



# Ambedkar Times Weekly

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## On India's 78th Independence Day DEMOCRACY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Prem K. Chumber

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Democracy and social justice are interrelated social processes. The one is incomplete in the absence of the other. Democracy offers freedom space to realize equality and experi-

ence fraternity. Equality and fraternity are the two essential ingredients of social justice, which achieves its true form with the addition of liberty. Thus the trinity of liberty, equality and fraternity constitutes the essence of social justice and the institution of democracy provides the requisite realm for its realization. Though many scholars' boasts of ancient origins of democracy in India but it would be prudent to argue that democracy achieves its roots in the real sense of the term with the adoption of the constitution in independent India. Bodhisattva Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, Chairman of Constitutional Drafting Committee, worked very hard to incorporate various provisions for the realization of social justice in the Indian society. He was of the firm views that if social and economic parity remains an elusive to the multitude of poor and historically socially excluded people in the country, then the very purpose of having parliamentary democracy would not be served efficiently. He reiterated the seminal point during his engaging discussions at various important forums within and outside the Indian parliament that for social justice to prevail in the country, India needs effective participation of the downtrodden in all the different spheres of the society.

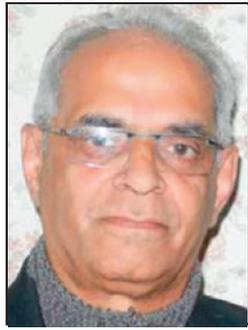
The demand for social justice was also raised at various platforms during the freedom struggle movement in colonial India. Ad-Movements in North and South India, Justice Party in South India, Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia from Punjab, Swami Achhuta Nand Ji from Uttar Pradesh, Baba Ghasi Das Ji from Madhya Pradesh, Sri Narayana Guru from Kerala raised a consistent campaign for the prevalence of social justice in the Indian society. Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia presented a number of resolutions to the British Government for the removal of untouchability and special provisions for the inclusion of socially excluded sections of the society in the public realm of power and social domain.

Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia joined hands with Bodhisattva Babasaheb Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar in his struggle for equal rights for the socially excluded people of India. When Dr. Ambedkar spreaded its movement into the political agile lands of Punjab with the formation of Punjab chapter of Scheduled Castes Federation, there was a tremendous response from the grassroots. That was precisely the contributions of Ad Dharm movement which laid the foundation stone of social justice campaign in the Punjab state in the mid-1920s. But the irony of the matter is that even after more than seven decades of India's independence, Dalits in the country are still subjected to various types of atrocities and social discriminations. Though the Indian state, while making the optimum use of various anti untouchability clauses of the constitution, is doing its best to bridle the monster of caste, but still is more needed to be done at the social level where the people should come forward to internalize the values of liberty, equality and fraternity in order to realize the true sense of democracy and social justice.

## DR. AMBEDKAR: NO LESS A PATRIOT THAN ANYONE ELSE

Dr. Hemant Devasthali

Formerly Principal, Ness Wadia College of Commerce, University of Pune, Pune



*Dr Ambedkar's life should be viewed as a part of a larger and 'a correlated but different freedom struggle, one for the liberation of the most oppressed sections of Indian society. This was a liberation movement wider and deeper than that of fighting colonialism'*

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar has been accused of siding with the British and keeping distance from India's freedom movement which resulted in the alienation of the Dalits from the movement. While it is true that Dr. Ambedkar participated in none of the move-

ments against the British rule that were led by Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress, it would be enlightening in this regard to view the Indian political scenario from 1930s till Independence from the perspective of Dr. Ambedkar and the Depressed Classes of India. In this regard attention may be drawn to a moot guiding principle in his thinking he happened to reveal in a very forceful speech he gave while participating in a Bombay Legislative Assembly debate on 26 October 1939. The point has been brought out very lucidly in this address and it would not therefore be out of place to quote an excerpt from it. Dr. Ambedkar says:

"I know my position has not been understood properly in the country. It has often been misunderstood. Let me, therefore, take this opportunity to clarify my position...Whenever there has been a conflict between my personal interests and the interests of the country as a whole, I have always placed the claim of the country above my own personal claims... But I will also leave no doubt in the minds of the people of this country that I have another loyalty to which I am bound and which I can never forsake. That loyalty is the community of untouchables, in which I am born, to which I belong, and which I hope I shall never desert.

And I say this to this House as strongly as I possibly can, that whenever there is any conflict of interest between the country and the untouchables, so far as I am concerned, the untouchables' interests will take precedence over the interests of the country. I am not going to support a tyrannising majority simply because it happens to speak in the name of the country. I am not going to

undertaken by the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. These include the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920-21, Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-31 and the Quit India Movement of 1942.

In other words, had Dr. Ambedkar felt convinced of the sincerity of the leaders of the freedom movement with regard to the interests of the Depressed



Dr. Ambedkar presenting the draft of India's constitution to Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President of the Indian Constituent Assembly (21 February 1948). Only a man who had a vision of free and independent India could have accomplished the task of drafting her constitution.

support a party because it happens to speak in the name of the country. I shall not do that. Let everybody here and everywhere understand that that is my position. As between the country and myself, the country will have precedence; as between the country and the Depressed Classes, the Depressed Classes will have precedence—the country will not have precedence."

It is very plain from the above that Dr Ambedkar was fiercely loyal to the interests of the untouchables and in fact of the whole community of the Depressed Classes. It therefore followed naturally that he remained steadfastly opposed to any individual, idea, organisation or movement that he felt was not in the interest of the Depressed Classes. Thus, since in his view the idea of the freedom from the British rule as it existed then did not in any way incorporate furtherance of interests of the Depressed Classes, he distanced himself from any of the freedom movements, particularly those

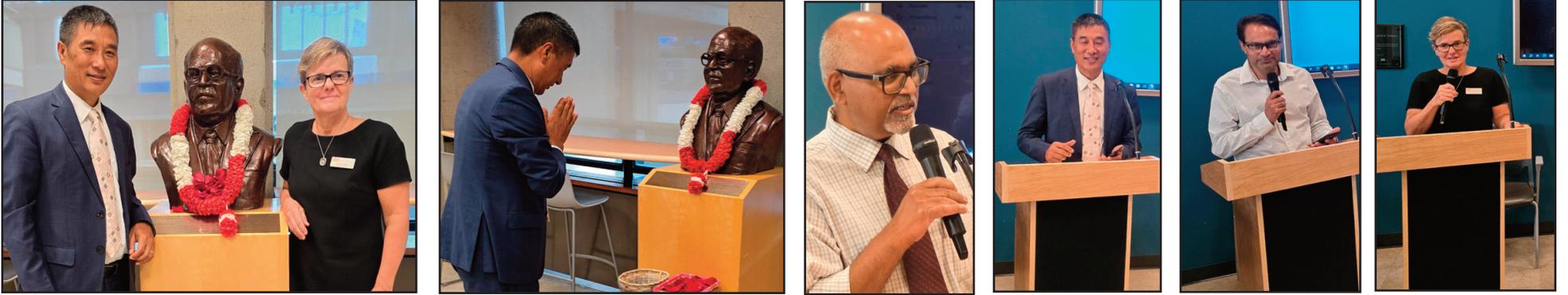
Classes, he might have extended them cooperation. And in that case, the fight for the freedom from the British rule and the one for the freedom from the social injustice could have been concurrent and simultaneous.

Unfortunately this did not happen since Dr. Ambedkar never felt that the interests of the Depressed Classes would ever be attended to appropriately by either the Indian National Congress or by the Mahatma who was the supreme leader of the movement under its auspices. A few broad reasons as below may be identified for the total absence of any meeting ground for Dr. Ambedkar and the leaders of the Freedom Movement:

1. The Freedom Movement, Dr. Ambedkar felt, was overwhelmed by the single goal of attainment of freedom from the British and had therefore little space for the interests of the Depressed Classes. This exclusive focus on the political gain had its roots in the well-known

(Contd. on page 2)

# Welcome Reception in honour of Mr. Rungsung, Consul General of India (Vancouver), hosted at Simon Fraser University by the Chetna Association of Canada -August 6



## Jai Birdi

**Burnaby (August 6, 2024)-** The Chetna Association of Canada hosted welcome reception for the new consul general of India on August 6, 2024 at Simon Fraser University's WAC Bennett Library in Burnaby. The Chief Librarian, Ms. Gwen Bird, conveyed her welcome remarks and described the history of the partnership between the Chetna Association of Canada, the SFU Libraries, and its partners for ac-

complishing its goals and mission.

CG Rungsung expressed his gratitude to the organizers and the library; explained the impact of independence on India and colonial rulers; and, shared his perspectives on how the Fathers of India such as Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Ambedkar worked towards the common goal of emancipation, even though they had their differences on a number of fronts.

CG Rungsung also offered to

facilitate the donation of books on India by the Indian authors and suggested the library designate "India Section" in the library to display books on India. Surjit Bains, treasurer with Chetna Association of Canada, introduced CG Rungsung and shared gratitude for his services in a variety of roles with the Indian Government.

JyotikaJasuja, member of the Women's Empowerment Committee of Chetna, also welcomed CG Rungsung

and sang the patriarch song, "Ae mere watanke logo"

Special guest for the occasion was famous Punjabi singer KanthKaler who also welcomed CG Rungsung and sang a couple of lines from his song on Dr. A mbedkar, "Jai Bheem Jai Bheem"

Past president of the Shri Guru Ravidass Sabha (Vancouver) was also present at the reception.

**Photos by: Sukhdeep Bhatti**

# Dr. Ambedkar: No less a patriot than anyone else

(Continue from page 1)

controversy at the time of Lokmanya Tilak, G. G. Agarkar and later Justice M. G. Ranade as to whether political reforms should precede social reforms or the other way. In a speech that he gave under the auspices of the Deccan Sabha of Pune in 1940, titled 'Ranade, Gandhi & Jinnah', Dr Ambedkar sided with Justice Ranade and maintained that the thesis that political reforms should precede the social reforms was untenable. The opponents of Justice Ranade maintained that the attainment of political power first was a precondition for protection of rights of the people or conferment of these rights on them, if they did not exist. Dr. Ambedkar however felt that as things stood then, the rights existed only for the minority of people and the vast majority of population stood deprived of these rights. Thus for this vast majority, the rights did not exist in the first place and therefore the question of their protection on attainment of political power did not arise. Secondly, he maintained that even if the rights were conferred on the majority after the political reforms were achieved, these would not be effective since 'the rights are protected not by law but by the social and moral conscience of society.' Dr. Ambedkar felt that the Indian society lacked this conscience and in its absence the conferment of political rights on people would be infructuous. He also further maintained that a self-government was not necessarily a good government since a democratic self-government would be effective only in an atmosphere of social democracy which was absent in the In-

dian society.

2. The Freedom Movement was dominated by the caste Hindus who, Dr Ambedkar felt, had been by and large ruthlessly indifferent to the fate of the Depressed Classes and were unlikely to change in an independent India. In the speech in the Bombay Legislative Assembly referred to above, Dr. Ambedkar quotes numerous instances to show the continued social injustice by the caste Hindus on the Depressed Classes. This was despite the Herculean efforts by the leaders of the Depressed Classes since the later part of the 19th century to ameliorate their conditions and combat injustice. Dr. Ambedkar thus knew well that only a miracle would work a sudden change of attitude of the caste Hindus on attainment of freedom and self-rule and therefore averred attainment of social democracy prior to political democracy.

3. Even if Dr. Ambedkar had waited for social reforms for removal of untouchability to follow the political freedom, there was a marked difference of approach toward the problem between him and Gandhi. While Gandhi felt there was no place for untouchability in the caste system and disapproved of caste inequality, he did approve of the caste system in the form of varnashram and felt that untouchability should be removed within the framework of the varnashram. He therefore relied largely on the change of heart of the caste Hindus.

Dr. Ambedkar's programme for the removal of untouchability on the other hand focused on uplifting the standard of education of the untouchables

and integrating them into the Indian society as modern politically strong citizens with aspirations to rise to the level of the highest Hindu. That is why the motto 'Educate, Agitate and Organise' became the motto of the whole Dalit movement not only before Independence but also afterwards.

In view of these fundamental differences in approach toward and perception of the problem of untouchability between Dr. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi, it was little wonder that the two men, great souls as they were both, could never find an amicable meeting ground on the Indian political firmament till the end of their life. This is probably the most unfortunate political fact of the modern Indian history.

It would be sinful however to dub Dr. Ambedkar anti-national or a stooge of British government for having kept from the freedom struggle. There are numerous instances when prominent Indian public men including Justice M. G. Ranade, G. K. Gokhale, Dadabhai Nowroji, Pherojshah Mehta and others preferred redressal of peoples' grievances through legislative and constitutional methods.

In a speech in 1917, Shahu Chhatrapati, the ruler of Kolhapur, stated that political independence in the face of a rigid and exploitative caste system would only mean the power in the hands of a few bent on exploitation of the lower classes. He went further and underlined the need for British support and counsel till the evil of caste system had disappeared.

While these men of prominence

did face criticism at the hands of their contemporaries, their views today are perceived with reference to their context. None of them is regarded as having worked against the interest of the country. Dr. Ambedkar should be no exception.

In the independent India, as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution, Dr. Ambedkar made a lasting contribution to India's stature in the comity of nations as the world's largest democracy.

Beyond this Dr Ambedkar's life should be viewed as a part of a larger and 'a correlated but different freedom struggle, one for the liberation of the most oppressed sections of Indian society. This was a liberation movement wider and deeper than that of fighting colonialism, focusing on the kind of new nation that was to be built' (Gail Omvedt in 'Ambedkar: Towards an Enlightened India'). The freedom struggle that Dr. Ambedkar waged was no less dignified than the the fight against the British rule in that it was an attempt of the weakest of the weak to allow them a rightful place in the society and a life of a human being, respectful and honourable. In the long term perspective, the movement benefitted the caste Hindus as well for no society can thrive for long at the cost of development of one of its own segments. The individual who led this great liberation movement was a true friend of human freedom. The greatness of his mission transcends the boundaries of any kind and shines as the lodestar for the movements of the oppressed everywhere.

## Rainbows

Only a seven-hue arch  
Of the enticing rainbow  
Can connect the two extremes  
Of earth visible at one glance!

But the rainbow  
Is only a celestial mirage  
That vanishes in moments  
Dashing the bridge twixt extremes.

Poverty has its own self respect  
Which often suffers blows  
When face to face  
With audacious show of riches!

Whatever altruism may preach  
All declarations of brotherhood  
Are affronts to financial vacuity !  
They are just vanishing rainbows.

Socialistic efforts  
Or similar preaching  
Succeed only half-way  
And snap the rainbow.

Affluence and deprivation  
Constitute two contrary worlds  
And the twain shall not meet  
What rainbows we may build !

## No Logic ...!

Divine logic defies all decoding  
It may reward the ruffian  
And starve the honest pedestrian  
Or any time crown the crook.

Sometimes, it catapults to power  
And then reduces riches to rags.  
May create babies with missing limbs  
Or put toddlers on ventilators.

Those who beg for death  
Are made to linger .  
And those to yearn to live  
Are simply stifled !

The scoundrels flourish  
While the innocent languish.  
It blesses some with robust health  
And makes others rot in hospital beds.

The only logic here  
Is that there in no logic  
In what we call Divine Logic!

## Retro Journey

The great Greek philosopher  
In his 'Politics'  
Called man 'a social animal'.  
Yes , that was man was  
When he evolved  
To societal awareness  
From the jungle stage.

He was guided by instinct  
To survive.  
By turns taking to hunting  
Or searching for fruits or roots.  
Or even becoming a cannibal  
In situations of scarcity of food.  
No doubt, he was an animal.

Gradually , he qualified  
To becoming cultured  
Where pace and art  
Came to be valued.



**DESH BIR**  
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Born in 1951 and brought up and schooled in Kangra district of erstwhile Punjab (now Himachal Pradesh), Desh Bir did his M.A. in English from DAV College, Jalandhar and topped the GND University, Amritsar. Taught at DAV College, Jalandhar for three years before joining Punjab Govt. Education Service in 1976 as a Lecturer at Govt. College Hoshiarpur. He was selected in Central Services based on combined UPSC exam for IAS etc in 1978, but chose to stay in Education. He was promoted as Principal, Govt. College, Hoshiarpur, in July, 2006 and retired in October, 2009. After retirement, he was appointed as Ombudsman, NREGA for five districts of Punjab for four years. Has nearly 170 creative articles published in English Newspapers like Daily Post, Deccan Herald, The Tribune, Daily World, Punjab Advance and Kashmir Vision. Lately, he has taken to poetry for pouring out his intensely felt perceptions

He learnt to be wise and moral  
And caring and sharing.  
...That happened for some centuries  
...Then came a turn.

From being man  
He chose the path to being  
An animal once again.  
Digital revolution and AI  
Have stultified mental  
And emotional side of man.

And he is heading  
To the animal timeline again.  
Crime , violence and animality  
Rule his mind.  
So we are walking back  
To a stage  
Worse than the jungle age.

## Animal Farm enacted

Orwell's 'Animal Farm'  
Comes as the handiest guide  
To all who wish to mount the ladder  
Of Power , Authority and Perpetuation.

So does Machiavelli's dictum:  
'Use the ladder , reach the top  
And then kick it'.  
It serves every power hungry ruler.

These help every autocrat  
Who passes for a democrat  
But spares no chance  
To crush dissent or clash.  
True of proverbially lauded nations  
Where Trumps and Putins,  
And Netanyahus and Haniyehs  
Know the art of clinging to power.

Back home , it is true of so many  
Holding the reigns for several terms  
And yet yearning for more....  
Even turning more ambitious !

The disease is vicious

The lure is insatiable  
The hunger is unlimited  
This thirst is unquenchable !

Somehow , lucky is the ordinary mortal  
Not infected by this virus !  
Though , may be , he is accursed ,too,  
Because he has to suffer the scoundrels!

## Goings-On....

The goings-on  
Of this monolith called life  
Keep rolling on  
Irrespective of what happens to whom.

The run-over dog's carcass  
Lying on the road,  
Pecked by crows this early morning,  
And nonchalant morning walkers prove it.

New shoots prop up and thrive  
While dead leaves from the previous crop  
Serve as nutrients of value .  
Nothing is missed for long!

In the race for present joy  
Mortality is taken as a feeder-event.  
Or how else would hatcheries  
And butcheries survive?

When by a quirk of fate  
Mourning and festivity  
Go on in adjoining homes  
The concurrence proves the case.

Licking by emaciated children  
From thrown away food plates  
And sumptuous feasting  
In nearby Five Star facilities vouch for it.

When a massive cosmic machine rolls  
In its rumble many kinds of music may rise  
It can be joy , victory , celebration....  
It can be destruction , loss or decay....  
The process shall always go on ....

## Destiny

Everybody is born with a destiny  
An unexplainable factor  
That no Microsoft or Google  
Can manufacture or market.  
That is what we say !

It opens unexpected gates  
And closes quite a few  
Defying human logic.  
Tosses you to undeserved glory  
Or unjust ignominy!

The boy from a sleepy village  
Topping the CDS exam sans coaching,  
Whose father is a postman,  
And grandfather a barber,  
Disproves such a thesis .

Being born poor or rich  
Doesn't go a long way  
In deciding the course forever.  
Thousands like Shastri and Lincoln  
Surmounted odds and rose to glory.

Each one of us has to charter a goal  
And carve the path with grit,  
Fight the seeming resistance,  
And create a Destiny for ourselves !  
No one else will do it for you!

## The All India Federation of Scheduled Castes, Tribes, and Other Backward Classes (SC, ST, and OBC) opposes the Supreme Court's decision of August 1, 2024, regarding the quota within the quota and creamy layer for SC, ST categories, and makes the following demands:

1. Reservation for SC, ST, and OBC categories is not a poverty alleviation program but a matter of ensuring equal representation in all areas of development.

2. The current central and state governments should ensure the recruitment of lakhs of vacant backlog positions for SC, ST, and OBC categories within one year through a special recruitment campaign.

3. The appointment of judges in the High Courts and Supreme Court should immediately end nepotism through the collegium System and implement the All India Judicial Service (IJS) under Article 312 of the Indian Constitution, ensuring representation for SC, ST, and OBC categories according to their population.

4. An immediate caste census should be conducted for all categories to ensure representation in all areas according to as per their population.

5. Reservation for SC, ST, and OBC categories should also be implemented in the private sector according to their population. The central and state governments should ensure this.

6. The current central govern-

ment should protect the reservation representation of reserved categories from tampering and, considering the



continuous caste-based exploitation of SC and ST categories and the encroachment by the judiciary, should remove reservation from the judiciary's purview and include it in the Ninth Schedule through a law passed by a

special session of Parliament..

7. The central and state governments should stop dividing Scheduled

cacy in the Supreme Court's decision by seven judges on August 1, 2024, the reserved categories of India oppose

the unconstitutional decision of dividing SC and ST reservations into sub-categories and implementing the creamy layer within it. The central government should amend this immediately through a special session of Parliament.

9. SC and ST categories have been granted reservation due to caste-based exploitation, which still persists today. Despite holding high positions, individuals are still identified by their caste. Therefore, these categories are homogeneous and cannot be divided into sub-categories. Implementing sub-categories and the creamy layer is unconstitutional. The reserved categories, including the SC, ST, and OBC federations, oppose this. They also demand the communal award of double voting rights, which Dr. B.R. Ambedkar secured from the British before the Poona Pact.

**All India Federation of Scheduled Castes, Tribes, and Other Backward Classes**

Castes and Tribes under the pretext of internal quotas within reservation (Quota within Quota). This policy of "divide and rule" reminiscent of British colonial strategies should be ended..

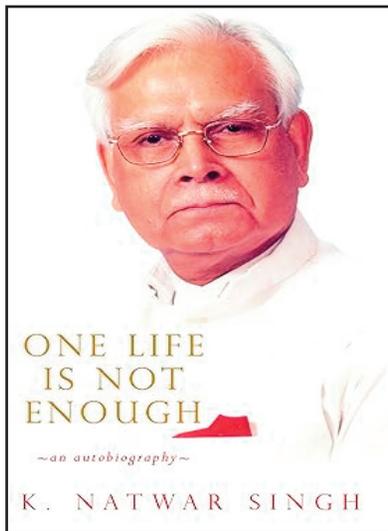
8. Due to the inadequate advo-

due to double voting rights, which Dr. B.R. Ambedkar secured from the British before the Poona Pact.

## K. Natwar Singh – A Scholar Diplomat

Kunwar Natwar Singh (94), a scholar diplomat, passed away on August 10-11, 2024. Being a member of the MEA and the IFS fraternity, I first heard of him in 1974 when I was deployed in the PMO as an Assistant Protocol Officer. Natwar Singh, 1953 batch IFS, was the flamboyant Director attached to PM Indira Gandhi in the PMO in early 1970s. Later in 1982-83, I got a couple of opportunities to meet and interact with him as a Protocol Officer in the MEA when he was the Secretary General of NAM. Beyond this, I did not have any occasion to work with Natwar Singh in my diplomatic career. But later in the process, I started liking him; particularly on his joining public life in the mid-1980s through his books and articles in the print media. He was a scholar diplomat and an articulate writer. Natwar Singh, immaculately dressed diplomat with a

charming personality, was a much sought after personality not only as a diplomat but in intellectual and literary circles. Later on joining politics, he adorned many coveted positions including that of EAM in various governments. While in the IFS, he was close to PM Indira Gandhi and later in public life remained in the inner circles of PM Rajiv Gandhi, PM Manmohan Singh, Congress Party President, Sonia Gandhi among others. Later sometimes in mid- 2010s, he fell from grace due his involvement in allegedly corruption case in the 'Oil for Food' pro-



gramme for Iraq as EAM in PM Manmohan Singh government. He was unceremoniously removed as EAM which resulted in "....." as termed by The Tribune on August 11. People in politics, sometimes, have to adjust with strange bed-fellows. Natwar Singh was no exception. He tried to be close to BJP and even joined for a while, BSP in late 2010s. His social background obviously helped him at the ladder to elevate himself. He was the scion of the royal family of Bharatpur and was married to the sister of Rani SahibaParneetKaur of Patiala, the wife of CM of Punjab Captain Amrinder

Singh.

As I said that I liked his books detailing his experiences in China and Africa and also Pakistan. His columns under the banner "As I Please" motivated me to write blogs under the same heading 'As I Please' and 'The Bits and Pieces'. I also wrote about his autobiography 'One life is not enough' which may be seen at: <https://diplomaticitbits.blogspot.com/search?q=One+Life+is+not+enough>

With this, I pay my tributes to KunwarNatwar Singh, a 'seasoned diplomat and erudite politician' and also a 'prolific writer' and close here with heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family.

Badi Muskil Se Hota Hai; Chaman Mein Didawr Paida

**Ramesh Chander** Ambassador - I.F.S. (Retired)  
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Dr. Paramjit S Takhar, MD

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Goodie Takhar, PhD