

INDIA IN GLOBAL CHANGE

Wilhelm von Pochhammer Memorial Lecture

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Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel particularly honoured by the invitation extended to me by the Federation of Indo-German Associations to deliver the first Wilhelm von Pochhammer Lecture. Wilhelm von Pochhammer was the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany just before Independence and a while thereafter. He was witness to the partition of the subcontinent, to the birth of the Indian State and its debut before the comity of sovereign nations. What evidently impressed him more was the emerge of the Indian Nation from a welter of languages, religions and castes, despite the terrible trauma of the partition. Wilhelm von

Pochhammer wrote a comprehensive and very readable history of the emergence of the Indian Nation and gave it the title, India's Road to Nationhood : A Political history of the Subcontinent. It was published first in the German language and later translated into English.

When I first read it some years ago I could not have even remotely thought that one day I would be enabled to pay my tribute to him in the form of this memorial lecture. The book had impressed me because of its sweep and depth of the author's knowledge of India's political, cultural, social, spiritual and political history. It even helped me in understanding the foreign policies pursued by several dignitaries and rulers of this subcontinent.

The book, I recall, illuminated comparisons drawn between Europe's and the subcontinent's progress towards nationhood, the great contrasts between the cultural evolution of a continent and a subcontinent. I am delighted to understand that there is a renewed interest in Germany now in this book, which reflects the interest that a united Germany has begun to take in India and its history.

While I must recommend to you to read and enjoy this valuable work of von Pochhammer, let me treat you to brief references to it, which will give you a taste of author's high perspective and lofty visions. The book begins with the "earliest signs of community life in India ... in the valley of the Indus" and ends with changes brought about in the subcontinent

and in India by the birth of Bangladesh - indeed a huge panorama of continuing history if there ever was one.

The author's interest in India began well back in 1925 when he met Mahatma Gandhi; he also came to know quite closely some of the first generation leaders of the Independence movement, particularly Chittaranjan Das. He marvelled at the quick integration of the princely States with the Indian Union and at the inauguration of a full-fledged parliamentary democracy in a country loaded with massive illiteracy and poverty. He was not without trepidations about India's progress as a democratic nation, but at every crossroad he found his pessimisms yielding to hopes about India's future. It is interesting that von

Pochhammer ended his book with a proposition that was then - and is even now - no more than a distant dream. He suggested a loose confederation of India and Pakistan with which Bangladesh and Nepal could also be linked, no country losing its sovereignty, but the four joining together, creating a power that could not only play an important role in world affairs but also resolve the gigantic problems of mass poverty. He wrote "Certainly the time may not yet be ripe for this, but the first steps in that direction can be taken by cooperation between neighbours". Even at this day that remains only a fervent wish.

Wilhelm von Pochhammer's concluding chapter begins with a sentence which may provide me

with a link between the India of her abiding interest and India in the midst of global change which I have chosen for my presentation. He said, "India has been connected with the rest of the world since the earliest times". And let me begin my main theme by saying that India remains inextricably connected with the rest of the world to this day. Over a long, very long continuum of history, and is inevitably caught in the webs of rapid seminal change coming over the entire planet.

The end of the cold war looks to some people in the West as end of history. To us in India, and in rest of the developing world, it is a beginning of a new history. We see the world liberated from the restrictive and inhibitive

chains of the cold war, its big great magnificent mind bursting open in a multitude of hopes, fears, amities and fresh conflicts. We have entered an epoch of unprecedented creativities and inevitably, unavoidably, of great confusions. I am not daunted by the latter. I am only warmed by the former.

Borrowing a phrase from Toynbee, I would dare to say that the disintegration of the stern order of the cold war will inevitably lead to a vibrant growth of integrative, cooperative enterprise of humankind and nations. The world of science and technology is getting us closer every year. The nations and human beings are getting interdependent more rapidly than they seem to reckon.

In my brief incarnation as India's Foreign Minister, I had rare opportunities of personal face-to-face introduction to the newly released genes of international change. I listened to many voices, voices of power and voices, weak and trembling, articulating different interactions with the genes of change. Political fortunes are like the sands of time; they shift with the unpredictability of impatient winds.

I must confess that I miss the pulsebeat of international politics at a crucial juncture of history. It will, however, be my effort in this lecture to share with you some of my own apprehensions about what may or may not happen in the years immediately following the end of the cold war.

Let me begin with listing what I perceive to be the principal forces and actors of change. In the very first place, Mikhail Gorbachev, the man who has changed the world but who is, alas, unable to change his own country, the Soviet Union in the image of global change. Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika put an end to the cold war in a matter of five years; he allowed the East European peoples to freely choose their own Government and thus brought down not only the Berlin Wall but a whole system of governments which had lacked the free consent of their peoples to govern. Gorbachev then set out to rebuild his own country, the USSR, on the basis of pluralistic democracy and equal sovereignty of the Republics in a Federal structure. It

is is an experiment never undertaken in the entire political history of mankind before. Like many of you I watch the results with admiration, anxiety and awe. Without Mikhail Gorbachev, the cold war would have run many more years because I can see no one striding the universe today who could do what he did or any one who has the visions of a humane cooperative world that has inspired him in his gigantic effort. It is a tribute to his political skill and statesmanship that the entire world has developed a stake in the unity and integrity of the Soviet State.

A Chinese journal recently spoke for the entire world when it wrote, "The international community views with grave concern the trend toward seperatism in some Soviet Union Republics. Observers worry that a Soviet

version of Lebanon style split will cause immeasurable worldwide repercussions." I do hope that the Soviet Republics and autonomous regions will duly sign the recently published Union Treaty adopted by the Supreme Soviet.

Mr. Chairman I believe that the European Common Market or EEC-1992 would have been born even if the cold war had not ended. In those circumstances, it would have been a catalyst for the end of the cold war. However, the collapse of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe and Gorbachev's new thinking on international politics created a much greater momentum of for the unity of Europe.

History has already beaten an exciting new track of European resurgence. There are several milestones on this track; the birth of united Germany which has just held its first national election; the 20-year treaty of non-aggression and friendship between Germany and the USSR; the German-Polish treaty recognising the inviolability of post-war national frontiers; the treaty concluded in Paris on heavy reduction and destruction of conventional weapons, and finally the consummation of the Helsinki process in the treaty, also just signed in Paris by 34 Heads of Governments, conferring on Europe a collective security system that also binds the USSR, the United States and Canada.

We in India have very good reasons to welcome the resurgence of Europe and the emergence of Japan as an economic superpower. Europe has been, for centuries, the locomotive of creative ideas as well as wars. We in Asia

have been —for hundreds of years, linked to Europe in the metropolis-empire syndrome. We lost our independence to the colonial powers of Europe but also gained the new spirit of liberal nationalism from our fertilising interactions with European political, social and philosophical thought processes. The Indian nationalist struggle was profoundly influenced by European social-democracy. The historical dialectics of colonialism also gave birth to the concepts of national liberation; democracy; equity and social justice in countries like India. It was a great loss for humanity when in the cold war period Europe ceased to be a main centre of independent political thinking and action.

At the cold war's end, Europe, integrated, into a commonwealth of free nations by linkages of various kinds and qualities, will be sending out to the rest of the world, Asia included, the message of integration on a regional basis and cooperation on a global scale. The voluntary transfer by a cluster of nations of portions of their national sovereignties to a supra-national political entity is a political and constitutional development of unprecedented historical importance. A herald of the One World that will hopefully be created by nations in the coming century.

Europe has also been the engine of wars for centuries and of two world wars in our own lifetime when sixty million people were killed. In the cold war period, a



frozen and barren peace was maintained by the Assured Mutual Destruction of over-kill strategic nuclear arsenals. However, in the same period 200 wars were merrily fought in the third world killing 40 million people.

Europe has now found a stabler and hopefully creative peace. With nuclear and conventional arms control and disarmament agreements signed between the United States and the USSR as well as between the NATO and Warsaw Pact nations, Europe will be the first world region to enjoy a peace dividend; France has already reduced military expenditure to transfer resources to creative economic and social spheres. Most remarkable in this regard is the role Germany has chosen for itself. It has renounced war-

making military capability and committed never to acquire nuclear weapons; its armed force will soon be cut down to a modest 370,000 men. A major portion of Germany's surplus wealth will go to rejuvenate the economies of Eastern Europe and also help Gorbachev tide over the economic crisis in the USSR.

As it seems, Germany, the Soviet Union, and France will now be the main actors of a new Concert of Europe. Even Britain will integrate itself faster with EEC. With Mrs. Thatcher having stepped down from the Prime Ministership Britain's traditional policy of keeping a safe distance from the continent and manipulate relations among the European powers to prevent the rise of a single European continental power or a coalition of powers has now finally been

put to rest. I would welcome Britain's full integration with the emerging European Commonwealth. This will lend strength to Europe's independence as a power centre in the new international political order.

The new Europe will have a majority of members that do not have a colonial experience for most of this century. Germany lost its colonies after the first world war. Countries like Portugal, Belgium, the Netherlands and Spain appear to have lived down their colonial past. The nostalgia of the Raj may still be lingering among some ruling classes in Britain but Europe as a whole, when united, is not likely to be a neocolonial power. We hope that united Europe will also act as a check on neocolonialism emanating from elsewhere.

There is a widespread apprehension in the developing world, however, that Germany\* and united Europe will have little surplus of funds and sympathies for the Third World Nations after transferring most of these resources for rebuilding the East European countries. Recently a magazine, published from London, ran a coverpage showing that Eastern Europe was "entering" the aid kitty of Western Europe while the Third World was getting out through an exit door. Germany and EEC, of course, have been assuring the developing nations that this will not be the case and that

their needs will remain at the forefront of their vision. The reality so far does not encourage unqualified optimism.

Signals so far are mixed. Nepal received a commitment of one billion dollars in aid from the donor's consortium in which the European powers now play a much more important part than before. That was a handsome reward for Nepal's newly minted constitutional monarchy. However, consortium aid for India has remain stagnant, and not much compensation is likely to come for the crippling impact on our economy of the Persian Gulf crisis.

However, I would not allow myself to lose sight of a better future only because the

present is loaded with unforeseen difficulties. Nor shall I share the gloomy views of those scholars and analysts in the United States and Europe who expect ethnic and territorial disputes to break out in Eastern Europe and spill over to the West thereby robbing the post cold war period of many of its potential benefits.

An American scholar recently ventured to predict that the world will soon begin to regret the end of the cold war. The world will not. Of course, old ethnopolitical tensions and conflicts may tend to surface in Eastern Europe and some people may stir up old territorial passions. But to suggest that these will get the upperhand of the integrative processes presently at work in Europe is to remain a prisoner of the past rather than a pioneer of the future.

Mr. Chairman, as you would see the global economy is tending to integrate faster than most of us can cope with. The result is a cacophany of controversies in almost every country of any economic significance. In the United States, a fierce debate is raging between "declinists" and "leadership reaffirmists", each side marshalling a barrage of statistics to make its own point. One fact, however, stands out in the global debate. In the United States as well as Europe, a new wall is visible even to the naked human eye. It is the wall dividing the rich and the poor. It is now admitted by the Americans that Reaganomics made the rich much richer, the poor poorer. In Britain too, Thatcherism, instead of creating "people's capitalism", as it was called, only widened the distance between rich and poor. Europe has developed its own poverty line. And the poverty line between North and South has widened too. South America and Africa lost a decade of development and they may well lose another. Asia has done better, the "little tigers" of East and South-East Asia are now centres of global attention. Even in South Asia, growth has not halted though it has moved forward shortly.

An increasing number of Western commentators are rightly of the view that the integration of the economies of the developed countries are adversely affecting the economies of third world. Integration of national economies in the global economy is a natural process in our time when the world is getting smaller. Science and technology could weave threads of such

global economic integration as would benefit universally. But divisions and differentiations between the developed and the developing worlds are causing anxieties and inducing us to seek a mutually beneficial South-South cooperation. The concepts and efforts in this direction are still at rudimentary stages and much remains to be done. It may also be kept in mind that within the developing world also economic differentiations have become more accentuated while the developed nations are trying to coopt the more developed among the developing countries as a kind of "associated members" of their exclusive club, leaving the least developed, the poorest countries of the world to stew in their own juices.

I hope that the more developed of the developing nations do not succumb to the temptation of getting listed with the developed powers. We have to stand together to fight for global economic justice, and, internally, we have to mobilise forces to fight for domestic economic and social justice. The two struggles must go on simultaneously, they are the two integral parts of one of the greatest human struggles of our time.

In the post-cold war period, trade and economic relations will continue to increasingly occupy the centre-stage of international relations. Already cries of an international trade war are heard in several world capitals. The great economic powers - the US, Japan, Germany and EEC -- are

getting locked in a new abrasive style of competition for markets the world over. A fierce battle has been joined between the concepts and policies of free trade and protectionism. No country, strong or weak, is pursuing a consistent policy. You are aware of quarrels between Americans and Japanese about opening up the two economies to one another. The United States has its own areas of protectionism but it insists that developing countries must throw their doors open to the service industries of the developed nations in what is bound to be a very unequal competition.

Only the other day, one of our newspapers reported that the World Bank was demanding that India privatise its nationalised

banks. IMF conditionalities have contributed to political unrest in a number of developing countries. The Uruguay Round of talks which are scheduled to come to an end this month have got into a deadlock over farm subsidy disputes between EEC and the United States. In any case, international trade is going to be one of the major causes of tension in the post cold war world. A primary cause of these tensions is that while global political economy has entered a period of seminal changes, there is no political organisation available that could harmonise and smoothen the passage of cooperative economic relationship.

It is here that the South-South forum and the Non-aligned movement could play a helpful role -- not one of confrontation with the North, but one of intense dialogue aimed at creating a global

coalition of interests of the developed and developing nations. The Non-Aligned Movement may have lost its political-strategic moorings in a world without the cold war, but it has an important role to play to promote and defend the economic, scientific and technological interests of the developing nations, to protect and safeguard their economic sovereignty and interests and to oversee the gradual integration of the economies of the South with the more advanced economies of the North.

The Non-Aligned countries must also look inward collectively on a global and regional basis and act as a locomotive of bringing the developing world into the mainstream of global change. We have too many disputes and

conflicts among ourselves. We still refuse to dialogue with one another in order to resolve our disputes and our differences. The superpowers will not be involved any more with our quarrels; global contents of regional conflicts are withering with the end of the cold war.

I am not suggesting that all regional conflicts will now vanish overnight, some will linger for years. In Afghanistan and Cambodia, for instance, the warring sides have accumulated mountains of arms and can go on fighting one another for years. However, superpower involvement has already diminished and will gradually disappear.

We in our parts of the world must find ways and means of limiting, controlling and resolving our conflicts. We must be able to limit arms expenditures which are running an all time high in the region of South Asia, and we must be able to reap peace dividends which we need more urgently than the developed nations. These are some of the daunting tasks that confront diplomacies of this region. \*

The crisis in the - Persian Gulf has unfortunately halted the engine of global change in the deserts of Arabia. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait its annexation as Iraq's 19th Province has led to an unprecedented mobilisation of nations against aggression. The United Nations Security Council is now at the

centre of the world effort to get the Iraqi aggression vacated. It has already adopted eleven resolutions without a dissenting vote, a most remarkable symbol of global change in the post-cold war period. The United States has assembled under its own flag a formidable force of nearly half a million men in Saudi Arabia and the waters of the Persian Gulf, with more or less minor contributions from some 30 nations. However, the overwhelming majority of nations do not want war in the Gulf, which would create more problems than it could resolve, plunge much of the world into economic chaos, and destabilise the Middle East as never before. The Security Council has served Iraq with an ultimatum; if it expires without signs of an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, the



probabilities of war will assume aspects of fated inevitability. A great historical tragedy looms before our eyes and I do hope the powers will be able to marshall enough courage and wisdom even in this crucial month of December to arrest it. It needs greater courage to avoid war than to make it in certain historical circumstances and such a historical circumstance stares humanity in the face.

During my tenure as Foreign Minister of India, my effort and that of the National Front Government was three-fold. First, to get over a 1,50,000 Indians out of Kuwait as quickly as possible. For this we needed cooperation of Iraq. The evacuation of such a large number by air in a matter of a month drew the admiration of the entire world even though it imposed a severe strain on our limited foreign exchange and aviation resources. Our second effort was to get Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait without a war, and my third focus was to persuade the Arab nations and the Non-Aligned to play the leading role in resolving the crisis.

While fully implementing the Security Council Resolutions regarding Iraq, We avoided harsh rhetoric and stayed away from the military mobilisations in the Peersian Gulf. I do hope thatt Saddam Hussein will heed the collective voice of the world before it gets tragically too late, and that the crisis will be finally resolved without a devastating recourse to arms.

In its election manifesto the National Front had committed itself to concretise the chemistries of global change in our own region, South Asia. Relations between India and all its neighbours had soured in 1988-89. We proceeded with imagination and determination to normalise these relations. We withdrew the Indian peace-keeping force from Sri Lanka a little ahead of an agreed schedule; we resolved all differences with Nepal; we placed Indo-Bangladesh relations on the track of understanding and cooperation. We were keen and candid in pursuing the same policy of good neighbourliness with Pakistan if Pakistan would abstain from intervening in Punjab and Kashmir with arms,

trained men and political-diplomatic propaganda to bolster unrest in the Valley.

In our dealings with the neighbours, I tried to build a cluster of principles which, if bilaterally and regionally implemented, can give South Asia a system of mutual cooperation and security. These principles are : (1) not to intervene in one another's internal affairs; (2) not take advantage of one another's domestic problems; (3) not allow a national territory to be used against the other; (4) to settle differences and disputes through dialogue, mutual understanding and accommodation; (5) to recognise and respect international boundaries as well as the inviolability of the territorial States; and to begin to do things together in the economic,

social and cultural sphere in spirit of cooperation and equality.

These basic principles alone can remove from South Asia the overload of mistrust, suspicion and conflict it has been carrying on its shoulders since the partition of the subcontinent. Without creating a climate of trust and confidence in each other, we cannot inject life into the SAARC.

South Asia must bring itself to the tune of mainstream global change if it were to benefit from the new historical beginning of the world at the end of the cold war.

India becomes a member of the UN Security Council with the New Year, after many years. The

role should offer India considerable opportunity to play a role in the affairs of mankind commensurate with India's size, population, political, social and economic progress, technological and scientific strides, which are by no means insignificant. India, China and the USSR have today world views that are very largely congruent with one another; if the three of us can coordinate our foreign policies to a significant extent, we should be able to formulate common positions much more easily with the United States, EEC and Japan. As the world's largest democracy I would like India to act as a bridge between the democratic nations and those who have embarked on bold and creative, if also temporarily convulsive, experiments in democracy.

In every new epoch in international relations, there is sunshine as well as clouds. History offers opportunities which human beings must seize and make creative use of. There is no Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel over our head; no finger of God touches man's outstretched hand to pass on the spark of new life and new hope. We have to exclaim, like Lincoln Steffens, "I have seen the future and its works". Arnold Toynbee saw in the vast expanse of history the eternal rhythm of Yin and Yang, of strophe and anti-strophe, victory and defeat, creation by destruction, birth by death. The world of the cold war is dead only to give birth to a new world that is yet to be defined. As I finish my statement I recall some of the most inspiring lines of Goethe, Germany's immortal poet, who probably had the Spirit of History in his mind when he wrote:

In currents of life, in tempests of motion,  
In fervour of act, in the fire, in the  
storm.

Hither and thither,  
Over and under,  
Wend I and wander:  
Birth and the grave,  
Limitless ocean,  
Where the restless wave  
Undulates ever,  
Under and over  
Their seething strife  
Heaving and weaving  
The changes of life.

At the whirring loom of Time unawed  
I work the living mantle of God.

Thank you very much for being so patient with me.