

An Odyssey Begins

1st May 1997

It was a small family gathering for worshipping Lord Ganesha, the loveable Hindu God with the head 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 milestone in one's life. 'Freedom At Midnight' the book that had created a wide 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 Bharat, 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 helped the matters. 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 epic achievements..

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 the 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 'Tatya', a respected elder of the family. I longed to solve many riddles and puzzles that had defied solution for long. Puzzles that haunted us since for far too long, while we have allowed ourselves to be lost in the dreary desert of prejudice. Once we had settled in our new home, I decided to invoke the spirit of Tatya sitting all by myself in the dead of night in what once was his own bedroom. I invoked his name and to my delight find him sitting before me. Overcome with awe, I posed the first puzzle that was a difficult one for my Avatar driven Hindu mind:

“Do the Personalities matter more than the Institutes.” I asked.

“Of course not – It is the bane of our civilization that we bow before the Person not the Institute he represents. That is why the ideal of Ramrajya is forgotten even as we worship Ram. Teachings of Gita leave us untouched but we profess to idolize Krishna” Tatya reasoned. “Follow the Flag. The Ideal is more important than the Person upholding the Ideal – no matter how revered he may be.”

I was shocked “I worship the ideal of composite culture, if I were to use your logic, it may mean that parts of your life when you gave up the Ideal of a Composite Culture would have to be discarded”.

Tatya was quick to respond, “ There is no need to be shocked. There is no getting away from the fact that Institutes are more important than Persons. It is when we forgot this, we lost our vitality as a nation. If your reasoning leads you to a conclusion that I gave up the Ideal of

Composite Culture that you cherish – discard me by all means. Do, however, give me a sympathetic ear, listen to the tale of my inhuman incarceration in the Islands of Andaman, realize the horrors of poison of communal hatred that was shoved down my throat every day for over ten long years by wretched rascals, whose belief in Islam stemmed from no pious consideration. Even Lord Shiva's throat turned blue after drinking *Halahal*, the deadly poison. If I spouted what you believe was communal poison in later parts of my life, do not agree with me by all means but at least understand limitations of a mortal man.

If you really believe in composite culture, surely you would not grudge me the liberty of having my own views. Let me challenge you to examine and provide answers to the following:

- If the Institutes are more important than Personalities:
 - What was Bharat in 1857 – Nation State in a legal sense or a legal nonentity? If it was a Nation State, who was its national sovereign?
 - Can a person even if he be Mahtama Gandhi be called Father of the Nation ? In any case, is it not true that many eminent Indians, whose portraits hang in the Parliament of Independent Bharat, contributed to making of Modern Bharat and not only the Mahatma ?
- The national sovereign of Modern Bharat is the Common Man. When did the People of Bharat come to replace the King of England as the National Sovereign of the Country – Did this happen on August 15, 1947?
- What is one thing that the Bharatiya State must attain – which it has not even in twenty first century before it can be called a Civilized State”

Stung by Taty's razor sharp biting intellect, I hit back, “What you ask me to examine is common knowledge. Of course India did not exist as a Nation State in 1857 either in legal or any other sense. The British united us. That Mahatma Gandhi is the Father of the Nation is

all too well known. Others did contribute but their contribution paled before his. That is why the Government of India prints his photo on currency notes to the exclusion of every one else – be it be Lokmanya Tilak, Babasaheb Amedkar or Netaji Bose, not to talk of you.

It was Nehru who stated “ For long time past we have taken a pledge on Independence Day that India must sever her connection with Great Britain because that connection had become an emblem of British domination”.

The occasion, I need not remind you was the passage of Objectives Resolution in the Constituent assembly on Januray 22, 1947. Since August 15, 1947 is our Independence Day, we severed the connection with British Crown on August 15, 1947. No scope for any argument

Finally, India is a Civil State, a nuclear superpower, that is feared the world over for both its military as well as intellectual prowess. There is nothing we need to do more – sorry, but Tatyia you are a historic relic who is not relevant today.”

Tatyia looked at me kindly but with sorrow

“May be, I am not relevant. That is not the point. If history is truly what you have been taught to believe in – you should have no problem in giving me a reasoned answer supporting your beliefs. By the way tell me why does Bharat even on the eve of the twenty first century continue to lead the world in the number of illiterate and malnourished children.”

I was nonplussed. Savrakar, what did he have to do with illiteracy and malnourishment. He did work passionately for many causes but there is simply no record of his ever having worked on these issues. He read the look of incomprehension on my face went on:

“Do not be surprised by my talking about illiterate and malnourished children. When Absolute Political Independence was the need of the hour, I worked for it, notwithstanding the fact that at that time Congress considered even a demand for Self Government nothing short of treason.

After Gandhi communalized the Freedom Struggle by advocating the cause of alien Turkish Khalifa, I propounded *Hindutva* to unite directionless Hindus, only to be branded as a communal fanatic. When the need of the hour was to work for eradication of caste system, I devoted my life to the cause and was ostracized by the orthodox community.

I have always worked for topical causes, even when they were ignored by others. Today, the need of the hour is to worry about Children. If they do not have enough to eat and can not even read – how long can the nation last? But no one seems to lose much sleep over their fate.

Follow the Flag – Follow the Ideal of scientific enquiry, do not be cowed down by any dogma, any holy cow. Examine history – not to divide but to learn the right lessons so that you can build a better future for your children – is this too much to ask”

He said this and vanished into the unknown leaving me alone and chastened. I was now to embark on an Odessy that now seems destined to consume the rest of my life. This book is a part of this Odessy. This book shall deal only with finding a reasoned answer to Tatyá’s first query, that is:

If the Institutes are more important than Personalities, what was Bharat in 1857 – Nation State in a legal sense or a legal nonentity? If it was a Nation State, who was its national sovereign?

The other issues, we shall keep for a later day.

The start point of our odyssey will be to try and understand the significance of 15th August itself, which is not clear to most of us even as we celebrated what was billed as the Golden Jubilee of Independence.

Chapter I

Golden Jubilee of Bharatiya 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 Bharat. They were there to witness, what seemed unthinkable, the Sena Supremo - Balasaheb Thackeray administering a secular oath of allegiance to the country, to his followers.

In countless homes across the country, TV sets were switched on waiting to see Melody queen - Lata Mangeshkar and Maestro Pandit Bhimsen Joshi enthrall 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 Bharatiya tricolour 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.

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 Bharat 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 united.

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 Bharatiya mind.

Time and again, the Bharatiya 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. Many 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 over Iraq's invasion, 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 the 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 Bharatiya social structure was visible to all. In this background, to have maintained the unity of the country has been no mean achievement.

Ask any Bharatiya, India's date of Independence. Rare would be someone who would take even a second to answer. In all cases, the answer would be August 15, 1947. Now, try rephrasing the question a bit and ask the date or even the period when the nation 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 Bharatiya nation is essentially a twentieth century phenomenon. Such an entity never existed in the past and therefore no date for the 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 Muslim and the British 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 for 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 sorry 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 the Congress were seeking to escape from the centuries old slavery under the 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 the Socialists as religion anyway is 'Opium of the masses' for them.

In its anxiety to reinvent history, the Congress, particularly under Nehru, consciously pushed Bharat 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 Bharatiya 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 odyssey that we now plan to 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. Ceylon became Sri Lanka, Burma is now Myanmar. India is yet to become Bharat

The Congress today does not tire of monopolizing the entire credit for winning the freedom back from the 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 independence before 1927 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 the 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 in 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 revolutionary and an 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 these 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 Bharat became Independent on August 15,1947, when did it lose its Independence? Each of the three views prevalent in Bharat shall be subjected to critical analysis. The three widely held views being that Bharat 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 Bharatiya society will come to terms with its own past and thereby face future with no divisive differences.

Chapter II

Defeat of Prithvi Raj Chauhan

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 - Sanyogita, of Benaras king Jaichand who was then the most powerful Bharatiya 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 Chauhan 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 Chauhan 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 Sanyogita 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 Sanyogita 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 Chauhan, 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, who was a 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 head of his arrogant 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, Sanyogita 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 Bharatiyans ' A Traitor'.

Our Secular Brigade 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 Bharatiya 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 Vindhya, 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 Secular Brigade 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 Islam's 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 begging 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.

Yet, I must add a footnote of some importance. One of the Sultans, who was involved in the sacking of Vijaynagar had set out from the fort of Golconda, near the present day city of Hyderabad. On a visit to this fort, right outside the personal palace of the Sultan, is a Hindu temple that predates the battle of Talikota and remains intact till date.. The irony of a Sultan setting out from the vicinity of a Hindu temple to sack Vijaynagar in the name of Islam is something that should casue us to pause before arriving at sweeping generalizations.

But to go on with the narrative, 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 Bharatiya landscape today offer mute testimony to this fact. Kashi, Mathura and Ayodhya being the most infamous instances. The destruction of the temples at Kashi and Mathura in 1669 is a historically proven fact that even the Secular Brigade cannot deny. Ayodhya issue which toppled two Prime Ministers in late twentieth century is left open for debate. With the Secular Brigade 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, the founder of Moghul rule in India, at Ayodhya, 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. Secular Brigade 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 Sanyogita, 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 Secular Brigade to make people forget their memories have, unsurprisingly, been in vain. For years, the Congress fought shy of accepting Rana Pratap as a genuine Bharatiya hero. It took fifty years after Independence and an Italian born President for the 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 the 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 the 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 III

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 the 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 1993 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 2,000 people had died in the city of Mumbai alone by official records, the unofficial toll was much higher. The countrywide 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. Bharat 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 Bharat 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 the Congress that would like to erase the fact of Hindus and Muslims being at war for centuries. These people legitimately feel that acts and omissions of Babar or any one else in history 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; these 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 Bharatiya affairs – in 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 chose to concentrate on his fight against the British.

For the contemporary Bharatiyans, 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 colonisation. Let us therefore travel back in time once again now to the middle of the 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 Bharatiya province and therefore much money was available to be made. Not only this, there was a compelling reason for the 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 Bharat.

The principles of *Free Trade and Sound Commerce*, which were used to deny similar protection to the Bharatiya 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 Subhedari of Bengal 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 Bharatiya 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 British officers, for there cannot be any other word to describe their practice. This led to the march of Siraj-ud-daula to Calcutta to enforce the 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 that 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 the 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 as the Bengal Subhedar, 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 Bharat 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 the Hall of Infamy where portraits of Traitors are hung.

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 Bharatiya ruler is perhaps by itself harmless. However, when this reinterpretation of history demands painting Rana Pratap, Shivaji, Guru Govind Singh as a misguided patriots, 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. In order to accommodate funadmenatist 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 Nambudribad, 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 Bharat, 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 the 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 criticised by many, prominent among them being the noted Jurist Mohammad Currim 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 lady 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 not 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 Bharat. 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 Bharatiya 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 Bharatiya 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 the Anti Defection law, discarded his own Muslim cabinet colleague, Arif Mohammad Khan, who spoke eloquently against the proposed law and forced overturning of a reasoned judgment of the Supreme 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 Bharat’s side so far. How far it will hold is anybody’s guess.

Clearly the Congress interpretation of history has done incalculable damage.

Chapter IV

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” said Nehru. 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 Bharat 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 Bharatiya 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 Bharatiyan 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 them 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 today 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 the South, Puri in the East, Dwarka in the West and Badrinath in the heart of the Himalayas. National integration was emphasised 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 four 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 the 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 claim of Tipu nor that of the Sikh to be Independent of the Moghul Emperor, was recognised by the British . Indeed, they defeated them in the name of the Moghul Emperor.

The legal base to 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, the 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 munsad 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 Salangah, he *made three low bows to the munsad* and advancing, placed 101 gold Mohrs on it as a nazzar, repeated this obeisances and took his seat on the left of the munsad.

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, the 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 ? Certainly not the East India Company, which as a commercial organization was not permitted under the 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 the East India Company to govern Bharat 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 Bharatiya territories of the Company open.

Can anyone really accept that a state of vacuum existed in the issue of sovereignty for the better part of a century, in respect of a possession that was as important as Bharat 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 favoured 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 Bharat, 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 the East India Company in Bharat, 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 in 1858 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?

Dr Pankaj K Phadnis

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 Secular Brigade that the moment anyone suggests an alternative title for Mahatma Gandhi, he is immediately accused of being in league with his assassins.

Chapter V

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 the 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 Great 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 on 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 the 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 symbol 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 Gandhiji.

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 on 1857 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 the Hindu soldiers in 1857.

One can therefore safely conclude that we lost our Independence 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 Bharat, a century later; is always shown as a period of terminal decline of the 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 and the Muslims. We have forgotten the fact that this period represented a period of true synthesis between the Hindus and the 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 the 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 and Muslims, once the rabidly fanatic Moghul Emperor Aurangzeb died in 1707.

Chapter VI

The End of Hindu - Muslim War in 1707

Historical Role of Shivaji

“History must from time to time be re-written, not because 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.

None other than Nehru himself regarded the 100 years that followed the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 as the years of the Maratha and the British struggle for Supremacy. In his book ‘The Discovery of India’, he quoted Warren Hastings, who in 1784 has written: “*The Marathas possess, alone of all the people in Hindostan and Deccan, a principal of national attachment, which is strongly impressed on the minds of all individuals of the nation*”

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 (now Aurangabad) 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 rechristined....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 Bharatiya 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 recognised 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 Bharat 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 that 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.

This act in 1325 AD 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 Shankarayacharya 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 forts 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 1630 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 an 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 the maintenance of

his mother - Jijabai; physically separated from her husband. The wanton cruelties of Alauddin Khilji, the Jowhar of Padmini, her own confinement at the fort of Kondha by Mahabat Khan; ever rankled in Jijabai's heart. The examples of Harihar and Bukka, of personal valour, together with 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 the Siddis, the French, the English, the Dutch, several small kings and local chieftains, each a power in its 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 the 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 present days governments in Maharashtra, three hundred years after his death, are proud to characterize their 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 the formulation of strategy and its successful execution.

In 1640, Shivaji paid a visit to his father at Bangalore, when 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 Torna was captured in 1644.

From Torna 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 throughout 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 the 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.

Moreys' 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 Chanakya knew very well, the 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 Bharatiya writers accusing British of immorality in their conduct with Bharatiya princes during eighteenth and the nineteenth century. In righteous indignation, they charge the British with committing fraud to secure Bharatiya 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 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 Gandhiji 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 Pratapgarh, 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 the fort of Panhala, controlling access to 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 a 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 the 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, Shivaji, himself, posing as Moghul soldiers made entry into his house, now occupied by the Khan under the cover of darkness. Once inside they massacred everything that moved. In ensuing confusion the raiders safely reached their base, 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 throughout the land. The small jagirdar of Pune had become a power for the mighty Moghul Empire to take serious note of.

The third decade stared 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 the 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, 1672. 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 going against his solemn oath, 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 the 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 the 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 go 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 the 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 an 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 put to shame 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 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. He could not dream of looking beyond his family to rule the Swaraj that was won at a great cost Thereby, sowing the seeds of destruction of his achievements at the hands of British about 125 years later. 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 VII

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 the 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 of a century. For more than a year after he arrived in the 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 Shia 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 buffoon, mounted on camel 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 the 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 perpetrated horrified people. Sambhaji was blinded and later hacked in pieces which were served to 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 Bharat -from Kabul to Chittagong and Kashmir to Kavari, 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 Hyderabad. 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 Moghul armies, exacting tribute, plundering their treasures, animals and stocks of camp equipment. The Emperor soon found himself unable to cope with this form of resistance. It was as if he had disturbed a 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 seemed to be veritable ghosts to the average Moghul fighter.

In one particularly daring guerrilla raid, the Marathas attacked the Emperor's personal camp and carried away its' large gold pinnacles. 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 Bharat 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.

A reference has been 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 Zinant-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 bloom? 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 an 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-uddin Ghauri was put to an end by the sword forged by Shivaji. What began with Sanyogita ended with Zinat-un-Nisa and her sister. What a shame that all these ladies died an unhappy death.

Chapter VIII

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**

Figs in %

	1750	1800	1830	1860	1880	1900
Europe	23.2	28.1	34.2	53.2	61.3	62.0
U. K.	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	2.9	3.5	3.5	4.9	8.5	13.2
Italian States	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
<i>Bharat/Pakistan/ Bangladesh</i>	<i>24.5</i>	<i>19.7</i>	<i>17.6</i>	<i>8.6</i>	<i>2.8</i>	<i>1.7</i>

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, Bharatiya 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 Bharat 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 Bharat 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 from the Marathas 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 Bharat 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 high 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 featurewas 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 lasting even a decade, 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 cold 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 it 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 Sanad 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 the 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 in 1803, before they could muster enough courage, to consign the Moghul Emperor to the dustbin of history in 1858.

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. Though a Muslim, 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 Mastani, a Muslim dancer, whose beauty was said to be beyond compare and much to the chagrin of the orthodox Brahmins married her. 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 wife. Now the scandalised Brahmin guardians of morality, who did not lift a finger to oppose any social evil, like untouchability, 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 from Iran 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 perpetrated 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 Bajji 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. Loss of Kabul was the lasting impact that the raid of Nadir Shah left on Bharat.

The dice was now cast. The Central Asian 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.

Bajji Rao came under incredible personal strain on account of conservative elements of the Brahmin community of Pune. They managed to get Mastani arrested through Bajji Rao's 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 heartthrob 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 Samsheer Bahadur, the son of Bajji 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 (alias Nana Sahib) 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 thirds 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 the 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 Bharat 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 Bharat. 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 Ahmed Shah Abdali knew perfectly well that to aspire for the Delhi throne was out of question regardless of the outcome of the battle.

At best, he would have to be content with addition of Lahore and Multan to the Afghan conquest of Kabul. 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 Ahmed Shah Abdali, a rising Pathan sovereign who appeared as the new invador following the footsteps 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 Bharat 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 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, Ragonath 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 'Attock' or the limit beyond which Hindus were not supposed to travel.

One can grasp the amazing reach of the Marathas by looking at the map of Bharat in 1758. The British 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.

As the influence of the Marathas reached Lahore and beyond, they 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 Subhedar of Ayodhya, Shuja-ud-daula. He was thus able to give a religious colour to his campaign against the Marathas who were fighting in support of Shah Alam who had been proclaimed as the Emperor in 1759 after the murder of his father. They were fighting to recover the Moghul territories which the Afghans had captured.

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 Bharat, 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 manoeuvres, 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 in Deccan lay 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, spectre 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, lusting 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 rocketfire 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 Abadali 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 Begg 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 themselves in defiance of the Peshwas. 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 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 IX

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 the Emperor - 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 through out 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 foiled by the British forces led by Major Carnec. On 16th January 1761, Pondicherry fell into the British hands, thereby smashing the French power in Bharat. Thus these three days in the middle of January 1761 proved to be momentous in determining the future of this country.

Nana Sahib Peshwa sank to his grave under the blow of Panipat. For a few years till his son, Madhav Rao 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. Nana Sahib Peshwa 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 the Emperor Shah Alam and Shuja-ud-daula, the Ayuodha Nawab, to form a Confederation 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 the 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. Emperor 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 Khan 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 the 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 lodgement 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 Bharatiya 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 his younger brother, Narayan Rao, who was to succeed him. 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, Independence was lost when 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 years on most of the present day politics with the Congress being the worst but not the only 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 and sentenced him to death. A wave of revulsion swept the sinner out of Pune, whereupon he sought solace in the 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 Phadnavis, who at Pune, was the guardian of the young Peshwa. It is to him that goes the credit for the first nation wide Bharatiya 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 Phadnavis held fast till the end. Mahadji Shinde one of the six Maratha chieftains, who had held the Maratha power aloft in the dark days after murder of Peshwa Narayan Rao, 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 lead 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 1794 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 Baji 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 Delhi and with it the 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 Bajji 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 1803, the Emperor at Delhi followed suit. Other main Maratha chieftains were made to surrender their freedom before the 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 spring. 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 Bharat 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 deindustrialisation. 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 the 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 Baji 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 until 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 in the twenty first century.

Chapter X
Resurrection of Italy
Mazzini

From the loss of Independence in 1803, let us now turn to the efforts to win back the lost freedom. One of the earliest revolutionaries in Bharat was undoubtedly Savarkar. A unique contribution of Savarkar to the Bharatiya Freedom Struggle was its globalization. It is only towards the end of the twentieth century that the Indian intellectuals came reluctantly to accept Globalization. Savarkar had traveled on this path nearly a hundred years ago. Truly, he was well ahead of his times.

Savarkar had reached London in 1905 ostensibly to study but in reality to further the cause of revolutionary struggle launched by him by forming a secret society – Abhinav Bharat, dedicated to the cause of Absolute Political Independence. This is a separate story that needs to be told in detail. For the moment, it is suffice to note that while in London, he was ceaselessly looking for ways and means to inspire his fellow countrymen, who were in a mental stupor and resigned to their fate.

He looked all over the world for an inspiration, least worried whether the source of inspiration was Swadeshi or Videshi. Indeed, in his quest, he found both Videshi as also Swadeshi source of inspiration. The first inspirational source was pure *Videshi* - the story of Mazzini. This was closely followed by an unadulterated *Swadeshi* source of inspiration - the story of the Great War of Independence 1857. We shall proceed to cover both.

Just as a matter of interest, it is worth recalling that at this time people like Gokhle, the Guru of Gandhiji as also the Mahatma himself, were unapologetic admirers of the British Raj in Bharat and considered it as a Gift of the Providence.

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 Bharat ? 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 even a second thought.

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 the 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, let alone Savarkar, fighting similar odds not be entrapped in Mazzini's thrall?

Savarkar 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 Bharatiya. No Bharatiyan 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/Gandhiji 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 the 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, 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 the 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 French Government did not yield. Gradually, the superior oppressive forces at its command 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 the 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 an 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 an 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, Genoa, 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 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 Giuseppes 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 Giuseppes 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 centre.

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 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 the heart of Europe and in which French, the traditional enemies of British, had played such a major part. This was just the powerful story 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 the middle of the nineteenth 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 Tantia Tope 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 Marathi 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 Savarkar 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 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 Baba, 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 the 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 pending 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 Bharatiya colony by the same powers. It is now 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 the 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, the Congress was to expel Tilak and other extremists from its rank, who knew not that the British Empire in Bharat was ordained by the Providence for its own Good and were 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 / Gandhiji 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. When will the Congress acknowledge the debt it owes to those who sacrificed their all and without whom, the Congress would never have dreamt of demanding Independence, let alone struggle for it? 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 sole 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 Bharat has not been Politics 'the last refuge of scoundrels', as the Bharatiya 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 the 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 Absolute Political Independence. Times have changed. Faxes, e-mail, Computers, Satellites; technologies 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 Bharat, 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 through out 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.’

‘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 Italy 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 the 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 XI

The 1857 Great War of Independence

History of Savarkar's Account

Mazzini's 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 Bharatiya. 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 Bharat. 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 Bharatiya 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 today to present to my Bharatiya 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 Bharat and try and collect (the Bharatiya 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 a Bharatiya 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 revolutionaries 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 and 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 Bharatiyans, 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 Bharat with the help of Bharatiya 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 a 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 Japanese 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 directionless 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 barbaric 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 sixty 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 summarised version of Savarkar's book. The stirring book is best read from start to end. Rare would be a patriotic Bharatiyan, 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 XII

Roots of the Upheaval of 1857

The most persistent myth of 1857 has been that the ignorant Bharatiya Sepoys went beserk 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, Gandhiji 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 Bharat'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? 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.

After Plassey 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 civilisation 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 civilisations'.

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 backbone of the British Raj in Bharat. Lest any one 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 bypassed the village communities, conferred 'the boon of private property' on the Bharatiya 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 Globalisation, when every pundit of Strategy promotes Exports of Value added goods as the sure-fire way to national prosperity. Bharat 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 Bharatiya 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 the 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 the British Parliament 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 did it affect 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 the East India Company enjoyed monopoly over Bharat's foreign trade. Though it could handle only a part of this, it guarded its monopolistic rights with unrelenting tenacity further damaging the Bharatiya 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 Bharat 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 Bharat while it was perfectly capable of meeting the entire demand for Bharatiya 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.

It 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 Bharat.

It is another matter that 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 Bharat was most apparent. After all, the British capitalists expected to see the 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 Bharat. Local producers were discriminated against by the 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 Bharat. This was the fair competition that the Bharatiya 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 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.”

Decades after Nehru wrote this, even in the twenty first century, the country 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 exports 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 Bharat, the trade was balanced by large exports of Silver from Europe. With the conquest of Bharat, Opium exports from Bharat 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 Bharat, 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 Bharat in 1914. Thus during this period not only Bharat shifted from exporter of Finished goods to that of primary commodities but even an 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 Bharat 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 the 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 Bharat 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 Bharat - the construction of railways. For one they were done in an enormously wasteful way. Moreover, 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 Bharat 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 Bharat 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 paramountcy over Bharatiya 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 the Moghul Emperor, who appeared to them to be a decadent ruler. 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, Nana Sahib 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

Rs5,000,000/- 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 Bharatiya 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 Twenty First century, it has become fashionable to deride the Indian states and even sympathize with the British attempt in the 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 whom 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.

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 no where near this ceiling. It was not until 1864 that the first Bharatiya entered the hallowed precincts of the Indian Civil Service.

The Bharatiya sepoy were 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 a Bharatiya 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 Bharat 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*”

Dr Pankaj K Phadnis

We should ask ourselves if the national attempt of 1857 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 that of those in the Twentieth and Twenty First century?

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

Chapter XIII

The War for United States of Bharat

The British reports about 1857 tended to revolve round certain gory incidents, which were offered as evidence that what happened in Bharat 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 cuddling 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 boat-men 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 Bharatiya 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 women and children survived on 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 Bharat. 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 Bharat was fire in the summer of 1857 with sporadic outbursts in Western Bharat as well as in the South of Vindhya. It took over two years and 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 Bharat. 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 their 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."

Whatever 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 Bharat affair.

Consider the chain of events in this localized affair. The first sign of the 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 the 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 Bharat 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 the British presence in Bharat. Events in Delhi had stripped the British cover. From this day i.e. 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 Governance of Bharat, one might well ask what was the status of any English soul in Bharat; if not that of an aggressor bent on defying the Bharatiya sovereign. The news of Meerut and Delhi resulted in the 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 Jalandhar, which revolted on the 9th June from marching to Delhi with their comrades from Ludhiana and Pilhaur. 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 Bharat - at Nasirabad in Rajesthan, Bareilly, Allahabad, Kanpur, Lucknow, Benaras in United Province 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, 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 1857, the flame of the revolt had spread to Maratha states of Holkers at Indore and Sindhias at Gwalior in central Bharat. The contagion also 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.

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 Bharat 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.

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 in Delhi. It is Lord Elphinston 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 Bharat. 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 they 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.. 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 Bharat 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 dejure 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 sceptre.” 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 preconcerted 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 widespread 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 the 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 were 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 every thing 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.”

It is beyond doubt therefore that 1857 was indeed a War of Independence. I would rather go further to term it as the War to establish United States of Bharat.

Let us go back to 1957 – a full hundred years after 1857. Six civilized nations - never mind that they had spent hundreds of years fighting each other, got together to form the European Union. These were West Germany, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxemburg and Italy. The combined area of these states is about 1.3 million sq meters. Notwithstanding the formation of the Union, they remained independent sovereign states, each with its own laws, currencies, flag, national anthem and bitter competitors in economic activities. There was not even a suggestion of a common sovereign.

Now let us go back to India of 1857. The present day states of Uttar Pradesh, Utteranchal, Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand were up in flames fighting for a common sovereign covering an area of about 1.45 million sq kms. For the moment, we are ignoring the fact that disturbances took place in Punjab, Maharashtra, Hyderabad and elsewhere.

One can safely assume that had these states been successful in their fight, their economic and political integration would have been higher than that of the European Union of 1957 – a full hundred years later. It is also natural to assume that the progression of United States of Bharat from Monarchy to Democracy would have also followed the evolution of political systems in other parts of the world.

Now let us take European Union of 2007. In the fifty years of its existence it has grown to have 27 member states having 23 languages, common currency in most of the Union, common visa for many of the states. The area of the European Union now stands at about 4.3 million sq kms. There is still no common anthem, no common flag, not to talk of common sovereign. Perhaps, they will now have a common full time President.

An undivided Bharat had an area of about 4.2 million sq kms with 23 languages and would have had about 30 states, roughly the same as the European Union. If a United States of Bharat had come into existence in 1857, in 100 if not in 50 years, it could easily have grown to the size of European Union in 2007.

What we should therefore recognize is that the defeat in 1857 caused this country a loss of about 150 years in terms of national growth. Any more loss of time is nothing short of being criminal but a start can not even be made without accepting the ideal of composite culture. Once again 1857 provides an inspiring legacy even in this regard.

Chapter XIV

The Legacy of 1857 in the Eyes of Savarkar Hindus and Muslima as Blood Brothers

Savarkar's book stirred up a host of issues that the British had worked so hard to keep out of the Bharatiya 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 bloodshot eyes, across barbed wires; one hand on the nuclear button capable of pulverizing the very cities their ancestors had once laid down their lives, to protect from the alien British occupation forces? *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.*

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 each other's citizens. 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 these are the same nations, which had once put up an united epic struggle against the British; whose ancestors had laid down their lives united 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 Bharatiya leaders who had grasped the true nature of 1857. Consider his stand on the following:

Bahadur Shah as the Emperor of Bharat

“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 Bharat 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 Bharat 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 Bharat 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 Bharatiya 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 Bharat 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 Bharat at a time when a revolution was taking place in Bharatiya 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 Bharat. 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 Bharat (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 steamroller of English slavery was strong enough to crush out all the differences among the peoples of Northern Bharat 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 Bharat 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 Bharatiya Nation”

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 learnt all too well was that the stability of their rule in Bharat 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 British have long departed from the soil of Bharat but the seeds of the infamous Divide and Rule Imperial policy sown by them continue to spout poisonous fruits in the 150th year of the Great War for United States of Bharat, there are still people who regard it as the Muslim Jihad.

A recent Marathi book, “The Jihad of 1857” by Mr. Seshrao More must take the cake. The author claims to be an admirer of Savarkar, who himself would have recoiled in horror if this devotee was to present himself before him. A peculiar theory is propounded that the Uprising of 1857 was led primarily by the Muslims fighting to restore the Muslim hegemony over the country that prevailed in the days of Aurangzeb. The inconvenient fact of the large scale Hindu participation is sought to be explained away by glibly claiming that they were either misled or coerced into participation. According to the author, the Hindus had suffered such terrible injustices under the Muslims that the British could be nothing but saviours to them. The author goes on to cite various proclamations that used the words Kafir to describe the British as also some scattered anti Hindu incidents to hold forth that 1857 was nothing but a Jihad. There is no doubt that many of the Muslim participants may have been driven by the zeal to go back to the days of Aurangzeb, when Islam was the dominant ruling power.

However, what we need to examine is the following:

- In 1857, was restoring the days of Muslim hegemony over India, the dominant Muslim sentiment?
- If so, was there any practical possibility that the Muslim hegemony over India could be reestablished?

To suggest that the dominant Muslim sentiment was to restore Muslim hegemony over India is to insult every Hindu who fought and died against the British. Take for instance the Bharatiya Joan of Arc – Rani Laxmibai. The suggestion that she fought and died under coercion to establish Muslim rule over India can only come from an extremely prejudiced bigoted mind. If the aim was to establish an Islamic rule over the country, there was no need for an old and ailing Bahadur Shah Zafar to go personally to areas rocked by disturbances on proclaiming the ban on cow slaughter.

To suggest that it there was any practical possibility that Muslim hegemony over India could be established in 1857, is to insult the Spirit of Shivaji, which had established the Marathas as a dominant Power by the early eighteenth century in the country. The Moghul Emperor remained the de jure sovereign but the defacto rulers were the Marathas. The British took power not from the Muslims but from the Marathas is the historical reality that likes of Mr. More would rather ignore in the quest to promote their convoluted anti Muslim theories .

The starting (and end) point of Mr. More's theory remains the proposition that Hindus had suffered such terrible injustices under the Muslims that the British could nothing but be saviours to them.

The prejudice of some people against the Muslims is so strong that they would rather not know that despite Muslims being in India as rulers since 1192, it remained an economic superpower till 1803.

It was the British who destroyed this country and the sufferers were the people – both Hindus and Muslims. It is this economic reality that united them as blood brothers against their common foe – the British in 1857. The sooner we all understand this, the better it shall be for all of us.

Chapter XV

Treatment of The Sovereign The Treason of the British

Time and again, one reads about the British sense of fair play and their belief in 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 Bharatiya 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 Bharatiya 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 withdrawal from the Imperial palace. A perfect legal coup that would have allowed the British to forever claim that their rule in Bharat was “established by law”. Traders who reluctantly turned to governance at the express invitation of the Bharatiya 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 in 1857 against the 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 Bharatiya 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 sovereign 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 Bharat as being legal. It boggles the mind to imagine that after 11th May 1857, anyone should seek to justify their presence in Bharat. If one were to use present day phrase, their Visa to remain in Bharat had expired on this day. From then on, their very presence in Bharat was completely illegal. Treatment of people, who overstay after expiry of their Visa, is far from friendly in any country even today. Illegal aliens harbouring 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 the Twenty First 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 Bharat 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 Bharat 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 was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for fifty years in the prime of his youth. 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 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 sacred homeland 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. It 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 heart. Purification of soul that would somehow lead to Swaraj.

A Mahatma, who never stopped swearing by Ram Rajya and Gita, curiously overlooked the 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 wails 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 the 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 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 Bharat 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 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 ultumgau, 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 Circar, 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 ultumgau, 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 ‘for ever and ever’.

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 Bharat 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 be said to have 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 then 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 from the protection of the Marathas. 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 die hard Liberals. 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, thought 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 Bharat. 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 by 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 only 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 Bharat 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 the 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 Bharat 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 Bharat. 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 straight:

- The Royal Firman issued in 1765 provided the legal basis for the rule of the East India Company in Bharat. 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 that their rule in Bharat, 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 were 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 Bharat continue to acknowledge his nominal sovereignty. In 1858, the Attorney General himself accepts that the British Government had not deprived him of 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 April 1859.

Malleeson 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 Bharat’

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 Bharat 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. Malleson 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 Bharat, 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 Bharat 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 Bharat, 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 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 1858, 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 XVI

The Relevance of Bahadur Shah Zafar Today

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 Bharat from 15th August 1947. He commanded no army in Bharat nor ruled over any territory in Bharat. He was completely dependent on the Indians for everything in respect of the Bharatiya possession. Yet, the British Government continued to hold that he remained the King of India. The sovereign of the Indian nation. The view to this effect by the Lord Chancellor was circulated by the Prime Minister of United Kingdom on November 10, 1948 to the British Cabinet. The Lord Chancellor 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 Bharat 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

For far too long, Bharat 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 Bharat 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.

For far too long, the people of the Bharatiya 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.

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 eyes and not that those of the British.

Bahadur Shah Zafar's act of dismissing his Diwan in 1857 is worthy of great respect. 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.

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 Bharat, Pakistan and Bangladesh. However, before this heritage can be reclaimed there are certain prerequisites. Most important is that Bharat 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 Bharat. Nothing can be more disastrous than that.

Bharat can not afford to ignore the lesson taught by Shivaji. It is only when he infused the spirit in the Hindus, of fighting for their 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 Bharat 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 the days of Khilafat in 1920 will suddenly disappear and the amity of Tilak-Jinnah days will come to prevail. Things will take time to normalise but a start has to be made.

Bharat 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 Bharatiya 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.

The myth that British did us a favour by colonizing us has to be laid to rest. Whatever good they did was completely incidental to their primary purpose – which was to loot this country. The myth needs to be laid to rest for it cripples the self-confidence of many of us – its destruction will pave the path for an emergence of a resurgent nation.

The most important outcome of these developments would be that the Bharatiya mindset that hates Pakistan and continues to remain beholden to the British would change. It is in this mindset 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 lies the relevance of Bahadur Shah Zafar in the Twenty First Century.

Chapter XVII

In Search of Elusive Justice

“Satya Meva Jayate – May the truth Always Prevail” has been given the pride of place in the Bharatiya National Emblem. All actions of the Bharatiya State, may those be of the Executive, Legislature or Judiciary are to be governed by this eternal value. The fact that Bahadur Shah Zafar was the national sovereign of the Bharatiya State in 1857 has never been acknowledged by the Bharatiya State that came into being on January 26, 1950. Was “Satya Meva Jayate” not the motto of this State – we wondered?

In January 2004, Abhinav Bharat, a registered charitable trust formed by my wife, Manjiri – our family friend Meena and me decided to approach, the Bharatiya Judiciary by way of a Public Interest Litigation to get the Bharatiya State acknowledge this fact - both by way of recording the true history of this nation as also correcting the legal foundation of the Bharatiya State. In our innocence, we approached several lawyers including the Attorney General of India to help us complete the legal formalities. We soon came to realize that the Indian legal fraternity comprising of some of the best brains in the world had no zeal left to pursue any matter that promised no commercial gain to them – even if it was something of national interest.

From April to June, our mission was derailed by my health. Years of working amidst unrelenting stress took its toll on me. Doctors ordered a series of tests to diagnose the ailment. The results came as shock. Yet there was no time to lose. A blood clot was blocking my artery. Not only had it to be dissolved but my injured vessel had to be repaired to ensure that I did not face this again. The wonders of medical science came to my rescue. What could have been a serious life long disease was corrected by a medical procedure of a few hours. I had to take precautions hereon but other than that I was free to lead a normal life.

After years, I took a holiday with my wife and daughters. In the high altitude of Ooty's cool and calm environment for three weeks I did nothing but relax – listened to music, read books, chatted with my wife, spent time listening to the college tales of my teenaged daughters. I also had time to reflect on the meaning of life. Why was God so kind to me. I was surrounded by family and friends who cared for me. Even a potentially life threatening situation had been corrected with virtually no damage. Perched mid way between youth and old age, I had to make a choice – of leading a life for my own sake or for something more than just surviving. During an early morning walk amidst the beautiful lush Tea Planation, I told Manjiri that we had to carry on our struggle of making “Satyamev Jayate” a living reality. If Bahadur Shah Zafar was the national soeverign of the Bharatiya State in 1857, why does the Bharatiya State of 1950 fight shy of acknowledging this even in the Twenty First Century. Manjiri agreed readily, so did Meena after we met her in Mumbai. The struggle was now truly on.

The first decision was whether to approach the High Court or the Supreme Court and if so under which article of the Constitution. Practical step we realized was to approach the High Court – if it rejected our case, we could always approach the Supreme Court in appeal. If we approached the Supreme Court directly and it threw us out – the doors of legal redressal would have been closed forever. Moreover, the scope of Article 226 – the key to approach the High Court - was wider than Article 32 under which one could approach the Supreme Court. Finally, the High Court was in Mumbai whereas the Supreme Court was in distant Delhi. So we settled for moving the High Court.

The next step was familiarizing oneself with the legal terms – submissions, crave to rely upon, prayers, reliefs and so on. It was easier than I was led to believe. By late October, 2004 the Petition was ready. One of the four prayers was that Union of India should acknowledge that Bahadur Shah Zafar was the national sovereign of the Bharatiya State in 1857.

On October 31, 2004, Manjiri and I trooped to the Court and lodged the papers on the filing counter with the help of a Court Clerk. The whole process set us back by about Rs 1,000/-. We were informed that Registry would look for defects and raise objections. Once we removed the same, the papers would be placed before the Bench of two High Court Judges headed by the Chief Justice for consideration of their “Lordship”. The Bharatiya Constitution may have abolished monarchy, abolished feudal order but within the walls of the Institute that was charged with upholding the Constitution – “Lordship” remained the preferred way of addressing the Judges.

A week later, when we went to find out what the objections were, we were astonished to find that our papers had gone for “production” i.e. were placed before the “Lordships”, who were ‘pleased’ to appoint an ‘Amicus Curiae’ – an officer of the Court, as prayed for by us. Our case Writ Petition 2947 (lodging) of 2004 was to be listed again on December 23, 2004

To say that we were excited was an understatement. Even in our absence, notwithstanding the several technical flaws in our papers, the matter was still considered important enough by the Chief Justice of the High Court to be heard again!!. In order to aid the Court, we filed a detailed written submission buttressing the merits of our case. I ‘crave permission from my dear readers to rely on what I said, which was as under:

“I propose to restrict my submission to proving the bona fides of the Petitioner, its authorized signatory and proving to your satisfaction that the issues raised in the Petition need to be considered in the larger Public Interest for granting relief as prayed for in the Petition. Thus, my submission will be in four parts:

- Part I will deal with the Trust that has filed the case.
- Part II will deal with the role of the Authorised signatory

At the end of Part II, we hope to prove that both the Trust and the Authorised signatory have nothing but larger public interest as the motive for filing this case.

- Part III will briefly outline the Issues raised in the Petition.
- Part IV will then deal with establishing that the Issues raised in the Petition are of material Public Interest and that they need to be considered by invoking Article 226 for granting relief as prayed for in the Petition.

1.0 Part I : Bona Fides of the Trust

Abhinav Bharat is a Public Charitable Trust registered with Charities Commissioner under Bombay Public Trust Act 1950..... As can be seen, one of the objectives of the Trust is to:

“To spread awareness of the need to reexamine history and refocus on future with renewed hope so as to promote National Interests”

2.0 Part II: Bona Fides of the Authorised Signatory

I am the sole bread earner in my family of four. It was while being engaged in a very stressful job to earn my livelihood in a German Multinational, that in my private capacity, I wrote the book “Freedom Struggle – The Unfinished Story” over a five year period from 1997. The writing could therefore be done only late at nights and over the week ends, when I was not working in office.

My book was published by the Trust on October 18, 2002. Apart from everything else, this book denounces the concept of Supremacy of the White Man. ...A neo Nazi officer in the German Multinational, where I was then employed, took great offense at the denouncement of the White Man’s Superiority. In next five months, by March 2003, he created conditions, despite my spotless and bright career spanning over 12 years, whereby I had to undertake search for a new job under traumatic conditions. In June 2004, I was diagnosed as having an ulcerated plaque in the Left Main Coronary Artery and a thrombosis, which threatened a heart attack.

It was my good fortune that by this time I had a much better job and very decent employers, who extended all possible assistance which helped me get over this medical crisis. If despite a traumatic change of job and a near fatal disease, I continue to fight for the Cause that I passionately believe in – it is only on account of my regard for the issues of larger Public Interest that lie in this case.

3.0 Part III: Issues of the Petition

To establish the identity of the Dejure Bharatiya Sovereign in 1857 is a major issue dealt with in the Petition

4.0 Part IV: Public Interest in Considering the Issues Raised in the Petition

There is a tablet outside what used to be the Sessions Court in the High Court of Bombay, where Lokmanaya Tilak was convicted in 1906. It reads:

“In spite of the verdict of the jury, I maintain that I am innocent. There are higher powers that rule the destiny of men and nations, and it may be the will of the Providence that the Cause that I represent will prosper more by my suffering than by my remaining free”

It was late Chief Justice – Shri. M.C.Chagla, whose portrait adorns the walls of this August Court, who had this tablet put up. In his autobiography – *Roses in December*, he confessed that, “I had always felt strongly about this conviction and I was glad that I had at last had an opportunity to make **some atonement** (emphasis mine) for the suffering that was caused by this conviction to a great and distinguished son of India” On the occasion of unveiling of the tablet on July 15, 1956, he said: “Disgrace tarnished our record and we are here to remove that tarnish and that disgrace. It may be said that this conviction was a technical compliance with justice, but we are here emphatically to state that it was flagrant denial of substantial justice. Tilak was sentenced for the crime of patriotism. He loved his country more than his life or liberty.

The verdict that our contemporaries pass on us, the verdict that our times pass on us, is not of much value. We must always await the inevitable verdict of history, and the inevitable verdict of history is that this conviction is condemned as having been intended to suppress the voice of freedom and patriotism, and the action of Tilak has been justified as the right of every individual to fight for his country. If today the High Court is functioning in a free India, if there is an Indian presiding as the Chief Justice of this Court, let us remember that it is in no small measure to the suffering and sacrifice of Tilak.”

Who else but the first Bharatiya Chief Justice of Bombay High Court – Shri. Chagla himself, was better suited to make this comment. My Lord, kindly note that the late Chief Justice was fully aware that by unveiling the tablet, he was only making ‘some atonement’. I am sure given the right evidence, the late Chief Justice Shri. M.C.Chagla would have welcomed an opportunity to do more – which remained an unfilled task.

I wish to submit that such an evidence is now being submitted to this Court – giving it a historic opportunity to complete the unfulfilled task of the late Chief Justice – Shri. M.C.Chgala. Kindly permit me to elaborate.

In this petition, we have contended that the Dejure sovereign of the country in 1857 was Bahadur Shah Zafar. Thus, the Moghuls, who came to Bharat as invaders in the Sixteenth century had come to be accepted as Indians by 1857 by all classes of people in Bharat. Judicial sanction for this contention would go a long way in developing a composite culture in the country. Your kind attention is invited to Article 51 A, Part IV A of the Constitution of Bharat, section (vi) which requires the citizens to preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture as a fundamental duty.

We therefore wish to submit that it is in Public Interest to establish the identity of Dejure sovereign of the Country in 1857.”

On the appointed day, we appeared in the Court. The ‘Amicus Curie’ seemed to be paralysed. Opposing him was a junior advocate representing the Union of India. The whole matter was disposed within minutes. We were perplexed. Nonetheless, we bowed and went out to hound the Amicus Curiae, who explained to us that we had won a major victory. We were to make a detailed representation to the Union of India and it was to dispose off our representation by a reasoned order within six weeks.

In simple language, the Government of India was either to accept that Bahadur Shah Zafar as the national sovereign in 1857 or reject the contention giving reasons for their decision. What more could we expect. It truly was a major victory. We went to work. The planned Christmas vacation went for a toss as I struggled to make sure that the representation was foolproof. By first week of January 2005, the representation was ready and sent to Government of India sorry the Respondant – Union of India. Time started ticking by. Soon we received a letter from the Law Ministry forwarding our Representation to the Home Ministry with a statement that it appeared to concern them and they should therefore comply with the orders of the Court.

With bated breath, we waited for the outcome. Six weeks came by and went with no response coming forth. We then sent a reminder to the Government with a copy to all the constitutional functionaries – the President, the Prime Minister, the Leader of Opposition, the Speaker of Lok Sabha. Surely one of them was bound to take note of the fact that an order of Division Bench of the Hon’ble High Court of Judicature at Bombay headed by none other than the Chief Justice was being brazenly flouted by the Government. Alas, none even bothered so much as to acknowledge the letter.

With no other alternative left, we once again filed yet another Writ Petition – WP 682 of 2005. Once again, it was listed with surprising speed catching us unawares. Once again – a date was given – April 20, 2005. Now we wrote to the Attorney General of India. We took the stand that the very fact that the Government was not complying with the order of the Court indicated that they had no objection to the matter being resolved by the Court. The letter was met with a stony silence.

The big day – April 20, 2005 came. This time I decided to appear myself in the Court and argue our case. The Government fielded its big guns – the Additional Solicitor General of India, the highest functionary in the Western Bharat. Once again, I took to filing a written statement to ensure that an attack of nerves should not come in the way of Justice. What I said was:

“ In the matter of WP 2947 (Lodg) of 2004 on December 23, 2004 it was held that the Petitioner, us, should make a detailed representation to the Respondent – the Union of India and that the Respondent would consider the representation by a reasoned order within six weeks of December 23, 2004.

The Union of India has committed Contempt of this Hon’ble Court by refusing to comply with the order of this Court to consider our representation by a reasoned order by February 5, 2005, the deadline set by the Court. It is this that forced us to file this new Petition, WP 682 of 2005, praying for relief that is substantially the same as was submitted in the detailed representation to the Union of India. Indeed, they remain in Contempt to date that is almost four months after the order of the Court. It is therefore humbly submitted that the Respondent – the Union of India, has forfeited their right to be heard in this petition. We have so informed the Attorney General of India.

It is humbly submitted that the refusal of the Union of India to consider our representation by a reasoned order even after being ordered by the Hon’ble Court to do so makes it clear that that the Union of India is structurally incapable of complying with the directions of the Hon’ble Court.

We may be kindly allowed to rely on the following documents that we would like to hand over the Copy of Chapter IX of The Cambridge History of the British Foreign Policy Vol II, Edited by Sir A.W.Ward and G.P.Gooch, 1923 edition and The Political Theory of Indian Mutiny, by Mr. F.W.Buckler as read out in the Royal Historical Society on January 12, 1922 These documents, your Lordship may like to note, were obtained by us from the Asiatic Library, Mumbai and Royal Historical Society London in April 2005.

.... I am prepared to submit our case for your consideration today or at any other date as may be convenient At this stage, the Trust has only me as a resource to take up this cause. I am an individual. My Zeal may Diminish, my Courage may Wane, My Life may Ebb away. Your Lordship may therefore like to take my statement on record as soon as possible so that the Cause that we seek to take up may become institutionalized”.

As I finished, the Chief Justice was red with anger. He asked the Additional Solicitor General to explain the non compliance, who feebly defended arguing that issues that I raised could not be disposed off “by a reasoned order”. The Chief Justice snapped “but It is the order of the Court”. The Additional Solicitor General hurriedly withdrew and asked for time. The Court gave him six weeks times and disposed the case. It was now my turn to point out that I could not be expected to file yet another petition. The Court assured me that they “were giving me liberty to approach the Court in case of non compliance” and that they would revive the case in case that happened. The order bears reproduction

“It is unfortunate that despite the orders of the Court, the representation of the Petitioner has not been disposed by a reasoned order. The learned Solicitor General submits that the representation would now be disposed of by a reasoned order within six weeks from today. We order accordingly. No further directions are necessary. The Petition is disposed of. In case the representation is not decided within six weeks from today, the Petitioner would be at liberty to approach this Court.”

We could not have asked for more. We left the Court satisfied. Our confidence in the legendary capacity of the Bharatiya Judiciary to correct wrongs touched new heights. Once again, six weeks came and went without any response. Once again we pointed out the same to the Attorney General of India. Once again, without any response.

This time, we approached the Court with a brief submission. In support of our plea to declare that *the Union of India should make a Gazette notification recording:*

- *Bahadur Shah Zafar, a truly Secular Emperor was the National Sovereign of Bharat in 1857, who was deposed in an illegal manner by the British using unlimited violence.*
- *That the Union of India – a secular state, is the natural heir to the secular rule of the last Moghul.*

I pointed out the importance of the issue stating that “The Moghul rule in Bharat falls in three distinct periods

- Upto 1579, when they were external invaders who recognized the Sovereignty of the Persian Rulers. They were defacto but not dejure sovereign
- From 1579 to 1720, when they were Bharatiya Muslim rulers, who did not recognize any external sovereignty but used Religion from time to time to make distinction between their subjects (Jizia Tax). They were both the defacto and the dejure sovereign.
- From 1720 to 1857, when they were universally accepted to be the national sovereign by people of all faiths. They were dejure but not defacto sovereign and used their vassals – first the Marathas and then the East India Company, to rule.

The fact that the communal harmony that we dream of today, had already been attained between 1720 to 1857 is of monumental importance to the development of composite culture in the country. It is hoped to kick start this process by judicially recognizing the fact that Bahadur Shah Zafar was the National Sovereign of the Country in 1857

The Court responded by fixing the date of July 13, 2005 for hearing the matter. Once again, Manjiri and I trooped to the Court on the appointed date with a big bag containing all our papers. Our worthy opponent – the Additional Solicitor General of India smirked at Manjiri “Why are you carrying such a big bag” almost as if he knew what was to happen. This time our wait was day long in the Court. Our turn came at about 5 pm. The same Chief Justice, who had rebuked the Additional Solicitor General in April now listened to him with a stony face, make the astounding submission that they had disposed off one of the four representations made by us (in respect of primary education, that we will deal with later) and that they had nothing more to do.

As I angrily sought to rebut, I was asked to recite all the four issues that we had raised, which I did. When I started to say the Government had not done anything in respect of the three of the four issues, I was reminded that there was a long line of litigants and that I should not waste the time of the Court.

It was strange, to say the least that I, who was given liberty to approach the Court in case of non compliance by the Union of India with the orders of the Court, was being accused of wasting the time of the Court for utilizing the liberty given to me by the Court itself.

The order passed was:

“ Heard the Representative of the Petitioner. No order.”

No word on what the Petitioner said. No word on whether or not the Government had complied with the order of the Court of April 20. Simply “No Order”. To date none of the legal luminaries have been able to enlighten me on what this order means. What is even more bizarre is that this order has not todate been put on the Internet.To say that we left the Court crestfallen would be an understatement.

I was reminded of what Mr. H.M. Seervai said in his seminal work “Constitutional Law of India, Volume II, Preface to the Second Volume.

“...another factor has emerged which has not been generally noticed. It is that in cases involving the Union or the State Governments on matters to which those governments attach great importance, consciously or unconsciously, judges have allowed their judgements to be deflected by the thought that their chances of promotion in the High Courts and their chances of elevation to the Supreme Court would be prejudiced if their judgements went against the Union or the State”

For the record, the Chief Justice was elevated to the Supreme Court in October 2006. Undeterred, we decided to file a Special Leave Petition against this No order, in the Supreme Court of India. Our SLP 23289 of 2005 came up for hearing on January 2, 2006 before the Chief Justice of India together with Justice Thackkar and Justice Ravindran.

As in the past, I had taken care to file written submission:

“I am here to fulfill my fundamental duties as enshrined in the Constitution of India. The Respondent is preventing me from doing so by his willful non compliance of the orders of the Hon’ble High Court at Bombay. My grievance before you is that, despite having pointed out this fact to the Hon’ble High Court at Bombay, it was pleased to pass No Order. This has grave implications for the Rule of Law in this Great Nation and I therefore appear before you with an appeal to:

- (a) Protect the sanctity of judicial process by setting aside the impugned order
- (b) Hear me on merits of Prayers of WP (PIL) 682 of 2005 filed in the Hon’ble High Court at Bombay and on being so satisfied grant me relief as prayed for.

I will set out my case in a few minutes with the help of this written submission.

After a five year research I wrote a book by 2001 and published the same in 2002. As the research findings were of great national interest, I informed the same to:

- Hon’ble President of India
- Hon’ble Prime Minister of India
- Hon’ble Chief Justice of India
- Hon’ble Speaker of Lok Sabha
- Hon’ble Leader of Opposition
- Hon’ble Attorney General of India

The first PIL under Article 32 was sent by post to this Hon’ble Court in March 2004. I was informed in April 2004 by the Assistant Registrar of this Hon’ble Court that I should file the PIL in a proper manner. Not being conversant with the procedure for doing so, I sought legal aid from the Attorney General of India, which I did not get. Nevertheless, I succeeded in filing a PIL - WP 3470 of 2004 under Article 226 in the Hon’ble High Court at Bombay on October 30, 2004.

This PIL was first heard on November 5, 2004 and an Amicus Curie was appointed. On the next hearing – on December 23, 2004, the Hon’ble Court was pleased to order that I should file a detailed representation before the Respondent and that he would dispose off the same by a reasoned order within six weeks of December 23, 2004. It was open to the Respondent to challenge this order – he did not do so.

As per the orders of the Hon’ble Court, I filed a detailed representation based on the four prayers of the WP PIL 3470 of 2004, on January 4, 2005 i.e. exactly one year ago. On getting no response from the Respondent, I was forced to file yet another Writ Petition – PIL 682 of 2005 on February 28, 2005 with same prayers as before. On April 4, 2005, I also informed the Attorney General of India, that the lack of response from the Respondent is indicative of the fact that he has no objection to my prayers being granted.

On April 20, 2005, the Hon’ble High Court termed the Non Compliance of the orders of the Court by the Respondent as ‘Unfortunate’ and once again confirmed its own order of December 23, 2004 by ordering the Respondent to dispose off the representation by a reasoned order within six weeks of April 20, 2005. I was given liberty to approach the Court in case of Non Compliance by the Respondent. Once again, it was open to the Respondent to challenge this order – he did not do so.

On June 6, 2005, I once again informed the Attorney General of India, that the continued lack of response from the Respondent is indicative of the fact that he has no objection to my prayers being granted. I then approached the Hon’ble High Court at Bombay as per the liberty given to me to do so. The matter was listed on July 13, 2005. Two days before the scheduled hearing i.e. on July 11, 2005, I was sent a communication in respect of my Representation no 4, purported to be its disposal by reasoned order. Immediately, I informed the Respondent on July 12, 2005 that this was not so – setting out detailed reasons.

On July 13, 2005, I informed the Hon'ble High Court of the fact that:

- (i) There was not even a claim of compliance in respect of representation no. 1 to 3
- (ii) That the claim of disposal of representation no. 4 by a reasoned order was not correct – giving reasons for so saying.

The Hon'ble High Court heard me and was pleased to pass no order.

I state that there is no dispute whatsoever in respect of the facts stated above. You will no doubt appreciate that this has grave constitutional implications for the Rule of Law. If the impugned order is not set aside, any Respondent will be able to argue that it is not mandatory to comply with the orders of the Court if he so feels. It is therefore submitted that the impugned order be set aside. It is also submitted that in view of the failure of the Respondent to comply with the orders of the Court and the failure of the Hon'ble High Court to ensure compliance with its own orders; the Apex Court of the Country may kindly step in – hear me on the merits of PIL – WP 682 of 2005 and on being so satisfied grant me relief as prayed for.

At the onset, I stated that this is a serious attempt to fulfill my fundamental duties and I have no interest in any publicity of any kind. My Lords may therefore kindly bar the media from reporting on the matter so long as you so deem fit.

Time waits for no one. I have invested ten prime years of my life on this mission. I am neither rich nor without responsibilities of raising a family. Yet, my wife has permitted me to spend monies we do not have on this cause. A close friend also contributed. So far, despite significant hardships, our courage has not waned.

What the future holds – we do not know. Hear me on the merits of the issues that I raise – so that this cause becomes institutionalized. Once that happens whatever may happen tomorrow, our National Motto – SATYA MEVA JAYATE will remain sacrosanct as it MUST.

With this, I bow my head in respect before this Highest Seat of Justice and await further directions.”

The Bench treated with me respect and kindness but observed that they saw nothing wrong in what the High Court had done and with this they dismissed the SLP without giving any reasons. In lay terms, they did not find it fit to interfere with the “No Order”. They studiously chose to refrain from making any comment on the merits of the case.

As on July 13,2005, we once again left the Court with our confidence in the Judiciary shaken. One had always heard that the Courts need evidence to pronounce a verdict. One had never heard that Courts can pass a “No Order” when confronted with evidence. And yet even the Supreme Court of India found it fit not to interfere with the “No order”

We decided not to give up and searched high and low for some judicial reference that would help our cause. Finally, we found what we belived was the clinching evidence that we needed - A five member bench Judgment of the Hon’ble Supreme Court in **AIR 1962 Supreme Court 445 (V 49 C 70)**, which defines what constitutes a Change over of sovereignty and how it takes place. As per Article 141 of the Constitution of India, this judgment is the law of the land on issues relating to change over of sovereignty and the implications thereof.

We filed a Review Petition – RC 1/2007, in which we pointed out that the Supreme Court had held that :

- (i) (para 12) “In doing so, we must make it clear that we must not be understood to have assented to the submission of the learned counsel for the respondent that a finding as to change over of sovereignty or completion of an act of State, is a finding of fact pure and simple. In our view, the question is essentially is what inference in law should be drawn from the facts proved or admitted to relating to change over of sovereignty.”
- (ii) Notwithstanding the fact that Head of the State of Junagarh fled the State and the Administration of the State was taken over by Dominion of India on November 9, 1947 – the State of Jungarh continued to exist.

- (iii) It explained that (para 15) “In law therefore the process of acquisition of new territories is one continuous act of State terminating on assumption of sovereign powers de jure over them by the new sovereign and it is only after that the rights accrue to the residents of those territories as subject of that sovereign.

In other words, under the dominion of new sovereign, the rights of citizenship commences when the act of state terminates and the two can not co-exist.....It is clear to us that there was no changeover of sovereignty on that date and the Junagarh State continued as such and did not cease to exist.

- (iv) In para 16, the Hon’ble Court dealt with the contention of the Counsel for the Respondent, who relied on certain observations in well known text books on International Law that State Sovereignty and State jurisdiction are complementary and co-extensive and a right to property and control exercised by State is really a right to territorial sovereignty and therefore acquisition of territory can mean nothing other than acquisition of sovereignty over such territory and therefore Dominion of India stood to have assumed sovereignty over Junagarh on November 9, 1947 when its Administrator took control of the territory and ruled otherwise. They held that “The problem is really one of State succession; namely succession to International Persons as understood in International Law. Such succession takes place when one or more International Persons take the place of another International Person in consequence of certain changes in latter’s condition; there may be a universal succession or partial succession. In the case before us, as long as the Junagarh State continued as such there was no such succession and even though the Dominion India took over administration of Junagarh and exercised control therein it did not assume de jure sovereignty over it. Therefore the act of State did not terminate till January 20, 1949, when Dominion of India assumed de jure sovereignty over Junagrah by its integration into the United States of Saurashtra.

(v) As per Article 141 of the Constitution of India this Judgment is the settled law of the land today. Therefore Bharatiya laws today (even if International Law may or may not) recognizes that:

- de jure sovereignty defines the existence of the State even if the sovereign is not in control of the territories of the State.
- de facto control does not mean assumption of de jure sovereignty.
- If two states have different de jure sovereigns, they are states alien to each other even though one may be ruled by an Administrator appointed by the other.
- Succession of one International Person by another is essential before de jure sovereignty can be said to have changed.

Extensive evidence was offered in WP (Lodg) 2947 of 2004, in the representation made to Union of India in pursuance of the Court order and in WP (PIL) 682 of 2005 to prove that there was no change in de jure sovereignty over Bharat between 1707 to 1857. **No International Person ever succeeded the Bharatiya State represented by the Moghul Emperor either universally or even partially.** Where such attempts were made, they were put down by the servants of the State being first the Marathas and then the East India Company. **Thus, there is no doubt that an Bharatiya State existed in a Legal sense in 1857.** This view was also held by F.W.Buckler, Allen Scholar in the University of Cambridge in a paper “The Political Theory of the Indian Mutiny” that was read out on January 12, 1922 in the Royal Historical Society London.

Union of India was directed to dispose this submission by a reasoned order within six weeks on two occasions by the Hon’ble Court but has not complied with the order of the Court. The issue has therefore to be determined by the Hon’ble Court.”

Amazingly despite this crystal clear evidence, against all canons of judicial norms, a three member bench found it fit to disregard the Judgment of a five member bench and dismiss the Review Petition with the following tersely worded order :

“ There is a delay of 311 days in filing the review petition. The explanation offered therefor is not satisfactory. Even Otherwise on merits, in our view, no case is made out to review our order dated 2nd January, 2006. The review petition is accordingly dismissed”.

Curiously, this is one of the last orders passed by the then Chief Justice of India before he retired. This order was put on the Internet and has now gone missing from the net as the “No order” of the High Court. Once again, there is not a word on the merit of the case. The only conclusion one can draw is the Bharatiya Judiciary may be very active in matters of filling pot holes on roads of Mumbai, dealing with which fuel the public transport should use in Delhi, sealing of commercial shops in residential areas of Delhi – when it comes to substantial issues of far reaching consequences it fights shy of dealing with them in a forthright way. To say more would invite charges of Contempt of Court and hence I refrain from commenting further.

In the end the question of whether or not Bahadur Shah Zafar was the national sovereign of Bharat in 1857 remains unanswered by the Bharatiya State despite being an order of the Court to decide the issue. Indeed the Court which itself passed the order has chosen to refrain from ensuring compliance of their own order. Even the Supreme Court has found discretion to be better than valour.

There is much empty rhetoric about celebrating the 150th anniversary of 1857. Arranging rallies, programmes involving wasteful expenditure of public money without addressing the central issue. What do we seek to celebrate – The Brave Mutiny of the Indians Against a Foreign Ruler or the The Actions of Bharatiya Sovereign Against the Treason of His British Diwan – the East India Company?

The answer to this would depend on who Bahadur Shah Zafar was in 1857 – an ancient relic, a pensioner of the British or the National Sovereign of Bharat accepted by all communities – the Hindus as well the Muslims as their national sovereign. Why waste the tax payer’s money on a cause, the significance of which seems beyond our comprehension!!!

Dr Pankaj K Phadnis

On our part we believe that the Bharatiya State including the Judiciary, is capable of doing far more to promote the cause of “Satya Meva Jayate” than it has done so far by steadfastly refusing to set aside the “No Order” faced with compelling evidence that cries out for intervention. Our belief in “**Satya Meva Jayate**” remains unshaken.

We shall not Give Up.

We shall keep Fighting

We shall Overcome

Chapter XVIII

The Financial Relevance of Bahadur Shah Zafar

One of the most far reaching legislations that the Congress Government under an Italian born President enacted has been the Right to Information Act 2005,

No longer can the Indian babudom hide their inefficiency cloaked under the draconian Official Secrets Act. The Government files including their notings are now open to the public.

On one hand it has also spanned an industry of blackmailers. On the other hand it has led to discovery of scams in the Government that would never have come to light but for Right to Information Act 2005. No wonder, there is a sizeable section in the Congress that feels but for revelations under the RTI Act 2005, they would have not lost the General elections of 2014.

Perhaps there is merit in that. From now on it is clear that notwithstanding the public proclamations of Good Governance, the real intentions of the Government in Power would be revealed by the manner in which it implements provisions of RTI Act 2005. Does it seek to implement it in its true letter or spirit or does it try and put hurdles in the way.

Thanks to RTI Act 2005, we were able to get an official answer to whether or not Bahadur Shah Zafar was the national sovereign in 1857.

From para 6 of Note No 12014/4/2005 SR Ministry of Home Affairs (SR Desk) File No. 23/3/2005 – Judl & PP (POL III) Ministry of Home Affairs, we came across a categorical assertion

“Bahadu Shah Zafar, the last Mughul was sovereign over his empire”.

The note then goes on to quibble over whether or not all of Union of India was a part of this Empire. That is not material. The word used is sovereign over his ‘Empire’

The word Empire is defined as “an aggregate of nations or peoples ruled over by an emperor or other powerful sovereign or government; usually a territory of greater extent than a kingdom, as the former British Empire, French Empire etc..”

This clearly means that Union of India considers Bahadu Shah Zafar to have been a person of great significance.

Fine, the point is proven, Dr Phadnis – so what? What is the significance of this academic point in 2015?

Let us try and understand the financial relevance of Bahadur Shah Zafar in the Twenty First Century.

Recently Dr Shashi Tharoor of the Congress went on to demand reparations from the United Kingdom at a speech delivered in Oxford University UK. The videotaped speech uploaded on You Tube went viral. This prompted a response from the arch conservative Times of India. In an editorial on 14th July 2015, it went on to argue that the share of India in the world GDP in 2015 was not very different from that in 1947 nor is the share of Indian population in industry very different than that prevailed at the time of “independence”. As the Congress was in power most of these years, Dr Tharoor better stop criticizing the British and focus on supporting industrialization now.

Fair enough. But completely besides the point.

Once Union of India has held 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 and this excludes the cost of actually prosecuting the war on a nation that had nothing to do with it..

- 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, on the other hand 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.

If Mr Tharoor is to be faulted he has to be faulted for claiming One Pound from the British.

Who is he or any one else to give up the claim that represents blood money of millions and millions of the Indian Sub Continent??

It is time to bring Bahadur Shah Zafar home from his forgotten grave at Rangoon.