

How would we Revive the Lost National Glory? History and Lessons

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Abstract

Through the annals of history, we tend to find episodes of valour, dedication and sacrifice for the cause of nation, of men, who chose to strive against forbidding odds and led a life of difficulties, squalor and misery. They should have been leading a comfortable life but for their urge to keep the nation above everything. They were trained and brought up in such a manner that for them, their nation and people in it were of prime importance, no matter what happened. However, the fact remains that these unsung heroes died a quiet death and were left to wither under the burden of anonymity. When it comes to discussing the Indian history, the above mentioned facts could readily be cross checked. It is our plight that after India gained independence in 1947, the contemporary government undertook the task of giving impetus to only those periods of Indian history which were a black spot on the piety, innocence and Rajdharma of kings who held their promise and name above all things. As we read Indian history and compare it with world histories, this void between the ruler and the ruled, the fact and overdose of fiction come to our view. India is perhaps the only country where nationalistic fervor and sacrifice for the sake of the nation were trampled underfoot thereby giving way to glorification of Afghan invaders, conferring titles on dynasties of Muslim invaders and naming institutions and roads after them in the post-independence era while at the same time, the Indian heroes of struggle with foreign forces were forgotten. Over a passage of time and with the rise of nationalism and a surge in patriotic fervor coupled with boost to social and electronic media, questions have begun to be asked and the wrong doings of the dynasties have been questioned repeatedly.

Key Words

Anonymity, Void, Impetus, Fervor, Conferring

Our nation is an old one, probably as old as the earth itself. We are the custodians of a rich heritage, having an aura and a charm of its own, while, at the same time, guiding the world about human values, affinity for fellow beings, importance of being earnestly dedicated, giving the status of God to a guest. For centuries, we have borne the guilt of being very lenient towards the invaders, who came to this great nation with mercenary motives, got involved too much in their selfish and vicious tendencies. (1) Nation and the concept of being united were never an appealing thought to the Indians. When the self-sustaining nature of the villages was given a jolt by the business men from these nations, the artisans and skilled people from these villages were made to shift to cities for working for their survival as the production from their industries was to rule over the handmade things. The industry was given much freebies and the raw material was straight sent to these factories owing to the whims of the princely states satisfied by the costly gifts by these businessmen from the West.

Far sightedness was genuinely lacking in the people of those times. They were not able to fathom the troubles they were to confront by providing facilities to the merchants from the industrial nations. Tackling a state, one at a time was the policy followed by the merchants who stayed to rule. They knew very well that they would not be able to surmount the

massive collective strength of this old nation. From the times of king Porus who was able to stop the victory onslaught of Alexander the Great., jealousy and hatred for neighbouring states formed the core of the foreign policy of these states. When Porus confronted Alexander on the banks of river Jhelum, the neighbouring states were not at all willing to stand by Porus against this foreign invader. Since then, this fact spread that Indians are never unitedly up in arms against an alien invader. This made every foreign attack easy to maneuver and get hold of a state like a cake walk. Since the first Arab invasion in 878 A.D., imagine 26 attacks by Mahmood Ghaznevi and 11 attacks by Mohammad Ghauri succeed without any stiff resistance. The blind plunder they carried out in temples and palaces is a lesson to be learnt by the progeny as to how divided houses fall easily without much resistance.

Indians have this mindset that in case someone attacks them from the West, he will not be able to harm them. This psyche rules them and is pre dominant even today. The Muslim invaders have always eyed the throne of Delhi as it meant their confirmed rule over India. They always had the notion of transforming DarulHarb into Darul Islam- converting the residents of Hindustaan into Muslims.(2) The Aibaks, The Khiljis, The Tughlaqs, all came and conquered the throne of India. Nowhere during this period was found a genuine effort on part of the Indian rulers to ignite a collective war against the invaders from the West. Not until 1526 when Babar defeated Ibrahim Lodhi in the battle of Panipat and laid the foundation of Mughal dynasty in India do we see the real religious onslaught of rulers to convert Hindus into Muslims. Babar was a hardcore muslim ruler who had it in his mind to change the social setup of India and transform it into a muslim state. Such was the extent of his ferocity of torturing the natives that at Eminabaad, the great Guru Nanak Dev had to spurn Babar with the words- Etimaatpayikurlane tai kidardnaaaya?(3)

After Babar, came his son Akbar, who was equally ferocious in his attacks on the Hindus to convert them into Muslims. He started the policy of marrying Rajput princesses thereby seeking the matrimonial aspect to secure Mughal rule over these states. One ruler whom he could not force to accept the dominance of the Mughal dynasty was the ruler of Mewad, MaharanaPratap. History bears a testimony to the fact that Maharana fought alone and bravely against the might of the Mughal army and the neighbouring rulers never thought about helping him. Whenever the history of India is written, this offending aspect of princely states will always be remembered as a black spot. Akbar was unjustly glorified by the Indian historians of the contemporary times for being kind towards the Hindus. Unwarily, Akbar was called Akbar the Great for no greatness of his while the great Maharana who alone fought against the might of the Mughals was forgotten as an insignificant chapter in the history. It was the beginning of the fall of national glory in the blind veneration of foreign invaders.

The next Mughal ruler to be very rough and unruly with the Hindus was Aurangzeb, the famous Puritan ruler who imposed a lot of restrictions upon the Hindus. He imposed Jaziya, the tax levied upon the Hindus alone for visiting their religious places. Like Akbar, he was keenly interested in enhancing the boundaries of the Mughal empire with all his might. He was upfront against the Marathas in the south and The Sikhs in the West. ChatrapatiShivaji, the great Maratha warrior with expertise in Guerrilla warfare(4) and Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru of the Sikhs fought from their places against the Mughals, the veritable symbol of tyranny and atrocity in India at that time. The campaigns of Shivaji and Guru Gobind

Singh were a huge headache for Aurangzeb. However, the same Achilles heel for the Indians proved their nemesis. Shivaji did not get the support from the other Maratha states as they were jealous of the growing power of Shivaji. Guru Gobind Singh was instrumental in wiping out the Mughals from the face of Punjab. He aroused among the Sikhs a love for their motherland and the zeal to efface out the enemy from the face of Punjab. With Aurangzeb in Delhi, Aakil Khan in Deccan, Shivaji had a herculean task cut out for him, the establishment and consolidation of a Hindu empire and create among the natives of this nation, a feeling of national pride during the onslaught of Muslim attacks on the fidelity of the Hindus. Guru Gobind Singh similarly got no support from the kings of the estates in the hills and had to wage a lone battle with limited resources at his disposal and a sea of Mughal army to confront. He, in the process lost his four sons, the elder two in the battle and the younger two to treachery. No doubt, brave heart warriors like him are called 'SarbansDaani'- He who lost his entire family for the sake of religion but never bowed down to the atrocious rulers.

During the second half of the eighteenth century, the East India Company got Deewani Rights (Rights to collect revenue) in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, as per the treaty of Allahabad(5). Shah Alam II granted these rights to Robert Clive. The Battle of Buxar was instrumental in laying the foundation of the British Empire in India and one by one, the separate princely states of India were subdued by the British might, entirely because they were shrewd and scheming while the native kings were self-assured that the British will not harm them in any way. Till the British annexed the state of Punjab in 1849, after the death of Maharaja RanjitSingh, the entire India was under the British. They plundered the wealth of this nation, destroyed the self-reliant system of the Indian villages and made the Indians dependent on the products of the industry established by them thereby leaving the artisans to misery. Here again, the same trend of not leading from the front and leading a life of self-assurance and accepting the authority of the British without waging even a hint of battle, made India a slave nation.

The Indian kings on their part were somewhat disturbed and disillusioned with the open fleecing of Indian wealth by the British and the burden of taxes upon the common Indians. The incident of Cartridges in the Meerut Cantonment in 1857 served as the oil upon the fire. The leaders of mutiny were united in arms against the British and this mutiny was perhaps the first organized opposition of foreign invaders after centuries of the foreign rule one after the other. It is another thing that the mutiny was a failure for lack of coordination and the ability of the British to curb it. The leaders of the first struggle for freedom had ironically chosen Bahadur Shah Zafar, the Last of the Mughal king as their leader against the common enemy, the British. The mutiny began at different places on alternate dates thereby allowing the British to overcome it effectively. Most of the soldiers in the British army were the Indians and sadly they fought for the British against their own bothers as it is correctly said that slavery is a state of mind. That is why, about 3000 Englishmen in India overcame the freedom struggle by millions of Indians and the same problem of Indians not being united proved the spoilsport.

The British realized that to give vent to the suppressed feelings of the Indians, a platform should be provided. With this aim, A.O. Hume, an Englishman(6) brought into existence, the Congress. With time, the lead of the Congress was taken by Mohan DassKaram Chand Gandhi. Congress split into Moderates and Extremists as their ideologies were at

loggerheads. As a result of it, the British liked the Moderates more because they resorted to Dharnas, Hunger strikes as against the killing of police officials and inciting people for use of force against the British by the Extremist leaders. The hanging of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev was never really opposed by the moderates because they considered violent means for their ends as something against the principles. The same Congress supported the British during the two World Wars thinking that the British will grant them freedom. The Congress accepted the Two-nation theory of the Muslim League. Even after that, the Muslims were told to stay back in India at the behest of the Father of the Nation. Trains filled with the corpses of the Hindus and Sikhs residing in Pakistan came to this side of the border and not a word was spoken as a mark of protest. The refugees who came to Delhi were forced to live in tents, and here too, the pain and the anguish of the Indians, hoping to live peacefully in the land of their future was doubled on reaching India. Appeasement of a certain class seemed to be the sole motive of the government of the times.

Since Independence, the nation is writhing under the weight of corruption, over population, riots, anti-national slogans, hatred for the original denizens of this nation and appeasement policies of the governments for votes. No national character seems to inspire and encourage the citizens of this country. How can a nation progress when 5-6% of the total population pays taxes and the rest flourish on it. After independence, the national policy makers wanted all Indians to have equal opportunity for work and make efforts for a better future. But today, the deserving brainy lags behind the undeserving brawny. A nation where the hardworking representative of the nation is criticized by those who are out on bail speaks volumes about the tendency of such vile people out to insult and blemish the post of the P.M.

A lot remains to be done, a lot is desired to be implemented. Not in vain did an American president tell his countrymen-“ Don't ask what the nation has done for you, ask what you can do for the nation.’ This is the true test of a nationalist out to regain the lost pride and the status of his nation. We can perform our part in nation building and thus create a great nation. People want facilities, perks, financial sustenance from the government but when , it is their turn to be a reasonable, law abiding citizen, the quality is missing in them. Fathers earn daily wages through hard work only to return home drunk, leaving their kids in hunger and dismay. Domestic violence rules the roost. Opportunism and favoritism are abounding in national culture. Patience and tolerance were our virtues for long but they became our weakness over the years. The virtuous stopped opposing the wrong doing and thus the societal structure stood disturbed. Violence for right reason is always reasonable. He who understands rough language should be answered in the same vein. Nation first should be the policy in all things and speaking against the nation should be considered treason. Old culture of Gurukuls should be revived to provide holistic education to the future of the nation. The top brass of the nation should set example by themselves. Perhaps Chaucer had rightly written many centuries back-

If Gold rust, what will then iron do?(7)

1. The East India Company founded by John Watts on 31 December 1600. Wikipedia
2. Darulharb to Darul Islam The land where Muslims can practise their religion as the ruling sect. Wikipedia
3. AsaMohalla 1, Page-360, Guru Granth Sahib.
4. Guerrilla Warfare, the first proponent was Sun Tzu, A General of 6th century BC.
5. The Treaty of Allahabad signed on 12 August, 1765. Between Mughal Emperor Shah Alam and Robert Clive of The East India Company. Wikipedia
6. Allan Octavian Hume, Father of Indian Ornithology and co -founder of Indian National Congress in 1885.
7. Geoffery Chaucer The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales Page 13