Monday, January 10, 2011/ Second Annual Saifuddin Kitchlew Lecture/ Jamia/ Edward Said Hall, 2.30 pm

Enhancing Security: Lessons from History and Geography

By Rajmohan Gandhi

Cherishing as I do my old relationships with Jamia, with Professor Sanjoy Hazarika, and with Toufique Kitchlew, son of Dr Saifuddin Kitchlew, this occasion means a great deal to me. In the 1920s, my father, Devadas Gandhi, taught at Jamia – I believe on the Karol Bagh campus; and until his death in 1957 he maintained warm friendships with Jamia's staff and faculty.

I don't want to speak of the precious relationship that his father the Mahatma had with Jamia. Precious things are not always easy to speak of. As for myself, I have had the privilege of knowing both Zakir Sahib and his remarkable biographer and Jamia colleague, Mujeeb Sahib, and of attending or taking part in some of Jamia's events.

And as for Sanjoy, having known him and his family in Assam ever since he entered his teens, I have felt great pride ever since in his numerous accomplishments, some of them pioneering ones.

In the mid-1950s, soon after *I* had left *my* teens, Dr Saifuddin Kitchlew, after whom this lecture series is named, was famous as an international figure in a movement to bring peace between the USA and the Soviet Union. I did not have the privilege of meeting him then or later, and it was only after Dr Kitchlew's demise in 1963 that I learnt, in the course of my studies of the freedom movement, of his extraordinary life as a boy of Kashmiri origin in Amritsar, as a student in Europe, as hero of Jallianwala in 1919, as a stalwart figure year after year in the Indian National Congress, and as one in a chain of INC presidents during months of severe British repression in 1932. This evening I offer respectful salutations to Dr Saifuddin Kitchlew's memory.

What brings me close to him in feeling is my friendship, interrupted for long years but firmly lodged in my heart, for his son Toufique. This friendship was nurtured in the 1970s and 1980s over cups of tea in the canteen of the Nehru Memorial

Library, which, as we all know but often forget, occupies the space and grounds of the British Empire's commander-in-chief in India. In those stimulating conversations over tea, which, as you can imagine curtailed his and my research, Toufique was always categorical and consistent in his opinions, one of which was that historians and public figures had failed totally to recognize the depth of his father's opposition to Partition.

If always categorical in his views, Toufique was also usually in very poor health, so much so that I always felt relieved, on returning to the library after a gap, to find that he was still active. In November last – many years after my last encounter with an ailing Toufique --, when on my campus in Urbana, Illinois, I was collecting thoughts for this lecture, I googled his name and was gladdened to find that Toufique the scholar, this descendant of Kashmir and Amritsar and of the subcontinent's great movement, was honoured at the India-Pak border in August 2009. Though relieved by this discovery, I remained apprehensive. Sadly my fear was justified, for Professor Hazarika has informed me that Toufique is no more.

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Saifuddin Kitchlew's life conveys the triumph and tragedy of the great Indian story. We can mark, in his piece of the story, the tossing away of a great promising career at the altar of freedom. We can mark the inspiration that he, Dr. Kitchlew, and Satyapal -- one a Muslim Kashmiri/Punjabi and the other a Hindu Punjabi -- jointly provided in the holy city of the Sikhs in 1919. We can recall the blood that was shed for liberty in April of that year by Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs who felt they were brothers and sisters together. And we realize that 28 years later, in 1947, greater quantities of blood were shed across the Punjab by Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs for the crime of being the 'other'.

We sadly know, too, that in the Punjab's story much blood was also spilled earlier than in 1947, century before century, and again in the decades after 1947, in the two Punjabs of India and Pakistan. We will not begin to understand or honour Saifuddin Kitchlew, or the numberless killed over time on Punjab's good earth, unless we at least ask the questions, 'Why did these wounds of history occur?' and 'How can they be healed?'

I do not claim to know adequate answers to these questions, but I pray that this evening may add to our common desire to search for the answers.

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What history and geography teach us regarding security is the question I am asking this afternoon, and the first point I wish to make, a most obvious one, is that the danger from the northwest of the subcontinent is not exactly a new story.

This danger is what thousands of years ago the communities of Harappa faced. Perhaps, who knows, it was a danger the ancestors of these Harappans also caused by descending down from Central Asia, if descending down from Central Asia is what they did. The threat from the northwest was what Puru or Porus faced from Alexander, what Chandragupta faced from some of Alexander's Greek successors. It was what the Janjuas, the Ghakkars, the Pals and other Rajput or non-Rajput tribes encountered from Mahmud of Ghazni and Shahabuddin of Ghor in the 11th and 12th centuries.

It was from the northwest that the Mongols regularly stormed into India over a period of three centuries; and it was from that direction that Taimur attacked at the end of the 14th century. The danger from the northwest is what the Lodis faced from Babur, what Akbar faced from his brother, what in the 1730s the Mughal king Muhammad Shah faced from Nadir Shah, and what Muhammad Shah's pathetic successors faced from Ahmad Shah Abdali in the 1740s and 1750s.

The sun rose in the east but the sword rose in the northwest. I offer this reminder not because we are entirely forgetful, but because we have chosen to forget a critical element in history's attacks from the northwest into the subcontinent. What is that element?

That forgotten element is the fact that the worst victim of every assault was -- Pakistan. We here can choose to call it 'the Pakistan area' of the subcontinent but Pakistanis think of it, simply, as Pakistan. The Pashtun country and the Punjabi country – the West Punjabi country – were wounded or devastated by the attackers before with depleted energies the attackers reached Indian Punjab and before they reached what we think of today as Haryana, Delhi, western UP or northern Rajasthan.

During the invaders' return trip to the northwest, West Punjab and the Pashtun country were often stripped all over again. These spaces, for many years part of Pakistan, have been the primary victims of attacks from the northwest.

Wrapped inside this forgotten element is another unrecognized truth, which is that the most destructive, perhaps, of these attacks from the northwest were of the Mongols who were not only not Muslim but fiercely anti-Muslim.

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What I am driving at should now be plain to everyone. Today the subcontinent faces a threat from the northwest, with Pakistan facing even more of it than India, but with some elements in Pakistan, as we know all too well, contributing fresh force to it. That threat is from an ideology that worships hate, celebrates death and destruction, and dismisses the value of life.

This ideology of violent extremism or violent radicalism uses phrases from Islam but, like the ideology of the Mongols, it is anti-Islam, and rejoices, as we all know, in the destruction of the lives, places of worship, and properties of human beings, of Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

At the present time, Afghanistan and the tribal lands between Afghanistan and Pakistan seem to contain many of this ideology's dedicated believers, but it would be absurd and risky to think that the northwest of the subcontinent is the only place where the banner of violent extremism or violent radicalism is being raised today.

Nor should we ignore the ominous reality that rather than feeling threatened by it, some are attracted by this ideology; and we know that those attracted to violent extremism live in all parts of our region. They include Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, atheists and Maoists.

Historical, economic and psychological reasons have always existed for the appeal of violent extremism. This must have been true of the anti-Muslim Mongols in the 13th century, and it must be true of the ostensibly pro-Muslim Al Qaeda in the 21st. Historical, economic and psychological reasons have also existed for the appeal that violent extremism has held for some among sections of India's Hindus, Sikhs

and Muslims, Sri Lanka's Tamils, the Baluch of Pakistan, for those who have enlisted as Maoists in Nepal and several parts of India, and many others.

But because grounds exist for me to feel enraged, it does not mean that I should enlist as a suicide bomber or as a non-suicidal murderer of innocent children. All of us in India and Pakistan must daily ask ourselves whether we are doing enough to defeat, around us, the ideology of extremist violence. While it is the state's task to defeat militancy, it is the citizen's task, and the thinker's task, to explore avenues more intelligent than violence.

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But I wish to return briefly to the Mongols, in order then to turn to a point all of us are familiar with. Not knowing too much about the Mongols or their history, I did what any good researcher does to start his study. I googled 'Mongols' and was led quickly to a website which I will not even name, for its material is disgusting. But on that website I found this about the Mongols:

> … the Jihadis tormented the Mongols…. leading to a fierce and vicious counter-attack by the Mongols on Islamdom from 1200 to 1258. An attack that was fiercer than the Crusades and which nearly wiped out Islam.

I don't know whether this is the full story, but I am willing to accept that for one reason or another, and maybe for good reasons, the Mongols felt provoked by a group of Muslims. It is something else that I found on the site that invites a comment from me. This was a call for Islam to be 'militarily defeated and then destroyed' on the ground that 'Islam' is the source of our world's violence.

Let me offer a quick word on this explanation for the violence of our times, an explanation now fairly common in parts of our world, at times hinted at, at other times directly put forward.

Believers in this explanation can, I suppose, detect an Islamic hand behind the killings in World War I, World War II, the Holocaust, Stalin's Soviet Union, Mao's China, Pol Pot's Kampuchea, and Rwanda 1994, but the rest of us are less easily convinced.

Has humanity changed dramatically and selectively in the last 25 years, with all non-Muslims suddenly becoming peaceful and forgiving, and all the Muslims suddenly becoming violent?

If today's images of violence often contain Islamic faces, and if we wish to end the violence, we should look at events of history that may have angered Muslims in general, similar perhaps to events that may have angered the Mongols all those centuries ago, or angered others in different times and climes, providing power-hungry and headline-hungry individuals with destructive fuel.

Blaming Islam for our problems may at times be politically or even commercially expedient. In the western world, a person, especially a woman, willing to say that she has given up Islam can today command a stage and handsome fees as well. But singling out a religion (or race or nation) for our ills is flawed diagnosis. It makes a cure harder to find.

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Returning again to history, very old Indian and South Asian history in fact, let us ask why Asoka and Akbar continue to inspire and amaze us. In part, frankly, we are struck by the size of the territory they ruled, but more impressive to us, surely, was their willingness to permit the expression of different ideas, including different religious ideas.

Akbar's Din-i-Ilahi was and will remain controversial. Should the great king not have clarified beyond doubt that for him Din-i-Ilahi was a form of Islam, not an alternative to it? Such questions are unavoidable, and there may be similar queries in regard to aspects of Asoka's Buddhism.

But who today would seriously challenge Akbar's *policy* that all should have the freedom to engage in dialogue on religious questions? Who would fault Asoka for his *policy*, enunciated in the 12th Major Rock Edict, of dialogue in a spirit of concord, 'so that (in his words) one may hear one another's principles'?

What history seems to say to us is that peace, stability and prosperity have a positive connection to tolerance, to freedom of religious belief. Many may question the adequacy of Akbar's Din-i-Ilahi as a personal faith. Concerning a far more

recent period, many may disagree with Jawaharlal Nehru's personal position on God or religion. But Akbar and Nehru were both wise in promoting free and civil dialogue and in assuring the freedom of religious belief or non-belief in the state they governed. We may dissent from their beliefs but feel thankful for their policies.

If I were a good Sunni Muslim, which I am not – I am only a not-so-observant, half-caste Hindu, half Bania and half Brahmin – but if I were a good Sunni Muslim, I *might* share Aurangzeb's loyalty to his school of Sunni Islam; yet I would still maintain that his policy of a superior place in his kingdom for his own sect, and inferior places or no place at all for adherents of other sects, beliefs or religions, was a recipe for anger and disintegration.

Dara Shukoh's theology *may* have been weaker, for all I know, than Aurangzeb's, but his policy of fostering translations of Hindu texts and discussions with scholars of different religions was surely wiser for the future of the Mughal empire.

Was Aurangzeb's way really the right way of dealing with the Sikhs, the Shias, the Marathas, the Jats? Would not our history, India's and Pakistan's, have been blessedly different under the policies of Dara Shukoh, the disciple of Mian Mir, the saint who laid a foundation stone for the Sikh temple in Amritsar? Under those policies, the Punjab would have seen less bloodshed in the 18th century, thereby also perhaps avoiding the enmities, stereotyping and bloodshed that disgraced us all, all of us in India and Pakistan, in that month of glory and madness, August 1947.

While many in this audience may agree with me, successive governments in Pakistan have firmly held the opposite view, so firmly in fact that history textbooks there from class one to matriculation do not even acknowledge that Akbar existed or mention his name. Books used in college do speak of him, but as one who weakened Islam, when in fact the opposite may be true.

If Akbar had not made Islam voluntary, and other faiths acceptable and legitimate, a counter-struggle may have eliminated Islam by force from India. If Islam, whether Sunni, Shia, or of another sort has a strong voice today in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, part of the credit, it can be suggested, belongs to Akbar.

In recent months, my studies have brought me closer to the Punjab. In particular, I am trying to find out why, as the Mughal empire retreated in the 18th century, the Punjab's Muslim majority did not fill the power vacuum, a vacuum that in the end the Sikhs filled, before the arrival of our friends the Brits.

I don't have good answers – yet -- to the question I have spelt out, and would much value any leads and insights that scholars here might offer. But I have discovered this much, that during his reign the Punjab and its Muslims – Lahore city and its Muslims -- really liked Akbar, and that while he was viceroy for the Punjab and later, they really loved Dara Shukoh.

We are told that Pakistan's Punjab today produces many recruits for the ideology of violent extremism. That seems to be true, and almost every day seems to bring new evidence to confirm this truth, plus a related truth that intimidation and fear silence many in Pakistan's Punjab who are deeply troubled by violent extremism and fanaticism. Historical, economic and psychological explanations for this troubling reality should and I believe can be discovered. But anyone who knows even a little about Pakistan's Punjab knows also that the vast majority of its people detest extremism and fanaticism.

The Punjab of Pakistan that continues to love Baba Farid and Data Ganj Baksh is as far removed from this ideology as the sun is from the caves or other dark places where callous killings were planned. As we know, a blast in October 2010 took five lives at the entrance of Baba Farid's shrine in Pak Pattan. And in July 2010 more than 40 people were blasted to pieces at the shrine in Lahore of Data Ganj Baksh Hujweri, the 11th century Sufi saint and pioneer of the subcontinent's engagement with mystical Islam. Sadly there have been several other manifestations.

The only difference between the Mongols who attacked Islam (and the Punjab) during Baba Farid's time in the 13th century and the attackers of the 21st century is that these modern killers claim they are defending Islam, when in fact they are its enemies.

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As many here know, one of the men who survived the frenzy of 1947 was Jamia's vice chancellor at the time, Dr Zakir Husain. Had it not been for three men, a Muslim, a Hindu and a Sikh, Zakir Sahib would have been killed during a train journey he was indiscreet enough to undertake, from Delhi to Pathankot, on August 21, 1947.

Protected and saved in that dangerous yet historic month, he went on to become India's President. In that capacity he delivered several important addresses, but one that always moves me was given when he laid the foundation stone for Guru Gobind Singh Bhavan at Patiala's Punjabi University.

> The whole life of Guru Gobind Singh (*said Zakir Saheb)* is a unique story of sacrifice, toil, educative activity, military talent, unrivalled valour, boundless graciousness, unfathomable love… For what was there (*he went on to say*) that this man of God did not bring as an offering before God's throne? His father; the light of his eyes, his beloved sons; recklessly brave comrades, to whom he was more gracious than to his own offspring, all were offered up by him.[1]

To absorb the real meaning of these sentences, one should recall that some of the bitterest violence of 18th century Punjab, and of 1947, occurred in Sikh-Pashtun clashes; that Zakir Saheb's ancestors were Pashtuns; that he too had lost a light of his eyes, a little daughter, and that earlier he had lost two brothers of his. It should not surprise us to learn that Zakir Saheb's eyes were wet while he wrote the speech, and again when he delivered it.

Let us also recall another amazing Pashtun, Badshah Khan, and his relationship with the Sikhs. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan not only had ancestors *from* the northwest; he lived there. In the early 1920s, the British jailed him, keeping him in different prisons. In Lahore jail Badshah Khan found that a scholar called Malik Lal Khan, together with whom Badshah Khan 'studied the Holy Qur'an diligently', soon, in Badshah Khan's words, 'dropped out, accusing me giving my own interpretation to the text.' This person 'was a blind follower of tradition,' Badshah Khan would recall.

In the jail of Dera Ghazi Khan, Ghaffar Khan found that one Gurdittmal, 'our respected teacher in my barrack' (as Badshah Khan described him), who ended his

Hindu prayers with ‘shanti, shanti’ (‘peace, peace’), was ‘not a man of peace’. ‘He used to lose his temper easily.’

But the Sikh prayers impressed Badshah Khan, including a line chanted enthusiastically in Punjabi, ‘Let me lose my head, let my body perish, but not my Sikh faith.’ He drew the interesting conclusion that:

> The Sikhs were more spirited than the Hindus and the Muslims because their scripture, composed in their mother tongue, touched their hearts . . . The Hindus and the Muslims do not understand the meaning of their prayers because they are recited in Sanskrit and Arabic and not in their mother tongue.[2]

Since the Punjab of the early 1920s was witnessing the non-violent Gur-ka-Bagh struggle for the autonomy and cleansing of Sikh gurdwaras, many of Badshah Khan’s prison companions in Dera Ghazi Khan were Sikh satyagrahis, none more impressive than Sardar Kharak Singh, who was often penalized for standing up for prisoners’ rights. Badshah Khan would later recall:

> Through a hole in the door of the hospital barrack, we used to have a glimpse of each other. Kharak Singh had become very weak and at times I passed some food for him through the hole. He was a brave man. All the difficulties and miseries did not rob him of his fine sense of humour.[3]

We are unaware of history if we find nothing unusual in a Pashtun in the early 1920s passing food to a Sikh through a prison hole. And perhaps we lose an opportunity if we fail to pick up pointers from Badshah Khan’s life on how violent extremism may be answered.

Dr Saifuddin Kitchlew, Badshah Khan and Dr. Zakir Husain were in a minority among the subcontinent’s Muslims when they expressed skepticism about Partition. Opinions have now changed. While some Hindu extremists openly say that nothing as good as Partition ever happened to the Hindus, some in Pakistan

voice disappointment at its results. After decades of rejection, Dr Kitchlew stands vindicated, but I suspect that his soul desires more than vindication. I have a hunch that it desires nothing less than friendship between India and Pakistan.

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Given the widely held Indian view that Pakistan is India's actual or potential enemy, a view for which history seems to offer some justification, we should ask whether India's security is enhanced or endangered by a rise in violent extremism in Pakistan, by a growth in Pakistan's enmity towards India, and by a weakening of Pakistan's economy, polity, and society.

It is natural, perhaps, for Indians injured and angered by Pak-sponsored violence to wish murderous attacks in Pakistan on Pakistani targets. This wish has been granted. Yet it is not clear that the rise in extremist militancy in Pakistan has helped India, except perhaps by reminding the Pakistani people that violent extremism is South Asia's common danger and foe.

If the situation in Pakistan worsens, if lives, schools, hospitals, shrines and mosques are not protected, if the state there ceases to function, if the country begins to disintegrate, if a vacuum is created in our neighbourhood and lawlessness takes over, then, by the inescapable logic of geography, a troubled and endangered India will be forced to examine the risks of intervening or not intervening in its neighbour's agonizing affairs.

May Pakistan and India **never** reach such a scenario. If Pakistan can find ways to move towards a healthier economy, a more stable and stronger polity, and a freer society, that would be very much in India's interest. Meanwhile we in India must remind ourselves that Pakistan's governing agencies and its people are two very different entities, and we must ask whether as a people and a government we have done what we can to reach both entities, and especially the more important one, the people of Pakistan.

It is known to several in this city that our much-respected Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, harbours a deep wish not only for a settlement with Pakistan but

also for the wellbeing of the Pakistani people, in whose territory he was born. Yet we have to ask whether the Pakistani people are aware of his desires. We have to ask whether our Prime Minister has tried hard enough, often enough and boldly enough to reach out to the Pakistani people with affirmations of his understanding and fellow-feeling, through means of communication which exist at his finger-tips but which were not available to his predecessors.

India's enemies in Pakistan need to know that if attacked India will fight back hard. It is probable that they know this. But India's friends there, who greatly outnumber our foes, need to know that they have a place in our thoughts, including the thoughts of our Prime Minister. Unfortunately, they do not know this.

And the people of India do not know that Pakistan today witnesses a courageous, untiring, and growing effort for tolerance and pluralism, and for strong, unwavering and uncompromising opposition to violent extremism. For those with eyes to see, this effort is visible in the media, on the street, and wherever people gather.

Many here will recall that a few weeks ago -- at the end of November last, thousands in Pakistan marched from Islamabad to Lahore protesting the terror attacks on shrines.

Are brave efforts of this kind large enough? Will they carry the day? We do not know. What is evident is that for every single person who courageously speaks out in Pakistan there are thousands of others who silently offer their backing.

Clearly Pakistan needs clear and unambiguous voices from its civil, military and religious leaders denouncing cruel fanaticism and extremist violence. The absence of such voices is profoundly worrisome. But the timidity of leaders should not blind us to the reality of what Pakistan's great majority wish, which is to have a life on the ground of live and let live, of the peaceful coexistence of people of different views.

The Pakistani people do not appreciate, even as Indians do not, the killing of their country's innocent children, of humble bread-winners at bicycle-stands, patients in their hospitals, worshippers in their mosques, or vice chancellors in their offices.

They do not appreciate, even as we don't, that a doctor, teacher or carpenter can be gunned down for the crime of belonging to his or her sect, religion or region.

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If the northwest is so critical to our security, what should be our policy on disputes between Afghanistan and Pakistan? Fixated on the 'Islamic factor', many of us fail to recognize or remember that the Pak-Afghan friction has in some ways been more resistant to solutions than the India-Pak friction. After all the only country in the world that in 1947 opposed Pakistan's membership of the UN was Afghanistan.

At present India seems by and large to be liked by the Afghans, Pakistan by and large disliked. But such inclinations are unlikely to cancel the realities of geography – the physical joining together of Pakistan and Afghanistan; or the realities of religion; or the reality of family ties – after having lived for years since the 1980s as refugees in Pakistan, a great many Afghans have married Pakistanis.

Not that active hostility between Pakistan and Afghanistan is impossible. If Pakistan is India's enemy, such hostility may seem desirable in a short-sighted view. But India's true and long-term interest in Afghanistan is in the well-being of the Afghan people. That interest is also linked to Central Asia's oil and gas, and to Afghanistan's own untapped mineral riches. Any active hostility between Afghanistan and Pakistan would cripple India's trade route to Afghanistan and beyond. That cannot be what we wish to promote.

All seem to agree that America's departure from Afghanistan is a question primarily of time. If this takes say four or five years, what should India be doing in Afghanistan during that period?

Countries like Iran, Russia, China and Turkey seem to be at least as interested in Afghanistan as India is, but if history says anything about Afghanistan, it is that that country is best left alone. When they tried to press or induce the Afghans to move in a certain direction against their will, they all failed – the Iranians, the Mughals, the Brits, the Russians, and the Pakistanis. It does not appear at present

that the Americans, their immense involvement notwithstanding, will rewrite this obstinate history.

We should of course continue with our effort, India's effort, to assist with Afghanistan's roads, electricity, and hospitals. But picking tribes or ethnicities to back in Afghanistan is a thankless exercise and a hazardous one as well. This is a truth for India and Pakistan both, and for the US too.

Seeking to manipulate the proud and independent-minded Afghans is foolish enough, no matter who does it, but using their soil for other battles, such as one between India and Pakistan, can only be worse. Pakistanis speak sometimes of an India-Afghan pincer directed at them. But that can never be a serious Indian goal.

And while snipping off the India-Afghan connection may be the wish of some Pakistanis, Afghans will resist the wish, and the realities of human nature will frustrate it. No one wants to be cut off from the enemy's enemy, especially when the enemy's enemy is a trading partner with a large and expanding economy.

But we should remind ourselves of the large constituency in Pakistan that wants friendship with India and engage that constituency in a discussion on how Indians and Pakistanis can complement one another in their roles in Afghanistan.

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The Soviet Union produced many a big bang but died because it failed to evoke from its people gentler words of contentment, and because it could not tolerate the sounds of dissent. We in India have only partly absorbed these lessons of history. Our governments have at times responded to popular feeling and acceded to demands from long-ignored groups for a share in power, but sections among us continue to crave for the big bang as a symbol of international status, and for the gun or the ban as the means of controlling internal unrest.

A healthy, educated and satisfied people are *the* source of a nation's strength – more crucial than the size of its armies -- and should be the concern of anyone interested in security. Every Indian drawn into a comparison of India and China – a

natural and useful tendency – knows sadly that in both education and health our performance has been inferior to China's. We have a very long way to go.

Yet we should not fail to recognize our democracy as a critical asset. Remember that the Soviet Union had high standards in both education and health and yet failed, in part at least because the Soviet state turned too readily to the gun, the ban -- and the prison.

Like his fellow-Kashmiri, Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr Kitchlew was a staunch believer in India's non-alignment between the Cold War era's rival blocs, one led by the US and the other by the Soviet Union. We should recall that India's non-alignment was dictated not merely by a theory but by geopolitics as well – by the recognition that the US would not send troops to support India in any Indo-Soviet conflict.

Some in India and the U.S. are excited by the idea of a US-backed India balancing China in the lands and waters of Asia. Some in Pakistan, and in China, are excited by the idea of a China-backed Pakistan balancing India. But the US will not send troops to support India in any conflict with China; and China will not send troops to support Pakistan in any conflict with India. Non-alignment remains a sound policy for our region, for India and for Pakistan.

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We do not know when will come the day on which India becomes a permanent member of the UN Security Council. President Obama's pronouncement before our Parliament last November has certainly brought that day closer, and President Medvedev of Russia has also made pleasing utterances. But perhaps that looked-forward-to event, while visible on the horizon, is not exactly imminent.

Obama's statement, 'In the years ahead, I look forward to a reformed U.N. Security Council that includes India as a permanent member,' suggests that the road to that day contains at least two bumps. One is indicated by the phrase 'in the years ahead', and the other is the President's mention of the reformed council ahead of India's inclusion in it. All know that amending the UN Charter in order to achieve a reformed UNSC, in which India would be included, will be a complicated exercise.

Nonetheless, Pakistan was quick to deplore the Obama pronouncement, and China may nurse misgivings, yet it is not a given that India's elevation will diminish Pakistan, or injure China, or upset regional equilibrium. Our leaders, diplomats and commentators should do all they can to indicate that India would want to represent not just itself but the region as a whole.

More than fifty-five years have elapsed since the end of World War II. If it is to remain relevant, the UNSC should get past a power-structure limited to the victors of that ancient war, and should aim as far as possible to reflect today's realities, which certainly include India's increased salience.

Since each culture or nation brings something distinctive to the world's table, Indians must ask what they would bring. Clearly, India's contribution should reflect the nation's perception, by no means easy to arrive at, of where the world is heading in these quick-changing times, and how India is likely to fare.

But it should also reflect an understanding of what history has prepared *us* for, and of what *the world as a whole* needs. And here it is certainly of interest that even as he was voicing his country's support for India's permanent seat, President Obama also spoke of his expectations of India on vital issues of human and democratic rights.

We all remember what he said, referring to suppressions in Burma, 'And if I can be frank, in international fora, India has often shied away from some of these issues.' 'As the world's two largest democracies' he added, 'we must never forget that the price of our own freedom is standing up for the freedom of others.'

Even if this was not a Kitchlew Memorial Lecture, I would have made the point I will now make. But since it is a Kitchlew Lecture, I will make it with added conviction. Remember that Dr Kitchlew and the thousands of his colleagues who were ready to face prison, destitution and bullets did so not for the rights of one clan, sect, caste, tribe or community alone, or even only for the people of India. They did so for the sake of humanity as a whole.

As we did during the final phase of our freedom struggle, as we did year after year following independence, but as we have regrettably not done for several years now, we must now speak up again for the rights of -- the Palestinians. And we should do so also for the ears of President Obama, for, despite his remarks in India that I quoted, he too has failed to speak up for the freedom of the Palestinians.

Speaking up for Palestinian rights will indirectly help, I believe, with India's and South Asia's security. In fact it will also win us wider support in the United Nations for our permanent seat bid. But we should do also it for, dare I use the word, moral reasons. In its criticism of the Obama endorsement for a permanent Indian seat, Pakistan, we can recall, had said that the world should take a 'moral view and not base itself on any temporary expediencies or exigencies of power politics'.

But mine is not primarily a tactical point. *Our* history, from Asoka to Akbar and down to our freedom struggle, challenges us to bring to the international table not gold, or oil, or missiles with nuclear warheads, but the human conscience.

An additional reason for my mentioning Palestine is the fact that I was there in April last and felt the impact of the illegal Israeli settlements. I saw that these settlements are enormous and built with granite. I saw that they add up to over a hundred different towns, occupy the high ground, and overwhelm Palestinian communities. Their construction has bisected Palestinian villages and walled them off. In fact the settlements have eliminated the physical possibility of an independent state in the West Bank.

Incidentally I should mention – for the sake of history and geography – that Badshah Khan's wife Nambata is buried in Jerusalem (which too, along with the West Bank, bears the weight of forced settlements). Also buried in Jerusalem is Maulana Muhammad Ali, the younger of the famed Ali Brothers, and Jamia's first rector. 'Here lies al-Sayyid Muhammad Ali al-Hindi' says the inscription on his grave near the great mosque.

I can hear the unspoken comment. 'What do distant graves matter? How does Jerusalem or Palestine affect our security? And please spare us the moral claptrap.

We believe in Twenty-Twenty cricket, a lengthening roster of Indian billionaires, and dishonest gains of one lakh crores. We believe in gold worship, silver worship, diamond worship. The suffering of millions of our people will end as we refuse to see that suffering. As the rich in India become richer, the poor will simply go away.'

In more elegant language, such pragmatic sentiments *could*, I suppose, form part of an inaugural-day utterance at the UN Security Council when India does take a permanent seat.

On the other hand, there is another perspective which Indian can bring and offer, a well-known yet oft-forgotten one, sixty-three years old but pertinent still, with which I would like to conclude. You know what I am reading from. The words were uttered in 1947.

> At the dawn of history India started on her unending quest, and trackless centuries are filled with her striving and the grandeur of her success and her failures.
>
> The ambition of the greatest man of our generation has been to wipe every tear from every eye. That may be beyond us, but as long as there are tears and suffering, so long our work will not be over.
>
> And so we have to labour and to work, and work hard, to give reality to our dreams. Those dreams are for India, but they are also for the world, for all the nations and peoples are too closely knit together today for anyone of them to imagine that it can live apart.
>
> Peace has been said to be indivisible; so is freedom, so is prosperity now, and so also is disaster in this one world that can no longer be split into isolated fragments.

(end)

[1] Mujeeb, *Dr Zakir Husain,* p. 240.

[2] Tendulkar, p. 42.

[3] Tendulkar, p. 43.