

VIBRANT INDIA

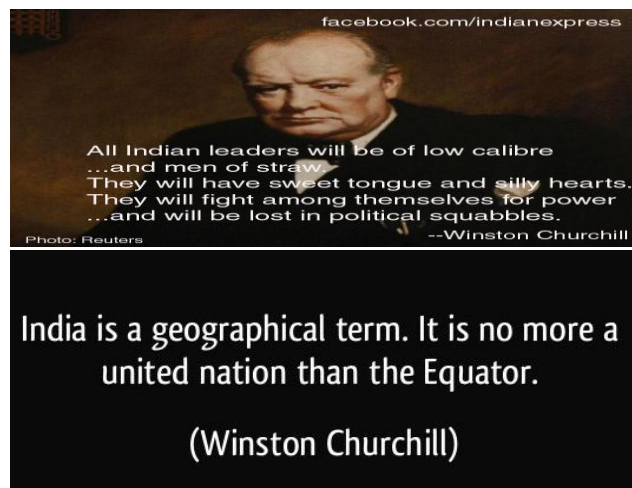
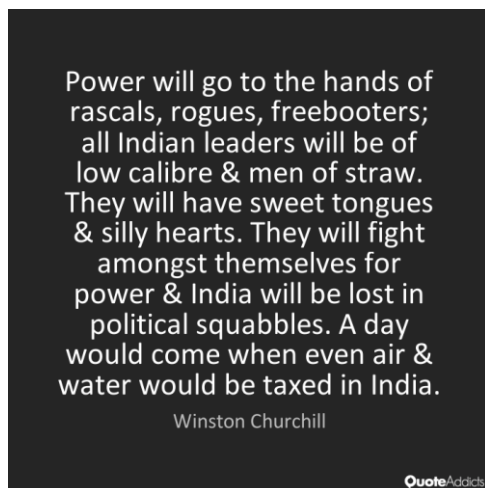
Major General P K Mallick, VSM (Retd)

The other day when we were discussing why there is so much of negativity in Indian discourses, why everybody only talks of bad things and tend to criticise everything that is Indian, forgetting so many good things that is happening in India, my good friend told me it is Pizza effect.

Before World War I, Pizza was a hot wheat bread of the Sicilian and south Italian, staple for the poor peasants of that area. In Rome and other areas of greater sophistication, the pizza was regarded as the food of the poor and pizza eater was a mildly derogatory synonym for a poor man. It was the poor from that region of Italy who emigrated to North America, the pizza gradually changed from the simple substance to a fast food item of much greater complexity and variation. By the early thirties it had become an all American dish. Soon the Italian Americans who had done well in the USA brought it back to Italy and within two more decade, it become a will respected dish in all part of Italy and all over Europe. ^{[1],[2]}

We only appreciate things Indian when American/ Europeans praise those, be it Yoga or Indian Philosophy.

It is a matter of extreme pain and shame when in social media people quote, of all people the racist Winston Churchill, and try to justify the present conditions of India. Quotations like this regularly appear in social media.



Through the authenticity of some of the quotes is not verifiable, following is when Churchill made a speech in the British Parliament House of Commons on March 6, 1947.

“Let the House remember this. The Indian political parties and political classes do not represent the Indian masses. It is a delusion to believe that they do. I wish they did. They are not as representative of them as the movements in Britain represent the surges and impulses of the British nation. This has been proved in the war, and I can show the House how it was proved. The Congress Party declared non-co-operation with Great Britain and the Allies. The other great political party, to whom all main power is to be given, the Muslim League, sought to make a bargain about it, but no bargain was made.

^[1]: [\[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pizza_effect\]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pizza_effect)

^[2]: Rajiv Malhotra, *Indra's Net*, HarperCollins, 2015, Page 6

So both great political parties in India, the only forces that have been dealt with so far, stood aside. Nevertheless, the only great volunteer army in the world that fought on either side in that struggle was formed in India. More than three and a half million men came forward to support the King-Emperor and the cause of Britain; they came forward not by conscription or compulsion, but out of their loyalty to Britain and to all that Britain stood for in their lives. In handing over the Government of India to these so-called political classes we are handing over to men of straw, of whom, in a few years, no trace will remain.

This Government, by their latest action, this 14 months limitation -- which is what I am coming to -- cripple the new Viceroy and destroy the prospect of even going through the business on the agenda which has to be settled. This can only be explained as the complete adoption of one of Mr. Gandhi's most scatterbrained observations, which I will read to the House. It was made on 24th May, 1942, after the [Cripps] Mission. He said: "Leave India in God's hands, in modern parlance, to anarchy; and that anarchy may lead to internecine warfare for a time, or to unrestricted dacoities. From these a true India will arise in place of the false one we see." There, as far as I can see, is a statement indistinguishable from the policy His Majesty's Government are determined to pursue."^[3]

How can people quote Winston Churchill when he was responsible for death of three million Indians mostly from the province of the then Bengal including today's Bangladesh, Odissa, Bihar in 1943 Great Bengal Famine. At a War Cabinet meeting the arrogant British Prime Minister blamed the Indians themselves for the famine, saying they "breed like rabbits". His attitude toward Indians may be summed up in his words: "I hate Indians. They are a beastly people with a beastly religion." On another occasion, he insisted they were "the beastliest people in the world next to the Germans". In October 1943, at the peak of the famine, Churchill said at a lavish banquet to mark Lord Wavell's appointment as Viceroy : "When we look back over the course of years, we see one part of the world's surface where there has been no war for three generations. Famines have passed away — until the horrors of war and the dislocations of war have given us a taste of them again — and pestilence has gone... This episode in Indian history will surely become the Golden Age as time passes, when the British gave them peace and order, and there was justice for the poor, and all men were shielded from outside dangers."

Madhushree Mukherjee has done a detailed study on Churchill's role in the famine.^[4]

Churchill was not the only one to criticise everything Indian. Chakravarthi Rajagopalachari popularly known as Rajaji, the tallest intellectual among India's political leaders in the last century who fought for India's freedom, wrote in his Vellore jail diary dating back to 1921 :

"We all ought to know that Swaraj will not at once or, I think, even for a long time to come, be better government or greater happiness for the people. Elections and their corruptions, injustice, and the power and tyranny of wealth, and inefficiency of administration, will make a hell of life as soon as freedom is given to us. Men will look regretfully back to the old regime of comparative justice, and efficient, peaceful, more or less honest administration.

"The only thing gained will be that as a race we will be saved from dishonour and subordination. Hope lies only in universal education by which right conduct, fear of god,

^[3] *Commons Sitting of Thursday (India, Government Policy), 6 March 1947; House of Commons Debates, Hansard; Vol. 434, cc. 663-776.*

^[4] *Madhusree Mukerjee, Churchill's Secret War: The British Empire and the Ravaging of India During World War II , Basic Books (AZ) , 2011*

and love, will be developed among the citizens from childhood. It is only if we succeed in this that Swaraj will mean happiness. Otherwise it will mean the grinding injustices and tyranny of wealth.”^[5]

India has not done too badly. We need to look at the countries which got independence after Second World War from their colonial masters, look at the population, complexity and diversity of our country. Comparing us with Singapore or South Korea may not be appropriate.

Following needs to be kept in mind when we try to denigrate our country ^[6] :-

- We have the largest population of Muslims after Indonesia. Number of Muslims in Pakistan are almost same as India. Please have a look at the number of Muslim population in European countries and how are they handling religious related issues. Compare this with ours and realise how better off we are.
- We have more number of Christians than in Australia, more Buddhists than Tibet. The most powerful person in this country till the last General Election, was a staunch catholic lady born in Italy.
- Being a dominantly Hindu country we had Muslim, Sikh, Dalit Presidents, Sikh, lady Prime Ministers, Sikh Army Chiefs, we had Muslim Chief of Intelligence Bureau. Do the most liberal and old democracies have such records. USA still has not got a lady President. Can you imagine a Muslim as chief of the Intelligence agencies of USA/UK/France/Germany.
- We have 17 official languages scripts of which are available in our Re 1/- note. There is so much diversity in terrain from high mountains of Himalayas to sea, desert, all type of forests, fertile flat plains, waste lands. Culturally there are so many varieties of dance forms, music, cuisine, apparels, customs. Which country in this world can boast of such amazing diversity.
- We have largest Exercise of democratic franchise in world history. 700 million voted in last General Election. No one ever questioned the efficiency and impartiality of Election commission of India. In some parts of Switzerland women could not vote till 1971. Our woman have equal rights from day one of our constitution being effective. In 1947 we got independence, in 1950 we got our constitution. 18 months later first Gen Election was held. It was free and fair election in all states despite more than 65% of the electorate being illiterate.
- Our Armed Forces have been completely out of politics.

We need to look at people like JBS Haldane. After Darwin he was one of the three greatest biologists in the world. In 1956 Haldane left University College London, and joined the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) in Kolkata, one of the few educational institutions where world class research activities take place. He declared he would no longer wear socks, "Sixty years in socks is enough." He always dressed in Indian attire.

Haldane became an Indian citizen. He was also interested in Hinduism and became a vegetarian. In 1961, Haldane described India as "the closest approximation to the Free

^[5]. <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/columns/b-s-raghavan/indian-raj-outdoing-british-raj/article3893128.ece>

^[6]. Ramachandra Guha, *Why India is Most Interesting country in the world?* Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwwDr9ikkfo>

World." Jerzy Neyman objected that "India has its fair share of scoundrels and a tremendous amount of poor unthinking and disgustingly subservient individuals who are not attractive." Haldane retorted:



(J. B. S. Haldane surrounded by his associates, on the campus of the Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta, 1961)

"Perhaps one is freer to be a scoundrel in India than elsewhere. So one was in the U.S.A in the days of people like Jay Gould, when (in my opinion) there was more internal freedom in the U.S.A than there is today. The "disgusting subservience" of the others has its limits. The people of Calcutta riot, upset trams, and refuse to obey police regulations, in a manner which would have delighted Jefferson. I don't think their activities are very efficient, but that is not the question at issue."

When on 25 June 1962 he was described in print as a "Citizen of the World" by Groff Conklin, Haldane's response was as follows:

"No doubt I am in some sense a citizen of the world. But I believe with Thomas Jefferson that one of the chief duties of a citizen is to be a nuisance to the government of his state. As there is no world state, I cannot do this. On the other hand, I can be, and am, a nuisance to the government of India, which has the merit of permitting a good deal of criticism, though it reacts to it rather slowly. I also happen to be proud of being a citizen of India, which is a lot more diverse than Europe, let alone the U.S.A, the U.S.S.R or China, and thus a better model for a possible world organisation. It may of course break up, but it is a wonderful experiment. So, I want to be labeled as a citizen of India" ^[7].

10. Of course we have our fair share of problems. With the second largest population of the world with so much complexity and diversity we had set backs. Perhaps in hindsight we can say we could have done better. But there is no cause of despair . We need not be so critical on everything that happens in our country. Lot of good things are happening in India in all walks of life. We need to appreciate the good works done by our countrymen in spite of all odds and bring those to the notice of all. We must remember it is the people of the country who always stood by the idea of India under overwhelming odds.

We salute them.

[We will try to bring out certain good work done by our fellow citizens along the length and breadth of our great country]

^[7] . https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._B._S._Haldane