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Decoding the Misunderstanding: A Critique of Rajmohan Gandhi's *Understanding the Founding Fathers*

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Abstract:

Rajmohan Gandhi, a widely known historian and grandson of the 'Father of the Nation' Mahatma Gandhi, states that his book *Understanding the Founding Fathers* (2016), 'enquires into our republic's start'. Keeping this enquiry about the Indian Republic's beginnings, this study aims to analyse whether any critical errors were made at the beginning of our nation in 1947 and how it would have been if India became independent without partition? Was Gandhi's non-violence responsible for weakening the Hindus and the nation's military capability as a whole and so on? This paper, therefore, attempts to decode all assumptions and hypotheses with regard to India's beginnings and the role of its founding fathers.

Keywords: **Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Jinnah, Swami Sachidanand, Perry Anderson, non-violence, India, Pakistan, partition, independence.**

February, 14, 2019. India witnessed the deadliest ever terrorist attack in the Kashmir valley. A suicide bomber reported to be of Jaish-e-Mohammed rammed a car with explosives into buses of CRPF convoy in Kashmir's Pulwama district. In this dastardly act, more than forty jawans have lost their lives and many others seriously injured in the attack. While the whole country has mourned the pathetic death of the martyrs including the author of this write-up, an evaluation of the nation's beginnings is felt necessary. For that end, Rajmohan Gandhi's *Understanding the Founding Fathers* (2016) seems to be an interesting study in this regard. In his 'Introduction' to the *Founding Fathers*, Rajmohan Gandhi, a widely known historian and grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, the 'Father of the Nation,' states that his book 'enquires into our republic's start' (p xi). Keeping this enquiry about the Indian Republic's beginnings, this study

aims to analyse, as the author himself mentions: whether any ‘critical errors’ were made at the beginning of this great nation that became free from the British in 1947.

Many ‘hypothetical’ questions often asked by many, were put together by the author on how India would have been if seventy years ago such and such happened. The author observes that we are often confronted with disappointing situations when people ask what if Sardar Patel had been the first Prime Minister of India instead of Nehru; or if Subhas Chandra Bose had remained in India to lead her after independence; or lastly, had there been an understanding between the Congress and the League (as desired by Mahatma Gandhi), the partition could have been averted if the premiership of a united India had been offered to Jinnah in 1947 and so on and so forth (xi).

Prime Minister, Narendra Modi repeatedly argues in favour of Sardar Patel not only in the Loksabha but also in his speeches in different rallies in the country. In a rally in November, 2018 during an election campaign while addressing the farmers, Prime Minister said, “the farmers would not have been ruined during the Congress’s 55-year rule had Sardar Patel been the country’s first Prime Minister.” Political war targeting the opposition happens everywhere in a democratic set up. However, such questions and assumptions as mentioned in the previous paragraph make no sense and it does not do any good to the country. Rajmohan Gandhi dismisses such questions as being purely hypothetical. However, he admits that a related question may make practical sense as some people might wonder whether our present-day discontents are of recent origin or connected to the beginning of this republic. The author too, wonders whether there were any crucial mistakes made during the 1947-50 period. He rightly observes that we as a free nation cannot return to 1947 for a fresh start. However, if ‘crucial errors’ were made at the beginning of our nation, ‘understanding those errors may prevent their repetition’ (xi). Question may arise in the readers’ mind, if errors were not made in 1947 and had there been an understanding between the Congress and the League, as mentioned before, the partition of 1947 could have been averted. It is interesting to underline those hypothetical assumptions noted by the author. However, his book seems to be more on the defence of Gandhi and Nehru and on the other hand, a critique of Perry Anderson’s *The Indian Ideology* (2014) rather than a proper enquiry about our republic’s beginning. He himself admits that at the beginning of his enquiry, the aim of his study was more ‘limited’ and he began by ‘merely

wanting to address sweeping criticism of Gandhi and Nehru labelled by two interesting men – a Swami from Gujarat and a Professor from America' (xi).

The Swami from Gujarat, whom the author met once, occupies a decent space in the book in the very first chapter. He is Swami Sachidanand, a spiritual man from central Gujarat who has number of followers not only in Gujarat but also throughout India and even abroad. This spiritual Guru has travelled throughout the world as well. The Swami, as the author puts it, was once an admirer of Mahatma Gandhi. It is mentioned that a picture of Gandhi always hung on his wall. However, his opinion about Gandhi changed and he felt humiliated with the retreat of the Indian Army when China attacked India in 1962. The Swami felt humiliated because he felt that Gandhi's *ahimsa* had weakened India. For him, Gandhi was a great man but he failed to understand the value of the 'sword' and the threat from Islam and Muslims. The author, Rajmohan Gandhi, however, feels the necessity of addressing the following questions in this regard:

Was it really Gandhi's ahimsa that weakened India and caused the 1962 defeat? Was Gandhi in fact flawed in his understanding of the sword, of Islam, of Muslims at great cost of the Hindus? (xiii)

He seems to be burdened with refuting the charges of two persons as mentioned before: one is the Swami with the above charges against Gandhi and the other is the American Professor, Perry Anderson, the brother of the great political scientist Benedict Anderson. Perry Anderson made scathing attacks on Gandhi saying that 'he forced Pakistan on an unwilling Jinnah, that he helped fashion a Hindu state where Muslims would remain subordinate [and] a state which had enslaved the people of Kashmir' (xiv). The author seems to be cautiously responding to the charges of both the Swami and the Professor. He observes though, that both of them were in essence cancelling each other's charges against Gandhi. For Swami, Gandhi's non-violence and appeasement of the Muslims have weakened the Hindus while the Professor, in contrast, believes that Gandhi was anti-Muslim and hence, he forced Pakistan on an unwilling Jinnah, as mentioned before, to ensure supremacy of the Hindus over the Muslims who would remain subordinate in a 'Hindu state' after partition. The debate is highly sensitive and both parties have their own reasons and points to argue. However, the author of the book under discussion believes

that many would agree that 'Gandhi could not have been both anti-Muslim and a betrayer of Hindus' (xvi).

Whether Gandhi's non-violence and alleged Muslim appeasement have weakened the Hindus, a charge labelled by the swami or the counter charges made by Perry Anderson that Gandhi was anti-Muslim and he 'brought religion into the national movement [and] thereby inviting partition' (37), one may agree that Gandhi always preferred a middle path. It is believed that throughout his life, he strove for Hindu-Muslim unity. However, his invocation of Rama or dream of *Ramrajya*, or his objection to a separate electorate for Dalits in 1932 may make someone believe that besides being taking a middle path, Gandhi, in reality, tried to keep the Hindu community united. If Gandhi had worked for the unity of the Hindus then it becomes difficult to believe that Gandhi had weakened and betrayed the Hindu community. Swami Sachidanand's autobiographical book in Gujarati *Mera Anubhava* (1986) which has an English version called *My Experiences* that appeared later in 1989, can be treated as a critique on Gandhi. The book highlights his (once a follower of Gandhi and user of khadi) denouncing of khadi, his immersion of Gandhi portrait in the waters of the Ganga and his scathing criticism of Gandhi's idea of non-violence which, he believes, is responsible for India's defeat in the hands of China in 1962:

Being in contact with newspapers and magazines, I considered the ideology of non-violence responsible for this situation. Gandhiji did not teach us how to attack . . . The chief reason for this shameful defeat was our excessive passion for the ideology of non-violence. (qtd. in Rajmohan Gandhi 6)

In order to counter the allegations made by the Swami, Rajmohan Gandhi comes in Mahatma Gandhi's defence saying that Gandhi 'openly welcomed the dispatch from Delhi to Kashmir of planes ferrying Indian troops to defend the valley against raiders from Pakistan' (10). Swami, according to the author, is wrong to suggest that Gandhi undermined India's armed defence. He further adds that when Kashmir's Muslims and Hindus joined hands to resist attackers from Pakistan, Gandhi welcomed their effort and he also felt that Hindu-Muslim partnership was essential in order to stop such aggression. In the present day scenario too, we can feel how much relevant are Gandhiji's words that if we are to defeat cross-border aggression and

terrorism, Kashmiri Muslims have to be taken into confidence and a meaningful partnership with them can solve the Kashmir issue. The Kashmir problem has remained the key issue between India and Pakistan since independence and both the countries should work for an amicable solution to this problem bilaterally. However, unless the cross-border infiltration, aggression and support for terrorists and separatists from the neighbouring country stop, the resumption of dialogue seems to be unlikely. Kashmir, as mentioned before, has seen recently on 14th February, 2019, the deadliest terrorist attack in three decades which has taken the lives of over forty CRPF personnel. The whole country has mourned the death of the martyrs who lost their lives in this dastardly act. Moreover, post-Pulwama days have witnessed escalation between the two nuclear-armed neighbours of which the whole world has shown much concern and urged for restraint and de-escalation. Once again, Kashmir (including the Pakistan occupied Kashmir) is the battle-ground and there must be some way out there to amicably solve the problems relating to Kashmir as mentioned before. However, in a recent and unprecedented move on August 5, 2019, the government of India has revoked Jammu and Kashmir's special status in a presidential decree nullifying the provisions of autonomy granted to Jammu and Kashmir under article 370. The government's move is seen as a measure to integrate the Jammu and Kashmir into the mainstream of the country even though it has drawn criticism not only from political leaders of Kashmir but also from the opposition parties. The state has been reorganised and divided into two union territories, one is Jammu and Kashmir and the other is Ladakh. The political leaders of Kashmir including the former chief ministers have been put under detention and the whole valley, if media reports are to be believed, have been put under 'virtual lockdown' in order to avoid untoward incidents. The valley, as per the government claim is slowly returning to normalcy. Let us hope the government's move may bring peace and progress in the region. Yet, doubt remains whether this move will help in resolving the greater Jammu and Kashmir issue between India and Pakistan. However, it may be worthwhile to mention here that Mahatma Gandhi felt in 1947 that a Hindu-Muslim partnership was essential in Kashmir for its remaining with India and the people of Kashmir should decide their fate. Before his visit to Kashmir on July 1947, Gandhi said: 'I am not going to suggest to the Maharaja to accede to India and not to Pakistan. This is not my intention . . . The people of Kashmir should be asked whether they want to join Pakistan or India. Let them do what they want' (qtd. in Rajmohan 63).

Turning our focus back on the book under discussion, one crucial point highlighted by the author about Gandhi is that he lived only five months after independence and held no office. The author claims that Gandhi was ‘marginalized’ in those years (11). His job was limited to stop the slaughter of human beings on both sides of the subcontinent after partition; to keep Nehru and Patel united at India’s helm as both of them differed on many crucial issues and to press the authorities of free India to treat all citizens as equals. Patel and Nehru had strikingly different personalities. Neerja Singh in her book *Nehru-Patel: Agreement within Differences* (2010) observes, “Patel appeared pragmatic and prosaic, Nehru exuded charm and charisma. Patel’s politics remained focused and linear whereas Nehru’s politics was multidimensional, aesthetic with an aura of intellectualism” (xiv). The author Rajmohan Gandhi cites an opinion of an RSS (Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh) leader from Madhya Pradesh on Gandhi’s role in weakening of Hindu community who believes that Gandhi’s work had reached its peak in 1932 when he was in fast at a jail in Pune and succeeded in convincing Ambedkar to give up his insistence on a separate Dalit electorate and at the same time, Caste Hindus realized the depth of the ‘sin’ of untouchability: ‘The Mahatma should have retired after the great achievement,’ the RSS leader adds, ‘because what he did thereafter weakened the Hindu community’ (14). The author, in his Gandhi defence, presents a number of arguments in favour of Gandhi: that he never ceased to ask Hindus and Muslims to learn to live together; he tried his utmost to prevent India’s division on communal lines, though he could not succeed to stop it. The communal riots in Punjab and Bengal undoubtedly played an important role in the partition but it is worth noting that in spite of Mahatma Gandhi and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan’s opposition, Nehru and Patel with their partition plan stood ‘firmly in favour of partition’ (14). Gandhi’s fasts and interventions, the author believes, secured a commitment from the ruling congress, the government and the larger Hindu community that ‘India would be a country for all its citizens, irrespective of their religion, caste or race’ (15). Those who blame Gandhi for his role, argue that if he did not intervene, India would have emerged as a ‘Hindu Rashtra’ in 1947 and it would have been a difference altogether. Yet, one may argue that since the partition of India was done politically by power-hungry people like Nehru and Jinnah, and while a majority of Muslims by disregarding Jinnah and Muslim League’s call for Pakistan, opted for India, the making of a Hindu Rashtra then was not possible. Moreover, to undermine the sacrifices of the Muslims who fought for a united independent India and the vast diversity it has in terms of language, religion

and ethnicity, it would have been difficult to keep the integrity of the nation as it is today. In the Epilogue of his book *Hindutva or Hind Swaraj* (2016), U. R. Ananthamurthy writes:

Whether it is Godse or Savarkar, what they broadly wanted was unity of the Hindus of India. A unity that ignores the inherent diversity, and silences those who do not consider India their punyabhoomi . . . The unity that Gandhi desired was one in which everyone retained their faith, preserved their own unique cultures and accepted ahimsa. Unity comes naturally to those who live in harmony despite their differences.
(Ananthamurthy 110)

It becomes evident from the above lines that Gandhi's idea of unity is all inclusive that houses all irrespective of caste, religion, race and ethnicity. There is a clear distinction between the idea of unity of the Hindus in the line of Godse and Savarkar (Swami also falls in this category) and that of Mahatma Gandhi whose idea of Hindu unity not only speaks of the unity of the Hindus but also gives equal importance to the diversity of the nation where everyone retained their faith and preserved their own unique cultures and maintained ahimsa. The legacy which the Swami inherited is a legacy which perhaps considers 'Hindu' as a race and not as a 'faith' and therefore, they speak of the unity of one Hindu race where 'others' have no place as it is alleged that they do not consider India, as mentioned before, as their 'punyabhoomi.' Whereas, Gandhi's 'Hindu' is a faith which recognises diversity and through ahimsa it accepts all; thereby ensures unity in diversity and harmony despite differences. This reminds us of our Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore who sang in his famous *Geetanjali* (1910) about India as a melting pot of all cultures and civilizations. He proudly called India a place of 'pilgrimage for humanity' where different races and cultures from all corners have met and mingled all through the ages into a single body (Tagore 122).

Swami's second and most serious allegation against Gandhi is that he appeased the Muslims at the great cost of the Hindus and thus betrayed the Hindu community. Anderson, on the other hand, alleges that Gandhi was chiefly concerned with the Hindu interest. The author, at this point, carefully examines the charges and allegations labelled by both of them against Gandhi and validates Gandhi's claim that he dreamt of Hindu-Muslim friendship even in his adolescent days in Rajkot: 'I have had the dream ever since then that if the Hindus, Sikhs, Parsis,

Christians and Muslims could live in amity not only in Rajkot but in the whole of India they would all have a very happy life (23). Again, when the call for a separate homeland for the Muslims began audible from the end of 1939, Gandhi's suggested reasons for keeping India united is notable: 'It was worse than anarchy,' he said, 'to partition a poor country . . . whose every corner is populated by Hindus and Muslims living side by side' (23). Gandhi was always in favour of a united India. The author, however, refutes the charges of both Swami and Anderson and meticulously presents series of references and incidents of communal riots that occurred in many parts of India, particularly Punjab, Bengal and Bihar, and Gandhi's role in pacifying the situation there in order to bring peace and communal harmony. As already mentioned before, in spite of Gandhi's efforts to keep India united and ensuring communal harmony between the Hindus and the Muslims, India's destiny at that time was hanging in the hands of Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel, and many other leaders who put forward the partition plan and consented in favour of partition. Anderson, as highlighted before, while blaming Gandhi, believes that, at that point Pakistan was forced upon an unwilling Jinnah (xiv) as it is often argued that Jinnah at one stage, only wanted some safeguard for the Muslims and dominion status for Muslim dominated areas within a united Indian Union where Muslims will not be subordinated and marginalized. Yet, from the preceding discussion, it becomes somewhat clear that Gandhi cannot be blamed for India's partition. 'At the stroke of the midnight hour,' in the words of Nehru, 'when the world sleeps India will awake to life and freedom' (Hasan 1), while the streets of Delhi was celebrating independence with joyous excitement, it was only Gandhi, as Mushirul Hasan in his 'Introduction' to *Nehru's India: Select Speeches* (2007) puts it, who celebrated independence in Calcutta by fasting. 'The Mahatma,' he says, 'was sitting in a Muslim's house in Calcutta on the day of freedom, his heart heavy with sorrow over the communal carnage that marked the partition of India' (Hasan 2). This is perhaps the saddest story relating to India's partition where one can discover a helpless Gandhi still fasting for communal peace and harmony.

Gandhi was not only sidelined but was also made to accept the partition, but he 'not only refused to see Hindus and Muslims as two nations,' he claimed that both 'India and Pakistan are my country [and] I am not going to take out a passport for going to Pakistan' (26). These words of Gandhi certainly reveal that he never wanted partition of India. He believed Hindus and Muslims as two brothers of a family who have got separated. It is said that post-partition period

in the subcontinent was very gloomy as there was widespread riot in Lahore and Delhi. The author adds that Gandhi who was once the spearhead of the freedom struggle becomes an ordinary man in the post-partition era. Yet, on January 13, 1948 he started his final fast for the ‘safety of the minorities in Pakistan and India both’ (27), and later broke his fast when people of Delhi pledged to protect the minorities. He also wanted to travel to Pakistan and ask for the protection of minorities there too. But, unfortunately, on 30th January 1948, Gandhi was assassinated by Nathuram Godse, a member of the group of people who accuse Gandhi of weakening and betraying the Hindu community. The author, though, at the end of the chapter, has come out in fierce defence of Gandhi saying that he was ‘wholehearted in defending Hindu rights and standing up to Muslim wrongs’ (30). Yet, this does not help to satisfy the people in the likes of the Swami of Gujarat. Like Gandhi, Jinnah too believed that partition was temporary and it happened as if between two brothers and one day both will come together and become united again. Sadly, this did not happen; and many in the subcontinent believe that had Gandhi and Jinnah both lived longer, there could have been a chance to rectify the errors and misunderstandings that led to the partition of this great nation.

The partition of India in 1947 is regarded as the most disastrous incident in the history of the sub-continent. Interestingly, no party claims responsibility for this calamity that had made millions homeless and had taken the lives of millions too. Whereas, each party, the British, the Congress, and the Muslim League had played blame-game on each other, which continues even more blatantly today with the predominantly Hindu nationalist party Bharatiya Janata Party’s (BJP) putting blame of partition on Congress and it’s the then leaders, particularly Jawaharlal Nehru besides Jinnah and his Muslim League. Interestingly, not much blame is put on Sardar Patel, also a Congressman who worked alongside Nehru. Patel is credited for his contribution in uniting and integrating the Princely States into the Indian Union after independence. However, individual responsibilities too such as the role of the then British Premier Winston Churchill, Lord Wavell (British Viceroy of India), Lord Mountbatten, and on the other hand, the role of the leaders among the Indians: Mahatma Gandhi, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel cannot be overlooked. The fate of the subcontinent, in fact, was in the hands of a few whose lack of farsightedness and thirst for power and partitioned land as ‘prize money’ (Anderson 76) had brought immense loss and suffering to the people. Partition of India was in no way the decision of the people of India, the common masses of India; it was ‘imposed

from above, deliberately circumventing any expression of a democratic will' (Anderson 74). On 1947 partition, Anderson quotes the noted Indian critic and postcolonial theorist Aijaz Ahmad who observes in an article that: 'Never before in South Asian history, did so few divide so many, so needlessly' (Anderson 74, Rajmohan 58). Anderson even goes beyond this observation of Ahmad saying that the adverb 'needlessly' should have been replaced by the word 'murderously' so that we could get an idea of the gravity and calamity caused by partition. There is no denying the fact that the British made lot of mistakes while dealing with the partition and its hasty withdrawal from India with the transfer of power. Though Anderson writes that the British imperialism in the subcontinent 'did not favour partition' (76) but when London and Delhi decided about the partition, they could not prevent it. Moreover, he argues, the 'avidity of Congress for the prize money of an instant division was the local motive of the disaster' (Anderson 76). He wonders what 'prompted' the British to 'inflict' partition on its subjects overnight? The pace with which the British left after declaring partition and independence, admits Anderson too that the partition can be claimed as 'the most contemptible single act in the annals of the Empire' (Anderson 77, Rajmohan 54). The author, in chapter two, seems to agree with Anderson, the American Professor on the question of 'who caused partition?' when the latter says that this major question posed by the modern history is yet to receive 'analytic treatment' and further adds that the 'party that led the national movement to such a disastrous upshot stands condemned' while the 'culture' that made the conflict between Hindus and Muslims 'insuperable' is also a cause for 'collective shame' (Anderson 100, Rajmohan 52-53). In his critique of Anderson, Rajmohan Gandhi further points out what Anderson believed about partition is that 'Gandhi, Nehru, Patel and the Congress' together with the 'Hindu culture' of India had made Pakistan and partition 'inevitable' (Rajmohan 53). However, the role of Jinnah (neither a religious man nor did he represent all Muslims of the subcontinent) and the Muslim League for their demand for Pakistan comprising of Muslim-majority portions of the subcontinent is equally responsible for the partition of India.

Gandhi, as it is known to many, was strongly against the partition and the 'two nation theory' formulated by Jinnah which said that Hindus and Muslims were two separate nations. In his Introduction to *Jinnah, India, Pakistan, Independence* (2009), Jaswant Singh makes an interesting observation saying that while Jinnah acting as a 'sole spokesman of Muslims' and wanted 'the insurance of a specified ratio of representation for the Muslims in elective bodies

and government jobs' (Singh 7), Gandhi disagreed and many others wondered that how, as Gopal Krishna Gokhale termed it 'the ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity' (Singh 95) could speak of division in the name of reservation. Meanwhile, Jaswant Singh accuses Jawaharlal Nehru, a western educated man like Jinnah (who was far from Islam and the common Muslims to be the spokesman of the Muslims) to be far removed from India's cultural consciousness competed for power at the cost of a vivisected India. Sadly, it was Mahatma Gandhi, he argues, who remained to 'speak for a united India' (Singh 8). While speaking about India's partition, Singh opines that Jinnah who was once termed by Viceroy Lord Linlithgow as 'more Congress than the Congress' (qtd. in singh 6) lately saw Congress as his adversary and it was therefore, 'Congress versus the Muslim League, two parties contending for power that led to partition' (Singh 80). On the other hand, one cannot, however deny that the British policy of 'divide and rule' has always remained as a barrier against any political solution between the two contending parties: Hindus and Muslims in the subcontinent. Even the 'overgenerous' offer for Premiership to Jinnah proposed by Gandhi for avoiding partition was never taken forward as 'Mountbatten toiled energetically against it, Nehru and Patel opposed it' (Rajmohan 58) and in this way instead of a peaceful resolution in favour of a United Indian Union, the 1947 tragedy happened. The author, however, honestly admits that the Congress must also 'be assigned its due share of blame' for failing to build an amicable partnership between the Hindus and the Muslims as there were many in the Congress who had 'anti-Muslim outlook' and in addition, the 'League and the Empire, as well as the Hindutva groups who pushed the line, identical to that of the League, that Hindus and Muslims were two nations' (Rajmohan 60).

In a later chapter titled 'Dream Team,' the author takes forward the views of Anderson in the latter's narrative of the subcontinent's journey to Independence and Partition, and of the Indian republic's journey thereafter concentrating mainly on three personalities such as Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Bhimrao Ambedkar and Subhas Chandra Bose. The author highlights Anderson's judgement on Jinnah that he was 'thoroughly secular in outlook and mode of life' and though ambitious, he was also 'an architect of Hindu-Muslim unity' who 'probably aimed at a confederation rather than complete separation' (qtd. in Rajmohan 88). Whereas, the Congress, observes Anderson, 'was essentially a Hindu party' (qtd. in Rajmohan 88) but Jinnah, who from 1940, passionately campaigned for Pakistan, was 'secular' in his eyes, argues the author. Ambedkar too, as the author mentions, gets a positive treatment from Anderson for his clear-

sighted vision and scholarship and who ‘would call for a division of Kashmir to allow its Muslim-majority zone, including the valley, to join Pakistan’ (qtd. in Rajmohan 89). Anderson, as the author adds, blames Nehru for abandoning Ambedkar in 1951 which had led to the latter’s departure from the union cabinet. And finally, it was Subhas Bose who, for Anderson, was the ‘only leader Congress ever produced who united Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in a common secular struggle’ and had he not reportedly died in a plane crash in Taiwan, as it is believed, ‘the political landscape of post-war India’ (Qtd. in Rajmohan 89) as it is rightly observed, would have acquired a different shape.

After all, ‘[w]hy did partition occur?’ is the sole question put forward by the author may help to draw the concluding lines. It is believed that there is no satisfactory explanation to this question available to us till today. It may not be wise to solely hold the British responsible for the tragedy of 1947. The author rightly observes while referring to a frontline Muslim leader and freedom fighter and a champion for Hindu-Muslim unity, Muhammad Ali Jauhar who long before the partition, ‘dismissed’ the ‘divide and rule’ explanation saying: ‘[t]hey don’t divide . . . We divide and they rule’ (Rajmohan 115). It was only the elite class of both the communities, Hindus and Muslims showed resentment on each other’s ‘pure birth’ and ‘pure faith’ respectively, observes the author. In contrast, the common mass belonging to both the communities and who formed a larger majority were ‘dependent on one another for life and livelihood . . . and learnt to coexist’ (Rajmohan 115). Seventy years on, the average Indians want to look forward and by forgetting the past and taking lesson from it, wish to live together harmoniously. In addition, hypothetical assumptions mentioned at the beginning of this write-up, cannot reverse what have already happened. Scholars may agree at one point that errors were indeed made by the leaders, administrators and ‘founding fathers’ of that time that had led to the 1947 tragedy in the history of the subcontinent. The prominent founding fathers: Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel, despite all differences of opinions, made all their efforts to reconstitute an India what we see today. India has learnt to be proud of its inclusivity and diversity and should continue to be so. Let India be what Mahatma Gandhi dreamt in 1931:

I shall work for an India in which the poorest feel it is their country in whose making they have an effective voice; an India in which there shall

be no high class and low class of people; an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony. (qtd. in Rajmohan 123)

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