

## INDIA'S QUIET REVOLUTION

Dr Homi Jahangir Bhabha, the founder of India's Nuclear programme had envisioned how energy would determine the development and autonomy of Nations in the modern era. Not only he could foresee, but he also asserted for funds and permissions from the government at a time when India was struggling with its basics like poverty and hunger. Today the nation must remember the visionary whose idea had led the country to a stage where it has become the second country to develop and operate Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) at Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu. India's most advanced nuclear facility attained its first criticality on April 6 triggering the initiation of a sustained nuclear chain reaction. It coincided with the Iran-US-Israel war and the governments worrying about the impending oil crises. The PFRB means that India is in a position to use thorium, a metal used to produce clean nuclear energy, and which is present in large quantities in the country. Reaching criticality means that the reactor is able to self-sustain as produce more fuel than it consumes for producing energy. The new technology was so far only with Russia. This revolution will surely change the dynamics of India's growth and its push for discontinuing the use of fossil fuels as part of mitigating the global warming. In has about 25 percent of the thorium deposits in the world and this milestone will enable it to use it instead of the imported uranium..

It's unfortunate that our school books to not teach us about great visionaries like Bhabha or other scientists who carried on his mission after he was killed in an aircraft, suspected to be the handiwork of a foreign spy agency. Thankfully, in this era of OTT platforms, the Indians know about this great man through a serial.

## Mahatma Jyotirao Phule: A light that still shows the way

Narendra Modi

Today, 11th April, is a deeply special day for all of us. It is the birth anniversary of Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, one of India's greatest social reformers and a guiding light for generations. This year, the occasion carries even greater significance, as it marks the beginning of his 200th birth anniversary celebrations.

Mahatma Phule was a great reformer. In addition to that, his was a life of moral courage, restless enquiry and unshakable commitment to social good. Mahatma Phule is remembered for the institutions he built and the movements he led. At the same time, his contribution to our civilisational journey lies in the hope he aroused, the confidence he instilled and the strength his thoughts continue to give to millions of people across the nation.

Born in the great state of Maharashtra in 1827, Mahatma Phule emerged from modest beginnings. But his initial hardships never stood in the way of his learning, his courage or his commitment to society. This is a trait that remained with him forever: whatever the challenges may be, one must work hard, acquire knowledge and mitigate those challenges instead of doing nothing about it. From his school days, young Jyotirao was deeply curious and became a voracious reader, often reading books far beyond what children his age were expected to engage with. Years later, he said, "The more questions we generate, the more knowledge emerges from them." Clearly, the spirit of enquiry he was blessed with since his childhood remained constant in his journey.

Throughout his life, learning and education became central to Mahatma Phule's mission. He recognised with rare clarity that knowledge is not a privilege to be guarded, but a force to be shared. At a time when the joys of learning were denied to many, he opened pioneering schools for girls and for those kept out of formal education. He used to say, "Any improvement that comes in children



through mothers is deeply valuable. Therefore, if schools are to be opened, they should first be opened for girls." He worked to create a new social imagination in which the classroom became an instrument of justice and equality.

His vision for education inspires us greatly. Over the last decade, we have worked to make research and innovation a cornerstone for the youth of India. Efforts are being made to create an ecosystem where young minds are encouraged to question, explore and innovate. By investing in knowledge, skills and opportunity, India is empowering its youth to become problem-solvers and drivers of national progress. Due to his knowledge and wisdom, Mahatma Phule developed a strong understanding of areas such as

agriculture, healthcare and rural development. He often said that injustice towards our farmers and workers weakens our society. He saw how social inequalities manifested themselves in daily life, be it in the farms or in villages. Hence, he immersed himself in ensuring dignity for the poor, the downtrodden and the marginalised. At the same time, he made every possible effort to ensure social harmony was maintained.

Mahatma Phule opined, "True freedom cannot be achieved until everyone in society is granted equal rights." And for that, he built institutions that translated this vision into action, contributing to a just society. The Satyashodhak Samaj, founded by him, was one of the most important social reform movements in modern India. It was at the forefront of social reform, community service and furthering human dignity. It became an effective voice for women, youngsters and those living in villages. This movement reflected Mahatma Phule's intrinsic belief that society could be strengthened by placing at its core justice, respect for every person and a spirit of collective progress. His personal life, too, carried lessons in courage. Always working and being among the people took a toll on his health. But even the most serious health challenges did not dim his resolve. After suffering a debilitating stroke, he continued to work and fulfil his vision. Yes, his body had been tested, but his commit-

ment to society had not yielded. For millions today, especially those who draw courage from struggle, this remains one of the most powerful dimensions of his life.

No remembrance of Mahatma Phule can be complete without a respectful mention of Savitribai Phule, who was herself one of the tallest reformers of our nation. As one of India's pioneering women teachers, she played a defining role in advancing education for girls, thus giving them the opportunity to pursue their dreams. After Mahatma Phule's passing, Savitribai carried forward that torch and, in 1897, during a plague outbreak, she served victims with such devotion that she herself contracted the disease and lost her own life.

Our land has been blessed, time and again, by great men and women who have strengthened society through thought, sacrifice and action. They did not wait for change to arrive from somewhere else. They became its source. For hundreds of years in our land, the clarion call for social betterment has often risen from within society itself, from those who could see suffering clearly and refused to accept it as fate. Mahatma Jyotirao Phule was one such voice.

I fondly recall my visit to Pune in 2022, when I had offered tributes to Mahatma Phule at his grand statue in the city. As we mark the beginning of his bicentenary year, the most fitting tribute to Mahatma Jyotirao Phule is about renewal. Renewal of our commitment to subjects close to his heart, such as education. Renewal of our sensitivity to injustice. Renewal of our faith that society can improve itself from within. His life tells us that the power of community can achieve miracles in India when joined with moral clarity and public purpose. That is why he still gives strength to millions. That is why his words and work still carry hope. And that is why, nearly two hundred years after his birth, Mahatma Jyotirao Phule remains not a figure of the past, but a guide for India's future.

*The writer is the Prime Minister of India; views are personal*

## CURIOSITY, CREATION, AND THE QUIET INSTINCT TO POSSESS

Sanjay Chandra

Humans possess an insatiable curiosity, a restlessness that continually pushes them to explore new boundaries. It is this quest that has given rise to newer technologies, enabling progress that often appears both inevitable and admirable. Yet, the same impulse carries within it a quieter, more troubling tendency — the desire not only to discover, but to possess; not only to reach, but to claim what was never inherently theirs, whether it be land, boundaries, or even fellow human lives. Over the past few months, I have come across two pieces of news that, in very different ways, reinforced this belief in the complex duality of human ambition. One of them was about researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, who have developed a solar-powered thermochemical battery using strontium bromide — an innovation capable of storing summer heat and releasing it during the freezing Himalayan winters. It offers a clean and cost-effective alternative to diesel-based heating, especially in remote, high-altitude regions, and holds the potential to significantly improve conditions for the local population, as well as for soldiers stationed in some of



the harshest environments on Earth. Here, curiosity manifests as care, as problem-solving, as an extension of human ingenuity directed towards sustaining life. And yet, the same impulse that enables such life-sustaining innovation can, when left unchecked, take on a very different character.

Another development pointed to this more unsettling possibility. It concerned emerging claims over the Moon by countries that have successfully landed spacecraft on its surface — an exclusive and growing club. What appears as explo-

ration often carries the early language of possession, something history has shown us repeatedly. Beneath the language of scientific progress lies a quieter assertion of presence and, eventually, of ownership. The idea of creating "parking facilities" in space, of positioning oneself closer to future interplanetary journeys, echoes — perhaps uncomfortably — the history of terrestrial colonisation, when empires stretched across continents under the guise of discovery, leaving behind legacies that are still being reckoned with. Placed side by side, these developments reveal the paradox at the heart of human progress. The same curiosity that warms a soldier in a Himalayan outpost can also extend its reach outward, seeking to imprint ownership upon distant celestial bodies. It is not curiosity alone, then, that defines us, but the direction in which we choose to take it — and the restraint, or the lack of it, that accompanies our pursuit. This tendency is not

confined to distant frontiers alone; it continues to shape our conduct much closer to home. One would have thought that the experiences of earlier centuries might have evolved us into a more mature and self-aware race.

Yet, the persistence of sustained conflicts across different parts of the globe in the twenty-first century quietly belies that hope, suggesting that while our technologies have advanced, our instincts perhaps have not kept pace. And yet, it would be too easy — and perhaps too convenient — to conclude that this is all that defines us. The same curiosity that drives us to claim can also compel us to correct, to collaborate, and to care. History, after all, is not merely a record of excesses, but also of gradual learning — of institutions built, of norms negotiated, and of individuals and societies choosing restraint over impulse. If there is hope, it lies not in abandoning our instinct to explore, but in refining it — so that discovery does not inevitably lead to domination, and progress does not come at the cost of our shared humanity.

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## 14-day reprieve: Ceasefire and new global strategic challenges

Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta

On the morning of April 7, 2026, the world stood at a precipice that US President Donald Trump described as "the death of a civilisation." Twelve hours before his self-imposed 8:00 PM deadline, the shadow of full-scale war loomed over the entire Middle East. With the destruction of bridges in Kashan, Iran's key oil export hub on Kharg Island, and the rising humanitarian toll — including the deaths of 18 civilians in Alborz province — Trump had provided a grim preview of this "civilisational destruction." As the clock ticked toward a catastrophic conflict, an unexpected mediator and a 10-point proposal, termed a "Document of Self-Respect," emerged to pull the world back from the brink.

This ceasefire, brokered through Pakistan, marks a turning point in 21st-century geopolitics. To understand its significance, one must observe the roles of the primary parties involved and the massive economic and structural implications of the demands currently on the table.

The path to the April 7 ceasefire was paved by the "Maximum Pressure 2.0" strategy. President Trump's approach was uniquely aggressive, eschewing traditional diplomatic nuances in favor of a "might is right" policy. By targeting critical infrastructure like power plants, railways, and bridges, the US presented Tehran with two choices: surrender or face total annihilation. During this period, President Trump and Vice President JD Vance played a "bad cop-good cop" routine, alternating between aggressive posturing and messages of peace.

In this crisis, an unexpected "hero" emerged. Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, despite struggling with his own country's economic fragility, filled the vacuum. According to analysts like Olivia Reed, Pakistan's role was a well-planned US maneuver. While the US used Pakistan as a credible "neutral" mouthpiece to deliver an ultimatum, Sharif — a favorite of Trump — and Field Marshal Asim Munir provided Iran with a dignified exit strategy, likely at Washington's suggestion. By re-

questing a two-week window to "give diplomacy a chance," Pakistan allowed Trump to appear magnanimous and helped the Iranian government frame the move not as a surrender to Western powers, but as a response to a brotherly Islamic nation.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and the High-Level National Security Council immediately pivoted, presenting the 10-point proposal as a "functional basis" for victory rather than a surrender. This narrative was crucial for domestic stability; facing pressure from ordinary citizens forming human chains around power plants and the IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard). This ceasefire is not a permanent solution but a strategic pause that exposes three significant loopholes:

Trump's announcement conditioned the ceasefire on the "complete, immediate, and secure reopening" of the Strait. Conversely, Iranian state media claims the agreement mentions "continued Iranian control" over the waterway. It is difficult to see how these contradictory

positions can coexist. If Iran attempts to collect "transit fees" during these two weeks, Trump's promise of a "secure opening" to his supporters will be proven false. While Prime Minister Sharif announced a ceasefire "everywhere," including Lebanon, Benjamin Netanyahu's office promptly issued a warning stating that Lebanon is not included. This is a major strategic discrepancy. If Israel continues operations against Hezbollah, Iran may feel compelled to respond, potentially collapsing the Islamabad talks before they begin on April 10.

Iran's call for human chains around civilian infrastructure was a calculated move to gain global sympathy. By agreeing to the ceasefire, Trump mitigated international PR damage but maintained the threat of "destructive force" if a deal isn't signed within 14 days.

The economic reaction was instantaneous. Within 30 minutes of Trump's Truth Social post, WTI Crude fell from \$114 to \$96 per barrel. This 9% drop provided much-needed relief after 38 days of uncertainty.

However, if Iran's primary demands — specifically the imposition of permanent "fees" in the Strait of Hormuz — are accepted in the final Islamabad agreement, it would signal a structural shift in the global economy. A fee of \$2 million per ship would drive global inflation. Furthermore, Iran's demand to trade in "sovereign currencies" strikes at the heart of petrodollar dominance. If the US agrees to this to ensure oil flow, it signals a multipolar financial world, benefiting the Chinese Yuan and weakening Washington's ability to use the global financial system as a weapon.

If the demands of Iran's 10-point plan are met, the Middle East will be transformed for the next half-century:

A US military withdrawal (Iran's 4th demand) would leave allies like Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the UAE vulnerable, potentially triggering a regional nuclear arms race.

example for other middle-tier powers. The message is clear: if you can choke the global energy supply, you can force any "superpower" to

the table.

Pakistan's Ascent: Pakistan's transition from seeking IMF loans to hosting the decade's most significant peace talks is nothing short of extraordinary. Chinese interests, seeking a stable and dollar-free energy route, likely lurk behind this development. For now, the bombing has stopped.

For the families in Alborz and the traders in New York, this 14-day reprieve is a blessing. But when delegates meet in Islamabad on Friday, April 10, the core disagreements will remain. The US views this as a "window for surrender" to reopen the waterways.

Iran views it as a "moment of victory" where they forced the US to acknowledge their dominance and lift sanctions. One side is bound to be proven wrong. In the words of Olivia Reed: "This is not peace; it is a time to re-arm." After 14 days, someone will have to back down. If no one does, the "civilization-destroying" force Trump threatened remains poised in the Persian Gulf. For now, the world breathes — but with one eye fixed firmly on the clock.