

TRUMP'S HALLUCINATIONS

US President Donald Trump's state of mind should be of concern to the world. The way he picked up a battle with Iran without thinking of its implications or assessing the firepower of Iran, show a disturbing trend. While the war had not ended and the negotiations to break it had failed, Trump came up with another self-image – likening himself to Jesus Christ. He posted his image as 'Jesus Christ healing patients and on social media. Before this he had very harsh words to speak about Pope, the leader of Catholics, who is the first one from the USA to occupy the Papal seat in the Vatican. Pope Leo XIV had spoken in favour of peace as against what he saw as political leaders' war-mongering efforts. There was an unprecedented exchange of words between the Pope and the US President. Now the first lay Melania Trump has also disapproved of her husband's diatribe against the Pope as unacceptable. The last we heard on this was that Trump had deleted the controversial post in which he posed as "Jesus Christ".

This surely doesn't augur well for the world peace amidst the threats from Iran and also the USA to block the Strait of Hormuz, a key transit route for ships carrying supplies from one corner of the world to another. The rest of the world is upset over all these developments. Though Europe has declined Trump's offer to join the US-Israel attacks on Iran making the NATO redundant, Trump continues to push the world towards more uncertainty. Now the UK has announced to defend the Strait of Hormuz against both Iran and the US over the blockade. Would the UK do the needful – take up a position against the USA in the sea remains to be seen. No wonder the refusal of the West to cooperate with the USA has made Trump to keep in touch with Indian leadership.

BR Ambedkar: His life, legacy and beyond

K P Tenneti

India is a nation built on the shoulders of extraordinary individuals, men and women who dared to dream of equality, justice and dignity for all. Among those towering figures, one stands apart - not merely as a statesman, jurist or economist, but at the intersection of law, public morality and social justice. His name: BR Ambedkar. As we commemorate him today, I would like to take a moment not only to delve into the life of an individual who transcended the brutal circumstances of birth to become one of the finest legal and intellectual minds of the twentieth century, the principal architect of the Constitution of the Republic of India, but also to shed light on the post-independence political marginalisation and, ultimately, the slow but deliberate reduction of his legacy.

Our story begins 135 years ago on this day, 14 April. The year was 1891, and in a small town called Mhow (now BR Ambedkar Nagar in modern-day Madhya Pradesh), a baby was born to the family of Ramji Maloji Sakpal and Bhimabai, their 14th child. The family belonged to the Mahar caste, classified as 'untouchable', thereby subjected to one of the most systematic and dehumanising forms of social discrimination the world has ever known.

From a very young age, Ambedkar faced harsh social exclusion. In school, he was made to sit separately. He was not allowed to touch water vessels. If he needed water, someone from a higher caste had to pour it for him, if they agreed at all. Many times, he simply went without water. These experiences were not isolated incidents. They reflected a deeply unjust social system that denied basic dignity to entire communities.

Despite these hardships, BR Ambedkar showed exceptional intelligence and determination. A teacher gave him the surname "Ambedkar", replacing his original surname. While this small gesture became part of a much larger journey, it lit a fire of determination and zeal in a child who was denied basic rights, pushing him to become one of the most educated and influential minds of his time.

In 1907, a young Ambedkar passed his Matriculation examination from Bombay University with outstanding results. He sub-



sequently joined Elphinstone College in Mumbai in 1908, a prestigious institution that that very few Dalits of that era could even aspire to enter. In 1912, he graduated in Political Science and Economics from Bombay University.

In 1913, following his father's death, Ambedkar departed for the United States to study at Columbia University in New York, where he was awarded a PhD for his thesis 'The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India'. His very first published article, 'Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development', announced to the world the arrival of a scholar of the first rank.

He returned to India briefly and then travelled to England, where he studied at the London School of Economics and qualified at Gray's Inn to be called to the Bar. During his time in London from 1920 to 1923, he completed another landmark thesis titled 'The Problem of the Rupee', for which the University of London awarded him the degree of DSc.

The multitude of recognition from prestigious institutions worldwide confirmed his standing as one of the most academically accomplished men of the twentieth century. However, for all practical purposes in his own country, he was still seen as an untouchable, with discrimination and prejudice making it very difficult for Ambedkar to find acceptance among the elite of India at that time. Yet, he remained firm in his resolve to use education as a tool for social change.

After returning to India, Ambedkar dedicated himself to the upliftment of the oppressed. In 1920, he started the newspaper Mooknayak (Leader of the Silent) to raise awareness among Dalits. His activism was

practical and structured. He believed in creating institutions and movements to bring change. In 1923, he founded the Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha to promote education and improve the economic condition of the downtrodden. In 1927, he led the Mahad Satyagraha at the Chowdar Tank, asserting the right of Dalits to access public water. This was a major moment in the fight against caste discrimination.

In 1930, he launched the Temple Entry Movement at the Kalam Temple in Nashik, demanding equal religious rights.

A major turning point came in 1932 with the debate on separate electorates for the Depressed Classes. The British Communal Award granted this provision, which Ambedkar supported. However, Mahatma Gandhi opposed it and began a fast unto death. Under immense pressure, Ambedkar signed the Poona Pact, replacing separate electorates with reserved seats.

This was the start of many differences between Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi, with the fundamental difference being that while Mahatma Gandhi referred to untouchables as 'Harijans' and sought reform from within Hinduism, Ambedkar, who had experienced untouchability in the flesh, believed that the caste system was fundamentally incompatible with human equality and dignity and needed to be abolished entirely.

His 1936 work, Annihilation of Caste, strongly criticised the caste system. However, the Congress party at that time was not aligned with this and felt that Ambedkar was going against the work of Mahatma Gandhi. This difference is seen aptly in the 1945 writing of Ambedkar titled What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables, a damning account of how the Congress party had repeatedly failed the Depressed Classes, prioritising the interests of the upper-caste Hindu majority over the rights of those at the bottom of the social order.

Ambedkar's contribution to India's freedom struggle is sometimes misunderstood. It is rather unfortunate that this misunderstanding has been encouraged, deliberately or otherwise, by those who preferred to see him as a sectional leader rather than a national one. The truth is more complex, and considerably more honourable.

Ambedkar's vision of freedom was categorically different from that which dominated the Congress-led national movement.

For him, freedom without equality was hollow. He wrote and argued repeatedly that the independence of India from British rule, while necessary, would mean little to millions of Dalits if the new rulers simply replicated the social hierarchies and injustices of the old order. For Ambedkar, freedom without equality and equality without freedom could lead to absolute dictatorship.

We see his efforts to tackle this in one of his most monumental contributions to a newly independent India, the heart and soul of our democracy, the Indian Constitution.

Within weeks of our country gaining independence, on 29 August 1947, the Constituent Assembly established a Drafting Committee to prepare a Constitution for the new republic and elected Ambedkar as its Chairman. The task was of an almost impossible magnitude. The Constituent Assembly 'moved, discussed and disposed of as many as 2,473 amendments' during its deliberations. Rajendra Prasad, Chairman of the Constituent Assembly, acknowledged the zeal and devotion of the members of the Drafting Committee and especially its Chairman, Ambedkar, in delivering our nation a Constitution despite deteriorating health and in conditions of extraordinary difficulty. Ambedkar ensured that our Constitution included robust protections for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes. He insisted on the separation of powers, an independent judiciary, and the fundamental rights of every citizen regardless of caste, creed, sex or religion. He advocated democracy in every field: social, economic and political. For him, social justice meant maximum happiness for a maximum number of people.

The tragedy of Ambedkar's post-independence years is inseparable from the tragedy of the Congress government's failure to honour one of its own greatest servants. Having used his towering intellect and prodigious labour to draft the Constitution, Ambedkar was subsequently marginalised, humiliated and politically destroyed by the very party whose government he had served. When differences emerged between him and the ruling government of Jawaharlal Nehru, he chose to resign from the government rather than remain part of what he did not believe was making the necessary efforts to uplift the Dalits, oppressed and marginalised classes.

WHEN HISTORY RETURNS IN THE SAME TONE

Sanjay Chandra

Our holiday in Poland was filled with laughter and companionship. Yet, interspersed were moments that were far more sombre.

We walked through the Jewish quarters and the remnants of the ghettos in Warsaw. These were not just places on an itinerary; they were spaces that demanded silence, reflection. At the start of a walking tour in Warsaw, our guide made a statement. The events, she said, could not possibly be condensed into two and a half hours. It was easy to reduce history to simple binaries-to label all Germans as perpetrators, or to question why Polish citizens did not stand up for their Jewish neighbours.

Then she asked us to pause and imagine a world where offering shelter to a persecuted individual could invite death-not only for oneself, but for one's entire family. Imagine the weight of that choice, and in that moment history moved away from abstraction and became something far more human, and far more complex.

At the end of the walk, she left us with



another thought that was even more unsettling. If one were to read the speeches of Hitler and his followers, and then listen to certain global leaders and their supporters today, one might find an uncomfortable familiarity in that language. It is not identical, but it echoes, and that echo is both uncanny and deeply disturbing.

The visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau from Krakow was heavier still, and there are no words that can fully capture what one feels walking through those grounds. The scale of suffering defies comprehension-men, women, children, no distinction, no mercy. The structures remain, but what lingers is not just history; it is the evi-

dence of what human beings are capable of doing to one another.

Our young guide spoke with a voice that often faltered under the weight of what she was recounting. At one point, she said something that cut through all detail and stayed as a simple, stark truth: that much of what happened there was rooted in hatred-of one race against another.

And then came the question, unspoken but unavoidable: if we cannot find it within ourselves to let go of our prejudices, then who are we? It is perhaps this question that travels with us long after such visits end, especially when one reflects that these events unfolded less than

a century ago. Not in some distant, unrecognisable past, but within a timeline that still touches our present. One would have hoped that such history would have firmly anchored us in a commitment to a more humane future, that it would have sharpened our ability to recognise the early signs of division and hatred.

And yet, as one listens more closely to the world around us, there are moments when the language begins to sound familiar again. History does not always repeat itself in the same form, but it often returns in the same tone. And perhaps what matters most is not that we remember what happened, but that we recognise when it begins to happen again. Remembrance is not enough. It must be accompanied by vigilance-an awareness of the words we use, the silences we accept, and the prejudices we allow to persist within us.

History may belong to the past, but its warnings are always addressed to the present. And if there is to be hope for the future, it will lie not in what we have seen, but in what we choose to refuse, resist, and rise above.

The book that wasn't: Silence, strategy, & security

Ashok K Mehta

It is necessary to revive the vital issue of national security suppressed, presumably at the behest of the government, by former COAS Gen MM Naravane's declaration on February 10, that his controversial book Four Stars of Destiny has not been published. For a full one week, the unpublished book paralysed Parliament and gave it publicity of high order. The book contains an oral operational directive presumably from PM Narendra Modi to Naravane at the height of the India-China crisis on Kailash Ridge on August 31, 2020 – "jo uchit samjho woh karo" (JUSWK). The situation obtaining at the time is well known and does not require recall. In his book Naravane wrote: "I was handed a hot potato" adding something few have recounted earlier, that he was told by the highest authority: "I should not be the first to open fire". This was in accordance with prevailing protocols promulgated in 1993-96 on "no use of firearms". JUSWK was clearly a case of passing the buck.

On December 15, 2023, Naravane issued a tweet, "Hello friends, my book is available....follow this link". The book was to hit the stands in January 2024. On 10 February 2026, he said (or was forced to say): "My book has not been published", which terminated several adjournment motions in the Lok Sabha. The publisher, Penguin Random House, repeated the claim on

the same day. Both author and publisher were muzzled. Earlier in October 2025, at a literary festival in Kasauli, Naravane said: "The book is under review. The publisher has to get clearance; now it is between the publisher and the government". In December 2023, the publisher provided extracts from the book to PTI. Two chapters, one on the events of 31 August 2020 - Operation Snow Leopard - and the other on Agnipath scheme, showed up the government in a poor light, reflecting the absence of civil-military coordination at the highest level.

Naravane has praised the government in his book, though he has much to answer for: allowing the Chinese PLA to commit aggression across a 2000km frontage in East Ladakh and occupying 1500 km of Indian Territory, this after claiming that all was normal on the LAC. But that is a separate topic as the government has papered over Chinese aggression and settled for disengagement without de-escalation and de-militarisation. Worse, it has lost 26 of 65 patrolling points, accepted buffer zones (not established earlier at Barahoti or Sundorongchu), lost grazing grounds, but still normalised relations on 1 April 2025 by cutting a cake on the 75th anniversary of India-China relations. The bottom line of the Army Chiefs since the aggression has been 'status quo ante April 2020'.

Ashley Tellis of Carnegie Endowment had said: "India has still not received from China



any explanation for what it did in East Ladakh; that normalisation had begun before de-escalation". NSA Shiv Shankar Menon had noted: "we know what happened in Fingers Area, but nothing about Kailash Heights". Extracts from Naravane's unpublished book throw some light without explaining the cover-up for the faux pas in agreeing to withdraw from Kailash Heights, which was India's Trump card. The other revelation in the extracts is the 'bombshell' of Agniveer which Naravane disparages in detail. Former IAF and Navy Chiefs have made extremely negative comments about the scheme. It has damaged long-term India-Nepal relations as Nepal has not accepted the revised terms of engagement, and recruitment remains suspended since 2020 following COVID. A strategic bond will soon be lost.

It is these two issues – Chinese aggression of

2020 and Agniveer – which were intended to be blocked from discussion in Parliament. The government succeeded in preventing any debate about the Galwan episode also saying any debate on national security will undermine the morale of soldiers.

This method has been patented to block any discussion on inconvenient topics involving national security. Instead, the government follows a simple procedure of making statements in Parliament on heroic and swift counter-deployment of 50,000 soldiers in response to Chinese aggression. In no other democracy is debate on national security disallowed in Parliament. But enough is out there in the public domain about China's inscrutable behaviour in 2020 and India's reactionary response.

When asked by ANI, Jaishankar said: "How can I fight China? It has a big (five times) economy". Unfortunately the Iron Curtain has concealed the excellent redeeming manoeuvre during Operations Snow Leopard and Chengiz on the North and South Banks of Pangong Tso Lake, Rajnath Singh, on 10 February 2021 merely informing Parliament that withdrawal from these areas had been done without mentioning the strategic loss of Kailash Heights. But he did add the usual: "not an inch of territory was lost". The Naravane story has been carried faithfully by Caravan magazine and Wire portal

Not only was an Army Chief silenced about his unpublished book, but also the publishers. Both

dutifully complied in saying that the book Four Stars of Destiny had not been published. Former Army Chief, Gen NC Vij's book Alone In the Ring-Decision Making in Critical Times was delayed by several months from release, but was freed later after vetting. The government has systematically persuaded mainline TV and print media not to publish matters that will show government infirmities, but also not to publish the views of the opposition parties. This is evident from watching TV and reading newspapers. Inconvenient journalists have been quietly eased out. As a thoroughly apolitical veteran, I would like to see free debate and discussion flourish in the largest and most populous democracy. The military is not above criticism. The government's new rules on retired public servants writing will inhibit them from recounting their instructive experiences during government service.

On April 3, The Public India Digital Media held a function to recognise journalists who are discovering and inventing ways and means to bypass government fiat on control of news and limit adversarial content. Naravane knew that his book would not fly; so he wrote the novel The Cantonment Conspiracy in 2024 when he triumphantly announced, not without sarcasm, "Now I am a published author" The message is out even if the author has been rendered hors de combat.