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Samaj Patra

Fall/October 1997

Chair's Corner

50 Years of India's Independence

Five decades ago at the stroke of midnight on August 14, 1947, the tricolor flag of independent India rose to replace the Union Jack on the Red Fort in Delhi. In the poignant words of Pandit Nehru, India had come to meet her tryst with destiny. Thus, the world's largest living democracy was born one hundred and seventy-one years after the people of America won their own freedom from the British.

The European presence in India dates to the seventeenth century, and it is in the latter part of this century that the Mughal empire began to disintegrate, paving the way for regional states. In the contest for supremacy, the English emerged 'victors', their rule marked by the conquests at the battlefields of Plassey and Buxar. The Rebellion of 1857-58, which sought to restore Indian supremacy, was crushed; and with the subsequent crowning of Victoria as Empress of India, the incorporation of India into the empire was complete. By the early part of the twentieth century, a nationalist movement had emerged; and by 1919-20, Mahatma Gandhi had emerged as the virtually undisputed leader of this movement. Successive campaigns had the effect of driving the British out of India in 1947, but not before they had partitioned it, and carved out the state of Pakistan.

The gradual emergence of India as a self-governing entity had been partly envisioned in the Government of India Act of 1935, and following India's independence in 1947, the Constituent Assembly deliberated over the precise constitutional future of India. On January 26, 1950, India became a Republic, and the Constitution of India was promulgated.

The Indian National Congress, which had led the country to freedom, remained the largest and the most influential party under the stewardship of Jawaharlal Nehru, who served as India's Prime Minister from 1947 to 1964. His 'regime' was marked by the advent of five-year plans, designed to bring big science and industry to India. In Nehru's own language, steel mills and dams were to be the temples of modern India. Relations with Pakistan remained chilling, and the purported friendship of India and China proved to be something of a hoax, when China invaded India's borders in 1962.

Nehru was succeeded at his death by Lal Bahadur Shastri, who led the country to victory over Pakistan in 1965 but died of a heart attack the day after a treaty was signed with Pakistan. He was succeeded by Indira Gandhi, Nehru's daughter. By the late 1960s, Indira Gandhi had engineered a split in the Congress, as the only means to ensure her political survival, and the Congress had been reduced to a shadow of its former self. In 1971, India crushed Pakistan in a

short war that also saw the birth of Bangladesh, and Indira Gandhi was now at the helm of her powers.

But the shine wore off, and as domestic problems mounted and popular movements directed at her began to show their effect, she resorted to more repressive measures. An internal emergency, which placed almost the entire opposition behind bars, was proclaimed in May 1975, and only removed in 1977.

The same opposition then hastily convened to chart its strategy and achieved in delivering the Congress party its first loss in national elections. This government, serving various political interests, lasted a mere three years, and Indira Gandhi rode a large wave of victory in 1980. But she did not live to complete her term. She was shot by her own Sikh bodyguards, who sought to avenge the destruction of the Golden Temple by the Indian troops.

She was succeeded by her son, Rajiv Gandhi, who was also assassinated. Narasimha Rao then became the new prime minister and a process of economic liberalization began in earnest during his term. When elections were held, the Congress party went out of power for the second time and Dewe Gowda of Janata party became the prime minister. He has recently been replaced by Inder Gujral of the same party. The coalition of political parties he has been heading, has so far survived for two years, which is a rare event in Indian

politics. Irrespective of who wields power in the Central Government, the process of economic liberalization has become an irreversible and continues to this day.

India is one of the oldest civilizations with a kaleidoscopic variety and a rich cultural heritage. It has achieved multifaceted socio-economic progress during the last 50 years of its Independence. India has become self-sufficient in agricultural production and is now the tenth most industrialized country in the world and the sixth nation to have gone into outer space to conquer nature for the benefit of the people. The literacy rate has gone up to 52.21 per cent and India has the third largest pool of scientific and technical manpower in the world.

India is an enchanting country of contrasts - ancient and modern, rich and poor. Her diversity is manifest in its people, languages, religions, and cultures. This plurality is held together by strong threads of democracy and human values such as personal freedom and equality of opportunity and justice, the same values that form the basis of the United States of America.

Emigrants from India are now in every part of the globe spreading its enduring and rich culture. Almost one million strong in United States, Indian Americans have brought with them their heritage to add to the panorama of the multi-cultural society here. They have won acclaim for their dedication, and accomplishments as scientists, doctors, engineers, computer specialists, and entrepreneurs.

India is the largest democracy in the world today and is destined to play a much bigger role in the next century. We salute the great nation of India on having completed 50 years of its independence. Jai Hind.

Tej S. Dhakar

Association calendar of events

- 10.18.97 Diwali: See flyer
- 12.1.97 Last date to submit articles to Samaj Patra.
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NHAAI New Address

We request you to address all your future correspondence to, NHAAI, P.O. Box 3132, Manchester NH 03105.

Annual Picnic:

The annual picnic was held in Pawtuckaway State Park on August 3, 1997. It was a bright and beautiful day, and Homai Khanna picked a gorgeous spot for the picnic. There was plenty of mouth watering food from all regions of India to go around. The children played softball and volleyball, and many of the participants rented canoes or paddle boats to try their boating skills on the Pawtuckaway Lake. After a sumptuous lunch, Drs. Padma Mathur and Tej Dhakar gave speeches on the 50th Anniversary of India's independence from the British. All in all it was a great day to relax, and enjoy each other's company. The participants displayed so much enthusiasm that they were collectively able to repel the dark and threatening clouds in the afternoon, and to bring back sunshine for the rest of the evening.

Mother Teresa:

NHAAI was deeply saddened by the death of Mother Teresa on Sept. 5, 1997. Mother Teresa, an international symbol of compassion and mercy, was buried after a state funeral in Calcutta on Sept. 13, 1997. A grieving India paid tribute to this "Saint" who epitomized what an individual could do to help people. Some of Mother Teresa's sayings are reproduced below:

» Intense love does not measure; it just gives.

» Little things are indeed little, but to be faithful in little things is a great thing.

» Nakedness is not only for a piece of clothing; nakedness is lack of human dignity, and also that beautiful virtue of purity, and lack of that respect for each other.

» Give until it hurts.

» The world today is hungry not only for bread but hungry for love; hungry to be wanted, to be loved.

» We have been created to love and to be loved.

» If you are humble nothing will touch you, neither praise nor disgrace, because you know what you are.

» Do not allow yourselves to be disheartened by any failure as long as you have done your best.

» We must make our homes centers of compassion and forgive endlessly.

» If we really want to love we must learn how to forgive.

» If we pray, we will believe; If we believe, we will love; If we love, we will serve.

» We can do no great things; only small things with great love.

Prithvi's Corner

Contributed by Prithvi Kumar
Announcement: Winter Clothing

I am collecting winter clothing to be distributed to the Homeless Shelters in the New Jersey and Eastern Massachusetts area. If you have sweaters, blankets, or jackets to be disposed off, please drop it off in my home at 62 Hitching Post Lane by 15 October 1997. ONLY NEATLY FOLDED CLEAN CLOTHING WILL BE ACCEPTED. Thank you for your generosity.

Should it be "That" or "Which"?

Test your relative pronoun skills by filling in each blank with either "that" or "which":

1. The therapy, _____ would have worked for most people in that condition, had no effect on him except to make him even more irritable.

2. With just one phone call, Meera solved a problem _____ had baffled all of us for three days.

3. NHAAI board of directors finally agreed to rewrite the by-laws, _____ were adequate but convoluted.

4. Based on what I have seen so far, it's only the flashy and impractical things _____ are affordable.

Answers:

1. Which, because the information in the clause - "which would have worked for most people in that condition" - is parenthetical (it is not essential to the sentence meaning). And that's why it's set off with commas. 2. That, because the information - "that had baffled all of us for three days" - is essential to the sentence meaning. That's why it's not set off with commas. 3. Which, for the same reason cited in the first example. 4. That, for the same reason cited in the second example.

Humor

Contributed by Prithvi

THE CASTAWAY BANKER

A rather inhibited banker finally splurged on a luxury cruise to the Caribbean. It was the "craziest" thing he had ever done in his life. Just as he was beginning to enjoy himself, a hurricane roared upon the huge ship, capsizing it like a child's toy. Somehow the banker, desperately hanging on to a life preserver, managed to wash ashore on a secluded island. Outside of beautiful scenery, a spring-fed pool, bananas and coconuts, there was little else. He lost all hope and for hours on end, sat under same palm tree.

One day, after several months had passed, a gorgeous woman in a small rowboat appeared. "I'm from the other side of the island," she said. "Were you on the cruise ship, too?"

"Yes, I was, " he answered. "But where did you get that rowboat?"

"Well, I whittled the oars from gum tree branches, wove the reinforced gunnel from palm branches, and made the keel and stern from a Eucalyptus tree."

"But, what did you use for tools?" asked the man.

"There was a very unusual strata of alluvial rock exposed on the south side of the island. I discovered that if I fired it to a certain temperature in my kiln, it melted into forgeable ductile iron. Anyhow, that's how I got the tools. But, enough of that," she said. "Where have you been living all this time? I don't see any shelter."

"To be honest, I've just been sleeping on the beach," he said.

"Would you like to come to my place?" the woman asked. The banker nodded dumbly.

She expertly rowed them around to her side of the island, and tied up the boat with a handsome strand of hand-woven hemp topped with a neat back splice. They walked up a winding stone walk she had laid and around a Palm tree. There stood an exquisite bungalow painted in blue and white.

"It's not much, but I call it home." Inside, she said, "Sit down please; would you like to have a drink?"

"No, thanks," said the man. "One more coconut juice and I'll throw up!"

"It won't be coconut juice," the woman replied. "I have a crude still out back, so we can have authentic Pina Coladas."

Trying to hide his amazement, the man accepted the drink, and they sat down on her couch to talk. After they had exchanged stories, the woman asked, "Tell me, have you always had a beard?"

"No," the man replied, "I was clean shaven all of my life until I ended up on this island."

"Well if you'd like to shave, there's a razor upstairs in the bathroom cabinet."

The man, no longer questioning anything, went upstairs to the bathroom and shaved with an intricate bone-and-

shell device honed razor sharp. Next he showered -- not even attempting to fathom a guess as to how she managed to get warm water into the bathroom -- and went back downstairs. He couldn't help but admire the masterfully carved banister as he walked.

"You look great," said the woman. "I think I'll go up and slip into something more comfortable." As she slowly walked out of the room the man heard the Island sound of Jimmy Buffett music filtering from a large Conch Shell in the corner. The man continued to sip his Pina Colada. After a short time, the woman, smelling faintly of gardenias, returned wearing a gown fashioned out of pounded palm fronds.

"Tell me," she asked, "we've both been out here for a very long time with no companionship. Have you been lonely...is there anything that you really, really miss? Something that would be really nice to have right now!"

"Yes there is!" the man replied, shucking off his shyness. "There is something I've wanted to do for so long. But on this island all alone, it was just...well, it was impossible."

"Well, nothing is impossible," the woman said. The man said breathlessly: "You mean you actually figured out some way we can check our e-mail out here?"

Email addresses:

We are in the process of updating the email addresses of all our members. Please send email to the Editor P.T.Vasudevan (email address: ptv@cisunix.unh.edu). This will enable us to include your name for future mailings of Samaj Patra or other important notices by email. Thank you.

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