

Day of India's Resurrection An Historical Retrospect

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This generation has witnessed the birth of several nations in territories which have been the seats of renowned civilizations: Egypt, Iraq, the Lebanon and Transjordan. Yet the birth of India, which we celebrate today, is an event unparalleled in the history of mankind. India, which, having shaken off her shackles, now breathes the air of freedom, was never dead. It is the selfsame land which sent forth colonists to the home of the Pharaohs, exported her merchandise and birds of gaudy plumage to Baber, supplied materials to the Phoenician merchants to embellish the temple of Solomon in Jerusalem. India never died during the centuries. She only slumbered.

The India that once again takes her place with the nations of the world is the very India that built the fabulous cities of the Indus Valley; that raised the hundred fortresses of Shambara upon the peaks of the Vindhya; that chanted the Rgvedic Sukta on the banks of the Kubha, the Parushni and the Sarasvati; that fought at Kurukshetra and before the walls of Lanka; that from the ports of Bharukaccha, Surparaka, Muziris and Mahabalipuram despatched her vessels to the seven seas and all the shores of the known world.

No wonder India has survived the ravages of time, the vicissitudes of fortune, the wars waged against her by rapacious conquerors. Centuries ago Alexander the Great yoked King Poros of Taxila to his victorious chariot. Not long after Chandragupta Maurya arose from the ruins of an effete dynasty to free the country from the sway of the Yavanas. The Hunas, swept Aryavarta from west to east, annihilating warring princes and peaceful bhikkus.

Arts of Peace

The tactics of India were now reversed. Instead of repelling the invader, she conquered him by the arts of peace and won him for the country, whose mountains and plains were vast enough to provide the newcomers with fruits and food for themselves, pasture for their cattle and timber for their buildings. Thus the Pahlavas, having conquered the kingdom of Gandhara, enrich Taxila with monasteries and stupas and, migrating to the South, transformed a cluster of rocks on the coast of the Bay of Bengal into a place of pilgrimage and a museum of art. Indrapastras receive the brunt of the Afghan army; and the Chanda-

las and Chauhanas win over the new invaders, making them Indians, as the Qutub Minar and the pillar of Asoka upon Phiroz Shah's Kotla widely proclaim from the plain of Delhi. Babar enters the country, writing his memoirs on the saddle of his horse, and his family is adopted by the country, as the new Indian architectural style so beautifully blended by his grandson Akbar in Fatehpur discloses, and the tastes of his great grandson confirm. Babar in his new home still longs for the melons of Afghanistan; but Jahangir relishes the mangoes of India. Dara Shikuh writes a handbook, the *Majma-ul-Bahrain*, synthesising Hindu and Islamic philosophy. And Urdu grows in the very military camps of the rulers.

Wonderful Vitality

The vitality of India! That is the wonderful *kavacha* which has preserved her amidst invasions, frontal attacks and infamous treasons. The Pandyas, a dynasty said to have fought at Kurukshetra, spoken of by Herodotus, "the Father of History", ruled in Madura down to the 17th century. The square coins of India still survive in the two anna and half-anna pieces of modern days. The Arthashastra of Kautilya, a final compilation of previous administrative codes, is even today materially followed by rulers at home and abroad. The old village communities still live in many parts of the land with the vigour of a youthful athlete.

What is the nature of this wonderful *kavacha*? A famous old sage, Narada, once approached Sanatkumara, craving to acquire *atma*vidya, the knowledge of the *atman*. That knowledge is life-knowledge. Kings resigned their thrones in quest of it and retreated to the forests; men of wealth abandoned their *grahas* and wives and devoted their lives to peaceful *tapas*. To aid them in the sublime pursuit the old *rishtis* composed the *Upanishads*. Let modern India also learn from the old how to appreciate values and distinguish the shadows from the light of the Sun. That spirit has preserved India fresh and youthful through the ages, and that alone will keep her so in the future.

In the freshness of this youth, India has for ages contemplated the orderly variety of Eternal Beauty and she has striven to translate it in stone in the hard life-realities of Kalidasa and learned to retain the white restful dream of the Taj Mahal. She has imaged that Beauty in the colourful paintings of Ajanta and Sittanavasal and in the thrill of her *ragas* and *raginis*, which seek to capture the infinite vibrations of the Eternal Silence.

As Savitri was robbed of her husband Satyavan by the dread Yama, so was India for a time despoiled of her freedom. As Savitri, so India through the ages. In every mountain pass of the Dekkan, in the person of Shivaji, she fought for her freedom. She led her glorious *lancharas* to the fields of Raichur and Udayagiri, in the person of the ever victorious Krishna Deva Raya of Vijayanagara. She defended the North-Western Frontier under the leadership of Ranji Singh. And today she has convinced her former overlords to return the priceless treasure of her freedom peacefully. May she now be restored to her pristine glories in the times to come. Today is not the day of India's birth. It is the day of her resurrection.



Field-Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck, Supreme Commander of the Forces of India and Pakistan.