in India, the Viceroy had this to say in May 1946:

“The rulers of States are perplexed and anxious; they realise that their former protectors the British are going, that they will be subject to agitation of Congress and that the end of their autocracy and easy living is in sight.

In any conflict or disturbances, the States would in all probability remain generally friendly to the British. Hyderabad for instance would welcome retention of British troops in Secunderabad and Mysore would certainly be unlikely to raise any objection about their remaining in Bangalore; these two places have important airfields which might be of great value to us....Kashmir, Baluchistan and the Punjab States would remain within the British sphere of influence in the North –West...”

The Cabinet Mission arrived in India on 24th March 1946 with a clear mandate. They were to leave on 29th June. For three months, three senior ministers of the British Cabinet camped in India hoping to find a way to out of the Indian impasse. This was a war of nerves. Was the Congress going to make the British play as per the rules they set in tune with national needs or were the British going to make the Indians dance to their tunes? It was an eyeball to eyeball confrontation. Who was going to blink first?

The national turmoil since the start of INA trials on the 5th November 1945 culminating into an open naval mutiny in Bombay and Karachi on the 18th February 1946 had convinced the Congress High Command that they could not hope to control the anger of the people, were they now to reopen struggle against the British. If they ruled out the path of agitation against the British then they had to make a settlement with Jinnah so as to present a united front to the British. Jinnah was after all an Indian, even if he now wanted

his community to live separately. Nor was he a man of straw, a British puppet. He was undoubtedly the leader of the Muslims. If the Congress suspected him of being a Communal monster, then it should have fought him to the bitter end. But the fact is Jinnah was no communal monster. If he was one he would have ensured that India had a blood bath of the likes never seen before; in August 1942. This was after all the time when a British Government anxious to put down the Congress inspired revolt would have easily looked the other way if the Muslims hoodlums had started bashing up the Congress volunteers. A government which could take to bombing its own people could do anything. 1942 was the only civil disobedience movement that did not lead to communal unrest contrary to all apprehensions.

In the summer of 1946, Gandhi had become the biggest stumbling block in a settlement with Jinnah. As the Viceroy rightly noted in his secret report to the Cabinet that the Muslim League was deeply suspicious of Congress under its present leadership. He felt that in case, the Congress got rid of Gandhi, the League could possibly co-operate with the Congress. A Netaji was now sorely needed but there was none. In absence of a Netaji, there was only one way of making Jinnah see reason. This was the Savarkar approach of accepting the two-nation theory, which in any case appeared to have been vindicated by the election results. If the Congress could accept this, then it was easy to see a way out.

Canada stood as a bright example of two antagonist nations, the English and the French living under the same roof peacefully. If the English and the French could do so, why not the Hindus and the Muslims. But a prerequisite was to accept that Jinnah was right. So were Savarkar and Ambedkar. Gandhi was patently wrong. And this was too much to expect from the Nehru, Patel led Congress, for whom life began and ended with Gandhi.

The Cabinet Mission offered them a way out. It proposed on 16th May 1946, a three tier federal structure for India with fairly autonomous groups of provinces. A structure more suited to nations aspiring to live under a common roof than the components of one nation living together. A structure that meant acceptance of a two nation theory by Congress and giving up the demand for Pakistan by League. The proposal envisaged formation of an interim government at the Centre and setting up of a Constituent Assembly for drafting of a Constitution. Nevertheless, important riders remained. The power was to be handed over to the Indians on a Dominion status being subject to a treaty being signed between the Constituent Assembly and the United Kingdom, no doubt to settle such issues as the Sterling Balances in a manner favourable to the British. The petty Indian princes, the British puppets were to continue to nominate representatives to the Constituent Assembly, leaving the 100 million Indians outside the orbit of democracy. Thus, the principal national objections to the British schemes remained.

There was only one response that Congress driven to fulfill its basic creed – Absolute Political Independence; could have given to the Cabinet Mission. That is to ignore it as soon as its intentions became clear. The Directive to the Cabinet Mission may have been secret but their proposals were dead giveaways. Ignore the Cabinet Mission and reignite the Quit India movement. This struggle was essential to make sure that the imperial designs of the British were thwarted. The national need of the hour was clearly to

intensify the Quit India movement, not keep on talking with the British, who were not making any effort to satisfy the national political or economic aspirations.

However, if Muslim League agreed to participate in the Constituent Assembly, it was worthwhile to accept the proposals if only to present a United front to the British. For once the machinery of the Constituent Assembly was set in motion, the British could have been in a very tight corner in respect of enforcing their Will on the Nation.

Jinnah accepted the proposal on 6th June 1946. Now, was the opportunity to make a common front and defeat the British intentions. What the Congress did was unforgivable—instead of conspiring against the British, it chose to try and sabotage the League acceptance. The AICC met on 6th and 7th of July 1946 in which it decided to accept the Cabinet Mission Plan despite the opposition by the Socialists. On 10th July, the newly elected Congress President, Jawahar Lal Nehru suddenly realised that Congress was not prepared to accept any British imposed limitations on the sovereignty of the Constituent Assembly. This realisation dawned three days after the Congress accepted the Cabinet Mission proposals with the same limitations, making his motives suspect not only to the League but also to all others. In the Constituent Assembly, he claimed that ‘what we (the Congress) do there (in the Constituent Assembly), we are entirely and absolutely free to determine.’ In other words, it was not committed to any agreement with the League. He thus virtually disowned those parts of the Plan, which had been the basis on which League had agreed to accept the Plan. Nehru has been widely condemned for this intemperate outburst. Majumdar had this to say of Nehru’s conduct.

“These words might have been legally and constitutionally true, but if Nehru was determined to scare away Jinnah, he could not have devised a better or more ingenious plan.”

Nehru’s conduct was the proverbial last straw on the Camel’s back for Jinnah. He was never again to trust the Gandhi Congress. By 29th July 1946, the League withdrew its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan. This in sum and substance, was the public story of the Cabinet Mission.

What seems to have irked Jinnah the most is the capacity of Gandhi and Nehru to be legally correct but devilishly encroaching on the rights of the others. Nor was Jinnah the only one to be so angered. What the Congress did in that fateful summer of 46 was unforgivable. If it had the courage of conviction, it should have fought the British. If Jinnah was such a devil, it should have had nothing to do with him. Either of this would have been far more preferable. It did neither. What it did was to appear legally correct but at the same time seek to undermine the League in a dubious manner and let the British escape out of the tight corner.

In 1937, it had insisted on the League members joining Congress as a precondition to being taken in Ministries. Now, that the League was too strong to be so shabbily treated, so it tried to be devious. It first accepted the unacceptable proposals of the Cabinet Mission to put the Muslim League off guard and then proceed to put its own

interpretations on proposals without giving a damn if the League agreed with it or not. If the Cabinet Mission proposals were acceptable on the 6th July, how come they suddenly became a matter of unacceptable principle four days later? If what the Cabinet Mission was offering was unacceptable and it indeed was as we have seen, why did the Congress talk to it all. Why did it not renew the call for Quit India movement. Many inconvenient questions but no answers.

The Congress did not even attempt to fight the British despite the fact that their offers fell far short of national demand. The truth is that the very power that the Congress had come to acquire in 1946 petrified Gandhi and his cohorts. For the power of the Congress came from people's love for Independence. It was a sacred tool. Once drawn from its sheath, it was not amenable to any compromise. Anyone, however great, who now dared to come in the way of Independence was going to be cast aside. The Gandhi wing of the Congress, which now came to control levers of power within the Congress in absence of such challengers such as Netaji, who was no more and the Communists who were discredited due to their great U turn of 1942; now sought to play safe. In the process they sold the dream of Independence down the drain.

What was a politically awake India capable of in the summer of 1946? It was certainly capable of throwing the British into the seas – lock, stock and barrel. A fact that the British were well aware of. Something that filled them with dread. For a disaster in India was going to painfully expose their pretensions to be a Super power. If India went, so would Burma, Ceylon and Malaya. Egypt would no doubt follow suit and kick them out. Palestine was seething with unrest anyway. With India gone, the whole British edifice in the Middle and Far East would have crumbled like a pack of cards. If this was gone, who would give them Dollars to buy food or supply them goods with a mere promise of payment. India had to be let go –that was sure but this had to be done in a manner that would bring Great Britain prestige and glory. Not shame. This is what was behind the May proposals. The British knew that they were running the risk of facing a United Congress, League front if both accepted their proposals. But they had no choice. The alternatives were far worse.

Let us take a look behind the curtains to see what was transpiring in the British camp. How close to despair had they come. How they had escaped from a sure Ignominy by the skin of the teeth due to Incompetence, Arrogance and timidity of the Gandhi Congress, which seemed bent on helping the British at the cost of Indian national interests.

By June 1946, the best laid plans of the British appeared to be going haywire. On 3rd June, the Cabinet received a telegram from the Cabinet Mission reporting an extremely serious situation in India. The telegram alerted the Cabinet to the situation that may have to be faced in either of the three eventualities listed below and the consequences of which were very serious for the British. The three eventualities were:

- Rejection of their proposals by the Muslim League
- Rejection of their proposals by the Congress.
- Rejection of their proposals by both.

The Mission found the first possible situation, the least serious. In case of the League rejecting the proposals, they were proposing to hand over the power to Congress leaving the protection of minorities to the good sense of the Congress. They considered the situation arising out of the Congress rejection to be far more serious. The third – rejection by both the Congress as well as the League was a plain and simple disaster for them. The British were jittery because they were well aware that:

“The Indian army could not be counted to act as a whole if it were called upon to deal with either a full scale Congress revolt or a declared Muslim League Jihad. The Civilian servicemen are tired and discouraged and loyalty of the police would be uncertain.”

They were being especially wary of the Congress because they realized that an opposition from the Congress could develop into a mass struggle on 1942 lines, but far more widespread and organised. The Communist involvement in the post INA turmoil had made it very clear that they were itching to make amends for the 1942 blunder. An opportunity that both the British and the Gandhi Congress wanted to deny them.

The report of the Cabinet Mission created a stir. A special meeting of the Cabinet was called to discuss solely the Indian situation. The meeting took place on 5th June 1946. Not surprisingly, the discussions were buried in the Secretary's Standard File of Cabinet Conclusions. It was clear to the Cabinet that let alone being in a position to meet a joint Congress-League agitation, it was in no way possible to crush an agitation sponsored by Congress alone. The administrative machinery in India was now extremely weak. For economic, military and political reasons, it was out of question to commit any new British troops to control the Indians for any extended period. That they had to get out was now very clear. The Cabinet Mission had even suggested 1st January 1947 as a possible cut off date. Every drop of the blood shed by the Indian Martyrs was coming to haunt the British.

To their credit that even in this hour of gloom and despair, they resolved that:

“We must at all times avoid a situation in which we had to withdraw from India under circumstances of ignominy after there had been widespread riots and attacks on Europeans. It must be clear that we were going freely and under no compulsion.”

They knew that they could count on the Gandhi Congress to help them achieve this objective. If they were not to withdraw from India, in face of organised opposition, then they had to maintain the existing form of government. The Cabinet minutes record:

“There was a strong support for this proposal, which would involve maintaining the existing form of Government. It was realised, however, that the extent to which it would be possible to follow such a policy must depend on the Indian reaction to it. If in fact it evoked widespread resistance, the policy would have to be modified, if only because it would involve very substantial reinforcement of our troops which we would have great difficulty in finding. But would there in fact be widespread resistance necessitating repression of the type which neither the Mission or the Cabinet favoured? It was difficult

to predict the Indian reaction, *but was there not a powerful element in the Congress which would resist a course leading to chaos and anarchy and throw their weight against the more irresponsible sections of the Congress.*”

It appears that the Cabinet was quite confident of finding a strong support from the **Responsible** Congress men, anxious to serve their interests against their own **Irresponsible** colleagues eager to throw the British out. Therefore, they decided not to rush into a decision on basis of the Cabinet Mission report, as :

“In general, the Cabinet felt that it was difficult to take firm decisions as to means of meeting a situation which had not yet arisen and which seemed in fact to be several move ahead.”

Nevertheless, the British knew that they faced a exceedingly difficult situation and the support from their *Responsible friends in the Congress* could not be counted upon to provide them succour. The revolutionary tide was far too strong. The Cabinet decided to have a detailed examination of the options available to them. These were discussed in the Cabinet Meeting of 17th June 1946.

The Cabinet Mission had considered that in the event of a breakdown of the negotiations, the British Government could deal with the resulting serious internal disorders by adoption of one of the following five courses:

- Complete Withdrawal as soon as possible
- Withdrawal by a certain date, 1st January 1947
- Appeal to the United Nations
- Maintaining overall control through out India
- Giving Independence to Southern and Central India and maintaining the existing position in North West and North East India.

The first option was completely ruled out being incompatible with the British interests. The second was supported by Cripps but opposed by the other two Cabinet Ministers. The third was studied in detail by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. According to him the matter could be referred to the Security Council in the first instance by the Government of India, in effect by His Majesty’s Government since the latter was *de facto* and *de jure* , the responsible government for India. Say on grounds of the Hindus and Muslims being hostile to the British in particular and the Europeans in general, In the second instance by the Government of some other state on grounds of its situation threatening international peace. A move to the Security Council by any other government could be easily checked by use of the Veto. However, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs warned that:

“It must be emphasised that if the Government of India or His Majesty’s Government took the initiative of appealing to the Security Council in this way, they would have abandoned their sovereign authority over India and would have invited the United Nations Organisation to assume that responsibility. The political consequences of this

action would obviously be incalculable, from every point of view. In particular, we might be certain that the Soviet Government, who by their veto power could prevent any action in a sense favourable to British interests, would seek to draw her own profit from the situation. The military aspects is rather for the Chiefs of Staff, but it seems likely that in the event of the Council being in principle ready to take military action to restore peace in India, the Soviet Union being the only country which would be both ready and able to supply the necessary number of troops. The result of such an appeal to the Security Council might therefore amount in practice to handing over the Empire of India to the Soviet Union.”

The Secretary lent his weight against the first two options on grounds of practical disadvantages far outweighing the possible advantages. The only advantage he could see was the sympathy that they could hope to get from liberal internationalist circles, who would be impressed with the sincerity of the British. Such sympathy, the Secretary scoffed at as being of little consequence and in any case being far outweighed by implications of the loss of prestige in far wider circles. Moreover, he felt that even the American Government would be appalled if the British chose to abandon their interests in India without seeking safeguards.

This left only the last two options, neither of which the Secretary noted were free of considerable disadvantages. The last two options were the subject of a detailed study by the Chiefs of Staff. Their separate study was based on the following two basic considerations:

- A mass movement sponsored by Congress would be extremely hard to be put down.
- The Princely States in India would remain pro-British during the period of disturbances.

Next, they proceeded to examine the Reliability of the Indian Armed Forces. This is what they had to say:

“We consider the reliability of the Indian Army as a whole, including those in garrisons outside India is open to serious doubt. This even applies to the Gurkha units....The Royal Indian Navy and Royal Indian Air Force cannot be regarded as reliable. There is some danger that the elements of shore establishments in the former may be actively hostile....A few units of the R.I.A.F. may be depended on, but ground crews, particularly in or near large towns, are unreliable.”

With the reliability of the Indian Army open to serious doubts, the Chiefs examined the feasibility of holding down a restive India as a whole by force. They opined that in the event of a Congress sponsored movement and decision to hold India by force, the British troops in India, which were in the process of being demobilised, would have to be augmented by as much as Five Divisions. In addition, there would be need for Nine Brigades of British troops to replace Indian troops in Malaya, Burma, Hong Kong, Japan, Dodecannese and Iraq. The sources of such reinforcements were:

Middle East	One Division
Greece	Two Divisions
Italy	One Division
Germany	One Division and Seven Brigades

The Chiefs cautioned that dispatch of troops from the Middle East would leave the British exposed in an area which was expected to witness serious disorders, a concern that was heightened by the possibility of unsatisfactory conclusions to the Anglo-Egyptian treaty negotiations. In Greece, withdrawal of two divisions would leave the area denuded of any British military presence. In Italy, the only reserve division available for supporting forces in Venezia Giulia would have to be made available for India. The tapping into forces in Germany would leave the British troops halved – an unacceptable proposition. Thus in each of these theaters, the repercussions of sending troops for duty in India were very serious for the British interests. As if this was not enough, the administrative services in South East Asian Command were manned by Indians, who would need to be replaced, which was sure to result in administrative chaos. Army was not the only wing of defense forces that was to be affected by this. The Navy and the Air Force resources were to be adversely affected by the Indian situation. In addition, the large scale movement of troops was sure to disrupt the Export, Import programme as it would involve 110 dry cargo ships for one voyage to India. No less serious was the implication for the morale of troops. They were all eagerly awaiting a discharge to go home after years of being on the battlefield. A fresh battle field commitment was the last thing they wanted.

Thus, from a purely operational point of view, the British had not a hope in the world to keep on holding on to India by force in the event the Congress decided to start a fight. This was the conclusion of the Chiefs of Staff as reported to the British Cabinet in June 1946.

Nor, were the Chiefs enthusiastic about the last option – a partial withdrawal from India. This option needs a little elaboration before we come to the views of Chiefs of Staff on the same. The Cabinet Mission had suggested that in the event, the Muslim League accepted their proposals and Congress opposed, the British should withdraw from six Hindu provinces, namely – Madras, Bombay, Central Province, United Province, Bihar and Orissa. In effect, these six provinces were to become six independent states and the British were to withdraw into Bengal, Punjab, Sind and Baluchistan to regroup their forces. This plan called for holding on to ports of Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, Karachi; airfields of Hyderabad and Bangalore and also Delhi. The withdrawing British troops were to escort the Europeans to these places, from where they could be evacuated. The Cabinet Mission made this suggestion being fully aware that this plan was illegal and involved throwing their puppets, the Indian princes, to the wolves. Regardless, of these considerations, the Mission was prepared to recommend this as the least unsatisfactory and sought to defend it as an emergency measure.

The Chiefs of Staff pointed out that even this plan hinged around the co-operation of the Congress. For, if it decided to oppose the plan, the withdrawal of the British troops would be fraught with grave dangers and the requirement of troop reinforcements would remain at about 5 Divisions with all the attendant repercussions in Middle East, Germany, Italy and Greece. Moreover, they pointed out that the provinces of Punjab and Bengal, which had sizable Hindu minorities, were sure to witness communal conflicts, which would need additional troops to control. They therefore stated that from a Military point of view, such a plan unless the cooperation of Congress was secured, was completely unacceptable.

Thus each of the Five alternatives that the harassed Cabinet Mission could think of were found to be suffering from serious defects. None seemed to be capable of protecting the British interests in a manner that was even remotely acceptable. In each of the alternatives considered, the power of the Congress to cause the British grief comes out all too clearly. The power was not the personal fiefdom of any of its leaders. It was given to them in sacred trust by the people to fight for freedom. Their failure to use this power at a critical juncture in the history was nothing short of betrayal of this sacred trust. The British days in India were numbered from the day that INA trials started – 5th November 1945. Any day that they managed to extend their stay after this was a bonus to them. The wonder is not that they left on 15th August 1947. The wonder is that they managed to stay that long and the biggest tragedy is that they departed in a blaze of glory. Not only did they depart in glory but they managed to make sure that all their interests were secured. How did they manage to do so? Let us continue with our story.

In the middle of June 1946, the situation was so serious for the British that in the meeting of 17th June, the Cabinet decided that the Minister for Transport was to make plans for emergency evacuation of the British women and children from India. In principle no more women or children were to be permitted to leave the United Kingdom for India. At the same time, appearance that all was normal had to be kept up. So some 250 children and women, who had booked their passage were to be allowed to proceed for canceling their travel at this late juncture would have sent off alarm bells. If the situation went out of hand in India and these 250 were unfortunately to come to any harm, the blame could easily be palmed off to the Indians. Who was to know of the role of the British Cabinet in deliberately sending them to what now constituted War zone?

One other decision was no less revealing. This was the inclusion of Sarat Bose, the brother of Netaji Bose, whose shadow loomed large on India. The British realized that in formation of the Interim Government, if the Cabinet Mission was successful, the Viceroy may be pressed upon to have him included in the Government. The Congress High Command could not risk alienating the popular sentiment by ignoring the brother of Netaji from the Government. The Confidential Annex of the Cabinet Meeting recorded:

“Though the first Hindu (Congress) reaction seemed favourable, there was reason to fear that the Congress party would make difficulties about accepting the invitations. It was possible that , to ease these difficulties, the Viceroy may be pressed to include Sarat Bose in place of one of the other Congress representatives. There were objections to his

inclusion on account of his past activities” such as being the brother of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, “and the Viceroy and the Mission had therefore sought guidance on whether, if this point was pressed, the Viceroy should yield.” The Cabinet was very clear, it decided that “While realising to the full the objections to the inclusion of Sarat Bose in the interim government, the cabinet felt that it would be a mistake to jeopardise the successful conclusion of the negotiations simply on this account.”

Sarat Bose could be dealt with on another day. As a matter of record, Sarat Bose was indeed included in the interim government to start with. Soon to be thrown out in less than three months. It appears that the Congress High Command and the British Cabinet were of the same mind when it came to Sarat Bose. Too strong a symbol to be ignored in the surcharged atmosphere of 1946. A show to be made about giving him the importance due to the brother of Netaji; to be got rid of at the first available opportunity.

By the time, the Cabinet Mission returned to the United Kingdom by end of June 1946, the threat of British being thrown out of India had considerably reduced. The League and the Congress seemed more keen to score over each other rather than join forces with each other to fight the British for the national interests. Not one of them seemed in the least bothered about the fate of the hungry millions. Even as the Secretary of State for India kept on harassing his colleagues in the Cabinet for sending food grains to India, the high and mighty of the League and the Congress were squabbling over petty matters. What appeared to be bothering these worthies was whether or not the Congress could nominate one Muslim in the quota of seats allotted to it in the Interim Government. The secular Congress insisted it could. The League angrily rejected the contention bolstered by the fact that the elections had clearly established that it was the League and not the Congress, which represented the Muslims. The millions, who knew no religion in their hunger were left to fend for themselves.

In its meeting of the 5th July 1946, the Cabinet Minutes tell us:

“Questions were asked about the possibility of disturbances in India in near future. At one point during the course of the negotiations certain military dispositions had been made against the possibility. Was it necessary that they should still be continued?”

The views of the Mission were that the feeling of insecurity was much less than it had been a month ago but that this improvement might not last if the Viceroy failed in his attempt to form a coalition Government”

The Cabinet Mission had given the British a reprieve. That was much more than that could have been hoped for in February when India seemed to be on the verge of a revolution or even in June when it appeared that the Congress would restart the Quit India movement. The British had given away nothing. Neither Complete Independence nor a smallest hope on the satisfactory settlement of the Sterling Balances. They had not even sent a single grain to India, which had famine at its door steps. Blissfully unconcerned with this, the League and the Congress seemed most anxious to let the British off the hook by continuing their stupid fight with each other.

Nehru's Lust for Power

The infamous press conference of Nehru rebutting the basic premise on which the acceptance of the Cabinet Mission proposals stood was the proverbial 'last straw on the camel's back' as far as Jinnah was concerned in his relations to the Gandhi Congress. He was never to trust them again. From here on, the journey on the road to partition of the country was inevitable.

What certainly was not predestined was that the parting of ways would involve rape, murder and massacre of hundreds of thousands of the innocents on either side of the divide. That the transfer of power would set off unending caravans of millions of refugees trekking off to an alien land – to an uncertain future in conditions of abject poverty. That, it would be **Transfer of Power** from the White to the Brown hands not **Absolute Political Independence**. That the sacrifices of the revolutionaries and the dreams of the millions would be so cruelly betrayed by the very man, who had once stood shoulder to shoulder with Netaji, as his senior colleague, taking on the might of his own father as well as his Guru. In the process setting off in motion, a train of events that would ensure that the two parts of the nation would forever remain locked in a cycle of mutual hate. As if this was not enough, the transfer of power in this ghastly manner appears to have been purchased with the promise of a favourable treatment of the Sterling Balances – the forced saving of the nation during the War years. Favourable, not to the inhabitants of the Indian sub-continent but to the British masters.

Yes! Jawahar Lal Nehru has much to answer for being the person primarily responsible for the happenings in that crucial period of history – July 1946 to August 1947. Nor can the guilt of Jinnah be denied, if not as a conniver than at least as an accomplice. The power play between these titans of the era, has left behind a legacy that continues to haunt generation not yet born.

There was only one solitary exception. Mohandas Karmchand Gandhi – No! Mahatma Gandhi, for no other word describes his action more aptly during the last phase of his life, was now an embarrassment to his nominal followers. The Congress Working Committee, no longer deemed it necessary to either involve him in the decision making or extending even the basic courtesy of keeping him informed. As his secretary Pyarelal wrote in his diary on 25th June 1946; referring to the meeting of the Congress Working Committee and the Cabinet Mission:

“Bapu not being a member was not sent for and did not go. On their return nobody told Bapu a word about what happened at the meeting.”

Majumdar noted: “Of course, Gandhi still remained a popular idol but he had ceased to count in the Indian politics – a fact that became more and more noticeable during the last phase of the negotiations with the British.”

Mahatma Gandhi during this phase of life seemed to have transcended the normal human barriers and had moved on to a metaphysical phase of what the ordinary mortals like us call 'Supernatural Existence'. Most of his actions were simply incomprehensible to people living on a much lower plane. Take for instance, his experiment of testing his own control of sexual desires by sleeping naked alongside his grand niece and openly writing about it, to the horror of the puritan Indian elite. Or for that matter, his act of staking his life to control the raging communal fury in the post partition Calcutta. One of his noblest fast that actually shamed hoodlums- both Hindus and the Muslims, into giving up violence. It is impossible, and I say this with all honesty, for us ordinary people to evaluate his actions in the last phase of his life. I have been exceedingly critical of his actions in the period before this. Yet, I have nothing but reverence for the post July 1946 Mahatma Gandhi. In this final phase, he had given up his Lust for Power that made him do strange things earlier.

The Saint in him had finally triumphed over the Politician, making him as near the God as is humanely possible.

Nehru and Liaqat Ali Khan, the first Prime Minister of Pakistan, are reported to have said: "Our People have gone mad" on witnessing aftermath of some of the more brutal murders after partition. It were not the People but the Leaders who had gone stark raving Mad.

Sadly, the first to lose his balance was Jinnah. For years, he had been a moderate restrained person shunning the dangerous path of arousing mass hysteria. In the evening of his life, his tuberculosis battered body was slowly withering away. Also, withering away in his eyes was the promise of an honourable place for his community in an India that was at last throwing off the yoke of British slavery. He therefore issued a call for Direct Action.

On 29th July 1946, the Muslim League passed two resolutions withdrawing its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission proposals. The first resolution rightly pointed out that the Congress had made its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission proposals conditional upon its own elastic interpretation. The second resolution said:

"Never have in the whole history of the League done anything except by constitutional methods and by constitutionalism. But now we are obliged and forced into this position. This day we bid goodbye to constitutional methods." The resolution pointed out that through out the fateful negotiations with the Cabinet Mission, "the other two parties, the British and the Congress, each held a pistol in their hand, the one of authority and arms and the other of mass struggle and non-cooperation." It therefore said: "Today, we have also forged a pistol and are in a position to use it."

True, Jinnah had been given enough and more provocation by the Congress particularly by Nehru during the Cabinet Mission negotiations. Nevertheless, the fact remains that a shrewd man like Jinnah could not have been unaware of dangers inherent in the use of

such loose terms. The use of such loaded terms as Pistols particularly in the context of the surcharged atmosphere that then prevailed, showed a regrettable loss of balance.

The rejection of the Cabinet Mission by the League was God sent to Nehru. Now, he could proceed to form an interim government, headed of course by himself, unencumbered by the irritating presence of his foe. In this mad rush to grab power, he neither bothered about the fact that a party that had called for Quit India in 1942 could not assume power under the British Monarch unless in a strategic attempt to buy peace with the Muslims. Nor did he care two hoots about the dangers he was courting by ignoring the most powerful representative of the Muslims. If Jinnah had lost his balance, Nehru must be said to have taken complete leave of his senses.

The power grab by Nehru was most enthusiastically supported by the British. On 31st July 1946, the Secretary of State reported to the Cabinet that the India and Burma Committee had felt that notwithstanding Muslim abstention, the HMG must proceed with the Constituent Assembly as well as formation of Interim Government, if necessary without the Muslim League. The Committee indeed came to conclude that:

“We could not allow a minority to stand in the way of the progress of the majority.”

For years, the British had insisted that they could not hand over power to the Indians unless the minority problem was resolved. Now, when it suited them, they were quite happy to throw the Minorities to the mercies of the Congress for it suited them. We have already seen how much they had dreaded the prospect of facing a Congress led agitation. By co-opting the Congress leaders, they were making sure that their interest would be protected. This also enabled them to avoid the worst case scenario - open opposition of both the Congress as well as the League. If this were to happen, the possibility of their being thrown out of India by force would have become all too real. Thus sacrificing the Minorities was a small price to pay if it brought the Congress into their camp.

The Congress did decide to play the ball. With this the decks were cleared for Jawahar Lal Nehru to assume the reins of power by swearing allegiance to the British Sovereign in blatant disregard to all that he himself had stood for. An incensed Jinnah called for observing Direct Action Day on 16th August. Time it seems had come to Use the Pistol. Jinnah, to be fair did his best to restrain his followers. He called upon them to conduct themselves peacefully and in a disciplined manner and not to play in the hands of their enemy. The reality was anything but peaceful particularly in Bengal.

The readers would recall that on 8th August 1946, the Secretary of State was warning his colleagues that the food situation in India was very serious. Widespread disaster and large scale famine were around the corner in India. This was causing him sleepless nights. On the other hand, all that Nehru and Jinnah appeared to be losing sleep over was how to grab power. We thus had the strange spectacle of a British Minister being more concerned about the welfare of the Indian people than the so called Indian leaders themselves. It is another matter that the British Cabinet proved to be as callous about the

Indian welfare as the Indian leaders themselves, by throwing out the proposals of the Secretary of State.

It was on 16th August 1946 that India got a glimpse of what lay ahead. An India without the British was at the door step but this was a Future that was very different from that envisaged by any Freedom Fighter. What is that happened on the 16th August 1946 in Calcutta. The *Statesman* an English Daily thus described the Darkness that fell on this Jewel of the East:

“What befell India’s largest city last week was no mere communal riot... For three days the city concentrated on unrestrained civil war. The primary blame lies upon the Muslim League Cabinet and particularly upon the Chief Minister (Suhrawardhy).”

The culpability of the League Ministry was clear. It had declared 16th August as a Public holiday and encouraged the hooligans of Calcutta’s underworld to believe that they had the license of the Government to behave as they liked. A license that had left nearly 5,000 people dead, over 15,000 injured and about 100,000 homeless. The role of the Muslim League Ministry has been commented upon and rightly condemned. So has the role of the British passivity in not taking energetic steps to control the situation. What has been completely escaped censor has been the role of the British Cabinet in not heeding the dire warnings of the Secretary of State in respect of consequences of not making adequate food grains available to India.

In the aftermath of Calcutta, a half-hungry populace seemed to have been affected by the communal virus. In town after town, in village after village people took to rioting. The people living on a starvation diet less than that had been made available by Hitler to the Jewish inmates of Auschwitz took offense even where none was intended and communal fires raged in the country. The scenes of Hindus-Muslims taking to streets together, protesting against the trials of the INA officers became a distant memory.

Meanwhile, neither Nehru nor Jinnah had thought it fit to visit Calcutta – both being too busy to offer solace to the people being affected by their power games. A visit to Calcutta was left for the Viceroy, Wavell to undertake, who returned badly shaken by the depths to which so called human beings could sink. To be fair to Jinnah, not even his worst detractors have levied an allegation that the Calcutta orgy of violence had been instigated by him. Indeed in the days to come, Surawardhy seemed to have out of favour with him and came to be sidelined in the League.

The grisly Calcutta massacre seemed to serve a purpose. British came to realise the folly of antagonising the League and pulled out all stops in order to secure its presence in the Interim Government overriding half hearted protests from Nehru. On his part, Nehru utilised this as an opportunity to drop Sarat Bose from the ministry to the delight of the British, who as we have seen had no love lost for him.

Thus Jinnah got his foot hold in the center of power, Nehru had already secured his seat. The British could rest easy with their position lot more secure in India than in June, when a *Dunkirk* had stared at them in the face. Now, they could afford to ignore all the dire warnings of their Secretary of State in respect of the food shortages looming large in India. They had their henchmen in place to deal with the situation. The only losers in the whole bargain were the people of Bharat driven to madness by the explosive cocktail of hunger and communal virus. But who had time to worry about them?

None other than the Mahatma. Indeed, his stature seemed to grow in inverse proportion to his increasing irrelevance in the political arena. Desperately, he wandered around in Bharat seeking to apply bandage to every wounded sore. But the bleeding nation had too many sores even for a Mahatma to heal. Fully conscious of the gigantic odds facing him, the old man well past the ripe age of seventy five kept on going about the task with an equanimity that leaves one stunned in wonder and amazement. In his old age, he seemed to be in a rush to atone for the every wrong that he had inflicted on the nation.

In the meanwhile, the British minds were trying to make best use of the reprieve that they had obtained – to protect their interests in every possible manner. The manner in which they went about doing so is best illustrated by the case of the Indian Civil Services, the ICS as they were popularly called. The Officers of the ICS, the incorruptible lot that had emerged as the so called steel frame of the Raj had to be taken care of. The integrity of these Officers had been ensured by paying them Salary and pensions far in excess of that paid to their counterparts anywhere in the world. The icing on the cake was provided by the life style of a Nawab, that they could lead during their tenure in the country. They were the people who symbolised the might of the Raj to the general populace. As the moment of truth- the transfer of power came near, it was feared that the days of the ICS, were numbered. For it was inconceivable that it would be life as usual for them under any nationalist government. A fear that proved to be groundless but that is another story.

What is it that these best paid Civil servants had to show for their efforts of more than a century and a half. A nation that could not feed its own. A nation that had the highest illiteracy rate in the world with a bare 12% of the people being able to read or write. The other evils are too well known to be repeated again. By the principle of Pay for Performance, a nationalist government would have been in order to **recover** monies paid to these fat pigs. Yet, we had the seemingly strange spectacle of the Secretary of State proposing to pay compensation to the well fed animals for the fear that they were going to get their just deserts in a future not too distant. A little critical examination would have revealed that the British were indeed following the principle of Pay for Performance. Pay from the Indian revenues and performance for the British. After all, it were these very Officers, who had carried out the difficult task of making sure that the power and prestige of the Raj was maintained at all times in India, through the thick and thin of the ferment of the freedom struggle. Bar a few, what in their eyes were very few dishonourable exceptions like Subhas Bose, none of the ICS officers had ever defiled their services by joining the freedom struggle. It is these officers, who had maintained the peace of a grave yard in the country so that their British masters could carry off the loot from India unhindered by the pesky nationalist protesters.

The Secretary of State therefore circulated a note on 15th November 1946 in respect of the proposed compensation for Officers of the Indian Services as a result of the termination of the British rule in the near future. The note accepted that Officers benefited from an unusual pension system. After a service of 25 years, every member of the ICS was eligible for a pension of £ 1,000 p.a. which was inflation indexed. Now, as a result of the British rule coming to an end, members of the ICS were going to suffer, for even a Congress government in an India free from the British rule was not going to be so generous to them. It could hardly afford to, for even the pay of the British Civil Servants in the United Kingdom paled in comparison to their cousins in India. The note therefore proposed to offer Compensation to the ICS Officers, for the loss of career and prospects, the total cost of which was estimated at £ 10 million.

The sum of £ 10 million, Keynes would have screamed represented an enormous sum of money and probably represented the difference between hunger and half a meal for the millions subsisting on a diet of less than 1,000 calories a day. But then Keynes would have soothed by the fact that the compensation was payable by India and not the British. India was thus being asked to offer compensation to those who were looting her, as the opportunity to do so (i.e. loot her) was not going to be available in future. The matter was discussed in the Cabinet on the 19th November and the Ministers who had paid no heed to the repeated pleas of the Secretary of State for diverting food grains to India; now had no hesitation in approving his proposals for compensating the ICS officers.

In the meanwhile, the British efforts to maintain a semblance of order so as to complete a orderly retreat from India came to be threatened by the growing discord between the League and the Congress, till matters came to a stage that the functioning of the Interim Government came to be paralysed. For years, I as well as most of the Indians have believed that it was the intransigence of Jinnah that alone was responsible for the discord. In our eyes, Nehru was the hero who could do no wrong. Facts are slightly different.

The Indian political situation that had not caused much anxiety to the British Cabinet for over a quarter returned to haunt the British in December 1946. Jinnah had made sure that the League claims to a share of power at the Center were not ignored. Next, he set about making sure that Pakistan would become a reality. After publicly repudiating the Cabinet Mission proposals Jinnah could not be faulted for his attempts. He was only making every possible attempt to achieve his stated goal. He therefore refused to have the League representation in the Constituent Assembly that was to be convened from 9th December 1946 unless certain clarifications regarding the procedure to be adopted were forthcoming in advance. This was an eminently sensible precaution after the inflammatory press conference of Nehru on the issue in July. Bitter public wrangle broke out on the issue between Nehru and Jinnah that threatened to derail the British plans. As a matter of interest, the British agreed privately that Jinnah's position was sound but did not publicly say so for the fear of antagonizing the Congress. Prudently, they decided on 25th November, to invite the Indian leaders for discussions to London.

The Indian leaders visited London in the first week of December. It was a strange sight. Political giants of India trooping in the Imperial capital not to demand Independence but to settle their own petty squabbles. One can only hang one's head in shame.

The British Cabinet was briefed by the Prime Minister, Attlee about the outcome of the discussions on 10th December. Attlee, if anything was a friend of Nehru. Yet this is what he had to say.

“It was impossible to be confident that the main political parties in India had any real will to reach an agreement between themselves. **Pandit Nehru's** present policy seems to be to secure complete domination by Congress throughout the government of India. If a constitution was framed which had this effect, there would certainly be strong reaction from the Muslims. Province with a Muslim majority might refuse to join a central Government on such terms at all; and the **ultimate result of Congress policy might be the establishment of that Pakistan** which they so much disliked.”

Right or wrong, this was the frank opinion of a third person who was otherwise well disposed towards Nehru. It had to be an honest opinion otherwise, it would not have lain buried as Confidential Annex in the Secretary's Standard File of Cabinet Conclusions. Partition was becoming more and more of a reality, not only because of Jinnah but also due to the power lust that seems to have blinded Nehru. The growing distrust and inability of the Indian leaders to work together, was leading to a very dangerous situation.

“The Prime Minister warned the Cabinet that the situation might so develop as to result in civil war in India, with all the bloodshed which that would entail. There seemed little realisation among the Indian leaders of the risk that ordered government might collapse... One thing was quite certain viz. That we could not put back the clock and introduce a period of firm British rule. Neither the military nor the administrative machine in India was any longer capable of this”

Nearly four decades after the Great Tilak had rekindled the torch of Bharatiya Freedom, the anger against the British had reached such a level that it was no longer possible to subdue the Bharatiya nationalism as the British evidently realised. Not after the British coffers were emptied by Hitler. In this moment of great national triumph, the aspirations of the people were being sold down the street by the very Leaders who claimed to represent the people. If this sounds harsh consider the fact that at this time in the life of the nation, there were certain non-negotiable issues of national concern, namely

- Treatment of Sterling Balances on a commercial basis between India and the British.
- Taking over power from the British as a Paramount power, in other words do away with the Indian Kings and Princes, who were no more than mere British puppets.
- Attaining Absolute Political Independence.

What were Nehru and Jinnah fighting about? The fight was certainly not in relation to any of these national issues. The squabble was about Power. Nothing more.

For too long, we have been misled into believing that the dispute was between a secular Nehru, who stood for an United India and a communal Jinnah who was bent upon dividing the country based on a false two nation theory. First of all, as we have seen, it was not merely Jinnah who spoke about Hindus and Muslims being two separate nations. That by itself need not have dissolved the will to live together. After all, Savarkar, who also held the same views as Jinnah, had himself proclaimed that Hindus and Muslims had become blood brothers since 1857 and suffered inhuman treatment lasting over a quarter of century for daring to do so. Nor was there any need to go back in time. In 1946, the INA story had become imprinted on the national psyche. The story of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs fighting together for the national cause was too recent in the memory. If there were differences between the Hindus and Muslims; there were also common bonds. Even if one accepted the extreme view that the difference were so acute as to make these communities different nations; it did not necessarily mean that they had to live apart in mutual hostility.

The issue was far more mundane. Elections had demonstrated that while the Hindus reposed their faith in the Congress, the Muslims had done so in favour of the League. Jinnah had no pretensions of being a leader of the Hindus. The Congress was however unable to swallow the bitter pill of a complete repudiation of their leadership by the Muslims and was playing the role of a very poor loser. That there were Muslims in the Congress was quite beside the point. The fact remained; the Congress Muslims commanded no following in their community. Jinnah had led the Muslim League to a position of undisputed leadership of the Muslim community. He was entitled to a certain respect. Congress could no longer treat him shabbily as they had done since 1920 but old habits die-hard. Nehru continued to live in the make belief world of his own making deluding himself that the real sympathies of the Muslims were on his side. Somehow, he seemed to believe that he had a divine right to rule the country and was attempting to impose his own domination on the Government, as his own friend Attlee shrewdly realised; hurtling the country down on the road to disaster.

The reason for the British concern over the consequences of this unseemly fight between Nehru and Jinnah did not arise from a humanitarian angle. They had their own axe to grind. On 24th December 1946, the Prime Minister submitted a note on Indian Policy to the British Cabinet. The note included a blunt admission of the ground realities in India by the Viceroy. In his own words:

“We are not in a position to maintain British rule in India beyond 31st March 1948, and possibly not for so long.....Our present authority in the country has declined owing to our announced intention to hand over power to India....the British members are few tired and dispirited by political opposition. As a result we can not in certain provinces at any rate maintain the administration if the Congress withdraws its co-operation....We may at any time be involved in what is virtually a civil war between Hindus and Muslims....no improvised measures to cover a short period of years can amend the situation....The alternatives are therefore to withdraw from India or to reassert our authority. Withdrawal would have to be phased process spread over about 12 months.”

The Viceroy did not rule out the option of staying back in India but he pointed out that it could be done only if the British had the will to stay on for at least next 15 years backed by troops drawn from all over the world. The India Burma Committee ruled out this option as politically impracticable. More importantly, it noted:

“Apart from this the British troops are not available.”

The Committee next considered the recommendations of the Viceroy in respect of phased withdrawal. According to Wavell, a cut off date after which the British would withdraw from India as a whole, had to be announced. As a first phase, withdrawal was to be completed from the four Southern provinces, Madras, Bombay, C.P. and Orissa leaving the power in the hands of the Congress Ministries. The next phase was to be planned after taking into account the developments in the first phase. If the Congress still did not reach an agreement, power in U.P. and Bihar was to be given over to Congress, while the power in Muslim majority provinces of Punjab, Bengal, Sindh and the North West Frontier Province was to be given to the League. Wavell earnestly hoped that the shock of British withdrawal from four Southern provinces would force the Congress and the League to come to an understanding.

Poor Wavell, who was essentially a soldier had evidently no idea about the directives to the Cabinet Mission. Namely, Paramountcy was not to be handed over to a successor Indian Government and the treaty to be concluded in respect of protecting British financial interests including those of Sterling Balances before handing over power. His proposals raised issues on all these accounts. Nevertheless, the India Burma Committee could see no way out and was forced to recommend to the Cabinet that by end of January 1947, an announcement be made in the Parliament setting 31st March 1948 beyond which the British Rule in India would cease to exist as well as to begin withdrawal from the four Southern provinces. The Indian states of Hyderabad, Mysore were to be eventually declared as Independent states living on the sufferance of the Congress Government in the Southern states.

The proposals were considered in the special meeting of the Cabinet called to discuss a single line agenda – India, on the eve of new year, 31st December 1946. The Prime Minister’s note created a furore. Several Ministers became agitated with the proposed announcement. They held the view that the announcement was bound to be regarded as beginning of the liquidation of the British Empire – clearly an unacceptable proposition. The records of the discussion bear reproduction:

“It would be bound to have serious repercussions in Burma, Malaya and elsewhere... The Foreign Secretary thought that the announcement proposed would have serious repercussions in the Middle East. He recalled that in the negotiations with Egypt we had claimed that it would not be practicable for us to withdraw our troops from that country before 1949. How should we reconcile this claim with a statement that we were prepared to evacuate the whole of India by the spring 1948.

*The general feeling of the Cabinet was that withdrawal from India need not appear to be forced upon us by our weakness nor to be the first step in the dissolution of the Empire. On the contrary this action **must** be shown to be the logical conclusion, which we welcomed, of a policy followed by successive Governments for many years.”*

The Cabinet discussion therefore forced a reconsideration of the proposed announcement. By 4th January 1947, the recast statement had been sent for the consideration of the Cabinet by the Prime Minister. The substance remained unaltered but the form underwent a change. It was made out that as if due to efforts of the successive British Governments, that the British were to leave India not later than middle of 1948. The possibilities of phased withdrawal from the Southern provinces, independence for Indian states of Hyderabad and Mysore were hidden behind meaningless platitudes. The focus had now changed to making Virtue out of a Necessity. This was the last British game in India – played all too successfully; one must sadly admit.

The recast statement was considered in the Cabinet on 8th January 1947 and approved. However, the Prime Minister suggested that the actual issue of the statement be deferred for the time being as there remained some possibilities of the Congress-League reconciliation. By now, it was becoming more and more clear that an unbridgeable gulf existed between the soldier Viceroy and the political establishment in London. The question was fundamentally one of approach. The stupid soldier did not understand the value of keeping up appearances. He did not think in terms of trying to make Virtue out of Necessity. The idiot just kept on thinking about the risks involved in maintaining Form over Substance. It was time to bring him home.

The expected reconciliation between the Congress and the League failed to take off. By 13th February 1947, the Cabinet authorised the Prime Minister to issue the statement in respect of the cut off date for British withdrawal from India. At the insistence of Lord Mountbatten, the new Viceroy of India, the last date for British presence in India was fixed at June 1948 instead of Middle of 1948. Wavell angered by his summery dismissal attempted to play spoil sport and bombarded London with telegrams to postpone the announcement, in complete reversal of his earlier stand. The Cabinet had no choice but to convene a meeting, which took place on 18th February 1947 to consider the new stand of the dismissed Viceroy. It decided to stick to its guns and leave it to the genius of their new wonder boy, Lord Mountbatten to get them off the Indian mess.

Permit me, dear readers to use a simile that may sound offensive but is being used merely because it is so apt. India in late 1946, early 1947, had become a used condom with no more utility to offer. It had to be discarded. Unfortunately, it had become stuck and therefore endangered a very delicate part of the British anatomy. Foolish Wavell had proposed a castration. No wonder, he got the boot. What was needed was a skillful surgeon, who would set the British free from what had become a very painful union. Who could do this better than Louis and Edwina Mountbatten, who by their own admission, had spent a life time jumping in and out of other people's beds. What became of India was of no consequence for what is the fate of a discarded used condom if not the garbage dump.

Mountbatten assumed the office of the Viceroy and the Governor-General on 24th March 1947. Just before the assumption of office by Mountbatten, an interesting discussion took place in the Cabinet on 6th March on the issue of the Sterling Balances. It discussed points that were likely to be raised in the House of Commons that day on resumption of the debate on India.

“The Chancellor of Exchequer said that it was possible that Mr. Churchill might refer to the question of India’s sterling balances. If so, he would argue that a substantial part of **this debt** should be wiped out in consideration of our defense of India during the War.”

This one of the very few places that the British records accept that Sterling Balances represented the fact that British were indebted to India. This is not all. Note the views expressed by the Chancellor, for it clearly shows the unanimity in the British establishment on the pressing British need to whittle down this debt as much as possible:

“Though Mr. Churchill might put this claim in an extreme form, it was important that nothing should be said by the Government spokesman which would prevent the Government from using this argument in the forthcoming negotiations with the Indian Ministers about these sterling balances.”

Contrast this care taken by the British to safeguard their vital financial interests, to the resounding silence that the Indian politicians, whether Jinnah or Nehru maintained on the issue – as if it was there was something vulgar about asking the British to promptly repay the debt they owed to us. Reams and reams of papers are filled with the torturous, acrimonious debate on one seat here or there in the cabinet for the League or the Congress but nary a word about the Sterling Balances, India’s loan to the British.

Sterling Balances was just one of the issues. The obscene idea of compensating the ICS for not being able to help the British loot India was not given up either. On 13th April 1947, the Prime Minister himself – no less, took up the issue. The last time this issue was discussed, the readers would recall, in November 1946 when the Cabinet had accepted the Secretary of State’s proposals. As per these proposals, both the British and the Indian officers were to be compensated equally. The Finance Ministry in Interim Government, headed by the League Member, Liaquat Ali Khan had strongly protested against this. It had spiritedly told the British, that while it had no objection to the HMG compensating the European officers from *their monies*, it saw no reason for Indian officers to get compensation even from the British Government to serve under an Indian Government. A view point that was accepted by the British Establishment save for the Secretary of State who kept on insisting that no distinction could be made between the European and the Indian officers as a matter of principle. He was told in the Cabinet meeting of the 14th April that *‘apart from the merits, there were strong arguments of expediency on the side of accepting the views of the Government of India.’*

Only on one issue the Cabinet saw no reason to accept the views of the Indian Government. This was in respect of who was going to foot the bill for this compensation.

“The Chancellor of Exchequer stressed the fact that acceptance of the scheme....did not necessarily imply that the cost of the proposed compensation would be borne by His Majesty’s Government: the source from which the money was to be found still remained a matter for negotiations with the Government of India.”

Let us get back to the story of the glamorous playboy, Mountbatten, the new Indian Viceroy. He had arrived in India with certain instructions. These were, as the Prime Minister was later record in his memo on the Indian Policy to the Cabinet on 22nd May;

“To do his utmost to secure the general acceptance of the Cabinet Mission’s Plan. If this proved impossible he was to report by the 1st October on the steps which he considered should be taken for handing over of power in June 1948.”

If these were his instructions, to report back by 1st October on the feasibility of the acceptance of the Cabinet Mission plan, how come India was partitioned in a great hurry by 15th August – a good two and a half months before the period given for securing the acceptance of Cabinet Mission expired. The reasoning given by Attlee in his note of the 22nd May was as under:

“Since his arrival in India Lord Mountbatten has had a prolonged series of conversations with the leaders of Congress and of the Muslim League and has also conferred with the representatives of the Sikhs. His conversation has convinced him that there is no prospect of acceptance of the Cabinet Mission’s plan or of a Union of India on any other basis. He is also convinced that a very early announcement of His Majesty’s Government’s intentions as to the manner as to the manner in which power will be transferred in 1948 is essential if widespread and uncontrollable communal disturbances, especially in the North-West Frontier Province and the Punjab are to be avoided. The India and Burma Committee are fully satisfied that this diagnosis is correct and that a further initiative on our part is essential.”

A Playboy arrives in India in March. His significant contribution to the Indian cause included blowing up the shrine built in memory of the INA martyrs in Singapore after it was recaptured by the British. Within two months, he comes to the conclusion that Unity of India is impossible. He proposes to announce *the manner in which power will be transferred in 1948 to avoid widespread and uncontrollable communal disturbances, especially in the North-West Frontier Province and the Punjab*. The India and Burma Committee sagely nods head in agreement. Prime Minister calls for *further initiative* on part of the British. What do these wise men do?

We all know the answer. Announce not the manner in which the power was to be transferred in 1948 but proceed to chop the country in two within next three months. Wide spread slaughter on a truly horrifying scale is what results. Were these men plain stupid or so evil that they decided to teach the Indians who were demanding Independence, a truly horrible lesson and therefore did this plainly insane thing deliberately. It would be so nice, if we had only the British to blame but the reality is far different, far more painful.

Let me make a confession. I had always been ambivalent towards Mahatma Gandhi. My emotions about him kept on undergoing change all the time. When at a young age of sixteen, I read the then still banned arguments of Nathuram Godse, his self confessed assassin, I became very angry. Later on when I read the miracle that he brought about in Calcutta, after partition, I became deeply impressed. Even in my writing so far, the readers would notice this ambivalence. Some times I call him Mahatma, sometimes Gandhiji, sometimes plain Mr. Gandhi. It is not accidental. The prefix varies with my assessment of his actions during the period under question. Least, the readers have forgotten, I have confessed to a deep abiding respect for his actions in this period, my amazement at his growing morale stature even as political relevance diminished.

However, as far as Nehru is concerned, till very recently, my feelings have bordered on hero-worshipping. The man who built educational institutes all over the country, in one of which I have studied. The man who spread the scientific temper in a superstition rid country. Handsome hero, riding the white horse attempting to take the country forward at a pace few could keep up with. So much so that I have visited Teen Murti Bhavan at Delhi, where he once stayed at least three times in reverence. Nothing had prepared me for the dark side of Nehru that came to light in the research that I had embarked upon.

The irrelevant Mahatma was being a maverick once again in April 1947. He has been reviled, condemned and finally even murdered for the sin of not preventing the partition of the country. The Hindu mind set is forever looking for either an Avatar or a scapegoat to slaughter without taking into account a simple fact. Even a Mahatma is only human. He can do only so much. There was not much that even Jesus could do once his own disciples betrayed him, except walk in dignity to be nailed on the Cross. The Mahatma's fate was no different. Tired and sick of the hate and enmity that seemed to fill the environment with its poison, the Mahatma sought a way out. His typically ingenious solution for the communal tangle was simple. He pleaded with Mountbatten - Make Jinnah, the Prime Minister, Let him choose his own Cabinet. This was solution to avoid partition, which he knew would lead to a national disaster.

The Congress was aghast. There was no reason to be. Jinnah was one of the senior most leaders of the country. In age and experience and practical wisdom, he soared far above the Congress nominee – Nehru. In a country, where a heavy premium is even today placed on Age, it was below dignity for Jinnah to work under Nehru. On the other hand, there should have been no problem for a far younger Nehru to work under an elder Jinnah. Jinnah was incorruptible and a doughty fighter for a cause that he held dear to his heart. The cause of the Indian nation was something very dear to him. His demand for Pakistan stemmed from despair at the Congress underhand tactics. If only somehow, the desire to live together could be rekindled in his heart, he could be the man to lead the country out of communal morasses. True, he had made a bad judgement in case of Direct Action but then so had the Mahatma himself in supporting the dubious cause of Khilafat. One mistake in a long illustrious career spanning over four decades could not be used to condemn a man and paint him as a villain.

Once before, such a suggestion had been made but the author was a political light weight – Rajagopalacharya. This time it was far more serious. The Congress could afford to take liberties with the Mahatma up to a point. But it well knew, if it came to a crunch, the old bones packed enough power to blow them all away. The people were with the Mahatma, even as the state power had been captured by the Congress.

Nehru appears to have lost his mind by the prospect of losing power. He fought the Mahatma's proposals tooth and nail. This much is known. He did something far more sinister, that remains unknown and comes as a severe blow. Let us go straight back to the minutes of the Cabinet Meeting that took place on 22nd May 1947. It is in this meeting that decisions which have locked India and Pakistan in a cycle of never ending mutual hate, were taken.

“During the last fortnight, however there had been a further development of major importance which put the whole matter in a different light. While Jinnah had always claimed that Pakistan would wish to remain within the British Commonwealth, it had been the policy of the Congress Party that India should be a sovereign independent republic and they had secured a resolution to that effect in the Constituent Assembly....It now appeared that some of the Congress leaders had become increasingly apprehensive about the grant of immediate independence would involve, and a most significant approach had been made by Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel, who had suggested that in the event of partition Hindu India should be granted Dominion status, at any rate as a temporary measure. They had explained that they would hope to secure the agreement of their supporters to this course by arguing that acceptance of Dominion status would enable power to be transferred to Indian hands at a date substantially earlier than June 1948, and that once she had attained Dominion status Hindu India would be free to secede at any time from the Commonwealth.”

This self-serving argument of Nehru and Patel was so much hogwash. Who else but Nehru, the man who had stood up to his own father in 1929 for the cause of Independence against Dominion Status; knew this better. In December 1946, Nehru had been the author of the resolution in the Constituent Assembly setting Absolute Political Independence as the goal. This was the very man making such a puerile argument in favour of Dominion status, that they do not need comment. Suffice to say the entire history of Congress since 1930 was being turned on its head by these Congress stalwarts.

Dominion Status instead of Independence. A partition of the country against the ideal of an United country. By making such proposals, which went against the official party line, it is not an exaggeration to say that both Nehru and Patel were committing what amounted to Treason. For what cause were such far reaching compromises being sought to be made. So that power could be transferred to Indian (read Nehru and Patel) hands.

The Quid pro being sought by the Congress leaders was, as the Minutes tell us, that:

“It must be remembered that the proposals made by the Congress leaders was that Dominion status should be granted and power transferred as early as possible in 1947.”

Give us what we want i.e. Power and we will give you what you want i.e. continued association of the British Crown with India. What was the reason behind this all might hurry? It is not far to seek. To deny Jinnah the opportunity of becoming the Prime Minister of a United India, for unlike Rajagopalacharya, the Mahatma was well in a position to force his solution down the unwilling throat of the Congress. He had to be denied the opportunity to do so and hence these **secret sinful treasonous deals were being stuck behind the back of an unsuspecting nation.**

For the proverbial coin of silver, **Nehru and Patel had no hesitation in betraying their mentor. If Christ was betrayed by Judas, the Mahatma was done in by the two of his most faithful followers – Nehru and Patel.** What was in it for the British? The reasons were fairly straight-forward:

“This was a most important development and the India and Burma Committee had felt that full advantage should be taken of it. If Dominion status was conferred on the two successor States as part of the plan for the transfer of power, this would greatly ease the difficulties inherent in partition.....More important, it was reasonable to suppose that the Indian political Parties, in the light of practical experience of the advantages of Dominion status would be slow to exercise their right to secede at a later stage. India’s decision would also, no doubt, be closely watched by Burma, who would shortly have to choose between independence and Dominion status; and Ceylon would also be greatly influenced by the line taken by India on this question.”

This was not all. We shall see later, an India that accepted Dominion status conferred several economic benefits to the British without getting anything in the return. An India that accepted Dominion status enabled the British to pretend that their withdrawal from India had not been forced nor was it a sign of their weakness or to be the first step in the dissolution of the Empire. On the contrary this action could be shown to be the logical conclusion, which they welcomed, of a policy followed by successive Governments for many years. What more could they ask for? The Nehru-Patel duo got what they wanted. So did the British. So it was a Win-Win situation for all except the Insane Mahatma. Is it not? Yes! Except for a small detail. The terrible fate that awaited millions who were going to be the victim of this terrible haste. Their fate was well known in advance.

“The Prime Minister said that communal feeling in India was now intense and it was possible that serious disorder might break out in the Punjab and certain other Provinces at any time after the announcement of the plan for partitioning India. It was the Viceroy’s considered view that the only hope of checking widespread communal warfare was to suppress the first sign of it promptly and ruthlessly, using for this purpose all the force required, including tanks and aircraft, and giving full publicity throughout India to the action taken and the reasons for it. In this the Viceroy had the unanimous support of his Interim Government. It was important that he should also be assured that this policy had the support of His Majesty’s Government.

The Cabinet agreed that the policy which the Viceroy proposed to follow in this matter should have their full support.”

With this decision, the country was sent hurtling down to partition and transfer of power, three months later on that fateful day – 15th August 1947. I need not bother the readers with details that are best available elsewhere. Let us only consider some facts that have remained so far hidden from the public gaze.

Communal rioting that would need use of **tanks and aircrafts** to suppress them, were known to be result from the unnatural hurry that was now being demanded by the Nehru and Patel, blinded by the lust of power. A fact that all the participants, the Congress, the League and the British, of this decision knew. The ruthless suppression that was deemed essential was nowhere to be seen. Forget Tanks and aircrafts, even the ground troops were not in place. In Punjab, a force of 50,000 troops had been deemed necessary. By the time rioting started, not even 10,000 were in place. In Bengal, the government had no troops worth the name.

The day was saved by the Mahatma in Bengal. The Man who was betrayed by his own was the man, who staked his life to knock some sense into the heads of those driven mad by communal fury. In an amazing outcome, he actually succeeded in doing so. What can anyone call such a man if not Mahatma. How one wishes, he had stayed away from the realms of power politics and instead concentrated on Social reforms.

In view of the sordid story that has unfolded, permit me dear readers to say that there is nothing to celebrate as far as 15th August is concerned. *It is merely the day when the Nehruvian grab for power succeeded by the Mother of all Betrayals.* Even if we ignore these emotional value judgements, how far is it true that 15th August can be celebrated as the Independence Day ?

Before, we take up this issue, just one more thing. How come Mountbatten remained on as the Governor-General of India, while Jinnah denied him the honour? Somehow, Indians see this as Nehru's greatness and the final proof that Jinnah was the power hungry monster.

First the facts. It is only after Jinnah saw the Congress give up its claim for Independence and collaborate with the British; that he decided to assume the position. He is reported to have said that in Pakistan, it was the Governor-General who held the keys to power. This was not the vain boast of an aging old man but the legally correct statement of a shrewd lawyer. The so-called Independence of India Act 1947 does not so much as mention the position of Prime Minister or even Council of Ministers. Wide-ranging powers were available to the Governor-General, even after the concept of Council of Ministers was introduced. It was plainly foolish, at the very least to trust any foreigner, particularly someone like Mountbatten, who commanded a large body of British troops still stationed in the Indian subcontinent with such an exalted position as the Head of State.

Either Jinnah was shrewd to deny and Nehru foolish to offer Mountbatten the honour. Or Jinnah was not as indebted to the British as Nehru was. Which of the two is true is best left for the readers to decide.

15th August – The Independence Day
What Independence

The ordinary Bharatiya citizen will be shocked to realise that 15th August, which is celebrated with considerable enthusiasm as the Independence Day, morally, politically and legally; can not be celebrated as such. The fact is India did not attain Independence on 15th August; it merely became a self-governing colony of the British crown. The British monarch, who till then had the title of King-Emperor of India, now became merely the King of India. What happened on this day was merely Transfer of Power from the His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom answerable to the Parliament in London to what amounted to His Majesty's Government in India answerable to the Constituent Body in Delhi. This is not mere wrangle about the semantics but had considerable financial implications.

When the dust of celebrations settled down in 1947, the problem of continued association of the British crown began to trouble the national opinion. The dispute between Dominion status and Independence had been settled in the Lahore Congress of 1929. The national verdict had been resoundingly in favour of Absolute Political Independence. Fact that Nehru and Patel had brazenly turned the clock by over two decades was something that could no longer be hidden. Burma had been least impressed with the Indian example of accepting Dominion status and had univocally declared Independence. Ireland was the verge of doing so. It was becoming more and more embarrassing to find India still holding on to the British coat tails. Something had to be done. Nehru and his British patrons went to work.

On 28th October 1948, the developments in Ireland and India were the subject of discussions in the British Cabinet – agenda point number 3. What is intriguing is the fact that while the discussions on Ireland were recorded in the Minutes; those on India were not. They can only be found in the Secretary's Standard File of Cabinet Conclusions. What could be the reason for this secrecy in respect of the Indian discussions? First let us see the Irish developments.

The British Government had made all possible efforts to persuade the Irish people to abandon their demand of Independence, holding out the possibility of several practical disadvantages that could result from their decision to declare Ireland as an Independent and therefore a country Foreign to the United Kingdom. Irish people refused to be swayed by British persuading. The memories of the Potato Famine were far too painful for them to forget, even after lapse of a century.

“The Eire Government were determined that that Eire should cease to be a member of the Commonwealth and no constitutional status which involved continued membership of the Commonwealth would be acceptable to them.”

Why were the Irish so unyielding, after all membership of a club is not something that necessarily involves an issue of national prestige. They were just being too fussy.

Well! For those who would like to believe that membership of Commonwealth was not something to lose sleep over, reminding of some historical facts would be in order. Let us look at what the membership in Commonwealth involved. We have it from the pen of the British Prime Minister himself. In a memo dated 26th October 1947 on Commonwealth Relationship addressed to his colleagues in the Cabinet. He had pointed out that as per the preamble to the Statute of Westminster, members of the Commonwealth *were United by a common allegiance to the Crown*. In other words, a nation could become remain a member of the Commonwealth only so long as it recognised the Sovereignty of the British Monarch over its people. This certainly was no small matter. No wonder, the Irish were being so adamant. How could they be expected to forget that the same British Monarch, who they were being asked to continue to regard as their Sovereign, had stood by silently watching millions of Irish people die of hunger?

Our Indian Leaders had no such qualms. For them, the millions who had also died of hunger merely a five years before, were of no consequence. If the British Monarch had shown no particular concern for these unfortunate souls, it was no more than that being done by they themselves. A perusal of the Minutes is illuminating.

“The Cabinet were informed that the Prime Minister of India had made it clear, during recent discussions in London, that he was anxious to keep India within the Commonwealth, if a constitutional basis could be found which would be acceptable to the Constituent Assembly; and as was shown by a report from India published in the “Times” that morning, public opinion in India on this issue had radically changed in the recent months. During discussions which Ministers had with Pandit Nehru, various suggestions had been made which, taken together, might constitute an adequate basis for India’s continued membership of the Commonwealth in a form acceptable to Indian opinion generally. The precise form of these suggestions was now being further studied by Pandit Nehru but their general effect was as follows.

The King’s sovereignty in India should be regarded as dormant, but not extinguished; no United Kingdom legislation should be enacted to terminate the King’s sovereignty over India and this could therefore be revived by a unilateral act on the part of India at any time. In statements to the Parliaments of the United Kingdom and India, an identical formula would be used to the effect that under the new Indian Constitution, His Majesty would not exercise any of the functions of sovereignty. A historical link with the Crown would be preserved by the enactment, as Indian law, of sections 1,2 and 7 of the United Kingdom Indian Independence Act, 1947. India would adopt the provisions of the British Nationality Act, 1948, in so far as they related to India. The King would conclude with the new President of India, an agreement by which he would act as the President’s representative for the protection of Indian citizens in the United Kingdom, and the President would act as The King’s representative for the protection in India of Commonwealth citizens other than citizens of India. In countries where India maintained no separate diplomatic representation, the diplomatic protection of Indian citizens would be undertaken by the diplomatic representatives of other Commonwealth countries. The King would be regarded as the fountain of Honour for the Commonwealth, and a new Commonwealth Order might be instituted, for which citizens of all Commonwealth

countries, including India, would be eligible. In all future legislation in India, care would be taken to treat Commonwealth countries as a class apart from all foreign countries.”

Let us not imagine that these proposals were being made by a humble British Government to an all powerful Prime Minister of India, who was going to decide whether or not these stupid proposals merited any consideration. The reality was the other way around. It was Nehru, who made these proposals for consideration of the British Cabinet. This once doughty fighter for the cause of Independence had so much compromised his own ideological beliefs that he was now making an ass of himself by proposing that the King will be the First citizen of India. For the record the absolutely disgusting suggestion that the King’s sovereignty will not be extinguished and lie dormant in India, made by Mr. Krishna Menon and Mr. B.N.Rau, did not form a part of the official note submitted by Nehru to the British Cabinet.

We thus had the shameful sight of Ireland rejecting any connection with the British Crown, while at the same time our own Indian leaders making cringing submissions to the British to keep them within the British fold, knowing fully well that the national opinion was firmly against any such step. The difference between the attitudes of the leaders of the two countries is vividly brought out in Minutes of one of the British Cabinet Meetings. It said:

“In discussion emphasis was laid on the fundamental difference between the attitude of India and Eire respectively between the attitude of India with the Commonwealth. Eire Ministers were determined to put Eire’s secession from the Commonwealth beyond question; the Government of India, on the other hand, were anxious to devise means, compatible with the form of her constitution, by which India could continue to be a member of the Commonwealth, and paragraph 10 of Annex A of C.P. (48) 254 gave hope that in time a closer association could be achieved.”

What is this paragraph 10 of Annex A of C.P. (48) 254 , that gave hopes to the British. This was a part of the Nehru memo to the British Cabinet that said:

“These proposals represent a sincere desire to continue the Commonwealth association and what is practical and adequate at present. No doubt as the relationship is not a static arrangement, further development by way of association may take place.”

Despite these sincere Indian attempts to continue to be British slaves, there was a problem. The problem being:

“The problem was how to secure the recognition, under international law, of a Commonwealth group which might include States no longer subject to the King’s sovereignty. The difficulty arose from the fact that, at present, international law recognised only ‘His Majesty’s Dominions’ or ‘Foreign countries.’

Notwithstanding the fact that the Irish wanted to kick out the British and the Indians were desperate to keep them or that India had helped the British in their hour of defeat during the War, while the Irish people had kept away; the British were far more fond of the Irish than the Indians. The British Ministers had argued that even if Eire were to extinguish the King's sovereignty, it could not be treated as a Foreign country for there were 'many ties of blood, history and intermingling of peoples which bound Eire to the older (read – White) countries of the Commonwealth.' Where as the case of India was different for 'these later arguments could not be used in support of a claim that an Asiatic country could still be regarded as not being "foreign" to Commonwealth after it ceased to be a member of the Commonwealth.'

What followed was even more interesting. The cringing appeals from the Indians must have no doubt enormously satisfied the British egos. However, as we have seen so often in the past, the British were far too professional to let their egos and emotions come in the way of their rational decision making process. It was nice to have this appeal from India to maintain the connection but was it in the interest of the British nation. The cabinet therefore invited the Lord Chancellor, in consultation with the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General to consider whether the Nehru proposals would-

- (i) Constitute an adequate basis for India's continued membership of the Commonwealth.
- (ii) Provide an adequate basis for resisting claims by foreign countries under the most-favoured-nation provisions of existing treaties.

The Opinion of the Lord Chancellor and the Law Officers deserves serious study. For, it blows to bits the myth that 15th August 1947 is the Independence Day of India that is Bharat.

The suggestion that the King's sovereignty lie dormant and not be extinguished in India may not have been formally made in the Nehru memo but it was certainly something being seriously discussed. This most disgusting proposal essentially meant that the Sovereignty of the King would be revived once the Bharatiya people had cooled down. A show of rebutting the British would be made and soon life would be back to normal. A worse thing than this is difficult to imagine. Fortunately, the Law Officers had the following comments to offer:

“It was suggested to us in the course of some most useful discussions which we had with Mr. Krishna Menon and Sir B.N.Rau that the sovereignty of His Majesty would not be absolutely extinguished but would only be dormant or suspended and might be revived by an appropriate amendment of the Indian Constitution. We have considered this suggestion, which is as **subtle as it is novel**, with greatest care, **but in the end find ourselves with regret quite unable to agree with it.**”

It was the Indians who made this suggestion and the British who turned it down. This is the shocking reality that one has to digest.

The Law Officers opined that once Indian Constituent Assembly passed the Constitution as it had been drafted, His Majesty's sovereignty over India would be fully extinguished in legal terms. India would no longer be a part of His Majesty's dominion and therefore be a Foreign country. The novel concept of treating His Majesty's sovereignty as dormant would be of no use whatsoever. They emphasized the fact that as the things stood on that date i.e. 28th October 1947, long past the so called Independence Day of 15th August 1947; India was not a country foreign to the United Kingdom in other words - it was not an Independent country. The consequences of this were many.

For example, so long as India continued to be a part of His Majesty's dominion, the Indian citizens entering United Kingdom had several rights and obligations not applicable to a citizen of an Independent country. Right being in respect of eligibility to contest elections, hold office, own British ships and aircrafts and other such things. The obligation being to be called to serve in the British armed forces after two years of residence in the United Kingdom.

The most important consideration for the British of an Independent India was the impact such an event were to have on the system of Imperial Preferences that they had instituted. The Commonwealth countries, being united by common allegiance to the British Crown were not foreign to each other. They could have preferential trade and tariff arrangements between themselves. To look fair such arrangements were on the face of it mutual. But it was no secret that in case of such arrangements between an industrialized nation like the United Kingdom and an agrarian society like India; could only work to the advantage of the United Kingdom. More importantly the hypothetical benefit extended by the British to sister dominion nation like India, could not be used as a basis for claiming similar benefit by any other foreign nation.

For instance, let us take the example of Steel. Let us say that India and the United Kingdom had agreed that Steel import into their country from the other would attract a 10% duty. So the British Steel carrying a 10% duty became more competitive than say 20% duty levied by India on imports from all Foreign nations. On the other hand, as India had no Steel to export, the possibility of Indian Steel producers threatening the British domestic producers did not arise. Moreover, since this benefit had not been extended by the British to a Foreign nation, a steel producer in North America, for instance could claim the right of exporting steel to United Kingdom at the lower tariff applicable to an Indian producer. Thus, it was a Win-Win situation for the British all the way. According to the Law Officers in case such arrangements continued even after the Indian Parliament extinguished the sovereignty of the British Crown, it would be a most unsatisfactory arrangement. Their opinion ran as under: "Assuming decision were taken to continue to treat India...as not a foreign country...if preferential treatment were continued to India after the passing of her now constitution, more or less plausible arguments could be put forward in opposition to a claim by some foreign country that that foreign country was entitled to the same treatment under the most-favoured-nation clause. We cannot say that these arguments either could or ought to succeed; indeed we are inclined to take the view that they would not succeed, they would not succeed."

The Law Officers were thus very clear that once India became a Foreign nation, the system of imperial preferences had to end, otherwise there was a very real danger of other countries asking for and getting similar benefits extended to them. Some of whom could take real advantage of what were only theoretical advantages as far as India was concerned. This was not all. In case, the British succeeded in denying such advantages to other nation, the situation was no better. Other nations could then use the same arguments as used by the United Kingdom to form similar trading blocks and keep the British producers out of their markets. As they said:

“We think it right to add that if they did succeed, they would or might open the way to a claim by e.g. a South American or Arab country that notwithstanding our most-favoured-nation rights under a treaty with that country, that country was entitled to extend preferential treatment to other South American or Arab Countries. We are told that this is a position which South American countries have in the past tried to secure. To support it they would be able to point to a common history-interrupted it is true – of domination by a common sovereign, whether King of Spain or the King of Portugal. They would be able to point to a much greater degree of cultural, linguistic and religious unity than is the case with the Commonwealth, at any rate so long as the eastern dominions form part of it. They would be able to point to an international organisation in some respects more closely integrated than there is between the members of the British Commonwealth. And they might be easily able to arrange a common citizenship with at least as much substance behind it as the Commonwealth citizenship will probably have in the Commonwealth if the Commonwealth persists with the new eastern dominions in it. **Up to now we have met this claim by pointing out to the thing they have not got viz. a common allegiance to the same Crown. This we would no longer be able to do.**”

It is on account of these commercial considerations that the British had been so anxious to avoid the possibility of India emerging as an Independent nation, one which did not recognize the all important sovereignty of the Crown. One can understand the British anxiety in persuading India to forgo the option extinguishing the sovereignty of their King. It is impossible to understand the rationale for Nehru's anxiety to retain this chain of slavery.

The Nehru memo had contended that the King of England had waived his right of appointment etc. and generally speaking all the functions of sovereignty in favour of the Indian people in virtue of the Independence of India Act 1947.

It is on this contention rests the myth of 15th August 1947 as the Day of Indian Independence. The reason, why we had witnessed such a pomp and show on 15th August 1997; which was celebrated as the Golden Jubilee of Independence.

What do the people, who themselves drafted the Act have to say on this contention. The truth is highly unpalatable but nevertheless needs to be known. The Law officers reply to this contention of Nehru is clear and unambiguous:

“It is not in our view the case that the King waived his functions of sovereignty by the Act of 1947. That Act, it is true, discharged *His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom* from their responsibilities and rights in India on his behalf; but it made clear that there was to be a Governor-General appointed by him and representing him, with the function of assenting ‘in his Majesty’s name’ to the laws of the legislature of the Dominion. Moreover His Majesty has in fact been accrediting the Indian Ambassadors to foreign powers.

If, however, what is meant by the paragraph is that The King, by assenting through his Governor-General, under Section 63 of the Indian Independence Act, 1947, to the new constitution of India, will in doing so waive all functions of sovereignty is indistinguishable from a waiver of sovereignty itself.”

It is thus not till the time that the Sovereignty of the British King was extinguished and that of the People of Bharat was proclaimed on 26th January 1950; that India can be truly said to have become Independent. We can celebrate 15th August as the Day of Transfer of Power from the White to the Brown Day or as the Day when Nehru’s ambition was fulfilled or for any other reason.

To celebrate 15th August as the Day of Independence is a historically and legally false proposition.

Squandering of Indian Sterling Loans to the British

A little known event – signing of an Agreement took place on 14th August 1947 even as India prepared for what the Bharatiya people had been misled to believe was the Independence Day, took place in London. A more shocking and startling betrayal of the Nation could not have been envisaged. I am referring to the Financial Agreement between United Kingdom and India. This was the Agreement that led to a criminal squandering of the Sterling Credit that had accrued to India during the War. We have already seen that the Sterling Balances or Assets were nothing but an Indian loan to British. We shall therefore not any longer use the misleading term Sterling Balances or Sterling Assets but rather the right term – Sterling Credits in India's account or Sterling Loans extended to the British by India.

Let us go clause by clause of this infamous agreement to understand the devilish nature of this final betrayal.

Article I

For the purpose of this Agreement the sterling assets of the Reserve Bank of India shall be taken at the figure of £ 1,160 million

The Reality

First of all, these forced loans that were being extended to the British for the purpose of fighting the War should have ended in August 1945 with cessation of hostilities in the manner that the American Lend Lease had stopped. We all know this did not happen causing great deal of misery to the suffering people of Bharat. The Sterling Loans that stood at £ 1,130 million at the end of August 1945 actually increased to £ 1,293 million by end of March 1946. A further sum of so called Recoverable War Expenses amounting to £ 387 million were shown in India's account from April 1946 to March 1947. There is no record of any British repayments of this debt. Thus, in August 1947, the Sterling Loans of India to the British should have been:

- As on 31st March 1946 £ 1,293 million
- Additions in 1946/47 £ 387 million

Thus the total figure in the Agreement should have £1,293 million + £ 387 million or £ 1,680 million as against £ 1,160 million. Where did the missing £ 520 million go? This was a huge sum of money representing almost 70% of the total money that was required to make India a self sufficient country in respect of Food. By another measure, this money was enough to provide free ration to all the Bharatiya people for Two and a Half years. We all know, none of this actually happened. So, where did the money go?

The Reserve Bank History has no clear answer to give. It merely says that this was on account of:

“Heavy imports of food grains, consumer goods and equipment. There was also some private capital repatriation, largely British.”

No quantification is given. The story of the decline being largely on account of heavy food grain imports can be safely dismissed after taking studying the ghastly manner in which the Indian interests were ignored in the whole of 1946; something we have already done in great detail.

The British repatriation of Capital had been actively aided by the Government policies. History of the Reserve Bank is rather helpful in this regard.

“The Budget for 1946/47 provided various tax reliefs including the abolition of Excess Profit Tax and introduced special initial depreciation allowances in respect of new buildings and plant and machinery for promoting investments....the Government also endeavored to bring about a further cheapening of money. It is hard to say whether this step was motivated only by the desire to fight the threatened slump. In any case, the boom in share and property values resulting from such a policy, reinforced by large tax reliefs was of help to the British investors to sell their holdings at good prices and transfer the proceeds to the U.K.”

We know all too clearly, how precariously the British rule in India was placed in 1946. It therefore made sense from the British point of view to give a chance to those who fought shy of taking a risk in an extremely uncertain situation, to take their money home at a handsome profit.

Now, let us look at the import of Consumer Goods and Capital Equipment. The Finance Member had stated in his Budget speech in February 1946 that some 150 control measures had been withdrawn. The Hoarding and Profiteering (Prevention) Order of 1943 and the Consumer Goods (Control of Distribution) Order of 1944 lapsed on September 30, 1946. In a country, where millions were barely able to keep their body and soul together, a *laissez faire* regime prevailed. Once again the History of the Reserve Bank is quite useful.

“However, much to his chagrin, the Governor found very soon that his representations to Government in April 1946 had resulted in a more or less complete abandonment of all controls over the import of all control over import of consumer goods. The full effects of this relaxation began to be felt in the last quarter of 1946 when imports began to arrive in large quantities. The value of licenses issued during the quarter October to December 1946 for imports from U.S.A. was well over \$ 500 million. Alarmed at the huge orders already placed for such articles as fountain pens, pencils, parachutes, combs, mirrors, imitation jewellery and toilet requisites, the leading Banks themselves, the Governor, found were tightening up their policy.....What was even more disconcerting was that control was still exercised over essential goods such as machinery, tools and agricultural implements for which licenses were only issued on a quota basis to established importers...even these being subject to inordinate delay.”

No wonder, then these imports did the Economy no good. The Governor admitted as much in August 1948. He said:

“From the meager data that is available it would appear that ...improvement in production...is far below expectations, the present output being far short of even the existing productive capacity in the major industries....prevailing shortages of capital equipment....The gap between supply and demand has therefore come to be covered by predominantly by a rise in prices.”

So this was the reality, the long suffering people of Bharat saw £ 520 million of their forced saving being used for the benefit of the British who wanted to take their money home and for the conspicuous consumption of the Indian elite. Their only reward was ever increasing prices of essential goods. Food grains were not available but Toilet paper was – in great abundance. This was the real face of India in 1946 even as Nehru and Jinnah fought out for the spoils of power.

Disappearing millions was not the only issue in the Agreement. Even the amount agreed upon £ 1,160 million itself was not final. The Chancellor of Exchequer was quite candid on this issue in the British Cabinet Meeting of 7th August 1947. He had informed the Cabinet that all that had been agreed was India would be repaid by end of 1947 - a measly sum of £ 35 million out of a total of £ 1,160 million. Of this, the Indian Government had agreed only £ 15 million would be spent in hard currency i.e. US Dollars. The balance £ 20 million were to be spent in buying goods from the United Kingdom and Australia. He added:

“No commitment for further release after the end of 1947 had been or would be made in the present negotiations **nor were His Majesty’s Government committed to recognise the total of £ 1,160 million.**”

A good £ 520 million is used for fulfilling the commercial interests of the British and their patrons with the gains to the Bharatiya economy being zilch. Then repayment of a pittance from the balance amount of £ 1,160 is magnanimously agreed upon. No further repayment is even promised. Nor is the balance principle itself accepted. What kind of a Loan Negotiation was this. But this is a small part of the shameful story. The British wanted to make sure that the interest payable on this balance principle was nominal.

So far they had managed this by legal fiction of the Issue and the Banking Department of the Reserve Bank. The readers would recall story of the Sterling Securities being kept in the Issue and Banking Department of the Reserve Bank. Those in the Banking Department were liquid and could be deployed to earn interest, while those in the Issue Department were considered frozen and earned no interest. Ever increasing demand of Rupee funds for the British War effort made the Reserve Bank print more and more currency notes for which it had to transfer the Sterling Securities it got from the Government of United Kingdom via the Government of India to the Issue Department. This was due to requirement of the British Statute then prevailing in India, which linked the Rupee to Sterling.

A stage came, when the Sterling Securities in the Issue Department far exceeded those in the Banking Department. With this the average yield on the total Sterling Balances dropped below one per cent and stood at a nominal rate of 0.8101%.

As the British rule in India neared its end, nationalist pressure for delinking the Rupee from Sterling mounted. Amongst other things, it would have meant that the legal fiction of the Issue and Banking Department would have ceased to operate and the entire sum of the Sterling Balances would have been liquid and enabling the Reserve Bank to earn at least the market rate of interest rather than the nominal 0.8101%.

More importantly, there was a pressure from the Americans to ensure that their exports to India did not suffer on account of enforced linkage of the Rupee to Sterling. The British therefore decided to devise a method by which the Interest Rate payable by them on the Sterling Loans remained minimal. They therefore decided to replace the fictitious Issue and Banking Department difference by so called Accounts of Reserve Bank in the Bank of England that had the same characteristics. Let us take a look at the next Clause.

Article II

- (1) The Reserve Bank of India shall open with the Bank of England a new account (hereinafter referred to as the 'No 2 Account') to which the balance of the total assets referred to in Article I above remaining at the close of business on the date of the signature of this Agreement, shall be transferred....

This Account Number 2 effectively replaced the Issue Department. 95% of the Sterling Credits were to remain in this account, virtually frozen. For this account could be operated only for the following purposes:

- Transfer of Ownership of military stores, equipment and fixed assets from the Government of United Kingdom to the Government of India on the 1st April 1947.

The amounts involved were substantial. The British claim was for about £ 375 million. The Indians believed that they got a good bargain, when they eventually settled the claim for £ 211 million. It did not cross the mind of the Nehru Government that since these assets were created in India by the British to fight a War that neither had the Indian consent nor was in its interests; the British should have been asked to carry them away at their own risk and cost. There was no need for the Indian Government to make any payments to the British for these assets.

- Pensions paid outside India by or on behalf of Government of India.

At stake were the Pensions payable to the loyal agents of the Raj – The Indian Civil Services, some 16,000 people in all. Indians were not only expected to pay them compensation for denying them the opportunity to loot the country on behalf of their masters but also pay them Pension for having taken the trouble of looting her in the past. In July 1942, the Governor of Reserve Bank, Sir James had estimated that a total sum of

some £ 75 million would be required for this purpose. This figure mysteriously rose to £ 250 million after 1948. Once again the Indians were happy to strike a deal at £ 168 million. Once again the very proprietary of making such an obnoxious payment did not trouble the Indian Government.

- For transferring the savings of the British citizens, who were going to return to their motherland from India after Transfer of Power.
- For Capital Transfers of British Investments in India

Thus by transferring, the Indian Sterling Credits to this Account No. 2, the British created a nice nest egg for taking care of all their vital financial interests. On the other hand, small amounts were to be released to the Indians for meeting their vital necessities of life by creating an Account No 1, which replaced the Banking Department.

Article III

- (1) There shall also be established at the Bank of England in the name of the Reserve Bank of India a new account (hereinafter referred to as the 'No 1 Account') to which any sterling received after the date of this Agreement by the Reserve Bank of India in respect of current transactions and any sums transferred from the No 2 Account shall be credited.
- (2) The Government of the United Kingdom shall not restrict convertibility of Sterling standing to the credit of the No.1 Account for current transactions in any currency area or for the purpose of any payment to residents of the sterling area.

An amount of £ 65 million was transferred to Account No 1, of which only £ 35 million could actually be used by India for her pressing current needs. It had been specifically and expressly agreed that the Government of the United Kingdom would not restrict the convertibility of this £ 35 million. In other words, India was free to use this entire amount of £ 35 million for any purpose in any currency. Nevertheless, the Government of U.K. persuaded the Indian Government to accept that only 42% of this amount would be considered convertible by the Indian Government.

The reasons for this were not far to seek. The Sterling was a fully convertible currency since 15th July 1947. Under the terms, of the Financial Agreement, it had been able to conclude with the United States, the British had been forced to accept this as many other humiliating conditions all for a loan that was **less** than that being extended by India and which carried an interest of 3%.

On 14th August 1947, the date of this Agreement, there was a run on the Pound. In a complete breach of the agreement that they had signed with the Americans, the British were preparing to suspend the convertibility of Pound. The British position was very precarious and they were in the imminent danger of completely running down their American and Canadian Credit without having anything to how for it. Foreign holder of

Sterling were exercising great ingenuity in transferring Sterling into Dollars or Dollar goods even in anticipation of their subsequent needs. As ever, the Indians rushed to the aid of the beleaguered British by forgoing the option of meeting their own national needs and agreed to accept a ceiling on the Convertibility of the available money in this Account Number 1. There were not many such large hearted friends of the British. Their actions forced the British to suspend the Convertibility on 21st August 1947. The total bankruptcy of the British fox was completely exposed.

The Agreement provided that the Reserve bank was free to alter its investments 'in accordance with normal central banking practices. Once again the Government of India accepted a limitation that was not provided in the Agreement. It accepted that the Reserve Bank **would not alter the** disposition of its Sterling Credits, which would increase their yield beyond the level which stood on that day. Since as on that day, the average yield was 0.8101%; this in effect became the ceiling on the yield that the Government could get on its Sterling Credits. Which nation other than India in the World could borrow money at the rate of 3% and lend it out at 0.8101%?

Unaware of this treachery, ill fed Indians and Pakistanis were sharpening their knives and swords to kill each other, rape and violate each other's women in an orgy of violence, the flames of which would continue cloak this vile act for generations to come.

A loan of £ 1,160 million that was not backed by any collateral, where neither the Principle nor Repayment Schedule had been agreed upon; carrying an interest of 0.8101% had been signed sealed and delivered hours before the Transfer of Power was to take place in Delhi. Of course, it is not correct that nothing had been said about Repayment. It had been in principle agreed that nearly a third of the loan would be adjusted against services provided by the British, which Indians had neither asked for nor needed. Payments in respect of Military Stores and Pensions to the ICS officers.

Loan of £ 1,160 million or US \$ 4,640 million was in excess of the loan given by the Americans. Wait did I say US \$ 4,640, did the Agreement denominate the Loan in Dollar terms so as to eliminate the risk in terms of Currency Depreciation? For in that Fall of 1947, every knew that Sterling was a worthless currency. This is one more sorry aspect of the Agreement that we need to examine. The damage caused to the Indian national cause by accepting denomination of the Loan in Sterling as against in US dollars.

In August 1947, the Sterling was officially a convertible currency. There was absolutely no legal bar in Indian Government insisting that since the British were hard pressed for Cash, the least they could do was to accept the Loan liability in Dollar terms so that the Indian national progress would not be hostage to fluctuating fortunes of Sterling.

It is quite illuminating to find that even as the magnanimous Indian Government sacrificed the interests of its own people, the British Elite did not allow such petty consideration as the interests of **their own nation** to come in the way of an opportunity to make money. This is no anti capitalist, rabble rousing. We already know the fact that ever since the Pound had been declared a convertible currency under the American pressure in

July 1947, anybody who held Sterling Assets of any kind was rushing off to convert it into US Dollars or Dollar goods.

On 16th August 1947, the Chancellor of Exchequer was bemoaning the fact that :

“The dollar drain has accelerated. In the last six weeks it averaged £ 115 million a week, compared with £ 77 million a week in the second quarter. In the last five working days £175 millions has been lost....The accelerated movement shows that the position as regards foreign holders is getting out of control. They are expressing very great ingenuity in transferring sterling into dollars or dollar goods even in anticipation of subsequent needs. It is only prudent judging by past experience to expect this acceleration to continue; in which event the rest of the Credit will be rapidly exhausted and the country will have very little to show for it.”

It appears that the run on the Pound was led by the financial wizards of the London Banking Community. In blatant disregard to the needs of their own country, the British Financial Community was collaborating with this Capital flight. If only the London Banks were to exercise a voluntary restraint in converting Sterling into US Dollars, His Majesty's Government would not have been facing dire straits. However, the greed to make more and more money overcame any nationalist scruples that the London bankers may have had. They were in a competition to execute the orders of the Sterling holders to transfer the funds to American Account and make available Dollars in lieu of Sterling either on New York or London market. When it came to a crunch, the famed British nationalist fervor counted for zilch, at last so far its Elite were concerned.

The Chancellor of Exchequer, faced with an almost open rebellion from his own colleagues in the financial markets, was forced to propose to the Cabinet that the Bank of England issue instructions to the London Banks to cease from such transactions. He was well aware that “this involves breach of the Anglo-American Financial Agreement and of the payment terms that we have signed. But”, he ruefully noted “it is the only way of checking the present drain.”. Moreover, he also knew that “the immediate effect of the action proposed will be felt world wide; countries which have ordered goods from U.S.A. in the expectation of being able to pay for them in Dollars acquired from us would be unable to pay for them; the shock to trading operations of all kinds will be considerable.”

Yet, he had no hesitation in recommending the breach of an Agreement in the interest of his nation. In proposing this action, he was also aware that, “there is some danger that some of our suppliers will retaliate, insisting on being paid in gold or dollars in advance. We expect some difficulty from Argentina...”. He could take comfort from the fact that the docile Indian Government would not join ranks with the uncivilized Argentineans and make life more difficult for the British than it already was. After all, the Indians were not going to build their huts from the ruins of the British castles.

Once again, the option of negotiating the Sterling Loan Repayment Agreement in a manner that was consistent with the Indian national interests does not appear to be figured in the Collective wisdom of the Indian Government. The seditious idea of insisting on

denomination of the Sterling Loan in hard currency was not entertained. Perhaps, it was too violent one for the minds bred on an unending diet of Non-Violence.

It is a small matter of little consequence that the long overdue devaluation of Sterling took place in September 1949. Overnight, the value of the British currency fell by 30.5% against the hard currency, US dollars. Indian Rupee, which had continued to remain tied to apron strings of its colonial master followed suit by an identical margins. Nearly, a third of the effective value of the Indian assets had vanished into thin air.

Let no one imagine that the insistence on denominating the Loan in US Dollar was simply on account of the fortuitous circumstance of the Sterling being a Convertible currency in August 1947 . There is one more story that we have briefly touched before. The story of the Empire Dollar Pool. The forced loans that the British extracted from the colonies was not the only form of exploitation of that they indulged in. The story of the manner in which the economies of the Colonies had been ruined at the altar of the British economic interests particularly during the Second World War seems to be never ending.

In April 1939 as the War clouds gathered over the horizons of Europe, the British Treasury and the Bank of England moved to ensure that the Imperial interest would not be harmed. Well aware of the harsh reality that the Sterling no longer commanded the confidence of the financial community in the world – the place of pride had been taken over by the American greenbacks; they moved to stockpile the American money. This by itself was a perfectly justified move – provided they had drawn up plans of increasing exports to America and curtailing imports, thereby leaving a Dollar surplus. The cunning British jackal knew too well that it was beyond its capacity to do so. So in the manner of its real life cousin in the jungle; it decided to feast on the prey hunted by others. The bank of England introduced a scheme, which would have done the Devil proud. It required all the Colonies to surrender the Dollars earned by them into a general pool – the Empire Dollar Pool to be under the control of the British Treasury. The reason given out was this was necessary to conserve the Gold and other foreign exchange of the Empire as a whole. The Pool provided for all contributors to make withdrawals from the Pool in line with their needs **irrespective** of their individual contribution. This, the British claimed would ensure that no part of the Empire would suffer undue hardship on account of non availability of foreign exchange during the hostilities that were about to break out. There was to be no question of maintaining and making available accounts of just how much was contributed and withdrawn by whom. It was considered below the dignity of the Empire to look into just how much help was required by whom.

The British Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, Sir James Taylor felt compelled to protest. In May 1939, he pointed out that:

“If history is any guide at all, everything points to our ultimate difficulties being not to maintain exchange at its existing level but to prevent it from rising above the present statutory limit.”

In other words, the problems of India during the War were going to be quite different from that of the British. It was going to face –not the shortage but rather abundance of hard currency. The Empire Dollar Pool could not but work to its disadvantage. But Sir Taylor overlooked the fact that the point was not whether it was in India's interest or not. The important thing was that the scheme served the British interests and soon found himself overruled.

As the War progressed, the prophecy of Sir James was found right on the mark. India did have a favourable balance in the Empire Dollar Pool. For the record, during the period September 1939 to March 1945 India's net contribution to the Pool was of the magnitude of \$ 300 million. Right through the War, the Indian nationalist opinion insisted upon India holding her Dollars herself. An opinion which was rejected by the British Treasury as being in 'radical departure from the basic principle...' Basic principle of India bailing out the British at her own cost.

In June 1942, the British Governor of Reserve Bank of India sought to placate the Indian opinion by opining that :

“He did not think that there was ‘any practical danger that these assets will not be convertible into producer goods as and when they are required.’”

What seems to have helped is the support to the nationalist cause from US commercial circles. They criticised the fact that as India was being made to surrender her surplus dollars to the U.K., the US exporters to India were being shut out of the Indian markets. In February 1944, the Finance Member announced the British Government's acceptance of the principle of starting a nucleus dollar fund. This was passed off as a magnanimous British gesture for meeting India's post war reconstruction requirement – an integral part of the reciprocal aid arrangement.

In the post war scenario, there was only one sure way of acquiring Producer goods for national reconstruction and that was to have US Dollars. This had been limited to \$ 20 million per annum. Under strong protests, even the British Government in India found it prudent to press for an upward revision of the contribution to US \$ 50 million. A request that was rejected by the British Treasury. C.D.Deshmukh, who had by now become the first Indian Governor of the Reserve Bank of India rightly pointed out that neither \$ 20 million nor even \$ 50 million had any logical relation to the situation. On December 5, 1944, he wrote to the Government:

“The British Treasury officials indicated that the principle use to which our surplus dollars are being put is the strengthening of the backing of gold and dollars of the United Kingdom's sterling liabilities to the outside world. To a certain extent, this use of India's surplus dollars is in India's interests, as it strengthens the currency in which all her foreign assets are held. But it is conceivable that a stage has been reached when all reasonable requirements of this nature are being met, and if, that is the case, then India is entitled to the whole of her surplus, after every possible allowance has been made for contingent liabilities on India's behalf. There can be no question of generosity, and if

India Office feel that they are accepting on India's behalf an arrangement which errs on the side of generosity to India and is correspondingly onerous to U.K. then Government would be justified in suggesting that India would be prepared to take over all the surplus, together with all the current and contingent liabilities. I think Government owe it to the public to satisfy themselves that only that amount of dollars is retained by U.K. out of its surplus earnings which can be reasonably be regarded as furthering the common war effort."

The only British response was to describe the sum of US \$ 20 million as 'a reasonable round sum in all the circumstances' as the Secretary of State put it. Or as the Finance Member described it in the Budget speech of 1945-46, 'a fair and valuable concession.'

First, the money is looted. Then if a part of it is returned, it is described as an 'aid' or 'concession' or what takes the cake, as 'fair'. Truly, the English words do seem to change their meaning when applied on the eastern side of Suez Canal

All that was returned to India finally was a princely sum of US \$ 40 million in all. One presumes, the Reserve Bank of India took into account this \$ 40 million in its calculation of net Indian contribution of \$ 300 million to the Empire Dollar Pool. Money that the Indians earned and gifted to the British; even as hundreds of millions within its own borders barely managed to live.

Let us now examine the economic implications of the three year delay in securing Absolute Political Independence. We all know all that took place on 15th August 1947 was a Transfer of Power, a power shorn of any economic substance but nevertheless eagerly grabbed by the power hungry leaders of the Congress. It is only on 26th January 1950 that the Revolutionary fervor finally won the day and Bharat was finally declared as Independent Sovereign Republic.

On 15th August 1947, the Indian Sterling Loans amounted to £ 1,160 million. Of this £ 140 million belonged to Pakistan. Thus, on Indian account the loans amounted to :

- £ 1,020 million or
- US \$ 4,080 million

Let us look at the manner in which this money was repaid. We will do this computation in hard currency for it is pointless to do the accounting in a currency, which was not trusted by its own people. But before we do this, let us not forget some facts:

- This loan was made available at a tremendous cost to Indian people. Without exaggeration, one can state millions died of hunger in the bargain. So this was not some body's private property to dispose of in any manner that one thought fit.
- The sheer amount of money was very large in 1947. To put the matters in perspective free rations could have been provided in all the ration shops of an Undivided India for full five years, in the Indian share alone.

- These loans had been financed by India at a average cost, as we have seen earlier of about 3%; getting a return of less than 1% on it and thereby making the money available to the British at an Interest Subsidy of 4%.

Cost of Transfer of Power

All figures in US \$ million

Period	Opening Balance	British Release	Payments to British	Closing Balance	Interest Subsidy
15/8/47 – 31/12/47	4,080	260		3,820	60
1/1/48 – 30/6/48	3,880	72		3,808	80
1/7/48 – 30/6/49	3,888	324	216*	3,780	79
1/7/49 – 26/1/50	3,859	140		3,719	91
		796			
As on 26/01/50	3,810				

* Cash payments made to the British on account Defense stores and installations.

Let us ignore the fact that not all British releases were in hard currency. Yet, we find that of the US \$ 4,080 that they owed to us on 15th August 1947; by 26th January 1950, what they had paid back was a mere 270 million Dollars or just about 6.7% of the total amount. Nor is this the end of the Story. India was saddled with a liability of US \$ 223 million that India discharged in 1957-58. Silver that had been given by the United States under Lend-Lease. If this liability is taken into account, the British repayment of loan drops down from 270 million to a mere 47 million or 1.15% Under these calculations, the British liability **stood at US \$ 4,033 million.**

Such an approach could have been made only by those willing to lay down their lives for Absolute Political Independence. The beholden Government of a Dominion could not dream of taking such a stand. It accepted the British manner of accounting of the loan..

First of all, the Loan continued to be denominated in terms of a worthless currency – Sterling. This shaved off the real value of the Indian asset by 30.5% when the Sterling was devalued in September 1949. Secondly, the effective Interest Subsidy was never taken into reckoning. Thirdly, India was forced to pay for Goods and Services, it had never asked for. The pensions of the ICS Officers and defense stores and installations. Fourthly, the absurdity of making Cash payment to a Borrower for the supposed services given by him, even as he continued to not make even Interest Payments on the amounts borrowed by him, leaves one speechless. I am referring to the Cash Payments made to the

British in 1948-49. Finally, the issue of the Lend Lease liability taken over by India was never factored into.

Thus the official history tells us that of the £ 1,020 million that the British owed us on 15th August 1947; they repaid some £ 200 million. Moreover, some £ 268 million was adjusted against pensions and stores. Thus, by 26th January 1950, the large hearted British had repaid some £ 468 million, leaving a balance of only £ 552 million. Thus had repaid 46% of the amount due to them. It is another small matter that even by this calculation, the balance amount of £ 552 million which should have been worth US \$ 2,208 million was now, post devaluation worth only **US \$ 1,546 million**.

Thus the financial implications of the difference between Absolute Political Independence and Transfer of Power involved in Dominion Status are staggering. A sovereign independent republic that would have insisted that the British liability stood at US \$ 4,033 million as against a Dominion which accepted that it was a mere US \$ 1,546 million. **Thus, the nation paid a price of something around US \$ 2.5 Billion to ensure that Nehru and Patel could assume reins of power on 15th August 1947.**

What more remains to be said ? Only one thing. All this is not being said with the benefit of hindsight. Nor was this manner of settlement of loan the only option available, even in those trying days.

On March 20, 1946, Mr. J.V. Joshi, the Economic Advisor to the Reserve Bank of India circulated a memorandum to the Directors, copies of which were also sent to the Government. He pointed out that the British private investment in India amounted to something like £ 1,000 million which could be taken over by the Government of India, in case the British failed to honor the Sterling Loans.

Such a take over would have really hurt the British very hard. For at stake were the British Management control over firms such as Unilever, Anglo-Iranian Royal Dutch Shell, Imperial Tobacco, Dunlop Rubber, Tate and Lyle, which routinely paid dividends in excess of 25%. The British firms ruled the roost in most sectors of the economy particularly in Petroleum, Rubber manufacturing , Light railways , Matches, Jute, Tea, and Mining. No less important was the fact that in 1947, India accounted for almost 50% of the total British Overseas Investments. The British economy which had always been dependent on sustaining itself on the profits from Overseas investments would have faced ruin if half of its sources of income were to suddenly dry up.

Thus, the fact is that in 1947, the British had no bargaining power. The tragedy is that the Congress leaders were not even prepared to look at the possibility of make them run for their money. Mr. Joshi's memorandum continued to gather dust in the archives of the Reserve Bank. The Official history offers no explanation for the shabby treatment of this very important document. The possibility of using the leverage of taking over the British investments in India in the Sterling loan negotiations does not seem to have been ever been even explored.

Bibliography

- 1 C.P. (46) 30 of 30th January, 1946
- 2 C.P. (46) 323 of 10th August 1946
- 3 C.P. (46) 328 of 2nd September 1946
- 4 C.P. (46) 339 of 6th September 1946
- 5 C.P. (46) 361 of 30th September 1946
- 6 C.P. (46) 366 of 2nd October 1946
- 7 C.P. (46) 367 of 1st October 1946
- 8 C.P. (46) 53 of 8th February 1946
- 9 C.P. (46) 58 of 8th February 1946
- 10 CAB 104/ 182
- 11 CAB 104/207
- 12 CAB 104/208
- 13 CAB 128/1-128/14
- 14 History of Reserve Bank of India, 1935-51, Reserve Bank of India, 1970
- 15 Crisis of the British Empire and the British Empire, R. Palma Dutt, People's Publishing House, 1953
- 16 History of the World, Bison Books Ltd., 1988
- 17 Age of Extremes, The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991 by Eric Hobsawm, Penguin Books, 1995

Chapter V-1

The Relevance of Bahadur Shah Zafar In The New Millenium

This book, as you know by now, has been an evolving affair. My initial focus was to exonerate Savarkar once and for all, from the unproven allegations in respect of his supposed involvement in the murder of Mahatma Gandhi. As I delved deeper and deeper into this project, this focus gradually shifted. In that fateful summer of 1947; far too many momentous developments took place; which continue to plague the nation till today. I came to realize that it is far more important to try and find an antidote to the poison that was then injected into the body polity of the nation than worry about the murder of any one individual – no matter how much venerated.

The murder of Mahatma Gandhi was duly probed, the assassin tried and convicted by due process of law. What more can one add to this after a lapse of over half a century. During my research, I have myself come across no evidence of any involvement of Savarkar in the Gandhi murder case. Though, I did have a chance to discuss the topic with his Personal Assistant, Bal Savarkar – no relation of Savarkar; and later a President of Hindu Maha Sabha; the party which Savarkar had once led. He did try and insinuate that Savarkar indeed blessed Godse's crime. His belief that Savarkar had blessed the act, he confessed was an inference and not any first hand knowledge. I then challenged him to quote one single instance in any Hindu epic wherein an unarmed old man had been killed and the killer of such a defenseless man had been worshipped as a hero. A challenge that left this old associate of Savarkar fumbling for an answer.

My own view on this matter is simple. I find it impossible to believe Savarkar could have blessed the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. If and it is a big IF, Savarkar ever blessed this heinous crime; of which no proof has ever been found; one would have to condemn this act of his. However, under no circumstances, can I accept a proposition that if he ever committed this mistake; it can be used to overlook his towering contribution to the national cause. This is not a mere emotional outburst. There are important reasons for saying so. The most important reason being that it is in Savarkar's writings that one can find an antidote to the poisonous state of relations between India and Pakistan. I am referring to his assertion that:

“It is true that an unending war raged between the Hindus and Muslims, in India from 1192, when the Muslims defeated the Hindu King of Delhi, Prithvi Raj Chauhan. However, it is also true that this War ended with the death of the last great Moghul Emperor, Aurangzeb in 1707. This paved the path for a real Hindu-Muslim synthesis that developed in the eighteenth century. Finally culminating in Hindus and Muslims becoming blood brothers as they fought and died in defense of their common national sovereign, Bahadur Shah Zafar in 1857.”

For far too long, India and Pakistan have relentlessly focussed on the non issue of Kashmir, sending the pick of their youth to die a futile death in the sterile, sub zero climate of Siachen and Kargil, instead of attempting to provide basic amenities to their

malnourished, illiterate millions, for many of whom simple things like toilet facilities, or access to clean drinking water, are an unaffordable luxury.

For far too long, the people of India and Pakistan have locked themselves in a mind set of religious frenzy comparable to that which prevailed in Europe during the days of religious crusades, hundreds of years ago. The mind set that has driven these desperately poor nations to embark on a dangerous Nuclear Arms race even as millions within these countries lack basic amenities. The race that according to the American President, Bill Clinton has made simmering conflict between these nations, 'the most dangerous situation in the world'.

For far too long, the people of the Indian subcontinent have tolerated the British loot of their nation for almost two hundred years, almost as a matter of no consequence, preferring instead to direct their anger against each other. We shall, in a little while do some calculations to find the exact cost of British occupation of this country to realize just how much the British owe to this sub-continent.

For far too long the last Bharatiya common sovereign – Bahadur Shah Zafar, has lain unsung in his grave at Rangoon, lamenting the needless deaths and deprivation of his people. It is time to take a new look at our history. From our own eyes and not that of the British.

Some may find the concept of considering Bahadur Shah Zafar as a national sovereign in 1857 rather fanciful – for he commanded no army, ruled over no territory and was completely dependent on the British for his every act. For those of such friends, I have a simple request to make. Let them look at the plight of the King of England himself. By an act of the British Parliament itself, the King of England was in a similar situation in respect of India from 15th August 1947. He commanded no army in India nor ruled over any territory in India. He was completely dependent on the Indians for everything in respect of the Indian possession. Yet, the British Parliament continued to hold that he remained the King of India. The sovereign of Indian nation. On this, we have already seen the opinion of the Lord Chancellor to the British Cabinet in November 1948. He had been very firm in rejecting the contention that the King of England had waived his functions of sovereignty by the Independence of India Act 1947.

Thus by the British legal opinion even in 1948, the King of England was the national sovereign of India despite commanding no army, ruling over no territory; being dependent on the Indians for everything in respect of India. If this were so, on what grounds can the claim of Bahadur Shah Zafar to be the national sovereign in 1857 be rejected ? Under which rule of law can there be one set of standards for the King of England and a different one for the King of Bharat?

There may be some who would like to quibble that the King of England continued to exercise functions of sovereignty in India – even in 1948. He for instance, was accrediting Indian Ambassadors to foreign powers. Bahadur Shah Zafar was not so fortunate. On the other hand, till 1835 the British coinage in India bore the seal of the

Moghul Emperor. A nazar had been presented to him in 1841. Crystal clear evidence that Bahadur Shah Zafar had indeed been exercising functions of sovereignty. Sovereignty that had been recognised to be as such by the British themselves. It is only during the period, 1841 to 1857; that the unfortunate Bharatiya King had been prevented from so exercising functions of sovereignty by the British. There is no evidence that he had given up this prerogative on his own. Indeed, he had successfully resisted the British attempts to make him vacate the ancient seat of power – the Red fort in Delhi. Seen from this context, the so called Sepoy mutiny of 1857 assumes the nature of a just and legal attempt by the national sovereign to reassert his control.

How I wish that the Supreme Court of India *suo motu* take up the issue of declaring that Bahadur Shah Zafar was the national sovereign in 1857. The consequences of such a declaration would not be academic. The British have always resisted any demand for tendering even an apology for their illegal occupation of colonies. I have no interest in any empty apologies. Once the Supreme Court of India holds that Bahadur Shah Zafar was the national sovereign in 1857, it would follow that the British act of deposing him was illegal. The revolutionary premise that the British rule in India was illegal would stand vindicated. It would then follow that the present day governments in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh could get together to press claims for economic damages. The extent of the economic damages can be gleaned from the illegal loot indulged by the British during the period of their occupation of Bharat.

The British occupation of India can be divided into two parts. The Legal and Illegal occupation. The period 1765 to 1857 would have to be treated as the legal occupation, since they were ruling the country under the grant of Diwani given by the Moghul Emperor, Shah Alam. It is this Diwani that was revoked by Bahadur Shah Zafar in 1857. Thus from 1857 to 1947 is the period of completely illegal occupation.

Much is made of the fact that the Diwani had been issued to the East India Company 'Forever and forever. From generation to generation.'. As always, this is only partly true. The Diwani was in respect of civil administration and had nothing to do with Criminal Administration – a function usurped by the Company on its own. Secondly, contingent with grant of the Diwani was the obligation of paying Rs 26 lakhs per annum to the Emperor – 'Forever and forever. From generation to generation.' This obligation was never fully fulfilled after 1772. If the Company did not fulfill its responsibilities, it was in no position to demand that its Rights endure forever. Thirdly, this so called permanent Diwani was not only revoked by the Bharatiya Emperor in 1857 but also by the British Crown itself in 1858. There is no basis for the claim that this Diwani could therefore never be extinguished. Not even a mad person would claim that based on this Diwani of 1765, the East India Company even today has the legal sanction to run the Civil administration of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.

The Bharatiya claim would have to take into account the amounts due and amounts paid while computing the claim for the period 1765 to 1857, the legal occupation. Any drain of wealth from India after 1857 has to be fully paid back, except where expressly agreed upon by an Indian Government. Let us now compute the costs on this basis.

Part One : Legal Occupation of the Country (1765 – 1856)

- 1765 – 1772: No claim, since the British paid the amount of Rs 26 lakhs to Shah Alam as stipulated in the Sanad of 1765
- 1773 – 1802: In this period, the British paid no money to Shah Alam, thus Bharat can claim the entire amount due for this period paid i.e. Rs 26 lakhs per year
- 1803 – 1857: In this period, the British at best paid a sum of Rs 14 lakhs per year to the Moghul Emperor. Thus an amount of Rs 12 lakhs per year is legitimately due to Bharat. This being the difference between amount due (Rs 26 lakhs) and amount actually paid (Rs 14 lakhs)

It is important to take cognizance of the fact that the British loot of the country far exceeded the amounts mentioned above. The loot that we have seen earlier contributed in no small measure to the millions who periodically succumbed to pangs of hunger even as the British remained unconcerned spectators to their plight. However, in this period they were present in the country with the legal force of the Sanad issued to them in 1765. In view of this unfortunate fact all that we can claim today is the difference between the amount stipulated in the Sanad and the amounts actually paid by them – no more.

Part Two : Illegal Occupation of the country (1857 – 1947)

The historical, political and the legal fact is that on 11th May 1857, Bahadur Shah Zafar, the national sovereign annulled the Sanad issued by his forefather, the unfortunate Shah Alam. The fact of his having annulled the Sanad was held proven in the subsequent trial that the British themselves held. Indeed, the very fact of having done so was held as sedition by them. Thus, the historical veracity of the annulment is beyond doubt.

From hereon the British had no justification to remain in the country. Thus a single paisa, penny carted away by them to their homeland or elsewhere outside Bharat can and must be demanded back from them. What were these amounts? These were

- An annual drain of £ 30 million, being the estimated drain of wealth as worked out by Dadabhai Navroji, the noted freedom struggle hero. One would have to also take into account the illegal gift of £ 100 million that was obtained by the British in 1917.
- The entire cost of prosecuting the Second World War, a war in which India had been dragged into by a unilateral declaration of the Viceroy over the protests of the dominant political organisation of the day – the Congress of Subhas Bose. The total cost of the Second World War to India was Rs 34,830 million. Much as I find it distasteful, I would have to leave out the Sterling loans of Rs 17,400 million, supposedly repaid by the British out of the Damage Claim exercise. For this was something that was expressly agreed to by the Indian Government of the day. The costs of the Second World War that can still be claimed as damages has to be pegged at Rs 17,430 million, being the difference between the total cost (Rs 34,830 million) and the amount supposedly repaid (Rs 17,400 million)

In working out the cost of the items under Part One and Part Two, I have taken a nominal compounding rate of interest of 5%. The value of the Sterling has been taken at 1 £ = Rs 10.00 for the period 1765 to 1899 and 1 £ = Rs 13.33 for the balance period. In this age of computers, it is not difficult to calculate the Damages. Under Part One, the damages are:

- Costs of Period 1773 – 1802 in Year 2000

The total amount due to Bharat on account of non-payment of stipulated dues to the Emperor, Shah Alam in this period rise to £ 3,361,046 million.

- Costs of Period 1804 – 1857 in Year 2000

The total amount due to Bharat for this period in the Year 2000 work out to £ 566,465 million

Thus the total amount due to Bharat for the period 1765 – 1857 in the Year 2000 is as much as £ 3,927,511 million.

In respect of damages under Part Two, the details are as under:

- Value of Annual Drain of £ 30 million for the period 1857 to 1947 in Year 2000 after taking into account the forced gift of £ 100 million extracted in 1917; in the Year 2000 works out to £ 11,735,486 million.
- The costs of Second World War costs have been worked out on the basis that the following amounts were spent in each of the years of the War. This excludes the monies spent for the so-called Recoverable expenses (Sterling loans) for reasons explained above. The expenses were:

1939	Rs 40 million
1940	Rs 530 million
1941	Rs 1,940 million
1942	Rs 3,254 million
1943	Rs 3,779 million
1944	Rs 4,108 million
1945	Rs 2,779 million

When these costs are converted into Sterling Pounds at the then prevailing exchange rate and compounded at 5%, their value in the Year 2000 is as much as £ 86,098 million.

With this, the total amount due from the British for Part Two i.e. the illegal occupation of Bharat can be computed at £ 11,821,584 million. The total amount due to Bharat from the British in the Year 2000 are £ 15, 749,095 million.

Let us now look at our own heritage in the right perspective. By the act of Shah Alam in 1765, when he granted a Sanad to the East India Company to act as the Diwan for three provinces of Bharat and did not grant an unfettered right to rule, he has made sure that in the Year 2000, the British owe us something close to FOUR THOUSAND BILLION STERLING POUNDS.

Bahadur Shah Zafar's act is even more worthy of respect. In comparison to him, Shah Alam was in a much better position. Several rival contenders to power were courting him to restore him to the throne. He was at worst an Emperor without throne. Bahadur Shah , was a prisoner. He was fighting with his back to the wall. He resisted all pressures and temptations to sign away Sovereignty. Not only did he not betray his heritage, he actually rose in defiance and annulled the Sanad granted to the British. By this act, he has made available a sum of some ELEVEN THOUSAND SEVEN HUNDRED FIFTY BILLION STERLING POUNDS for us to claim from the British.

It is this glorious heritage that we betray when we refuse to accept that the Hindu-Muslim War ended with the death of Aurangzeb in 1707. It is time, we finally accept that the successors of Aurangzeb were as much a part of this nation as anyone else. It is only then that we would be able to comprehend that from Shah Alam to Bahadur Shah Zafar, the Moghul Emperors were all truly Bharatiya. Like all of us, they had their share of human follies. That is understandable. What is important is to look at the heritage they have left behind for us. This heritage is the common property of the present day states of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The total claim that the countries in the Indian Sub Continent can lodge on the British is close to Sixteen Trillion Sterling Pounds. Thanks principally to Shah Alam and Bahadur Shah Zafar. An amount that is more than the combined Annual Gross National Product of United States of America, Japan and Germany, the richest three countries in the world taken together.

However, before this claim can be lodged, there are certain prerequisites. Most important is that India and Pakistan have to stop looking at each other through blood tainted eyes. Ever ready to obliterate each other by the press of the nuclear button. This is of course easier said than done. Nor is it a call for unilateral lowering of guard by India. Nothing can be more disastrous than that.

India can not afford to ignore the lesson taught by Shivaji. It is only when he infused the spirit of fighting for their nation in the Hindus that the Muslims sued for peace. The process of real synthesis can start only when both sides can wield the sword. 'Ever capable to wield the sword but ever ready to foreswear its use' has to be the watchword in the new millenium. Yes, many would say that this has been tried out many times by India but failed to dim the animosity in the hearts of Pakistanis. There is some merit in this argument. It is completely unrealistic to expect that the poison that has been injected into the body polity since 1920 will suddenly disappear and the amity of Tilak-Jinnah days will come to prevail. Things will take time to normalise but a start can be made.

India has to take the lead. A good starting point would be for the Government of India to petition the Supreme Court to legally declare that the British presence in the Indian Sub Continent after the historic annulment of the Sanad by Bahadur Shah Zafar on 11th May 1857 was completely illegal. There is no reason to even wait for the Government to take action. There is the possibility of a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) that can be initiated by any citizen truly desirous of dissipating the war clouds on the horizon. Or even the Supreme Court itself suo motu take up the issue on its own.

Once the illegality of British rule in India is firmly established; several consequences would follow. It would set the ground for co-operation between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh for preparing the claim to be lodged in the International Court against the British. A claim that is in excess of many times their combined annual Gross National Income. There is no way, a claim could be lodged unless the three Governments co-operate with each other fully. Whether or not the claim would succeed is not of much interest to me. What is more important is that the process of preparing the claim itself would nail the myth that the British did any good during the days of their colonial rule. The myth that cripples the self-confidence of many of us – paving the path for an emergence of a resurgent nation.

There is of course no use in merely proclaiming that Bahadur Shah Zafar was the national sovereign in 1857. India would have to go further. The Supreme Court would be doing a justice to history if it ascertains from the Government of India, the basis on which only Mahatma Gandhi's photograph has been chosen to appear on the currency notes. It should ask the Government to explain, why is it that only his photo appears on the currency notes and why not, of say Tilak? In any case, the present practice of issuing currency notes with the photograph of Mahatma Gandhi has no justification. Important as his contribution was to the national cause, to say that his was the most important contribution is to say something that flies in the face of facts presented earlier on in the book. Logically, once the Supreme Court accepts that Bahadur Shah Zafar was the national sovereign in 1857, it would follow that the Indian Government would have to revive the process of issuing currency notes with the symbol of Bahadur Shah Zafar – a process that was stopped by the British in 1835.

One more myth that would be laid to rest is that 15th August 1947 is the Independence Day. It is not – as we have seen earlier. Independence is a process that started on 11th May 1857 and ended on 26th January 1950. 15th August is an important milestone – nothing more.

The most important outcome of these developments would be that the Indian mindset that hates Pakistan and continues to remain beholden to the British would change. It is in this mind set change that a brighter future lies. When would the Pakistanis respond ? One does not know. The wait could be long but that is no reason for giving up hope. One day they will. It is in this hope that the relevance of Bahadur Shah Zafar in the Twenty First Century lies.

Chapter V-2

Paradigm Shift in the Concept of Development Life in Twenty First Century

As Aristotle once said, even God can not change the past but the future is ours to make. Let us use our knowledge of the history to make a better future. But before we go to the future, let us also see the realities of today.

Globalization facilitated by unprecedented and ever accelerating pace of technological development is a phenomenon of this day, that can-not fail to dazzle any one. Just consider some facts to realize how dominant a force globalization is. How today's interaction between nation's and people are deeper than ever before.

- World exports, now \$ 7,000,000 million, averaged 21% of GDP in the 1990s, compared with 17% of a much smaller GDP in the 1970s.
- Foreign direct investment topped \$ 400,000 million in 1997, seven times the level in the 1970s. Portfolio and other short-term capital flows have grown substantially, and now total more than \$ 2,000,000 million in gross terms, almost three times those in the 1980s.
- The daily turnover in foreign exchange markets increased from \$ 10,000 - \$ 20,000 million in the 1970s to \$ 1,500,000 million in 1998.
- Between 1983 and 1993 cross-border sales and purchases of US Treasury bonds increased from \$ 30,000 million to \$ 500,000 million.
- International bank lending grew from \$ 265,000 million to \$ 4,200,000 million in 1994.
- 590 million people traveled as Tourists in 1996 compared to 260 million in 1980.
- Time spent on international telephone calls rocketed from 33,000 million minutes to 70 billion minutes in 1996.

The world is far more prosperous than ever before. In last fifty years, the global GDP has leapfrogged from \$ 3,000,000 million to \$ 30,000,000 million. Even the per capita income has tripled in the same period. The infant death rates have fallen by half since 1965 while the life expectancy has increased by a decade. The adult literacy rates have also increased from 48% in 1970 to 72% in 1997.

No wonder Mr. Amartya Sen, the noted Noble prizewinner economist has this to say:

“We live in a world of unprecedented opulence, of a kind that would have been hard to imagine a century or two ago. There have also been remarkable changes beyond the economic sphere. The twentieth century has established democratic and participatory governance as the preeminent model of political organization. Concepts of human rights and political liberty are now very much a part of prevailing rhetoric. People live much longer, on the average, than ever before. Also different regions of the globe are now closely linked than they have ever been. This is so not only in the fields of trade, commerce and communication, but also in terms of interactive ideas and ideals. These

dazzling statistics seem to cut the ground under the feet of such critics of the process of Globalization as Alvin Toffler, who in 1980 had written that:

“The thrust to create this integrated world market was based on the idea best expressed by David Ricardo..The success...can be measured in the fantastic growth of world trade...between 1750 & 1914....rising from 700 million dollars to almost 40,000 million dollars. If Ricardo had been right, the advantages of this global trade should have spread more or less evenly to all sides. In fact the self serving belief (that this)..would benefit everyone, was based on a fantasy of fair competition...it presupposed deals uncontaminated by threats of political & military force. It presupposed arms length transactions by more or less evenly matched bargainers.. **in short it overlooked nothing ...except real life.**

The innocent household product Margarine provides a dramatic case in point..in 1907, the researchers discovered that Margarine could be made out of coconut & palm-kernel oil...The result of this discovery was an upheaval in the life style of West Africans...The main areas of West Africa...where Palm oil was traditionally produced, the land was owned by the community as a whole...the western businessmen who organised large scale production of palm oil for the manufacture of Margarine as a convenience food...destroyed the fragile & complex social system ...and Africans became semi slaves on huge plantations”

Whatever the merits of such criticisms may have been in 1980, the world in the Year 2000 is a far different place, one would like to imagine. Denial of access to Transport, Communication and Knowledge have been the principle tools of holding back Development of people throughout the ages. In today’s brave new world, the cost of transport and communication is on an ever accelerating downward trend as can be seen from the table below:

Declining Cost of Transport and Communication

1990 US \$

Year	Sea Freight (average ocean freight and port charges per ton)	Air Transport (average revenue per passenger mile)	Telephone call (3 minutes New York/London)	Computers (Index 1990 = 100)
1920	95			
1930	60	0.68	245	
1940	63	0.46	189	
1950	34	0.30	53	
1960	27	0.24	46	12,500
1970	27	0.16	32	1,947
1980	24	0.10	5	362
1990	29	0.11	3	100

Such a long term declining trend in costs appear to indicate that denial of access to these engines of growth is something that would simply become impractical to the most totalitarian nation or even society.

The decade of 1990 has been revolutionized by the Internet phenomenon. The Internet – a centreless web of computer network-was funded by the US Department of Defense in the late 1960s as a Strategy for communications in the event of a nuclear attack. Soon it was used to link technically skilled science and university communities. In the early 1990s user-friendly innovations- the creation of World Wide Web, the distribution of free browsers-turned the arcane of computer language into simple point and click of a mouse, making Internet widely accessible. At the same time computers became cheaper, and the network took off.

Internet users who numbered less than 100,000 as late as in 1988 became a worldwide community of 36 million in less than 10 years. By 2001, the 1998 base is expected to increase twenty times to a staggering 700 million. The speed and cost advantage would be simply incomprehensible to some one who lived even quarter of a century before. Take for instance the fact that a 40 page document can be sent from Madagascar to Côte d'Ivoire by a 5 day courier at a cost of \$ 75, a 30 minute fax for \$ 45 or a two minute email for less than 20 cents – not only to Côte d'Ivoire but also to hundreds of other locations at no additional cost. As the number of people surfing the Net, a domain that can-not be censored by any one, grows geometrically, access to Information becomes more and more universal.

The explosion in Communication Technology sets this era of Globalization apart from any other in the past. Traditional barriers to growth – denial of access to Transport, Communication and Knowledge are crumbling under its onslaught. No wonder, the World is in an era of unprecedented global prosperity.

One could then easily argue against any Shift – Paradigm or otherwise in the Concept of Development. Why try and fix something that seems to be working so well? The traditional Bharatiya disinterest in Material Development is unlikely to find favour with many. The conversation between Maitreyee and her husband that took place almost 2,800 years ago –recorded in Sanskrit text Brihadaranyaka Upanishads has been used time and again to point out the limitations of the material world.

It is hardly unusual for a couple to discuss the possibility of earning more money. The discussion between Maitreyee and Yajnavalkya proceeded rapidly to a bigger issue than the ways and means of becoming more wealthy. *How far would wealth go to help them get what they want?* Maitreyee wondered if 'the whole earth, full of wealth' were to belong just to her, she could achieve immortality through it. "No," responded Yajnavalkya, like the life of rich people will be your life. But there is no hope of immortality by wealth." Maitreyee remarked, "What should I do with that by which I do not become immortal?"

Mr. Sen has recounted this story in his book 'Development As Freedom'. As he notes:

“I have too much skepticism of otherworldly matters to be led there by Maitreyee’s worldly frustration, but there is another aspect of this exchange that is of rather immediate interest to economics and to understanding the nature of development...The issue is not the ability to live forever on which Maitreyee-bless her soul-happened to concentrate, but the capability to live really long (without being cut off in one’s prime) and to have a good life while alive (rather than a life of misery and unfreedom) –things that would be strongly valued and desired by nearly all of us. The gap between the two perspectives (that is, between an exclusive concentration on economic wealth and a broader focus on the lives we lead) is a major issue in conceptualizing development. As Aristotle noted at the very beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (resonating well with the conversation between Maitreyee and Yajnavalkya three thousand miles away), ‘wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking; for it is merely useful and for the sake of something else.’

If we have reasons to want more wealth, we have to ask: What precisely are these reasons...what are the things that we can ‘do’ with more wealth? In fact, we generally have excellent reasons for wanting more income or wealth. This is not because income and wealth are desirable for their own sake, but because, typically, they are admirable general-purpose means for having more freedom to lead the kinds of lives we have reason to value...

An adequate conception of Development must go much beyond the accumulation of wealth and the growth of gross national product and other income-related variables. Without ignoring the importance of economic wealth, we must look well beyond it”

Even as Sen talks of looking beyond mere Wealth creation, he does not ignore the harsh realities of life as they exist today. He writes:

“And yet we also live in a world with remarkable deprivation, destitution and oppression. There are many new problems as well as old ones, including persistence of poverty and unfulfilled elementary needs, occurrence of famines and widespread hunger, violation of elementary political freedoms as well as of basic liberties, extensive neglect of the interests and agency of women, and worsening threats to our environment and to the sustainability of our economic and social lives.

Many of these deprivations can be observed, in one form or another, in rich countries as well as poor ones. Overcoming these problems is a central part of the exercise of development.”

The Noble laureate thus provides us excellent reason for a paradigm shift in our concept of Development, namely *Existence of remarkable deprivation, destitution and oppression in the middle of Unprecedented Opulence.*

There is no need to take Mr. Sen at face value. All that we need to do to have a better understanding of the anguish expressed by him is to look at the dazzling statistics of the benefits of Globalization a little more closely. The same Human Development Report 1999, prepared by United Nations Development Program, which was used earlier to present beneficial part of Globalization also has a sobering story to narrate.

The steady expansion of exports and phenomenal growth of capital flows mask enormous disparities in experience across countries and regions.

- World exports of goods and services almost tripled between 1970 and 1997 in real terms. The winners included Botswana, China, the Dominican Republic and Korea. But the exports of countries like Bulgaria, Niger, Togo and Zambia actually declined.
- Since the 1970s, the share of manufactures in merchandise exports has grown considerably for some countries – Mauritius, Mexico, Tunisia; being the notable examples. For 28 countries, the primary commodities continue to account for more than 90% of their merchandise exports.
- Foreign direct investment did zoom to \$ 400,000 million in 1997 but 58% went to industrial countries, 37% went to developing countries and just 5% to Eastern Europe and CIS.
- 80% of \$ 148,000 million (37%) that went to developing countries was accounted for by just 20 countries mainly China, while 100 countries have averaged less than \$ 100 million a year since 1990. For nine countries, the net flows have been negative.
- Only 25 countries have access to private markets for bonds, commercial bank loans and portfolio equity. The rest are simply shut out by their lack of credit ratings

Even the much-touted Internet is a tool that is available to only a select few as can be seen from the table below:

Internet Users – A Global Enclave
Mid 1998

	Regional Population (as a % of world population)	Internet users (as % of regional population)
United States	4.7	26.3
OECD (excluding U.S.A.)	14.1	6.9
Latin America and the Caribbean	6.8	0.8
South-East Asia and the Pacific	8.6	0.5
East Asia	22.2	0.4
Eastern Europe and the CIS	5.8	0.4
Arab States	4.5	0.2
Sub-Saharan Africa	9.7	0.1
South Asia	23.5	0.04
World	100	2.4

It is often said that Information is only one of the many human needs. E-mail is no substitute for vaccines, and satellites that make Internet a reality can-not provide clean water. As one health worker in Kathmandu said, “Our priorities are hygiene, sanitation, safe drinking water...how is access to the Internet going to change that?”

Sure, it can-not be anybody’s contention that clean drinking water would pour out of an Internet connected PC. What Internet does do is provide a Global voice to those suffering from deprivation or oppression of any kind. It provides them access to Communication and Knowledge, reducing the need for physical transportation of people. It is through this access that they can make a serious attempt to get out of their present wretched state using human ingenuity.

It is no accident that Sub –Saharan Africa and South Asia, the two regions with lowest access to Internet are also the regions where extreme poverty is heavily concentrated. It is in these regions that denial of access to Communication, Transport and Knowledge is extracting a very heavy human cost. A cost that stares at us bleakly from the figures in the table below:

India and Sub Saharan Africa : A Tale of Shame

	Region	Population in millions	Infant mortality rate per 1000 live births	Region	Population in millions	Adult literacy rate (Female/ Male)
India		846.3	80			39/64
Worst three States						
	Orissa	31.7	124	Rajasthan	44.0	20/55
	Madhya Pradesh	66.2	117	Bihar	86.4	23/52
	Utter Pradesh	139.1	97	Utter Pradesh	139.1	25/56
Worst three districts						
	Ganjam, Orissa	3.2	164	Barmar Rajesthan	1.4	8/37
	Tikamgarh M.P.	0.9	152	Kishanganj Bihar	1.0	10/33
	Hardoi U.P.	2.7	129	Bahraich U.P.	2.8	11/36
Sub-Saharan Africa						
		488.9	104			40/63
Worst three countries						
	Mali	8.7	161	Burkina Faso	9.2	10/31
	Mozambique	16.1	149	Sierra Leone	4.3	12/35
	Guinea-Bissau	1.0	148	Benin	4.8	17/35

Sen notes, no doubt with a deep sense of distress that:

“It is remarkable that there is no country in Sub-Saharan Africa-or indeed in the world-where estimated infant mortality rates are as high as in the districts of Ganjam in Orissa, or where the adult female literacy is as low as in the district of Barmar in Rajasthan. Each of these two districts, incidentally, has a larger population than Botswana or Namibia, and the combined population of the two is larger than that of Sierra Leone, Nicaragua or Ireland. Indeed, even entire states such as Uttar Pradesh (which has a population as large as that of Brazil or Russia) do not do much better than worst-off among the sub-Saharan countries in terms of these basic indicators of living quality.”

On the literacy front, Sen points out there is little to choose between India and sub-Saharan Africa. Every other adult is illiterate. He then goes on to look at the status of life expectancy and nutrition in India and sub-Saharan Africa and concludes that the problem of premature mortality is enormously greater in Africa than in India. But the quality of longer life in India presents a dismal picture. As he writes:

“ Calculations of general undernourishment in India are much higher in India than in sub-Saharan Africa on the average. This is so despite the fact that it is India, rather than sub-Saharan Africa, that is self-sufficient in food. Indian ‘self-sufficiency’ is based on the fulfillment of market demand, which can be, in normal years, easily met by domestically produced supply. But the market demand (based on purchasing power) understates the food needs. Actual undernourishment seems to be much higher in India than in sub-Saharan Africa. Judged in terms of the usual standards of retardation in weight for age, the proportion of undernourished children in Africa is 20 to 40 percent, whereas the proportion of undernourished children in India is a gigantic 40 to 60 percent. About half of all Indian children are, it appears, chronically undernourished.”

Thus, India and sub-Saharan Africa end up in tie in comparing and contrasting their record in the nature of deprivation faced by people at large in respect of three key indicators, i.e. Illiteracy, premature mortality and undernourishment. Fifty years or there about of Independence and a large number of people in the two regions live an existence that is barely human.

Recently, I happened to meet a Catholic priest, who is currently living with the street children on the platform of a railway station. Unlike most others of his flock, he had little time for evangelizing. He told me that the children with whom he lived were humans only in body. They lived and hunted like packs of wild dogs for every morsel of food competing with pigs and street dogs. Even waste food thrown by rail passengers on the rail track was fought over, ignoring little inconveniences such as the pool of shit that it may have landed in. His mission was to give them a human existence in this life. Life after death could wait.

If this does not call for a Paradigm Shift in what passes for Development in the minds of the elite in India and sub-Saharan Africa, one wonders what would.

That deprivation on this scale should co-exist on the same planet, where some nations enjoy unprecedented opulence is bad enough. What is far worse is even states that are amongst the richest in the world subject some parts of their society to indignities that have no justification.

Sen looks at the record of Western Europe and points out that it can hardly afford to be smug about its own record in treating its own people. True, the sight of a European child fighting a dog for a morsel of food is completely unreal today. However, the Individual today finds himself fighting on two fronts.

The pressures of global competition has rendered jobs and incomes more precarious. Employers have taken to adopting what are called 'flexible labour policies, a euphemism for job insecurity on a scale never seen before. The phenomenon of job insecurity has received a fillip as large-scale corporations have embarked on a path of growth that is imposing a severe cost on society. With Corporations rushing into mergers and restructuring, layoffs have become a part of life. Countries like Germany, Italy and France are forced to battle an unemployment rate of 10% and above. Realization is slowly dawning that an unemployed person may not starve due to the welfare benefits. However, the very process of doing nothing at young ages saps human vitality and renders the individual prone to being dysfunctional.

As if this was not unsettling enough, with ever changing technology, people need, ever changing skills-yet even in the richest countries many lack the basics. Despite universal primary and secondary education in OECD countries, one person in six is functionally illiterate-unable to fill out a job application, excluded from the rapidly changing world that demands new skills all the time. As Sen passionately argues:

“ Indeed, it can be argued that at this time the massive level of European unemployment constitutes at least as important an issue of inequality, in its own right, as income distribution itself.”

The United States of America does not face a serious unemployment problem but has other problems, equally serious. The fact that the African Americans have a lower income than the American whites is well known. However, this is explained away as being insignificant in the international perspective. For after all the African Americans do have an income that is far higher than most other people in the world. Sen points out the fallacy of this argument. Income, he points out, is just a means to achieve a longer and better life. Judged from this perspective, he notes that in terms of premature mortality, the African Americans fall far behind much poorer Indians and Chinese.

One more problem that the Americans live with is the fact that some 40 million Americans are without any medical coverage or insurance. Bulk of them on account of economic grounds or on account of the fact that the Insurers shun them. The richest country in the world leaves a good number of its own to fend for themselves, not even having the fig leaf of the excuse of lack of resources. What kind of Development is this?

One supposes that by now the case for bringing in a Paradigm Shift in our Concept of Development stands proven. The present system is certainly not working for a whole lot of people all over the world and therefore needs to be fixed.

Before we proceed further there is something that we need to keep in mind. We do need to be angry about the present state of affairs. However, we will be doing enormous damage if we allow this anger to cross over into bitterness. The first victim of this bitterness will be none other than ourselves. This is something that I learnt at my own cost recently. As I started delving into the past and writing the first four parts of this book, I became more and more angry. The readers would no doubt have noticed a shrill tone creeping into my writing particularly as I have covered the period 1939-1947. How could Gandhi have worked to help the British during 1939-42; launching a mass movement when it was doomed to fail? How could Nehru and Patel; for whom I always had nothing but the greatest regard accept partition in such a hurry knowing fully well the gale of violence that was sure to sweep across the country? How could they virtually write off the Sterling loans that were stained with the blood of Bengal famine victims? All for the sake of getting power!!

Slowly, this anger gave rise to a deep sense of bitterness in my heart and it reflects in my writing. As this book has been an evolving project, I let that be. It is the journey of my discovery that I want to share with you in its raw undiluted form. Corporate world that provided my livelihood even as I undertook this journey was unaware and unconcerned with this venture of mine. It continued to extract its own pound of flesh in form of unrelenting stress of one deadline after the other. One power play after the other. Buffeted between the twin screws of earning a livelihood in today's corporate jungle and the deep sense of bitterness that I came to harbour against my childhood idols, my body finally broke down. By the time, I finished the first four parts I had become a victim of hypertension.

Alarmed at the prospect of having my earning capacity hindered by what could be a life threatening disease, I quickly took to gulping down my daily dose of medicines. My mind continued to be as poisoned as ever. No wonder, the blood pressure remained high. The only recourse I now had was to increase my dosage. With this realisation, the alarm bells started ringing loudly within my mind. In a desperate bid to find a long-term solution, I stopped the medicines and instead turned to an ancient Bharatiya form of meditation – Vipassana; rediscovered by Siddarth Gautam, the Buddha more than 2500 years ago. I will deal with this in a little more detail later. For the time being I would only like to explain Vipassana as the art of living with truth. The truth about one's one breathing and sensations on body. Nothing more nothing less.

It brought some relief but not the miracle cure that I wanted. I did calm down but the blood pressure remained high. Years of abuse of the body and mind were not going to be rectified in less than a month. This was the truth about myself that I came to face at the end of a 10 day camp. Once I came to terms with the truth about myself, I felt relieved and took to fighting the disease with double M – Medicines and Meditation. Soon enough, the doctor was happy to see my blood pressure get back to reasonable levels.

I now began to see the things in a different light. First of all, the thoughts of Savarkar came to guide me. In his book, *My Transportation for Life*, he has dealt with his experience in the cells of Andaman Islands. He was not the first revolutionary to be sent to penal colony. Others had preceded him. When he reached Andaman, he was warned that he should not trust someone merely because the person had once been revolutionary. Many of those, who had once fought for high ideals had turned into British spies in a bid to soften the rigour of the prison life.

Savarkar took this information in his stride. Neither then nor later in his life he ever took to condemning these people. As some-one who had himself gone through the inhuman torture, he knew how very easy was it for someone even with the highest of ideals in heart to break down. Neither did he himself condemn such people nor allowed any-one else to do so. He held that only some-one who had himself undergone the same physical torture and agony had the moral right to be critical of the actions of the revolutionaries, who became turncoats in jail. A right he himself had, but never exercised. On the contrary, he warned the arm chair critics, who lead an easy life to refrain from trying to take pot shots at the revolutionaries.

Nehru and Patel may not have been revolutionaries by the high standards of Savarkar but their sufferings and struggle for the national cause were all too real. I was chastened also by the realization that merely the accident of living in Savarkar's house gives no one the claim to his legacy of sufferings for the cause of nation. What have I done for the sake of the nation in the forty years of my life compared to Nehru and Patel. What gives me the moral right to be bitter about their actions? Indeed, I feel the biggest tragedy of post independence India has been the secession of the Middle class from the Political process. It loves to parrot the lines of J.F. Kennedy, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country". Once this parroting is over, the middle class avoids the process of governance of the country like plague. Preferring to keep away from the 'cesspool' of politics, it takes pride in not even going to vote in elections. This class of which I am also a member has no sufferings for the national cause to speak of. If Savarkar himself was alive, he would have roundly rebuked this class for being bitter against Nehru and Patel. Once this realization sank in, my bitterness melted away to be replaced by a deep sense of shame for being so foolish. The doors to a new understanding opened up.

As a citizen of Bharat, I continue to be critical of their actions in respect of accepting Dominion status, gifting away the Sterling loans of £ 1,160 million, putting their desire to attain power ahead of the need to prevent the communal holocaust. Yet, I can-not bring myself to harbour any animosity or bitterness. That would have been the prerogative of a Savarkar or Subhas Bose. A prerogative that they would not have used.

A recent OECD publication 'Monitoring the World Economy 1820 – 1992 helped me put the Indian achievements in the right perspective. It gives hard numbers to illustrate the extent of the wealth that was being drained away by the British up to 1950 to enrich themselves. A drain that was stopped by Nehru and Patel, along with the Revolutionaries.

In 1820, the Indian GDP was 55.8, if 1913 is considered as 100. In relative ranking, it was the second biggest economy in the world coming behind China. Nor was this second ranking merely on account of the weight of its population as is the case now. Its GDP was 16% of the World total as against its population that was 19.6% of the World total. This is where India stood after more than half a century of exploitation that began sometime in the middle of the eighteenth century. The publication has this to say on the Colonisation.

“Colonies received some benefits from world expansion, but a substantial part was siphoned off to the metropolitan powers. The British Empire, which was run on a free trade basis, had substantial hangovers from mercantilism. In Asian colonies, British shipping, banking and insurance interests enjoyed a de facto monopoly. Administration was efficient and free of corruption, but it was by white men, living in white cantonments, with British clubs, so that there was an automatic de facto discrimination against the local enterprise which was reinforced by neglect of education amongst the native population, and some direct discrimination in government purchasing policies.”

From 55.8 in 1820, the Indian GDP grew to 128.4 in 1950. Something like 130% increase in 130 years. For all the venality of Indian politicians that the Indian middle class loves to hate; the Indian GDP increased to 711.9 by 1992 or by 454%. The economy actually grew 3.5 times more in 42 years of Indian misrule compared to 130 years of efficient honest rule of the White man. By the way, the British managed to grow their economy by something close to 893% during the period 1820- 1950. Almost six times more than the growth in India. Once the Colonial Empire had to be dismantled under the pressure of popular outrage, which a bankrupt Britain was not in a position to contain, its economic growth plummeted. In the period 1950 –1992, it managed to grow by only 178%. The contrast is too glaring to be missed.

From 1820 – 1950, when it had control over India, the British economy outperformed the Indian economy by almost six times. Once India became independent, the roles were reversed. The Indian economy now outperformed the British economy almost two times. An efficient corruption free rule by the White people for the White people. This is what was brought to an end by the freedom struggle of which Nehru and Patel were an integral part of. Let there be no mistake in understanding this.

Hard economic data tells us that, had India continued under the British rule, it would have reached in the year 2404 AD, where it actually did in 1992. It is time the Indian middle class accepts the fact that venal Indian politicians are far better than the efficient and honest white officers. And if it dislikes the Indian corrupt politicians so much, nothing but its own inertia stops it from replacing them.

Understanding the past is a necessary step to build up creative anger so that our future actions will be wiser by the follies of the past. Bitterness and animosity towards our own people who participated in the freedom struggle should be given no place. Some of them may not have done all that we wanted them to but all of them did something. How many of us can give an honest answer on our own record with head held high to the future generations?

Chapter V – 3

Development As Dhamma

Let me at the onset express my gratitude to three noted personalities of our time. They are Baba Amte, the crusader for social action, Amartya Sen, the eminent economist and Goyankaji, the Vipassana Acharya.

I owe my interaction with Baba Amte to the course content of the Master in Management course of the Asian Institute of Management, Manila. A unique exercise in the course originates from a rite of passage practiced by Australian bushmen in the desolate hinterland of that continent. When a boy passes on to become a man at the age of about 16, he is given a bow and arrows and sent off into the desert, to *walkabout* and survive alone and on his own wits for six months. If he returns safely to his tribal village, he is received as an adult. If he falls a victim to the animals in the wild, he just does not return anyway.

Towards the end of the programme, aspiring managers are given three weeks off to 'Walkabout' to do what they wish to do with just three guidelines. Whatever they do must be experiential, challenging and must involve managerial learning experience. If at the end of three weeks, the faculty finds the candidate has violated the guidelines – he simply does not graduate. In my *Walkabout* I decided to take a deeper look at the concept of Development and the sacrifices it demands from many. Development resulting in hardships sounds a logical contradiction but that is the reality that I came to confront.

It was in the three weeks that I spent away from the confines of the campus that I interacted with Baba Amte, who was (and remains) at the forefront of agitation against construction of a mega dam over the river Narmada. From Manila, I traveled down to Mumbai and then to the banks of Narmada, where this frail old man of failing health had come to reside. In temperatures crossing 45 degrees, this man who had already seen 75 summers, had come to fight for the rights of the poor and protect them from being used as fodder for Development.

For five days in a row, I cycled down to meet him on the heat-scorched bank of Narmada. The police officer on duty duly noted down my movements, charged as he was to keep an eye on the dangerous subversive- whom I was on way to meet. I was privileged to have Baba Amte spend time with me, sharing his life long experiences of social action in the service of leprosy patients and now in the evening of his life take on the might of the State and established notions of Development.

Slowly I came to realise that here was not a man, who was out to oppose construction of dam by being obstinately opposed to modern forces of development, He was well aware of the benefits of the dam – increase in the electricity generation, irrigation potential resulting in higher food production and the rest. What he was fighting for was a reasoned debate on the cost benefit of the Dam. It is this elementary courtesy that has been denied to the poorest of the poor in Democratic Independent nation for years on end in the name of Development. It is only once that this realisation sinks in that one wonders, what

Development are we talking about. Years after I heard them, the ringing words of Baba Amte continue to echo in my ears. He had said:

“Twenty First century will be dominated by the common man (and woman) raising uncommon challenges for the policy makers of the world.”

A taste of the future to come was visible for all to see on March 6, 1990. In a watershed event that marked the arrival of Green Politics as a force to reckon with in India, thousands of villagers, unarmed men, women and children resorted to blocking the vehicular traffic protesting against construction of the Dam on the river Narmada. The impasse continued for 36 hours before the protestors could be moved. The very people who were supposed to benefit from the Dam were protesting against it. Such mass protests were an entirely new and puzzling phenomenon to the policy makers in the Government. They were quick to dismiss Baba Amte as an old senile man, who had taken to subverting people against the State, misleading them – a man who had to be kept under police watch all the time, as I was to later discover.

On the face of it, the Government case for building the Dam looked unassailable. It had relied on construction of multipurpose dam, such as the one on Narmada, to boost electricity generation and provision of irrigation facilities to raise the food production. The electricity generation had been increased from 1700 MW in 1951 to 49,300 MW by 1987. Yet, demand far outstripped the supply. Power shortage remains a perennial feature of life in most parts of India. Thus the case for increasing the electricity generation seems self-evident and those opposed to it as being lunatics..

On the food front, the progress had been equally impressive. The food grain production that was only 51 million tonnes in 1951 had increased to 144 million tonnes in 1987. A country that had for long lived from ‘Ship to Mouth’ was better placed with increase in food production. Vagaries of monsoon continued to play havoc with food production. A single year of drought could see the food production plunging by as much as 25%. Thus an increase in irrigated land that remained below 40% of total cultivable land was something to work for and not fight against.

Narmada is an important river in the country, flowing some 1,320 kms in the heartland of the country, keeping alive almost 20 million in its basin. Narmada Valley Development Project had for years been pursued as a dream project. A network of 30 major, 135 medium and 3,000 minor dams have been seen to irrigate 4.8 million hectares of land and provide 2,700 MW of power. With an investment of over Rs 300 billion, the project has always been held up as a model project generating enormous benefits.

Big dams invariably lead to large-scale submergence. In case of Narmada over 600,000 hectares of land, a third being cultivated, is expected to be submerged leading to uprooting of almost 1 million people, who would need to be resettled. The Narmada project has envisaged that all necessary facilities would be provided to these displaced people, so that the pain of uprooting from their abode would be softened.

This looks so good on paper, that normally one would dismiss people like Baba Amte as people who do not deserve serious attention. Unfortunately, the ground realities in India, despite independence have always differed vastly from the picture on paper. In 1990, the Narmada Project was already decades old. By this time, the area that was expected to be submerged should have been known. A map showing the area that was to be submerged should have been on display in all the villages with details of the land record so that the affected people could plan their lives accordingly. Far from such a map being freely available, the only source of information that people had were vague newspaper reports and rumors. If the grandiose plans of resettlement were to have any credence, then Mr. A living in village B should have been given specific details of village C where he was going to be resettled down to details of land records of his new abode. Such a state of planning and execution that would be considered normal in any well run commercial organisation anywhere in the world, was (and is) a complete fantasy in the wonderland of Indian babudom. They were rest content to hide all this information, that was of critical importance to the affected people under, believe it or not - Official Secrets Act. An act designed by the British to keep intact their power base in a slave country was being used by the Officials of an Independent country to be insulated from their own inefficiencies. Such is the perversion, people have come to confront in the name of their own development.

It is well known but never officially acknowledged that the underside of the dazzling statistics in growth of Electricity generation and increase in irrigated land is ever proliferating slums in the metropolitan cities of India. The exploitation of the hinterland resources for the benefit of the urban areas compels people to uproot themselves and migrate in search of livelihood. Every dam construction has led to a fresh wave of slum construction in the cities. While the officials rejoice in completion of the project (and fattening of their wallet), people who become uprooted are left to fend for themselves. Shorn of their land and livelihood, they have no choice but to scavenge for food in the slums of cities. No matter, what is said on paper, faced with this track record and the use of such instruments as the Officials Secret Act, one can not fault people for being very wary of such projects in the name of Development.

The fate of people who would be displaced by such project, bad enough as it is, is not the only reason people like Baba Amte have come to oppose such projects. That such expensive projects lead to large scale corruption need not come as a surprise to anyone. Benefits to people is not the sole reason, why such projects are tenaciously pursued by vested interests. No effort is spared to get the project sanctioned. Once on, the project gets a life of its own and goes on providing patronage to many – all of whom come to have a stake in ensuring that the project would end up costing as much as possible and go on far as long as possible. So that their source of power, patronage does not dry up. The benefits to people can wait.

It was the Prime Minister of India, who in July 1986 confessed that since 1951, 246 major irrigation projects were taken up. Only 65 were completed at all, none on schedule. Of the 65 completed projects, as many as 32 had shown a cost increase of more than 500%.

Many tricks are used to exaggerate the benefits of the Project. One of them deals with the reservoir life of the dam. This depends on the Siltation Rate (SR) or the rate at which the silt is carried into the dam by the river. Accumulation of silt reduces storage capacity of the dam over a period of time and ultimately renders it unproductive. Thus correct calculation of the Siltation rate is important for estimating the Cost/ Benefit ratio. Some figures in this context are revealing as can be seen below:

Annual Rate of siltation per 100 sq kms of the Catchment Area

Project	Year of Impounding	Estimated SR	Actual SR
Maithon	1956	1.62	13.10
Mayurakashi	1955	3.61	16.43
Ramganga	1974	4.29	18.19
Ghod	1966	3.61	15.24
Beas Unit 2	1974	4.29	14.29
Ukai	1971	1.47	10.95
Tawa	1974	3.61	11.15
Sivanagar	1961		15.24
Narmada	Proposed	1.55	11.15

It is technically possible to reduce the Siltation rate by soil erosion control treatment in the catchment area. Despite a wide variation between the estimated and actual siltation rate, the project envisages treatment of only 7,919 sq kms as against a total catchment area of 98,796 sq kms.

In addition to higher siltation rate, another factor that needs to be taken note of is the problem of water logging and salinity of irrigated land. This is the phenomenon of land being lost to agriculture. If proper drainage systems are not provided, surplus water accumulates, rises to the surface, evaporates leaving behind salts. In the forty years between 1950 and 1990; as many as 10 million hectares of land were so lost to agriculture. Technically, the problem can be overcome by digging one well every 6.2 hectares and pumping out water for 400 hours per year – a cost issue. Predictably, not considered in case of Narmada Dam.

An emotive issue has been added to the Narmada Project by projecting it as a solution for the severe shortage of water that prevails in Saurashtra region of Gujarat. This at best is the half truth. There are 69 tehsils in the six districts of this region. The project as conceived would lead to provision of water in only 13 of the 69 tehsils. Not one tehsil in Jamnagar, Amreli and Junagarh will benefit. In Rajkot, 2 of the 13 tehsils will get water. 3 of the nine tehsils in Surendranagar will get water, while in Bhavnagar, 5 of the 12 tehsils will get water. Thus as many as 56 tehsils would have to live with their present water problem despite Narmada. Surely there are better and less costly solutions available to resolve the water problem of the entire Saurashtra and not a mere small part thereof.

The project raises some cost issues. In 1990, the project envisaged that Gujarat Government would raise Rs 50,310 million over an eight year period. A state which had a budget deficit of Rs 3,400 million in 1988-89. Thus, valid reason existed to fear that under the guise of shortage of funds plea, the Government would cut back on soft issues as Resettlement, treatment of catchment area, reforestation etc.

It has been ten years to date since I completed my Walkabout. Narmada project continues to raise strong emotions. The leadership of the agitation has passed on to younger hands. Gujarat Government remains as determined as ever to implement the project, while the agitators are prepared to give no ground. The so called biggest democracy in the world continues to fight shy of having a reasoned debate on the issue.

Much of the data that I have presented came from the anti-dam proponents. For the very simple reason that the Government refused to release any. Some of it may now be outdated or could even be wrong. Let me confess to the fact that I was not completely convinced by the arguments against the Dam. Much of the arguments against the dam arise from the completely inefficient and callous manner in which similar projects have been executed in the past. That such an execution is the only manner of doing things can not be an acceptable proposition from an administrative point. The issue is of creating an efficient and empathic organisation that can do the job in a sensitive manner. One thing that is beyond doubt is that the Indian bureaucracy is singularly incapable of executing the job. Ten years in the reform process and it remains as insensitive and callous as ever before.

If any one has any illusions on this score, he would do well to read the tragic story of Colonel Save. This 57 year old army man, who had retired in 1995 after distinguished service was leading an agitation against a proposed port in Umbergaon village of Gujarat. For this 'crime' he was arrested on 8th April 2000 and severely assaulted by the police led by an officer who happens to hold an MBBS degree. The poor Colonel, who had held the Pakistanis at bay on the sensitive border areas of Kashmir, slipped into coma never again to regain consciousness. He died on the 20th April 2000 at the Hinduja Hospital in Mumbai. What the *enemy* had not been able to do to him was done by his own countrymen.

In case of Colonel Save, perhaps (?) justice may be done. It is possible that the responsible police officer may be tried and sentenced on charges of murder, since the story has already appeared in mainstream newspapers in a city like Mumbai. The cause of justice and equity would not be served, in the unlikely event of the guilty being brought to the book in case of Colonel Save. The issue is far more fundamental.

Just what constitutes Development? Creation of infrastructure for economic growth such as a Dam or a Port – infrastructure that would boost economic activity, is that Development! Our problem in India is that we have been creating this infrastructure in a most inefficient and insensitive manner, leading to martyrs like Save but even if we do this in the most efficient and sensitive manner, would it lead to Development in true sense of the word. This is what we need to examine with the help of Amartya Sen.

Development As Growth in Per Capita Income

“I was playing one afternoon- I must have been around ten or so- in the garden in our family home in the city of Dhaka, now the capital of Bangladesh, when a man came through the gate screaming pitifully and bleeding profusely; he had been knifed in the back. Those were the days of communal riots (with Hindus and Muslims killing each other), which preceded the independence and partitioning of India and Pakistan. The knifed man called Kader Mia, was a Muslim daily laborer who had come for work in a neighboring house- for a tiny reward-and had been knifed on the street by some communal thugs in our largely Hindu area. As I gave him water, while also crying for help from adults in the house, and moments later, as he was rushed to the hospital by my father, Kader Mia went on telling us that his wife had told him not to go into a hostile area in such troubled times. But Kader Mia had to go out in the search of work and a bit of earning because his family had nothing to eat. The penalty of his economic unfreedom turned out to be his death, which occurred later on in the hospital..

The experience was devastating for me...Kader Mia need not have come to a hostile area in search of a little income in those terrible times had his family been able to survive without it.”

Thus writes Amartya Sen in his book ‘Development As Freedom.’ Little seems to have changed in last fifty years or so, which have passed since Sen had a face to face confrontation with terrible choices that low income forces on the poor. Extreme poverty remains concentrated heavily in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, having lowest levels of per capita income among all the regions of the world. A Developmental strategy which exclusively focuses on growth in per capita income seems to make excellent sense for these countries. A Baba Amte, who stands in the way of a Narmada Dam or a Colonel Save who seeks to protest against a new port, are people who would not be tolerated in such a Developmental Strategy. There could be more humane ways of dealing with them than clubbing them to death but they have to be set aside- would go the reasoning.

This alluringly appealing simplistic arguments needs to be examined to understand how hollow and misleading it is. The truth be told, the persistence of poverty has nothing to do with Baba Amtes and Saves of Bharat but everything to do with the incredibly inefficient and corrupt process of Development that has been followed year after year after the British left the country.

Soon after Independence, the Government took to following a model of growth that had no equivalent. The export oriented outward looking growth strategy that came to be followed by South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong left the Indian policy makers cold. They chose to follow a domestic regulatory system that in many ways put to shame even the Soviet central planning system. When the outcome was far below expectations, novel excuses were invented to justify failures. The noted magazine ‘The Economist’ hit the nail on the head when it wrote:

“In excuses for failure, too, India can supply all its needs. Its educated elite talk complacently of ‘the Hindu rate of growth’; Hinduism promotes acceptance and resignation, you understand, blunting the spur of competition. Never forget that India was crippled by its colonial past, that the rich first world will refuse to let it catch up, that democracy costs India one or two percentage points of growth a year. For much too long, Indians were encouraged to believe such rubbish by people in the West, who claimed to be their friends.”

Not once did the elite look at the past to ponder over the wonder that the same Hindu ethos that were now crippling India left Bharat untouched. How was it that Bharat had led the world in economy till the closing years of the eighteenth century ? In the case of this historical fact –of Bharat being an economic giant- that the so-called educated elite have remained content to have this fact placed beyond the level of consciousness. They simply do not know – nor want to know the history of their own country.

Forget history, they would rather not acknowledge the present either. The fact that their country is exceptionally well endowed in physical as well human resources. The world over people from this part of the world are known to be intelligent, thrifty, capable of punishingly hard work, entrepreneurial, ambitious and materialistic. Emigrant Indians have been known to have prospered within a generation. Yet, not once have the Indian policy makers wondered at the paradox of Indians being remarkably successful abroad, while only at home, are so many imprisoned, in their hundreds of millions, in a sink of despair and degradation.

In a brazen attempt to cloak the failure, the Indian intellectuals took even to presenting partial facts as examples of success. Post independence, India did industrialize quickly. In the 1960s, its industrial output went up on an average by 5.5% a year. By developed world standards, this looks impressive. At such a rate of growth, industrial output would double every 12 years. But by the standards of India’s Asian neighbors, it was decidedly unimpressive. Industrial output in Pakistan grew almost twice as fast, at 10.8% a year. Thailand managed 11.5%, Taiwan 13.2%; South Korea, 16.5%. In the 1970s these gaps widened substantially and India fell behind even further. In the 1980s, finally Indian growth rate seemed to catch up with its neighbors but that was once again a misleading comparison. India was operating from a much smaller base, on account of its dismal performance over two decades than South Korea.

Even, when faced with such embarrassing comparisons, the Indian elite would not give up their arrogance. Singapore, Hong Kong were city-states, while South Korea and Taiwan were the size of an average province in India. Thus even if they had fared better than India, it was merely on account of their being so small. In meetings after meetings, the Indian elite bristled at the irrelevant comparison between Singapore and India. Perhaps, there is some merit in the argument that a country of a continental dimension like India could hardly look at a city state like Singapore as a model. Well, what about China-if anything it had problems on a bigger scale than India. By 1978, China was already clocking growth of 13.5% in industrial output and was already out racing its

smaller rivals. This should put India's failure in the perspective. For details of the sad story, refer the table below:

Average Annual Increase (%) in Industrial Output

	Industrial Output	
	1960-1980	1980-88
South Korea	15.2	12.6
Taiwan	12.8	7.2
Singapore	12.1	4.5
Hong Kong	10.3	7.5
Thailand	10.3	6.6
Indonesia	8.9	5.1
Pakistan	8.0	7.2
Malaysia	9.6	6.1
India	4.6	7.6
Bangladesh	6.1	4.9
Sri Lanka	5.3	4.4
Mynamar	4.2	7.3
China*	9.3	8.8

* Figures for China are in respect of the period 1952-1978 & 1978-1995 respectively

The sorry state of affairs in the Industry could have been compensated by a revolution in the agriculture. On the face of it, that does appear to be the case. India, that imported 15% of its food grain requirement during the famine years of 1966 and 1967 was able to send food grains to a starving Ethiopia in 1984-85. The shine on the achievements, fades once again when compared to the rest of Asia.

The Green revolution had changed the face of farming in Asia. Between, 1970-89, the volume of farm output went up by 2.1% a year in India – but by 3.7% in Indonesia, 4.7% in Malaysia, 3.6% in Philippines, 3.5% in Pakistan. Thus while the farm output went by 40% in India, it nearly doubled in Malaysia.

The Indian green revolution was flawed in more aspect. To a much greater extent than in other countries, it was confined to certain crops – wheat and rice. In many other crops, where technological advance was slower, India's output lagged behind and in some cases stagnated. Nationally, farm out put barely kept pace with the population growth (which ahs averaged 2.1% per year since 1947). Farm labor productivity has increased by less than 1% a year compared to 5% a year in South Korea. Yields have remained at low levels. For instance Paddy yield was 1,962 kg/hectare in India compared to 5,841 kg/hectare in South Korea, 4,953 in Taiwan or even 2,604 in Pakistan. Thus rural incomes have increased slowly. That in turn has meant little progress on poverty. The bleak rural scene has hampered industrial growth unlike in South East Asia, where booming agriculture provided a growing home market to the industry.

The roots of the dismal story of inadequate growth in Industry and agriculture do not lie in lack of resources. Ambitious five year plans had been launched one after the other since 1951-funded by a combination of internal resources, deficit financing, loans and aid from the rich countries. The mega developmental projects became convenient sources of funds for the corrupt politicians and bureaucrats. The country that was once haunted by the drain of wealth in the form of home charges and other such forms of exploitation came to be plagued by the phenomenon of Black Money. A euphemism for money siphoned off from the government treasury; which on paper was to have been spent for construction of infrastructure to support economic activities.

The popular outrage over the Black Money forced the Government to commission studies to report on the problem. One of the reports detailed three case studies on the manner in which illegal profits were made.

- The Sugar Industry

The factories, managed by people whose skills lay in the art of obtaining a license to open and run the plant, were required to sell a major part of their output state run public distribution system. The prices in the open market were much higher. In order to make available sugar for sell in the open market, the factories took to under reporting the amount of sugarcane brought in for refining, issuing bogus receipts. Sugar produced from the unaccounted supplies was sold in open market to generate illegal profits

- Urban Property

Numerous rules blocked the development of a free market for sale and purchase of land, building and houses. The resulting scarcity drove the prices of tenements outside the reach of most people, on one hand. On the other, the sales that did take place were undervalued to escape the net of taxation.

- Public Spending

The findings were most damaging in respect of public spending – to no one's surprise. For instance, in case of construction of an irrigation dam (such as the one on Narmada), a significant percentage of spending takes the form of illegal payments to contractors and officials. The means include 'substandard work and materials, inflated bills, false rolls for labor and kickbacks to the sanctioning officials. The result of these practices led to a substantial proportion of government expenditure going into the private coffers of the corrupt individuals rather be spent for the intended beneficiary.

Only the most naïve were surprised by the finding that there exists a regular market for public offices. State postings are bought and sold for prices that vary according to the graft that posting would yield. Officers are known to have spent 40 –50 times their normal annual salary for posting in a lucrative places for a period of two years at the most. Engineering positions in the mega projects are amongst the most coveted.

It is this corrupt and illegitimate nexus of politicians and bureaucrats that is threatened by activities of a Baba Amte or a Colonel Save. The police officer who clubbed Colonel Save to death was not enraged because the activities of Save were threatening the developmental benefits that were to accrue out of the construction of the port. Rather, the reason would have been far more mundane. If the construction of a port was going to be stopped by Save's actions, from where was he going to recover the money he must have spent to buy a short duration posting in the area?

In 1990, it had been hoped that the cure to the present day Indian ills lay in deregulation and globalisation. It was argued passionately that once the perverse regime of Licenses and Permits was dismantled, the Indian entrepreneurship would flower and lift the country out of the morasses of despair and destitution. Faced with the specter of bankruptcy after four decades of mismanaging the economy, in 1991 the Government of India had been forced to virtually dismantle the elaborate structure it had built up in the name of social equity. A structure that served the interests of the corrupt Indians and did nothing to help the cause of the poor.

In a country, where once only cars of 1950 vintage were available, the streets are full of latest models of all colors. Where once most consumer products of shoddy quality, were scarce in supply, today the newspapers are full of advertisements seeking to woo the customers with attractive offers. In a land, where even the import of capital equipment for an industrial activity was once virtually prohibited, the shops now carry oranges from America and fruit juices from Spain.

The Indian stock market now gyrates in sync with NASDAQ. If it was not for the East Asian crisis, the Indian rupee would by now by have been convertible on the capital account. The country has traveled a long way down the road of deregulation and globalization. There is of course a long list of unfinished agenda. On top of the list is privatization of state run companies and utilities. The desire to see the government get out of most areas of governance is so strong that recently a leading economic daily was euphoric over the State Government decision to hand over a Public hospital in Mumbai to a private company which would run it as a super specialty hospital. The incongruity of handing over a public hospital catering in whatever inefficient manner to the every day needs of the poor to a private company to treat the rich and the rich alone, was not even considered worthy of mention.

This party of deregulation and globalization was recently rudely disturbed by a World Bank report. The newspaper report bears reproduction in full- after all it would occupy so small a space, which in itself is an indication of the elitist concern for the poor. The report originating from Washington, datelined 4th June 1999 is an eye opener in more than one way.

“Poverty on the rise despite reforms, says World Bank

Economic reforms notwithstanding, poverty in India has increased significantly, swelling the ranks of the poor by a record 40 million within a decade, according to the World Bank. By late 1990s (1997) an estimated 340 million people were living in poverty, up from an estimated 300 million in the late 1980s, says a new World Bank working paper released here. Now India has the single largest concentration of income-poor people in the world despite economic growth in the 1990s it adds.”

As a matter of interest, for the first time since independence India in 1997 had witnessed three consecutive years of 7% + growth in economy.

“A poor person is one who earns less than a dollar a day. Asked whether India and China could attain the target of halving their poverty by 2015, the Bank’s Poverty reduction Program Director Michael Walton said: ‘On present trends, if we just extrapolate from what is happening in the 1990s, then China is clearly on track to do that. It does depend of course, on China maintaining a reasonable growth rate to achieve that.’”

He, however, said the situation was right now different in India. The growth pattern there suggested ‘stagnation for poverty’ which indicated that at least the rural poor are not participating in the economic growth. So that means for India not only is there a need to sustain the economic growth but there is also the need to increase participation of the poor, and especially the rural poor, in that growth, if the targets are to be achieved -he adds.

Clearly China is doing something that is far different than India. Many an enthusiast would jump up to point out that the population control in China is far more effective than in India. The right way to eradicate poverty would be to castrate the poor, so that their rabbit like breeding habits would not endanger the economic growth of the country. Yes, population control is indeed far more effective in China than in India; with its own set of problems, as we shall see later but this does not really answer why poverty should have actually increased in India in the years of economic growth. Let us see some figures:

Per Capita Income in India

Figures in %

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
GDP at factor cost (constant prices)	7.0	7.3	7.5	5.0	6.8
GDP per Capita (constant prices)	5.3	5.4	5.1	2.8	5.0

The figures clearly demonstrate that year after year, there has been a real growth in the per capita income of the people. Increase in population can not then explain the increase in poverty together with increase in per capita income. Perhaps, the economic growth is not high enough. If only, it were to exceed 10% per annum for ten years, things would be far different. Indeed, such an economic growth would certainly do wonders for the country – of this I have no doubt.

One set of warning would be in order at this stage. There are enough and more people, who would like to use the newspaper report cited above for promoting regulated economy in the name of poverty eradication. They fall in two categories. One who have a vested interest in returning to the old days of socialistic control, so that they can regain their power of patronage that they have lost in the last decade. The other being those who want a return to the good old days, in which they mistakenly imagine India to have been standing alone in the league of nations as a magnificent example for others. For one, this self-image is nothing but an exercise in self-delusion. Today, people do want to emulate Singapore or South Korea and certainly not India. Besides, they also forget that even in those days, Indian economy was sustained by what the 'Economist' called ' \$ 4 billion a year in handouts and cheap credits from rich country governments'. Such a money is today simply not available. Back to past is therefore an option that simply does not exist. In any case, the option of a regulated economy was tried out in the name of many a lofty motives – not one of which was attained in four decades- a long enough period. What is the point in hoping that the same experiment under similar or even worse conditions would now generate a different result?

Globalization has become a feature of our life which can not be undone. Explosive growth in technology is making sure of that. In the age of Mobile phones, pagers, e-mail, how can anyone remain isolated from the world? In any case, why should anyone want to remain isolated. For the first time in the history of mankind, technology is universalizing the access to information and knowledge. The high priests of knowledge are to their horror seeing their turf being invaded by the common man. This is the time to seize the initiative and make sure that the rulers are never again in a position to curtail the right of common man to information. Anyone, who seeks to turn the wheel back is no friend of the common man.

If the Poverty is on the rise in India and not in China, it is not because China is regulated and closed while India is deregulating and globalizing. On the contrary, China has been on the road for far longer than India. The process that was started in 1978 in China is simply irreversible and pervasive. Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore has this to say:

“Deng knew what he was doing. That is why I think he is a great man. He opened up the system; he opened up the country and deliberately. He knew it could not be closed up again. You can not close people's minds. It is no longer a question of what the leaders want. If the leaders do not bring progress and prosperity to replace backwardness and poverty, there will be a revolution in China, a real one in which armies will change sides and will shoot ministers. That is part of Chinese tradition.

The people now know that it is the system that is at fault. They see the Taiwanese. Look at them bringing all gifts to their relatives. They look at Hong Kong. If people in Singapore and Taiwan can make it and people in China can-not, then it has to be because of the stupidity of the Soviet system that Mao adopted. Then let us get rid of it.”

The misfortune of the people in South Asia is none of the countries has been able to eradicate poverty. The first country that does so in the manner of Taiwan will act as the irreversible magnet for the people in all other countries. No matter what the rulers in rest of the countries want; they would be compelled to formulate their policies along the lines of the prosperous nation or risk being swept aside.

The Economist that thus quoted Lee Kuan Yew in November 1992 added that

“No matter where you travel in China today, the most emphatic sensation you get is the intensity of the desire to modernise and grow. Governors, party secretaries, party representatives on the board of directors; their only interests seem to be foreign investment, trade and economic reform. The concerns of the bureaucrats and public-security men in Beijing are growing fainter all the time in the rest of China.”

It is thus appears that one difference in India and China is the momentum of economic growth. Ever since opening up the economy, China has been clocking an impressive economic growth of close to 10% per year. India, on the other hand, after a three year burst faltered. In 1999, it is expected to clock in only 5.5%. An economic growth of 10% per annum for 10 years – India can do it, just as China did do so.

India certainly does have the potential to do so. What is holding it back is neither the weight of its numbers as is popularly misconceived nor the agitations over mega projects. If anything, the agitations, if they succeed in halting the grandiose misuse of public money would only boost economic growth. There is no evidence that a population increase necessarily curtails the economic growth. As the Economist put it most succinctly in 1992:

“For all these failures India has two great excuses. The first is the sheer weight of people. It is undoubtedly true that India is already over populated and the continuing growth of numbers is a heavy burden on the economy. (that is why the country’s inability to educate poor women matters so much) But it is worth remembering that India’s population growth has not been all that rapid by Asian standards. In the last two decades to the mid-1980s, its population grew by a little over two percent a year. The populations of Hong Kong, Taiwan and Indonesia grew at about the same rate. Malaysia, Thailand and Pakistan-all of which have been more successful than India on most economic measures-had to contend with significantly faster population growth.”

Indeed, the years that followed proved just how true this statement was. This can be seen from the table below, which gives a comparison of population growth and economic growth.

Comparison of Population and Economic Growth in India

Figs in %

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Population growth	1.90	2.09	1.72	1.69	1.67	1.64
Average population growth	1.90			1.67		
Economic growth	7.0	7.3	7.5	5.0	6.8	5.5
Average economic growth	7.26			5.76		

At the very least, it can be noticed that the population growth declined in the later three year period, 1997-1999 by 12% compared to the prior three year period, 1994-1996. Yet despite the slow down in population growth, the economic growth declined by 20%. This does not however prove that a decline in population growth necessarily goes with decline in economic growth. However, it does prove that the impact of population growth on economy is far more complex than has been simplistically portrayed in India so far.

So what is it that is holding back India in realizing its economic potential? In the days of License-Permit Raj in India, it had been thought that once the government unshackles the Indian industry, entrepreneurship would flower and propel India to economic glory. Perhaps, it will. However, the impact of liberalization on the Indian corporates, who were used to the cozy comfort of the protected economy has been far from beneficial. One of the hottest words in the management jargon is the Economic Value Added – EVA. Simply put, EVA measures whether a Company is adding or subtracting value from the economy. It does so by taking into account, the total capital (equity as well as loan funds) employed to run the company and measuring the return obtained to the floor rate of return or the minimum return expected in the economy. For instance, in India today, the floor rate of return would be at least 11% per annum, the yield obtained on such risk free investments as Public Provident Fund. Unless, any company is generating a return higher than the floor rate of return, the company is leading a parasitic existence. For it is in effect destroying economic value irrespective of whether it earns profits.

In last two hundred years, Corporations have emerged as the locomotive of economic growth. No country which has scaled heights of economic prosperity, has done so without having a significant number of successful commercial entities in its borders. Thus EVA is not a jargon merely of use to industry executives. Policy makers interested in economic growth would be well advised to be conversant with such tools as EVA that can decisively shape managerial behavior in running industries. Those interested in learning more details of EVA would find it in “The Real Key to Creating Wealth’ by A.L.Ehrbar of the Stern Stewart & Co.

Recently, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) commissioned a study to evaluate the performance of the Indian corporate sector on the benchmark of EVA. The results are shocking in the extreme. The study covered some 363 companies, almost all-important commercial entities in India. The results are tabulated as under:

Value Loss By Indian Corporates

Figures in Rs million

	1995	1996	1997	1998	Total
Sales	1,913,990	2,340,980	2,678,330	2,933,820	9,867,120
EVA at 20% cost of capital	(90,130)	(92,800)	(161,440)	(220,050)	(564,420)

Let us put this figure of value Destruction in perspective. In the year 1998, the total borrowings of the Government of India amounted to Rs 1,113,490 million to meet its requirements of funds. Now, if we take out the requirement of money for interest payments, the borrowings for operating expenditure or payment of Rs 354,670 million. Let us make the following, admittedly simplistic assumption that :

- The value destruction by Indian corporates was evenly spread between 1995-98.
- The entire value destroyed by the corporates was otherwise available to the Government in the form of taxes and increased economic output.

On this assumption, the amount of money available to the Government of India but for value destruction by Indian corporates would have been Rs 141,105 million. In other words, the borrowings of the Government for operating expenses could have been **reduced by almost 40%**.

Once again let this realization sink in. With all the inefficiencies in the Government, over manned bureaucracy and all other evils, the Government could have paid out all the subsidies it needs to the poor of the country , while remaining within norms of financial prudence. If and only if the Indian Corporate World had not been so prodigious a waster of scarce resources in a poor country like India. Population Growth, inefficiency in the Government have got nothing to do with this momentous failure of the Indian industry.

I am sure, many would jump up and claim that under Indian conditions – poor infrastructure, corrupt and inefficient bureaucracy, low labor productivity, high interest costs and God alone knows what else; nothing else is possible. Well, the same *Indian conditions* that seems to have crippled many, there have been some sterling performances. Let us turn to the table below to see the top ten value adders in India, the roll of honour.

Top Ten Value Creators

	EVA Rank	EVA (in Rs million)
Hindustan Lever	1	7,360
ITC Ltd	2	5,170
Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd.	3	3,410
Castrol India Ltd.	4	2,420
Bajaj Auto Ltd.	5	2,310
HCL Infosystems	6	1,410
Kirloskar Oil Engines Ltd.	7	1,390
Bharat Heavy Electricals	8	1,270
Wipro Ltd	9	1,240
Asian Hotels Ltd.	10	1,160
Total		27,140

The list of value creators is truly ‘secular’. Finding a place in this roll of honour are multinationals like Hindustan Lever and ITC Ltd, who head the league, public sector organisations like Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd and Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd. And also home grown companies like Bajaj Auto Ltd and Kirloskar Oil Engines Ltd. They are living proof, if any was ever required, that when problems exist – there are only two types of people – one who are a part of the solution and the others who are a part of the problem. The value creators in Indian environment, which does have more problems than most places in the world are simply a part of the Solution.

Let us now turn to the other set of companies, which are Value Destroyers and are therefore a part of the problem itself.

Top Ten Value Destroyers

	EVA Rank	EVA (in Rs million)
Steel Authority of India	(1)	(92,360)
Reliance Industries	(2)	(43,930)
Mahanagar Telephone Nigam	(3)	(40,620)
Essar Steel	(4)	(29,610)
Tata Iron and Steel Co	(5)	(26,540)
Ispat Industries	(6)	(15,630)
Larsen and Toubro	(7)	(8,060)
National Aluminium Co.	(8)	(7,150)
Indian Petrochemicals	(9)	(7,050)
Videcon International	(10)	(6,650)
Total		(277,600)

The list is dotted with both Public sector as well as home grown companies. Multinationals seem to be missing. This does not mean that Multinationals do not destroy value, for instance Whirlpool of India has destroyed value of Rs 3,140 million. It does not figure in the list of top ten, not for want of its performance or the lack thereof but simply because others have been more wasteful.

The record of Indian Corporate World seems to indicate that there are two types of corporates. The well run, who add value to the economy and are value adders. The other being the badly run ones one, who destroy value. It is interesting to note that Reliance which figured in the Value Destroyers; has of late emerged as one of the top most Value Creators. Proof if any was ever needed, if the Corporate Management has enough will and skills, it can turn a company from one which retards the country's progress to one that can become the jewel of the nation.

One can certainly argue for the merits of offering some degree of protection to a well run home grown company against foreign predators. The most ardent champions of free trade indulge in such practices. Protection to home grown companies has been one of the foundations of the East Asian economic miracle and in subsequent years its undoing. The economy boomed so long as the companies added value and went into a tailspin, when they threw financial prudence to winds. The private foreign debt obtained by these companies proved to be the undoing of East Asia countries, when lenders became wiser and refused to roll over the debt. It is worth recalling that at the time the East Asian crisis broke out the Chaebols, who had led the economic growth in South Korea were heavily indebted. Hyundai, the largest chaebol had a debt equity ratio of 5.32 followed by LG with 5.08, while Daewoo was close behind with a debt equity ratio of 4.7 followed by SK of 3.13 . Only Samsung was close to prudent financial norm of 2.0 having a ratio of 2.14. Reduction of debt equity ratio of the Chaebols formed an important part of the strategy of the South Korean government to revive the economy.

What passes comprehension is that one should argue for protection for badly run companies purely on ground of the national origin of its management. A company which is destroying value is a threat to national economic security. Such a company (and population growth) is the biggest obstacle in the path of poverty eradication. Policy makers should have no hesitation in formulating policies that would throw the management of such companies to the wolves. It is perhaps only in India that it is possible for a person to feted as a hero, whether or not his company is adding value to the economy. Not only do the promoters continue to run the company as their personal fiefdom despite having a minority stake in the company, in the event of failure they are secure against the threat of being dismissed from their jobs.

In any country if the company goes into losses, the management lose their jobs. In India, there exists a wonderland called The Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR) that seems to exists to provide succor to the unfortunate souls who have been beaten hollow in the corporate warfare. The law requires any company whose entire net worth has been wiped out to be referred to BIFR. Once a company enters this wonderland, the management gets immunity from all commercial disciplines of running a

company. The law now prevents initiation of any winding up proceedings against the company nor allow any of its properties to be alienated. Nomination of a fresh Director comes to be disallowed. Suppliers or dealers can not refuse to deal with it. Even if fails to pay any rent, landlord can not seek to evict it. On the other hand no restriction is imposed on the management of the company in conduct of its business.

Thus the failed management of the company enters the world of commercial paradise that is unknown elsewhere in the world. What happens to such companies. A look at the track record is instructive.

In ten years ending March 1998, some 3,148 companies sought protection of the BIFR. The Board accepted 2,145 of them. The net worth of the companies so registered was about Rs 130,000 million. Accumulated losses exceeded Rs 300,000 million.. One scheme or the other was sanctioned by the BIFR for 625 companies, while the balance 1,520 cases are under consideration allowing the management to make merry. No details of the success of 625 cases is available. For since, the BIFR normally does not change the management, which had run the company to the ground in the first place, the fate of such schemes is not difficult to guess.

No wonder it is said that 'In India, there are only sick (or failed) industries but not sick (or poor) industrialists'. What India badly needs is not Exit Policy for the Workers but a harsh Exit Policy for those who run the companies to dust.

It is important to realize that before Indian managers embark on a torturous discussion of the relevance of a Paradigm Shift in the Concept of Development, let them first do the job for what they are paid. Run their companies so that it contributes to the national economy and not subtract from the existing pool. Let them learn from the inspiring story of the Reliance turnaround.

Even as I ask the Indian managers, a tribe to which I belong, to focus on Economic Value Added, EVA; I realize that others have to ponder over more important aspects. There is no doubt that a sustained economic growth over the long term will reduce if not eradicate poverty. Not withstanding the unpleasant reality that in the short term, poverty may increase. However, one needs to examine if in the long term a focus on economic growth alone would result in Development.

It is the United States of America that would provide us an ideal environment to test this hypothesis. No other country in the world has had a sustained economic growth in the last two centuries as America has had. Let the figures speak for themselves. In 1820, the United States of America had a population of 12.2 million and a GDP of 12,432 million or a per Capita Income of \$ 1019. In 1992, the population had increased to 255.61 million or an increase of 1995%. On the other hand, the GDP grew to \$ 5,675,617 million or an increase of 45,553%. Per Capita income now stood at \$ 22,204% or an increase of 2079%. U.S.A. that in 1820 had only 1.8% share in the global economy, had in 1992 a 20.3% share. Surely, it would be extremely difficult for any nation to better this growth. Even more impressive is the manner in which this growth was attained.

- From 1820 to 1913, the US made massive investments in the infrastructure which was needed to exploit its prodigious natural resource endowment and provide its booming population with urban facilities.
- In the period 1913 to 1950, the focus shifted to investment in machinery and structures to support the industrial production. In 1950, the average age of equipment in the industry was 6.4 years and that of the industrial structures was 19.3 years.
- Research and development took precedence over collusive business practices on account of Anti-trust. As early as 1946, the US manufacturing firms had four scientists on pay roll for every 1000 employees.
- The most striking feature was the increased role of very large enterprises in the economy. Giant firms played a strategic role by controlling large number of plants at different stages of production and distribution. They handled the allocation of large amounts of capital, spread risks and increased productivity over a large number of new industries.

It is therefore disturbing in the extreme that as many 40 million of American people should have no access to medical facilities. A fact that we have noted earlier on. We had earlier on also referred to the fact the mortality in African-Americans is much higher than that in much poorer people elsewhere in the World. Let us now consider the implication of this. Development presupposes existence of life. If African-American having more than ten times the Per Capita Income of those in Kerala, live a shorter life than those in Kerala, of what use is their higher per capita income? So what explains the morbid fascination for an increase in income per se? A focus on economic growth to the exclusion of every thing else.

Sen has cogently explained that there is good case for beginning with growth in income for attaining development. For income has an enormous influence on what we can or can not do. The unfortunate dramatic death of Kadar Mia being just one striking example. He has built up a convincing case for establishing that the road to development should not end with income growth. As the American example demonstrates, a higher income level can co-exist with at least one significant disability. The ability to live longer itself.

If China is today on track for eradicating poverty and India is not, the reasons need to be understood. The fact that Indian economic growth rate is slower than that in China is only partly responsible for this phenomenon. Where China is far more successful is the level of preparedness of its people to face changes being unleashed by forces of deregulation and globalization. Ability to acquire new skills all the time is the key to survival in such an era. Basic prerequisite for developing such an ability is that the person should be educated. The difference between India and China is most striking in approach to education. India has some of the world's best institutes of learning at the graduate level. At higher levels, even these institutes tend to become more and more hollow. The access of the masses to primary education in India is far more restricted in India. In 1950, years of education per person, aged 15-64 in India was 1.35 years, while in China it was 1.65

years. Starting from a base that was more or less similar, the divergence became more and more pronounced as the years went by. By 1992, the figure in case of India had increased to 5.55 years, while that in case of China had climbed to 8.50 years.

Education, infant mortality, life expectancy, access to health facilities – take any indicator of Human Development and the result would be same. China is far ahead of India. The Chinese focus on multi-dimensional Development unlike India, which seems to be looking only at an increase in Per Capita Income – that too far less efficiently than China; is the real reason why China is more successful in poverty eradication.

Development As Freedom

In an age when Deregulation and Globalization have become the buzz words in the corridors of power, expanding market process to all spheres of economic activity has become a priority, privatization of public hospitals has come to be lauded as essential to boost economic growth; it has been left to erudite thinkers like Amartya Sen to point out the perils of such a course of action. It was the work of Sen along with his friend, Mahabub ul Haq of Pakistan that made Per Capita Income lose its place as the Holy Grail of Development. Together, they fashioned Human Development Index, which has now gained respectability as a more authentic indicator of the state of Development.

In recent years, Sen has traveled further down the road in his quest to define just what constitutes Development. He has now staked himself to the position that Development is the process of expanding the real freedom that people enjoy. Growth of GDP or Per capita Income, he agrees are very important *means* of expanding freedoms enjoyed by members of the society. He however points out that freedoms also depend on other factors such as social and economic factors – such as facilities for education and health care. Political and social rights in his opinion are also integral parts of the freedom that an individual has reason to value. Liberty to participate in public discussion and scrutiny are therefore critical components of Development. Sen is categorical in his view that if Freedom is what Development advances and that is his central thesis, then in his opinion Development can be best attained by concentrating on expansion of Freedom as an end rather than concentrate on such means as economic growth to attain that end.

Implicit in this view is the thesis that those who seek to brush aside people like Baba Amte and Colonel Save in the name of attaining economic growth, are enemies of Development of the people. Dams and Ports may contribute to economic growth but if they are built by curtailing political and social rights of the people, by clubbing to death people who have a different view – then such Dams and Ports can not lead to Development. Nor is this something that Sen leaves to inference. With all the emphasis that he is capable of, he rejects the view that authoritarian regimes are better equipped to force the pace of Development by choking dissent. As he patiently explains:

“It is often asked whether certain political and social freedoms, such as the liberty of political participation and dissent or opportunities to receive basic education are or are not ‘conducive’ to development. In the light of more foundational view of the development as freedom, this way of posing the question tends to miss the important understanding that that these substantive freedoms (that is, the liberty of political participation or the opportunity to receive basic education or health care) are among the *constituent components* of development. Their relevance for development does not have to be freshly established through their indirect contribution to the growth of GNP or to the promotion of industrialization. As it happens, these freedoms and rights are *also* very effective in contributing to economic progress...but while the casual relation is indeed significant, the vindication of this casual linkage is over and above the directly constitutive role of these freedoms in development.”

Central theme that runs through the arguments advanced by Sen relates to pursuing a view of development as an integrated process of expansion of substantive freedoms that connect with one another. He holds that Freedoms are not only the primary ends of development, they are also among its principal means. Freedom, to him is central to the process of development for two distinct reasons. The first is the availability of freedom to people is itself an indication of progress in respect of development. The other being the effective reason, since achievement of development is thoroughly dependent on the free agency of people. It is from this core belief from which springs his view that the process of Development has to advance five distinct types of freedoms:

- Political freedom
- Economic Facilities
- Social Opportunities
- Transparency Guarantees
- Protective Security

Sometimes, people in democratic countries take Political Freedom for granted. It is only when an elected Prime Minister in a neighboring country is deposed and jailed by an Army General that the absurdity of lack of choice in choosing one's own rulers through peaceful and democratic manner becomes apparent. For all its flaws, the Indian democracy has provided political freedom on a scale that has few parallels in developing nations. Those of the Indian elite, who refuse to vote in elections- for whatever real or imagined reason, would do well to consider that it is not an accident that India that was devastated by large scale famines time and again during the British rule; has not seen famine death since independence. Sen goes so far as to prove that no large scale famine has ever occurred in a functioning democracy. .

Economic Facilities in Sen's view refer to opportunities that individuals enjoy to utilize economic resources for the purpose of consumption, production or exchange. A regulated environment, such as the one that prevailed in India for a long time, is one that makes people unfree and therefore sets back development. This view is sure to raise hackles of many a socialist. Sen has therefore taken care to examine the merits and demerits of market mechanism as an important agency in economic facilities available to individuals. His views on market mechanism are as refreshing as breath of fresh air in a smoke filled room. As he says:

“One set of prejudices has given way to another-opposite-set of preoccupations. Yesterday's unexamined faith has become today's heresy, and yesterday's heresy is now the new superstition. The need for critical scrutiny of standard preoccupations and political-economic attitudes has never been stronger. Today's prejudices (in favour of the pure market mechanism) certainly need to be carefully investigated and I would argue, partly rejected. But we have to avoid resurrecting yesterday's follies that refused to see the merits of-indeed even the inescapable need for-markets...My illustrious countryman Gautam Buddha may have been too predisposed to see the universal need for 'the middle path' ...but there is something to be learnt from his speeches on nonextremism delivered 2,500 years ago.”

The middle path advocated by Sen is elegantly simple. He divides the goods that people seek to transact into two broad categories. The first being private good. A shirt one wears, an ice cream that one may eat, a car one may drive are all examples of private goods. For such goods, Sen advocates nothing but free market mechanism. The only rider he adds in such cases is that markets need to be competitive and no information is withheld from different players. The other category of goods, he classifies as Public Goods – those which people consume as a group and not as an individual. A malaria free environment, for instance is a Public Good. He is for exercising great caution in allowing free play of market forces in Public Goods.

Such Public goods as Defense, policing and environment protection necessarily have to be kept outside the market mechanism. Few would quarrel with Sen on this. The issue becomes more complicated in such cases a basic education. Once again Sen's views provide a refreshing contrast to the prevailing orthodoxy.

“Indeed, the state has typically played a major role in the expansion of basic education across the world. The rapid spread of literacy in the past history of the rich countries of today (both in the West and in Japan and the rest of East Asia) has drawn on the low cost of public education combined with its shared public benefits.

It is in this context rather remarkable that some market enthusiasts recommend now to the developing countries that they should rely fully on the free market even for basic education-thereby withholding from them the very process of educational expansion that was crucial in rapidly spreading literacy in Europe, North America, Japan, and East Asia in the past. The alleged followers of Adam Smith can learn something from his writings on this subject, including his frustration at the parsimony of public expenditure in the field of education:

‘For a very small expence the publick can facilitate, can encourage, and can even impose almost the whole body of the people, the necessity of acquiring those most essential parts of education.’

The ‘public goods’ argument for going beyond the market mechanism supplements the case for social provisioning that arises from the need of basic capabilities, such as elementary health care and basic educational opportunities. Efficiency considerations thus supplement the argument for equity in supporting public assistance in providing basic education, health facilities and other public (or semi public goods)”

From Economic facilities, Sen moves on to Social opportunities. He points out that Social opportunities refer to arrangements that Society makes for education, health care and so, which influence the individual's freedom to live better. One of the most significant contributions made by Sen to the Economic thought process is to establish that educational infrastructure that a society provides for its people has a significant influence on its level of preparedness to face the increasingly irreversible process of globalization. Illiteracy, for instance can be a major barrier to participation in economic activities that

require production that demand strict quality control – as globalized trade increasingly requires.

This is a point that I had learnt with some embarrassment in 1992. Those were the days that were filled with euphoria. The government had set itself on the road to deregulation. The air in commercial capital of India, Mumbai, was surcharged with the expectation; now that the doors to foreign capital had been finally opened – the multinationals would que up for putting their money in India and that propel India on road to economic prosperity. This expectation had led to a boom in the Stock Markets that had no relation to economic fundamentals. As in many subsidiaries of multinationals operating in India, my company was involved in an exercise to woo the foreign parent to invest in India. Our activities were at their feverish pitch during the visit of one of the senior most German Directors, who was visiting India to take a stock of the situation.

During the presentation, this gentleman who was a first time visitor to India; was polite but non-committal. It is during lunch that followed that he really opened up. He was very keen to know about India – in particular the education policy of the government, the reason for seeing so many children begging on the street and not where they belonged i.e. in schools. The much vaunted elite educational institutes, the IITs and the IIMs of the country, he readily accepted were amongst the best in the world. Small number of such institutes, however did not impress him. He was more concerned about the availability of a wide pool of workers, who could run the plants efficiently. His point was most simple. Such a pool, was to be found in countries which made sure that children attended school in the formative years of their life rather than in those which callously allowed them to roam aimlessly in the streets. In case, India wanted to attract serious long term foreign investments, he was firmly of the opinion that it would need to address this serious social lacuna. Otherwise, he was clear that the process of globalization in India would be very shallow. The years that have passed since then have only served to confirm the validity of this opinion. Sen provides the corroboration, if one is still needed.

“The contrast between India and China has some illustrative importance in this context. The governments of both China and India have been making efforts for some time now (China from 1979 and India from 1991) to move toward a more open, internationally active, market oriented economy. While Indian efforts have slowly met with some success, the kind of massive results China has seen, has failed to occur in India. An important factor in this contrast lies in the fact that from the standpoint of social preparedness, China is a great deal ahead of India in being able to make use of market economy. While pre-reform China was deeply skeptical of markets, it was not skeptical of basic education and widely shared health care. When China turned to marketization in 1979, it already had a highly literate people, especially the young, with good schooling facilities across the bulk of the country. In this respect, China was not very far from the basic educational situation in South Korea or Taiwan, where too an educated population had played a major role in seizing the economic opportunities offered by a supportive market system. In contrast, India had a half-illiterate adult population when it turned to marketization in 1991, and the situation is not much improved today.”

The health conditions in China were also much better than in India because of the social commitment of the pre-reform regime to health care as well as education. Oddly enough, that commitment, which while totally unrelated to its helpful role in market-oriented economic growth, created social opportunities that could be brought into dynamic use after country moved towards marketization. The social backwardness of India, with its elitist concentration on higher education and massive negligence of school education, and its substantial neglect of basic health care, left the country poorly prepared for a widely shared economic expansion.”

Universal availability of education and health care, are two issues that Sen repeatedly emphasizes as being of central concern to poverty eradication. It is not globalization or deregulation that lie at the root of Indian failure to make any dent in eradication of poverty. It is the complete lethargy of the Indian elite to social preparedness of the country, by neglect of education and health care that is the true culprit. It is not the evil multinational, lowering of tariffs or economic deregulation that is responsible for Indian ills. It is the apathy of Indians to Indians themselves that needs to be overcome.

The elitist apathy to the cause of universal education was forcefully driven home to me by a chance encounter with a newspaper vendor. I was on a visit to the Indian Institute of Technology, Khargapur, hoping to undertake a Ph.D. The institute was set up in the early days of independence with a hope that it would act as a catalyst of growth for the neighborhood as well as the country at large. Lush green, well spread out campus was a treat for my eyes, used as they were to the concrete jungle of Mumbai. Well-stocked library with an annual budget of millions of rupees is the envy of other educational institutes in the country. Keeping pace with the times was the availability of the internet facilities to one and all. Fast and efficient courier services to the land of opportunity- the United States of America; were available in all corners.

As I was taking a morning stroll, I came across a boy of about eight, standing with a forlorn expression-clutching bundle of crumpled newspapers. With plenty of time on hand, unlike in Mumbai, I struck a conversation with the boy. He came from the land beyond – outside the perimeter of the institute campus and was helping his parents eke out a miserly living by selling newspapers. Of schooling, he had no clue. Used as we all are in India, to the sight of children roaming on the street, the sight of this boy in the middle of a campus highly subsidized by taxpayers’ money; was particularly incongruous. How come the Government, which had money to train engineers, most of whom would be headed for the West, no sooner graduation was over; had no money to make sure that this child had a decent chance to acquire some education?

This is a question that has come to haunt many. Faced with such awkward questions, the elite has now taken to raise the fees of the institutes of higher learning in the name market orientation; so that the charge of squandering taxpayers’ money could be diluted. In the process, it is only making sure that the doors of such institutes are closed to the poorer sections forever. As it is, extra years of education are a burden on those who come from economically weaker strata. Time that could be spent to acquire money needed here and now has to spent in search of the proverbial gold pot at the end of the rainbow. On top of

that one is now expected to pour in much larger sums of money for this already difficult task, than was ever needed. If this continues unabated, the day is not far off when only the well off sections of the society will be represented in the Indian universities with poorer sections being pushed beyond its borders forever. The only time they would set a foot inside the campus would be to either sell the newspaper or to steal.

Raising the fees in institutes of higher learning is a cure far worse than the disease. Purely market driven education, at any level, would be a nightmare in a country like India. Some amount of subsidy is inevitable. What is vital is that this subsidy is well used. This can be done by making sure that all students who wish to acquire education at the University level have to compulsorily devote one year of their life to spreading the cause of education. If Americans could make it compulsory for its youth to fight in the jungles of Vietnam, why can the Indian government not enroll its youth in its fight to eradicate illiteracy? Social preparedness is ultimately the responsibility of the society and not the government alone.

We can now turn to the fourth freedom that Sen considers as being absolutely essential for Development – the Transparency Guarantees.

“In this sense, the society operates on some basic presumption of trust. *Transparency guarantees* deal with the need for openness that people can expect; the freedom to deal with the need for openness that people can expect: the freedom to deal with one another under guarantees of disclosure and lucidity. When that trust is seriously violated, the lives of many people—both direct parties and third parties—may be adversely affected by the lack of openness. Transparency guarantees (including the right to disclosure) can thus be an important category of instrumental freedom. These guarantees have a clear instrumental role in preventing corruption, financial irresponsibility and underhand dealings.”

The relevance of Transparency guarantees in preventing corruption, financial irresponsibility and underhand dealings is easy to appreciate. Uses of openness are not limited to preventing negative things from happening. Innovative use of Openness can be made to build up a positive consensus. The case of Taiwan is instructive and bears some understanding.

In the civil war that raged in China, Communist forces led by Mao emerged victorious on the mainland. The Kumintang forces led by Chiang Kai-Shek had to retire to Taiwan to lick their wounds and entertain illusions of one day retaking the mainland. In 1949, the hopes of once again recovering the mainland were indeed quite remote. This was evident to one and all. The biggest challenge that the rulers of Taiwan faced was to build a state that would not only stand on its feet but also withstand the egalitarian lure of the communist rule on the mainland. The challenge was daunting for in 1951, the GNP per capita of Taiwan was a mere \$ 145. Rapid economic growth was vital but if it widened the gap between the rich and the poor – the communist agents of the mainland China would have found it all too easy to fan dissidence and bring down the last outpost of the Kumintang forces.

The strategy adopted by Taiwan was as novel as it was unique. It built an outward looking economic powerhouse based on farmers' cooperatives, small and medium sized business firms. At the same time, it took care to publicize the fact that The top twenty percent of the population claimed and cornered 15 times the income of the bottom twenty percent. This ratio, called the Gini's Index was then publicly monitored on a periodic basis. The transparent manner of monitoring the gap between the rich and the poor paid rich dividends. Public pressure even under the totalitarian rule was strong enough to make sure that the gap became narrower as the time went by. By 1991, the GNP of Taiwan had skyrocketed from \$ 145 per head to a staggering \$ 8,800. Even as this economic miracle was attained, the Gini's Index had fallen from 15 to a mere 4. With this Taiwan had achieved the status not only of one of the richest nations in Asia but also one that had the most equitable distribution of income.

Socialist rulers of India have seen no need to follow this illustrious example preferring rhetoric over action. The process of economic reforms was initiated in 1991. It is only towards the end of the decade that it became known that the reforms had failed to dent poverty. The credit for bringing this uncomfortable fact to notice went to a World Bank report than any public monitoring mechanism of the Government of India. So much for openness in the world's biggest democracy.

Withholding information under the obnoxious Official Secrets Act or bureaucratic lethargy is the hallmark of government institutions in India. Even the British would have fought shy of using this Act to the use it has been put to by officials of independent India. With a straight face, the Indian elite does not tire of proclaiming from every housetop that India is the biggest democracy in the world even as it denies right to elementary information to its citizens. Construction of a dam is started without telling which people are going to be affected by submergence and exactly where they are going to be resettled –the information is considered worthy of being hidden under the Officials Secrets Act.

Even more bizarre is the manner in which even the information that was once in the public domain gets blocked by officialdom with passage of time. During my research for this book, I could get the once most secret records of the British Cabinet for the period 1945-48. All within a short time by use of Internet and e mails. When I tried to get information about Custom Duties prevalent in India during 1947 from Reserve Bank of India, I came across a wall. I was told that I needed to go to the Archives Office in Pune and look through the records to find out exactly which file contained the information. Once I located which file I needed, I was required to fill up a form which would be sent by the Archives office to the concerned Ministry. Some silly official in that Ministry would decide if I, a free citizen of a free country, was fit enough to know the import duty structure that existed in 1947. I just gave up in disgust. So much for the Transparency guarantees in a nation that has been independent for over half a century. It is difficult to not to conclude that the record of the biggest democracy in the world has a very poor record on this count.

With this rather sad conclusion, let us now move to the last part of the Freedom that Sen considers necessary for Development – Protective security. Once again Sen is lucid in his elaboration:

“Finally, no matter how well an economic system operates, some people can typically on the verge of vulnerability and can actually succumb to great deprivation as a result of material changes that adversely affect their lives. *Protective security* is needed to provide a social safety net for preventing the affected population from being reduced to abject misery, and in some cases even starvation and death. The domain of protective security includes fixed institutional arrangements such as an employment benefits and statutory income supplements to the indigent as well as ad hoc arrangements such as famine relief or emergency public employment to generate income for destitutes.”

If there is one redeeming feature of Indian polity - it is the consensus that prevails on the necessity of state intervention to prevent famine deaths. India has seen nothing comparable to the 30 million famine deaths that occurred in China during the dark days of the *Great Leap* under Mao. As a severe famine looms large on the country in the summer of 2000, most ardent supporters of free market dare not utter a whimper of protest against the proposed state action to provide relief. For the record, at the risk of repetition, it worth recalling that under British rule, successive Viceroy had refused to intervene to provide relief to the famine affected population on grounds of obstructing the free play of market forces resulting in large-scale deaths.

The Indian consensus does not extend beyond preventing famine deaths as widespread undernourishment of children show. The only real Protective security that the Indian state offers to its people in normal times is the availability of food grains at subsidized rates under the Public Distribution Scheme (PDS). For all its faults, an urban bias, bad quality, non-existent service, diversion of material to market; the PDS does provide substantial relief to the poor in times of needs.

The PDS in India is under a two-fold attack. Its scope is sought to be curbed by elegant arguments propagating the cause of means testing. People who can afford to pay should be deprived of the PDS coverage, goes the argument. Sen points out the difficulties inherent in ensuring that means be effectively tested with acceptable accuracy without leading to other, adverse effects – anywhere in the world. A fact that is all too well known to any one familiar with the ground realities in India. As is his wont, Sen brings in a different dimension to the debate. He points out the a far more efficient way of weeding out those who do not need economic subsidies is to focus on the self respect of the person. A rich person, is unlikely to use PDS facilities if he has to stand in a line and rub his shoulders with the poor. This is something he would have to do if the PDS facilities have to be availed in person and not nominees.

The other attack on PDS is under the guise of curbing fiscal deficits subsidies on PDS are sought to be reduced by raising the prices of food grains till the differential in PDS prices and the open market prices is minimised. A step that would defeat the very purpose of having a PDS in place in the first place. Indeed, Sen appears completely unimpressed by

Anti-deficit radicalism while having sympathy for genuine financial conservatism. He however cautions that:

“The need for financial conservatism-important as it is-fits into this diverse and broad picture, and can not stand on its own-in solitary isolation-as *the* commitment of the government or of the central bank. The need for scrutiny and comparative assessment of alternative fields of public expenditure is altogether crucial.”

Thus if Protective Security is an essential ingredient of Development and PDS is about the only Protective Security that the Indian state offers to its citizens – any reduction in its scope or tempering with the subsidies offered- has to be critically examined. It can not be glibly explained away as an essential exercise to control fiscal deficit. Protective Security is an end in itself-fiscal deficit is not.

With this we come to an end to the Freedoms that according Sen individuals need to progress on the path to development. The overarching freedom to lead a life that we have reason to value. It is implicit in Sen’s view of Development that different people from different cultures can share many common values and to agree on some common commitments. In other words, people would not use their freedom to encroach on the rights of others or their way of life. He is strong in his condemnation of such Talibanic practices as a violent attack on a certain way of life or mode of dress in the name of some mythical cultural values and quotes Rabindranath Tagore, the great Bengali poet:

“Whatever we understand and enjoy in human products instantly becomes ours, whatever they might have their origin. I am proud of my humanity when I can acknowledge the poets and artists of other countries as my own. Let me feel with unalloyed gladness that all the great glories of man are unique.”

Sen’s definition of Development as Freedom is certainly a unique contribution to the debate on development. One that clears many a cobweb and provides instructive insights to policy makers all over the world. Yet, I can not escape the feeling that he has skirted an issue of some importance. It is right and proper to define development as a process enhancing our freedom to lead the kind of life we have reason to value. It is also not unreasonable to assume that humanity as a whole has many things in common and truly free people would not seek to encroach on others but some hard facts have to be faced. At the same time, it is also not unreasonable to assume that many people may use the freedom that they may acquire to lead a type of life that is not illegal but goes against the acceptable norms of behavior. That Sen seeks to skirt this issue is understandable. For the issue is far too controversial. What is acceptable – who defines this and for whom – who polices the so-called unacceptable behavior. It is clearly unacceptable to leave this in the hands of the government or the cultural police. Nevertheless, it is futile to deny that certain limits have to be evolved that define the outer limits of freedom that an individual may enjoy without setting back development.

Who but the Individual can herself set such limits? Let us now turn to Development As Dhamma to understand just how such limits can be set by the Individual in real life.

Development As Dhamma

What I am about to write is completely based on my understanding, necessarily limited, of the teachings of Siddharth Gautam –The Buddha. I know of no other way of resolving the dilemma that we face at this point in time of our journey.

So far we have traversed through time taking a dispassionate look at various events in the history stretching over various continents with a particular reference to those in the Indian sub-continent. The journey has hopefully provided us an antidote to the poisonous state of relation that bedevil the ties between India and Pakistan. The antidote is in the form of the legacy of their last common sovereign- Bahadur Shah Zafar, who was illegally deposed by the British. It is only, when India and Pakistan stop looking at each other through blood shot eyes that they will come to realize the fortune left behind by Shah Alam and Bahadur Shah Zafar – a fortune that is bigger than the GNP of the three richest countries in the world, a fortune that has not even been claimed as their own by them. And how could they – for they have been too busy fighting each other, ignoring the simple geographical fact that whether they like it or not, they are fated to live together as neighbours.

An amicable relation with Pakistan, though necessary can not be the end point of this journey of discovery but rather the starting point of a larger voyage. Just what is development – can a mere growth in GNP be considered as development or does development constitute of something far bigger. Indeed, even a cursory look at the state of the world lays bare the fact that to consider growth in GNP – necessary as it is; can not constitute development.

It is the noted economist Amartya Sen, who has provided a more fuller meaning of development. He has rightly defined Development as Freedom to lead the life; we have reason to value. A freedom that an individual can have only when she can enjoy political freedom, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective security.

Any freedom can not be limitless. Once we have freedom to lead the life, we have reason to value; we would need some reference points. A broad parameter that would guide an individual in choosing the kind of life we should value. To merely say that different people from different cultures share many common values and can agree on some common commitments and thereby leave it for the people to infer that such shared values can be the reference points for individuals to choose the kind of life they should lead is not very helpful in day to day to life.

Not only is this unhelpful but also downright dangerous. For it leaves a vacuum and we all know nature abhors vacuum. It is in this empty space that all the defenders of faith, tradition and culture step in to drive the people in a direction that suits them but takes the people they lead further and further away from freedom and therefore development. To criticize such guardians of public morality alone and not offer concrete alternatives, as Sen does is to indulge in escapism.

It is the individual and the individual who alone should have the freedom to choose the kind of life she has reason to value. The fact that this choice will be severely curtailed in real life unless the Individual has a reference point, a guide to day to day actions in life has to be accepted. The consequences of not making such a reference point available have to be recognized and not merely wished away to avoid controversy.

Perhaps, the very notion that making such a guide available to people will be necessarily controversial has to be examined. The moment one say that a reference point to guide day to day actions of the individuals has to be evolved, one would jump to the conclusion that the ground is being prepared to propagate one religion or the other. This is where the controversy would begin. For granted that all religions have good things to teach, the fact remains that no religion is universally acceptable to all. Further more, every religion has self-appointed middlemen, who have arrogated to themselves the right to interpret the true teaching of the saints for the benefit of the ignorant. Thus, to use any particular religion to evolve a reference point to guide the individuals to choose the kind of life they have reason to value, suffers from two serious limitations, namely:

- Lack of universality
- Presence of middlemen, who would eventually diminish the freedom of individuals to make choice of their own.

If no religion can be used as a basis for evolving a reference point, then the next choice could be the right Culture. This would be even more difficult. In the history of humankind, civilizations have evolved in different parts of the world. Separated by geography and the peculiar accidents in their evolution, each region of the world has developed its own unique culture with its own set of positive and negative features. People being what they are, they are passionately attached to their own unique culture unmindful of its warts. Nor is this unreasonable. Since the dawn of civilization, human beings have always attempted to better their lot. Every discovery, every invention, from times immemorial have been a result of this human endeavor. Thus to be passionately attached to the endeavors of their forefathers is but natural.

This is the reason why an Englishman's claim that the British culture is superior is bound to be contested by the French. German or Japanese claims to possess a superior culture would instantly evoke painful memories of the Second World War. Perhaps the Bharatiya culture is superior to all. Once again, we need to examine the claim critically and not be swayed by emotions.

During the course of history, the Western world started seeing human beings as being at the Center of universe, thus creating disharmony in natural scheme of things. At the same time partial understanding of scientific discoveries led them to treat the universe as a machine. This worldview of considering the Man as the center of a machine-like universe, provided philosophical base for unleashing unprecedented forces of exploitation in the name of progress. If the universe was a machine, nature could not be seen as something with which Humans have an organic relationship. It was only an object to be exploited for the benefit of the central entity - The Man. With minor variations of the

same philosophy, the exploitation of the black and brown human beings as the objects for the benefit of the subject - the White Man could be justified. No wonder that for centuries, the colonial exploitation did not bother the conscience of otherwise well meaning people in the West.

Even a philosopher like Karl Marx was not free from this dogma, prevalent in the West, of treating the man as the center of universe. Even as he fought against exploitation of Man, he never raised a voice against exploitation of nature. Thus environmental damages noticed in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Communism, were not an aberration but indeed built up into Marxist philosophy.

It is this culture, synonymous with the West today, which has created tremendous ecological imbalance that is so visible in the world today. This imbalance can not be corrected we develop a structure which will promote a strong and sustainable relationship between an individual and her social and environmental surroundings.

Such a structure that we so desperately seek today is said to have been evolved by the ancient Hindu sages, who had studied the inter-relationship between all forms of creation - animate or otherwise. This led them to proclaim in Vedas and Upanishads that there is unity and harmony in the entire universe - a basic oneness prevails in the entire creation. This beautiful and seemingly simple statement has profound implications for concept of development. It implies a Human Being is as much a part of universe as any other form of creation. Thus her welfare is interlinked with the welfare of the whole universe. This concept of inter-linked welfare establishes the intellectual rationale for an exploitation free, harmonious socio-economic order. For if the universe is one, development of one Human Being at the cost of the other or at the cost of nature is no development at all.

It is evident that in the world racked by ecological disasters and ringing with cries for sustainable development, the Bharatiya culture has an appeal that would transcend the national and religious identities.

There is however one big problem with the idyllic view expressed above. If the Bharatiya view really advocated the oneness of the universe, how come the Hindu society came to be divided into four water tight compartments of castes, which provided no freedom to the individuals in the name of preserving social order. Pitiably indeed was the plight of those who found themselves outside the pale of the caste system. They had to suffer inhuman indignities for over two thousand years. These people, known as the Untouchables in the former times would be quick to dismiss this grand vision of the Bharatiya culture as a historical myth. And who can say that they are wrong in doing so.

Nor is the Bharatiya culture alone in suffering from such flaws. Such warts would show up in any critical examination of any culture in the world. Whether, it is the so-called Western Culture, the Bharatiya culture or the Confucian culture of the Chinese.

We are thus back to square one. Neither religion nor culture can be propagated to develop a guide for individual's choice to lead the life she has reason to value without inviting severe controversy. No wonder, Sen has left the issue alone.

It is not Religion or Culture that can be used to evolve a universal reference point for individuals to use their freedom. This much is clear. However, fortunately we need not despair. For, we have Dhamma to help us. Now pray what is Dhamma?

Let us simply say that Dhamma aids an individual to attain enlightenment and has just three components :

- Shila – The Moral code

The moral code involves Speaking the truth, Refraining from act of theft, violence and adulterous sex and not being vain about oneself .

Some clarifications may be in order. This code does not call for absolute non violence of the variety preached by Gandhiji. It clearly lays down that to watch passively from the sidelines, while the forces of oppression indulge in aggression is itself a violent act. To take up arms in some situation, where no other remedy is possible is not only necessary but also the duty of some one who believes in Dhamma. Similarly prohibition on adulterous sex is not to be confused with sexual abstinence, once again a confusion advocated by Gandhiji. Moreover, it is worth keeping in mind that adulterous sex is usually but not necessarily linked to the institute of marriage.

- Samadhi or concentration of mind on the task at hand
- Pragya or Wisdom

Thus defined Dhamma becomes universally applicable, being in conflict with no religion or culture of the world. It is therefore capable of providing an individual the reference point to choose the kind of life she has reason to value. A reference point that would be beyond controversy.

Dhamma is what guided the actions of Siddarth Guatam, once he became the Buddha and lay behind his life long efforts to improve the lot of the human kind. But how does an individual attain enlightenment? How could some one like Siddarth Guatam who lived more than two thousand and five hundred years ago be of help to now? If he did indeed attain enlightenment, it was perhaps because of the fact that he was an extraordinary person. It is but natural that such questions would arise in one's mind.

We are beholden to Siddarth Guatam, not because he himself attained enlightenment but because he left behind a science which can help anyone attain enlightenment. The science of Ana-pan & Vipassana. This science was banished from Bharat two thousand years ago but fortunately managed to survive in the jungles of Mynamar. Today, if this science has come back to Bharat, we have to remain beholden to Shri Goyankaji, who has been instrumental in setting up several institutes in various parts of the world, where for no monetary consideration, the path of Dhamma is taught to people from all walks of life, from all faiths and all classes of the society.

One of the institutes is in Igatpuri, about 100 kms north of Mumbai. Set up in an idyllic setting with all the conveniences of modern life but none of its irritations, the institute offers several 10 day camps round the year. Participants are charged no money. Their lodging, boarding is free. Food is simple but hygienic. Rules are simple. The participants are required to take two vows for the duration of the camp. The vow of following the Moral Code and the vow of observing complete silence for first nine days. No interaction of any kind with the outside world is allowed. Mobile phones, pagers, lap tops, reading material of any kind is a taboo. For first three days, the meditation of Ana-pan or the process of observing one's own breathing is followed. In the remaining six days, meditation of Vipassana is followed. Vipassana is the science of bridging the gap between the conscious and the sub conscious mind by being aware of the sensations on one's own body and thereby learning true Dhamma. Participants are repeatedly advised not to look for any supernatural experience or out of the world sensation. Time and again they are advised to be sensitive only to the process of what is physically happening on their own body. Nothing more. The schedule followed in the camp is as under:

4.00	Wake Up
4.30-6.30	Meditation
6.30-8.00	Break for Breakfast
8.00-9.00	Group Meditation
9.00-11.00	Meditation
11.00-13.00	Break for Lunch
13.00-14.30	Meditation
14.30-15.30	Group Meditation
15.30-17.00	Meditation
17.00-18.00	Break for light snacks
18.00-19.00	Group Meditation
19.00-21.00	Video Discourse
21.30	Lights Out

At the end of the camp, participants are informed of the cost incurred on their behalf, Rs 676/- at the last count. In case desired, the participants can pay a donation or walk out without paying anything. Donations are accepted only from those who have attended camps in the past. Entire set up of housing, feeding a few hundred people for ten days is a labor of love, from those who have attended at least three or more camps. Participants are advised to attend at least one camp in one year and meditate for at least two hours a day at home on a daily basis to get best results.

Being alive to oneself through Samadhi brings about Pragya or wisdom. This has been the experience of hundreds of thousands of meditators from times immemorial, from all parts of the world. In my own limited way, I have also experienced gain of some Wisdom from the two camps I have attended so far.

It is by this wisdom on the path of Dhamma, can an individual frame for herself a guide to choose to lead the kind of life, she has reason to value. **Dhamma is therefore true development**

Chapter V-4

Emancipation of Women- The Key to Development

Missing Millions

There is a very simple and straight-forward reason for concentrating our attention on the welfare of woman in any discussion on development. The gender bias against the women is so strong that Sen has been forced to conclude that millions of women are simply missing from the population in many parts of the world on account of excess mortality and artificially lower survival rates of women.

In those parts of the world, where bias against the women is much less pronounced, the women generally tend to outnumber men by substantial numbers. For example, in the United States, France and the United Kingdom, the ratio of women to men exceeds 1.05. In general, it has been noticed that about 5% more boys are born than girls but there is much evidence that women are 'hardier' than men and given the same level of care as the male child, survive better. Higher ratio of Women in the West, may therefore not only be a function of the large number of unnatural deaths of men during the war but also the higher life expectancy. It could therefore be misleading to take the 'Western ratio' of 1.05 as a standard.

A more appropriate benchmark would be the female-male ratio that prevails in sub-Saharan region, where it stands at 1.022. This is startling, for the same ratio in many parts of the world is far lower as can be seen from the table below:

Female-Male Ratio

Country	Female-Male ratio
Sub-Saharan region	1.022
Egypt	0.95
Bangladesh	0.94
China	0.94
West Asia	0.94
India	0.93
Pakistan	0.90

Sen and Drèze have concluded based on the above information that about 44 million women are missing in China, 37 million in India. The total number of missing women in all these countries cited above are in excess of 100 million. Now, if as many as these large number of women are missing – in other words have died a death due to reasons otherwise ordained by mother nature; it is something that needs to be taken serious note of. Sen and Drèze have sought to understand the reasons for this very grim phenomenon. Sen has this to say:

“Consider India, where the age-specific mortality rates for females consistently exceeds that for males until the late thirties” – presumably if the female survives till the late thirties, her natural hardiness takes over and helps her live longer than her male counterpart, “While the excess mortality in child bearing age may be partly the result of maternal mortality (deaths during or just after child birth), obviously no such explanation is possible for female disadvantage in survival in infancy and childhood. Despite occasional distressing accounts of female infanticide in India, that phenomenon, even if present, can not do anything to explain the magnitude of extra mortality, nor its age distribution. The main culprit would seem to be the comparative neglect of female health and nutrition, especially- but not exclusively-during childhood. There is indeed considerable direct evidence that female children are neglected in terms of health care, hospitalization and even feeding.”

The neglect of the female health is not a phenomenon that is confined to remote rural areas. It can be seen even in well educated, confident career women, who ought to know better. It is not that these women neglect their girl child and care only about their male child. They know better than to indulge in such medieval practices. What they are guilty of is the neglect of their own nutritional requirements. If the girl child observes her mother neglecting her own health, she too imbibes the same value system and the cycle goes on.

We have so far talked of development as constituting of several freedoms that allow the individual to lead the life she has reason to value. If the very life itself is going to be cut short so tragically, what development can one talk of. The fact of the missing millions of women in the world forces us to look at Emancipation of Women as the key to development

Female Literacy and Population Growth

It is being increasingly realized that societies that do not allow the women to play the role they are capable of, end up seriously affecting their own welfare. It is this recognition that is now reshaping the agenda of the women’s movement today. Not so long ago, these movements focussed on the welfare of the women. Now, the direction of their struggle is slowly shifting in the direction of the active role of the agency of the women.

Women of the new millenium are now being seen as active agents of change; the dynamic promoter of social transformation that can alter the lives of both women and men. Take for instance, the issue of population control – an issue that is so emotive. In India, the fashionable elite casually talk of bringing the population growth under control by castrating the poor. Indeed, this was even tried out in a disastrous experiment during the dark days of Emergency between 1975-77. China, which has had better success in controlling its burgeoning population, has consistently tried out draconian measures. Couples had to marry late (i.e. in their mid twenties) and were limited to one child, and all this was supervised and enforced by officials, and health workers. Public monitoring of the menstruating cycle of women in their childbearing age was one of the many humiliating mechanisms used. Those, who flouted the single child target were punished

with fines, loss of job and withdrawal of social and educational privileges. Blowing up the houses and browbeating the female into abortion have not been uncommon features of the Chinese population control programme.

Quite apart from the terrible assault such policies entail on basic human freedoms, the plain fact is that these policies have resulted in China having a potential catastrophe on its hands sometime around 2025. It is estimated that on account of the Chinese Population Control policies, in particular that of having one child; China will have some 300 million people over the age of Sixty by 2025. In other word, one in every six Chinese will be 'over the hill' – not being in a position to work but needing significant degree of social and economic security. If China does not make provisions for its elderly (and it seems to be at present making none), the human dimensions of this situation would be simply appalling.

It is only now that it is being recognised that the most effective contraceptive is female literacy.

Adult Female Literacy rates and Total Fertility Rates

Figs in %

Country	Adult Female Literacy Rate	Total Fertility Rate
Oman	12	7.2
Yemen Arab Republic	3	7
Afghanistan	8	6.9
Burkina Faso	6	6.5
Sudan	14	6.4
Honduras	58	5.6
Chile	96	2.7
Thailand	88	2.6
Hungary	98	1.8
Singapore	79	1.7
Canada	93	1.7

Thus the overwhelming evidence suggests that when education is available widely to women, average family size drops sharply and the demographic transition set in. This seems very clear from the experiences in different parts of the world. Education allows the women to have far more options (such as a career) than merely being an heir-producing machine for the family. An educated woman is in a far better position to influence the choice of reproduction. It appears that education gives her the much needed confidence to assert her own identity as a human being

It can perhaps be argued that some societies are inherently incapable of allowing the women to play any significant role in so sensitive a matter as a choice in reproductive choice. This does not do justice to the innate decision making capacity of the women. A capacity that education allows to flower. Even in some of the closed societies of the

world, educated women are far more successful in deciding how many children they would like to bear than their less educated counterparts. This is evident from the table below:

Average Number of Children by Mother's Years of Education

Country	No Education	Seven + Years of Education	% Drop in Number of Children
Jordan	9.3	4.9	(47)
Ecuador	7.8	2.7	(65)
Benin	7.4	4.3	(42)
Pakistan	6.5	3.1	(52)
Sudan	6.5	3.4	(48)
Haiti	6.0	2.8	(53)

The table given above clearly proves the fact that the average number of children that a women is prepared to bear drops by almost half once she has a decent education even if the social environment, the society she lives in does not itself change in any manner.

In India, the success of Kerala in curbing population growth, where female literacy is high and the failure of states like Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Utter Pradesh, where female literacy is abysmally low is all too well known to bear repetition. What is perhaps not well known is the fact that Kerala's voluntary population control measures have had better success than even the coercive methods adopted in China. Between 1979, the year when one child policy was adopted in China and 1991; the Chinese fertility rate dropped from 2.8 to 2.0. During the same period, the fertility rate dropped from 3.0 to 1.8 in Kerala.

Empowering Role of Education

The role of female education in controlling the population growth is just one of the many beneficial aspects of such an education. It has been noticed that there is a close relationship between female literacy and child survival in many countries of the world. Sen has this to say on the subject:

“Countries with basic gender inequality – India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, China, Iran, those in West Asia, those in North Africa and others-often tend to have higher female mortality of infants and children, in contrast with the situation in Europe or America or sub-Saharan Africa, where female children typically have a substantial survival advantage. In India...heavy disadvantage persists for women in regions where inequality is particularly pronounced, including most states of northern India.”

The resulting decline in the female-male ratio has far reaching consequences for social peace. Sen has bemoaned the fact that this aspect has not received the attention it deserves. He adds:

“It appears that there is a very strong – statistically very significant- relation between the female-male ratio in the population and scarcity of violent crime. Indeed, the inverse connection between the murder rates and the female-male ratio has been observed by researchers.”

It is education that provides an opportunity of economic participation to the women. The impact of economically active women goes far as the remarkable success of the Grammeen bank in Bangladesh demonstrates. The bank makes a special effort to provide credit to women borrowers. It is not an accident that this bank, which has a very high proportion of women amongst its borrowers has a repayment rate in the region of 98%.

No women, whether working outside or within the home has the luxury of not working for long hours. When a woman works solely in the house, her work is not remunerated and often ignored in the accounting of the respective contribution of man and woman in the household. Once educated, the woman has a greater chance of working ‘outside’. Once, she earns money; her contribution to the family prosperity becomes more visible and she comes to acquire greater voice in decision making process. Besides, outside employment has useful educational effects in terms of exposure to the world outside the household, making the agency of women more effective.

Liberating Role of Sports

Sometime in early seventies, I recall listening to the running commentary – there were no TVs in those days in most parts of India, of the World Cup Hockey Finals being played between India and Holland at Amsterdam. It was late in the night in India. My father and I were glued to the transistor. Through the crackling sound coming through to our ears, the boisterous sound of the Dutch crowd screaming encouragement to their team was most noticeable. The whole stadium seemed to be reverberating with just one sound “Holland, Holland, Holland.”, punctuated by the sound of the ball hitting the boards as the crack Indian outfit went on slamming one goal after another. At one stage, it seemed the curtains for the Dutch for they were trailing, if I remember right, by a huge margin of 0-4. Buoyed by what we, as well as millions of others listening to the progress of the match, thought was an unassailable lead, my father decided it was time I went to bed. After all, I was barely thirteen then and had a school to attend early in the morning.

The first thoughts that stuck to mind, when I got up the next day were to savour the sweet smell of victory, hoping to see photos of the Indians holding aloft the World Cup for all to see. Alas, this was not to be. My downcast father told me that spurred on by the home crowd, the Dutch had somehow managed to level the score and then went on to win the match in the penalty shoot out. It was an incredible victory. The Indians did manage to lift the World Cup, two years later. Then a drought began. More than quarter of century has gone by without India being anywhere near the final victory podium.

On my part, I had no more interest in hockey or in any other sports in any real sense of the word. Though, I did reserve the right to be an arm chair critic and shed tears, when in all Olympics, our huge squad returned empty handed.

Years went by. I took up a job, married and had two lovely daughters. One day, I was rather startled to hear my daughters tell me that they would like to join a hockey camp being conducted in their school. Three years ago, when I first saw them play, they were more like a bunch of kittens fighting over the ball. Undeterred by rains or demands of studies, they kept on and practiced daily. Slowly it became clear that about 10-15 girls (in a school of some 1000 students) were really passionate about playing hockey. This craze for playing hockey is shared by about 50-60 other girls in the city of Mumbai.

This nucleus of some 70-75 girls is keeping alive this otherwise dying sport at least in Mumbai. Those who bemoan that this nation of close to a billion people wins no medals in the Olympics would do well to note the ground reality that less than 100 girls play what is billed as our national sports in a city like Mumbai.

In the last three years, these girls have clashed with each other in over 100 matches. Winning some, losing others. What has been most remarkable has been the spirit of 'do or die' that seems to pervade every match that they play. Their skills may not be world class – not yet anyway but their enthusiasm certainly is. Some of their matches have generated more excitement than the rigged matches that our overpaid and under performing cricket stars play.

In one particularly exciting match, one team took lead early on in the match. Now a ferocious contest began to draw level or retain lead. At the end of the first half, the score remained 0-1. Mid way into the second half, few hundred spectators who were watching the match, erupted into applause, as the scores were leveled by a crackling shot from the top of the D off a penalty corner. Now both teams put their heart and soul into the match. The ball traveled from one end to the other but the defense stood firm. With the full time, producing a tie, the match went into extra time. Excited as I was as a spectator, as a father I became concerned with the extra effort that the match was requiring of each player. The scores remained level and now the penalty shoot out began. A hush fell over the ground as the goalkeeper took guard and one player after the other went to take a crack at the goal. Few incredible moments later, the penalty shoot out left both the teams tied at 3-3. By this time, the shadows were lengthening over the ground. The sun had slipped below the horizon, unable apparently to bear the tension. Sudden death began. A hit, a miss and the match was finally over. The winners simply fell on the ground, while the losers were inconsolable. I had finally seen live, what I had missed hearing over the transistor as a youngster. Winner or loser is a strange way of describing any of the teams. There were no losers – only winners for winning is all about putting in our best, something that was visible in ample measure from both the teams.

It is not as if this was the only exciting match, there were many more. Sometimes, they even got an opportunity to travel outside Mumbai to play matches. For months after they returned from their outing, my daughters would come to me to share some hitherto unshared experience of their outing. Each match, each outing has been an educating and liberating experience for them. Something that they would have never learnt in the classrooms alone.

Any one would find it impossible to imagine that any of these girls who have gone through the baptism by fire on many an occasions, held their nerves in a situations which many would have run away from, unleashed thunderbolts from their sticks – would ever bow down meekly to any injustice merely on account of their being a Woman.

The liberating influence of sports was best described by my brother in law, who once sat next to me watch these girls play. As his niece, not yet a teenager confidently strove forward and unleashed a scorching shot, he exclaimed, “Her future husband better watch out”. Yes! All those who think they can dominate the Women, merely because they are Men, better watch out, when dealing with an educated woman. More so some one who has also experienced the liberating influence of sports.

Influence of Technology on the Lives of Women

If the Women are the ‘hardier’ species, if they can undertake any mental task as well as Men, how is it that they have come to be so deprived. It can be argued that if Men have marched ahead and left the Women behind, it is because of the fact that Men are inherently superior to Women.

This fallacious argument has been torn apart by the noted thinker Alvin Toffler, who has given a cogent reasons for the deprivations faced by Women. Early on the pre-historic days, men and women must have hunted together. However, during the periods of her confinement for pregnancy, Women had to stay behind, while Men had to go out and find food on their own. The handicaps faced by women became particularly acute with the evolution of the market mechanism. The goods produced by men could be exchanged in the markets for things valued by families. On the other hand, the goods produced by Women were non-tradable in the markets and therefore her work came to be considered as being of lower value. What is the goods that Women produced. At basic level - children. The Woman was (& is) involved not only in the biological production of children but for long years thereafter has to give her considerable time to make sure that they become equipped to acquire skills to produce goods for the market. Take for instance, toilet habits. Unless the Woman invests considerable energy and time in teaching her children basic toilet habits very early on in the years, the child would not even be allowed entry into the market place. It is not that the goods produced by Women were of lower value but merely that they did not command an external value or could be traded in the market.

If evolution of market was the first step in subjecting Women to an unnatural handicap, the second step was the process of industrialization that began in the eighteenth century. With industrialization, began the era of nuclear families. In a small unit of husband, wife and children; it became even more important for Women to stay at home and look after the children, while the Men took on new trades, learnt new skills and became more adapt at the new ways of doing things. With this men ordained division of labour, that had nothing to do with the relative skills of Men and Women, Men moved into the future, while the women remained in the past.

Toffler has lucidly explained the consequences of such a division of labour:

“The division produced a split in personality and inner life. The public or collective nature of factory and office, the need for coordination and integration, brought with it an emphasis on objective analysis and objective relationships. Men prepared from boyhood for their role in the shop, where they would move in a world of interdependencies, were encouraged to become ‘objective’. Women, prepared from birth for the tasks of reproduction, child-rearing, and the household drudgery, performed to a considerable degree in social isolation, were taught to be ‘subjective’- and were frequently regarded as incapable of the kind of rational, analytic thought that supposedly went with objectivity.”

Time and distance were the two major obstacles to participation of Women in the external world. In the most productive part of the Women’s life i.e. between the age of twenty to forty, the time available for Women to pursue economic activities in the external world has traditionally been far too limited on account of man-ordained division of labor compounded by technological constraints. Similarly, distance between the home and the office or the factory served to further limit the already limited time available for being involved in external economic activities.

We are now fast entering into an era where technology is overcoming the traditional barriers of time and distance. In the networked world that is already upon us, mobile phones, lap tops and communication revolution, time and distance are no longer the real limitations in most external economic activities. If there is one thing that is preventing the full potentialities offered by technological revolution, it is the mind set of most people- mostly men of course. With a PC and a telephone line, a worker – male or female can virtually work from anywhere, needing perhaps to come to office once in a way, not for work but to generally gossip, loiter around and have some a human interaction.

Technological growth in the years to come will therefore liberate the Women from the age-old handicaps of time and distance imposed upon her in the years of child rearing. An entire new world is opening up right in front of our eyes. The direction of this new world is not predetermined, it is for us to drive. The sooner we overcome our traditional gender based prejudices and biases, the lesser energy we will dissipate in fighting the inevitable. The rise of the New Women is inevitable. Technology has ensured this for sure. It is not men alone but Women too, reared in the Men-centric world, who are going to be very uncomfortable with this new Women.

One who will not seek to base her self worth on what men think of her. One who will not submerge her entire identity in child rearing and holding her family together. One who will seek to form her own identity unhindered by past baggage. One who will revel in the unprecedented freedom that the technology would offer her. Something completely unknown to the generation of her mother. Many a thing that she would do would leave most of us shocked but she would remain unmoved by our reaction.

This is not to live in the make-believe world of thinking that all Women; all over the World will be so emancipated. Certainly many women will continue to suffer debilitating handicaps but many would not. The well educated sportswomen would certainly not. For them, unrestrained freedom is on the threshold. To fight it is to fight a losing battle.

Technological progress can not be undone. To try and impose some kind of Talibanic code of dress or behavior on the Women will soon be found to be impractical, nor is it desirable in the first place.

This is where Dhamma can help. To act as a guide—a reference point to choose the kind of life she has reason to value. A guide that will be evolved by her own individual Will and not imposed by an external agency.

Sexual Freedom and Emancipation of Women

One of the most disturbing things is the casual manner in which the emancipation of the women in the West is dismissed in India as being equivalent to permissive sexual practices. Defenders of the so called Indian culture do not fight shy of proclaiming that we do not need the western type of emancipation of women; as it is incompatible with our traditions. We will take on this argument of sexual freedom being incompatible with the so called Indian tradition in a moment.

Before we do so, we must understand the sheer absurdity of ignoring the very real progress made by the West in its treatment of Women. For a start, it is in the developing world that millions of women are simply missing, 37 million of being them in India. With such criminal large scale neglect of welfare of the women, with what face we can ignore the example of those countries, where the women are far more equal to men than in India.

It is also useless to shy away from the fact that an emancipated woman will enjoy her sexual freedom that may be shocking to people of other generation. Recently, I met an old German colleague of mine. This gentleman, over sixty came from a background of a joint family in Germany. In his younger days, as he said, only gangsters wore earrings and prostitutes had tattoos on their bodies. For a boy and a girl to live together without marriage was to invite eternal damnation.

It was this gentleman sitting next to his lovely daughter, told us about the boyfriend who was going to join his daughter that night, while having a glass of beer with us. With some amusement, he also told about the earring which his other daughter had asked for to be given as a gift to her boy friend. Even as he said this with a smile, the pain in his eyes was all too evident. His children were leading a life, he had never imagined as being respectable, in his young days. I am sure the defenders of Indian culture will feel vindicated. 'If this is what emancipation does to women, we do not want any of it.' would be their refrain. To condemn emancipation of women on grounds of deviating from male ordained traditions is the favorite past time of men (& women) belonging to another era. In this case, before anyone moves to condemn these young ladies, they better learn some more facts about them. It is then that they will realize how hollow their stand is.

The young lady sitting in our house was a doctor in the German army, who had completed a Commando training recently. She was on a visit to India, as she wanted to specialize in gynecology and wanted more training in the process of childbirth. Her other sister is in the Infantry wing of the German army. In Germany, it is not easy to get into army. Both of them are very valued respectable patriotic citizens of their country. In any case how many of our defenders of faith would even try to enter the armed forces is a moot question and even if they do, how many of them would survive a commando training is a question that is best left unanswered.

It is time, we faced the issue of Bharatiya traditions squarely. Ramayan and Mahabharata are the two great Bharatiya epics. Let us first take a look at Ramayan. For, Sita, the heroine of Ramayan is held up as an example of a Bharatiya woman.

It was Sita, who ungrudgingly bore all the difficulties for the sake of her husband – Ram. When her husband had to leave the palace at the bidding of his father, she chose to follow him to the jungle. In the jungle, she was kidnapped by Ravan and was rescued by Ram after a great battle. Ram would not see her unless she had somehow publicly proved that she was ‘pure’. This was not the end of her travails. She came to be abandoned by Ram even as she was pregnant on account of some rumor mongering. Years later, when she came face to face with her husband, she was once again asked to prove her ‘purity’. This time, the enraged Sita preferred to have the earth swallow her than suffer the indignity of proving her innocence.

Today’s feminist may dismiss Sita as being slavishly loyal to her unjust husband but that is to deny her the freedom to chose the kind of life she had reason to value. She was simply so much in love with her husband that she came to accept every indignity heaped on her. In the end, when she found that the indignities were beyond her tolerance, she preferred to have the earth swallow her rather than have a chance to once again co-habit with her husband. If she were slavishly loyal, she would not have chosen the end she did. She was a truly emancipated woman, who led the life she wanted to.

The story of Mahabharata began with pre-marriage affair of Satyawati, the daughter of a fisherman, who was to later marry into a princely family. In her old age, Satyawati was faced with the pain of seeing her son die without leaving an heir. Satyawati forced her unwilling widowed daughters-in-law to have sex with her illegitimate son in order to beget an heir. The sons of this union were to be the fathers of the cousins who ultimately fought the Great War. Kunti, the daughter-in-law of Satyawati was to have sexual relations with four men (apart from her husband), three of them with the consent of her husband in order to have an heir. Her first affair that took place before her marriage was to remain largely unknown.

It was Draupadi, the daughter in law of Kunti, who was the real heroine of Mahabharata. Draupadi was a truly extraordinary woman. Her marriage with five brothers has no parallel. The genesis of this extraordinary marriage was her desire to have so many qualities in her husband that could not be had in one, forcing the Lord Shiva to grant her the boon of getting married to five men, who together had all the qualities she desired. It

is this sexual freedom that she sought and obtained – of having sexual relations with five different men, that remains unprecedented. Like Sita, she shared all the misfortunes of her husbands but unlike Sita, she was far more assertive. It was she who would not allow her husbands to forget her public disrobing forcing them to fight the great war with their own cousins.

Sita, Satyawati, Kunti, Draupadi were all emancipated women. All of them are revered. But it is Sita, who is the favorite of the defenders of the faith, for it she who is much more amenable to being conveniently slotted in the male ideal of women – her last act of rebellion notwithstanding. The sexual freedom enjoyed by Satyawati and Kunti are glossed over. It is Draupadi who is the most inconvenient. The manner in which she reveled in all her freedom (including sexual) is too glaringly visible to be glossed over. The Indian male has therefore responded in a manner that borders on the bizarre. While the name Sita is very common in India but no one names his daughter, Draupadi, despite being considered as worthy of respect as Sita

There are enough and more tales of sexual freedom in the history of ancient Bharat that would make today's defenders of culture squirm in discomfort. Suffice to say, it is only the Victorian prudish norms of morality that equate sexual freedom as perversion. In ancient Bharat sexual freedom does not seem to have been necessarily incompatible with Dhamma. Adulterous sex seems to have had a far different connotation than merely whether the sexual act was within or outside the institute of marriage.

It is futile to pretend that despite all that I have written, many of the acts of the emancipated women would not violate my personal value systems. But that is beside the point. The issue is simple. Does anyone have the right to seek to sabotage the emancipation of women merely on grounds that this would lead to their enjoying hitherto forbidden sexual freedom ? The answer is a resounding No.

Once they have the freedom to lead the life they have reason to value, the freedom can not be curtailed by an external extra-constitutional authority. Once they have the freedom, the kind of life they chose to lead is completely their own individual choice. One can only request them (as well as every one else) to follow the path of Dhamma, be guided by the wisdom that would arise within one's own mind by following the science of Ana-pan and Vipassana.

Bibliography

1. Preparing for the Twenty-First Century, Paul Kennedy HarperCollins Publishers India Pvt. Ltd., 1994
2. Development As Freedom, Amartya Sen, Oxford University Press, 1999
3. Human Development Report 1999, Oxford University Press, 1999
4. The Economist, May 4, 1991
5. Monitoring the World Economy, 1820-1992, Development Center Studies, OECD,1995

Sindhutva

Now that we have come to an end of our journey, it is time to take a re-look at what we want to achieve by this great odyssey.

First thing first. I hope, by now it is abundantly clear that since the purpose of our journey has been to discover the path to a better future; bitterness has no place in our scheme of things. I have been extremely critical of Gandhiji's policies but the fact remains that he was a Mahatma. We can be critical of his policies but we have no right to show any disrespect to his memory. Like all men, he had his share of follies – for after all he too was a mortal man like any of us; not a God. I have focussed on his follies; not so much on his achievements. Not out of any sense of disrespect to him but to fight those who have turned him into a God for their own selfish vested interests. His achievements are all too well known to merit a recount. Now that we know his follies; we can come to terms with Gandhi, the Human being – one of the Greatest who ever lived. I would like to lay my claim on him as any other citizen of the nation, as my own grandfather – one with whom I have many disagreements but for whom I also have deep and abiding respect.

The machinations of Patel and Nehru in the summer of 1947, fill me with great sorrow, no longer with bitterness. Such Great men but in the end turned to have feet of clay. Nehru's actions, in particular are difficult to comprehend even now. For he was the one, who was endowed with intelligence and the vision to know better. He was the one, who could spend lifetime in the service of the nation, unburdened by the need of providing for his day to day needs, which were taken care of by his father. He was the Prince charming riding on the white horse leading the nation to a better future. In the end, he turned out to be little better than a man of straw. Let me just stop here by saying that the Nehru clan has taken far more from the nation than they have given back to it.

Now that we have come to terms with the past, we need to move ahead and not get locked in history. Let us focus on the path to future. **The path is surely the one that would lead to Sindhutva.** Since, I have used this term for the first time and that too towards the very end of the book, let me briefly dwell upon this. I would not go into details since this would call for an independent book by itself on the subject.

The term Hindutva is well known in India today though not really understood by even many of those who claim to speak in its name. The term was originally coined by none other than Savarkar in a thesis written by him, in 1923 while undergoing rigorous imprisonment at Ratnagiri. In this thesis, he was forthright about his views. These views need to be understood in the context of the place where this thesis was written. By 1923, Savarkar had been denied a normal life for over a decade – made to work like an animal; compelled to live amongst hard core criminals, many of whom were no better than animals. Quite a few of them rabidly communal Muslims. Indeed, some of them had even tried to kill Savarkar in an engineered prison riot in Ratnagiri. It is amazing that by this time, Savarkar was alive and astounding that he retained his razor sharp Intellect.

In his thesis, Hindutva, Savarkar defined Hindus as those who loved the land of SaptSindhu – as their own Fatherland. Those, who claimed the history and culture of this land as their own. The SaptSindhu being the seven rivers, Sindhu (Indus), Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswati, Narmada, Kaveri and Godavari. Brahmaputra is not separately mentioned as it is considered as the eastward flow of Sindhu itself. The final test of being a Hindu in the opinion of Savarkar was that the person should also recognise this land as his Holy land. Based on this final qualification, he was categorical that Muslims, Christians, Parsees, Jews and all others, whose religion required them to worship lands other than the land of SaptSindhu – were therefore not eligible to be called Hindus

By itself, this is not an assertion that would be contested by anyone. One doubts if any Christian or a Muslim would be particularly keen to be called a Hindu. Each one of us has every right to be proud of our religion. Different religions may share some common values but some of the values are unique and dear. Any assertion that Indian Muslims and Christians are somehow Hindus can not but be therefore deeply offending to them. Savarkar was therefore quite correct in defining who is a Hindu and who is not.

In the context of the place, he wrote this thesis – a place infested with hard core criminals; the time – 1923, when India was racked by communal disturbances in the aftermath of the infamous Khilafat movement; it is easy to understand his other views. He held forth that Hindus alone could provide the real foundation for the Indian nation.

In the context of the time, we live in – at the very dawn of a new millennium, we should define the term Sindhu. They are those who love the land of SaptSindhu as their own, those who claim the rich and diverse history and culture as their own. These are the people – who should be called Sindhus. They may or may not necessarily consider this land as their Holy land – that being the criterion for being called Hindus - not Sindhus. It is the Sindhus, who alone can provide the real foundation for building a nation worthy of the potential of the land of SaptSindhus. The honour thus belongs equally to Muslims, Christians, Jews, Parsees, Hindus and others. It can-not be the monopoly of the Hindus. **This to me is what Sindhutva all about.**

Sindhutva is then an expression that takes into account the ancient history of this land that lies between Sindhu in the West and Brahmaputra in the East ignoring the artificial political division brought about in 1947. It is a value system that is based on the famous dictum of Savarkar:

“ If you come – with you; if you do not – without you; if you oppose –despite you”

Thus participation of all is welcomed and even sought in the grand task of national reconstruction. At the same time; no one is given a veto – the bane of Indian polity since the advent of Gandhian politics. So long as Jinnah sought to work with Congress, he had been ignored. Once he sought and obtained the support of his co-religionists; he was handed the power of Veto – leading to the division of the Country.

The term Hindutva was coined by Savarkar in a prison cell. I have the proud privilege to use the term Sindhutva, something he himself would have used; if his life was not disrupted by the years of hard rigerous prison term – sitting in the very room, which he used in the later part of his life; at Savarkar Sadan in Mumbai. I am sure Savarkar, had he been alive today would have blessed this term. For, it is interesting to note that even as he wrote his controversial views; he also affirmed his intention of working for a United India. Indeed, to quote him from his thesis Hindutva:

“We are trying our best, as we ought to do, to develop the consiousness of and a sense of attachment to the greater whole, whereby Hindus, Mohammedans, Christians and Jews would feel Indians first and everything afterwards.”

This was not all. In Hindutva, he also hoped that:

“It may be that at some future time, the word Hindu may come to indicate a citizen of Hindustan and nothing else; that day can rise when all cultural and religious bigotry has disbanded its forces pledged to aggressive egoism; and religions cease to be ‘isms’ and become merely the common fund of eternal principles that lie at the root of all that are common foundation on which the Human State majestically and firmly rests.”

The future time that Savarkar hoped for in 1923 is something we can now seriously work towards and achieve some of it – if not all; within our lifetime. Sindhutva is today a dream that can be realised.

Let us now look at some of the things that can be done in order to bring in Sindhutva in this ancient land.

- We need to legally declare that Bahadur Shah Zafar, the national sovereign of Hindustan was illegally deposed by the British in 1857. Thus the entire British rule in India thereafter was completely illegal. The present day governments of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are therefore heirs to their last common sovereign – Bahadur Shah Zafar, not to the illegal British rule. This will pave the path for all the three governments to get together and lodge a claim for damages incurred by the British occupation of this ancient land. For if, Kuwait can claim damages from Iraq for forceful occupation of its land, so can India, Pakistan and Bangladesh; from the United Kingdom. Potential damage that can be claimed exceeds the annual GNP of the richest three countries of the world taken together.
- The very act of the three governments to get together and prepare a damage claim on the British, it is hoped, will serve two objectives, namely
 - Act as an antidote to the poisonous state of relations that exist today between India and Pakistan.
 - Demolish the myth of white man’s generosity and superiority that bedevils the national elite, paving the path for a resurgent nation.

- In the new millenium, we should finally acknowledge that 15th August is not the Independence Day of the country. The claim of treating 15th August as the Independence Day is demonstrably false. There are only two days that can lay claim to being the Independence day. The first is 11th May 1857, when Bahadur Shah Zafar dismissed the British as the Diwan of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. The other is 26th January 1950, when the nation regained its sovereignty, it had lost with forceful deposition of Bahadur Shah Zafar. We should start celebrating 15th August as Gandhiji himself did. By being engrossed in the service of the nation, without any pomp or show.
- It is also time that Gandhiji should be treated as a Mahatma that he was, not as a God that he himself never claimed to be. It is without doubt that his services to the nation were great. So were those of others. The most prominent amongst them being Lokmanya Tilak; who lit the revolutionary fire that devoured the British Imperial Power. The best way of acknowledging the contribution of both these stalwarts is to print the photographs of both of them on the currency notes.
- The elite of the nation have to get involved in the task of building the nation. For years, we have talked of providing compulsory primary education and basic health facilities to all our citizens and then bemoaned the lack of resources. This is so much hogwash. We have enough and more resources. When we have the best of human talent, what is the reason to worry about financial resources? The task can be left to those who seek to have or had university education in the country. They need not pay market-oriented fees for their education but be required to spend at least two year of their life spreading the cause of literacy and health care. The cause of female literacy must have top most priority.
- All managers in the industry, owe it to the nation to make sure that their companies create Economic Value Addition (and not destroy it), so that the nation can move on the path of economic prosperity.

The list of things to do is long but we need to make a start. Getting rid of the inferiority complex, spreading the cause of literacy and health care, creating sporting infrastructure and working towards national economic prosperity would make an excellent start. It would help if Supreme Court of India, the one institution in the country that is capable of dispassionately scrutinising the arguments presented so far; takes suo motu notice of these conclusions and issue suitable directions to the Government of India.

On my part, I wish to play a small role in shaping the future of the nation. The profits from the distribution of this book will form the corpus of a registered charitable trust, 'Abhinav Bharat'. The Trust will be run on the lines of a modern, professional efficient corporation. It will undertake such activities on a "Not For Profit" basis as are necessary for promoting the following objectives :

- To spread awareness about the need to reexamine history and re focus on future with renewed hope so as to promote national interest.
- To provide literacy in the field of Information & Technology.
- To help poor people who need financial help for medical treatment, or any other genuine and acceptable reason which deserves sympathetic action or to creating basic health facilities, where required.
- To Promote Team games like Hockey and Football.

My wife – Manjiri has agreed to be the Managing Trustee. Giving her valuable assistance is our close family friend – Meena Prabhu as the Advisory Trustee and Secretary of the Trust.

Hopefully, you dear readers would allow us to raise an adequate corpus to start our activities in a meaningful manner.

If more and more of us make start here and now in however a small manner, we would all be working towards realization of the dreams of dreams of Rabindra Nath Tagore, so eloquently expressed in his poem:

*Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high
Where knowledge is free
Where the world has not broken up into fragments
By narrow domestic walls
Where the words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reasoning has not lost its way
Into dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action
Into that heaven of freedom my father
Let my country awake*

A more eloquent description of Sindhutva is scarcely possible.