

Mahatma & Qaid-e-Azam counterpoised

COOKIE MAINI

MY instant reaction to the book, *Jinnah versus Gandhi* was that, at last, the two subcontinental icons have been juxtaposed. Just as well, that a British historian has penned this well-textured evocation since on either side of the border opinions would not be bereft of biases and hagiographic tints. B.R Ambedkar, in 1943, drawing a comparison between the two organisations and the men who headed them, had said "Politics in the hands of these two great men have become a competition in extravaganza. If Gandhi is known as the Mahatma, Jinnah is known as Qaid-e-Azam.... The session of the Congress must be followed by a session of the Muslim League. If the Congress passes a resolution of 17,000 words, the Muslim League resolution must exceed it by a thousand words....If the Congress must address an appeal to the United Nations, the Muslim League must not allow itself to be outbitten, when is all this to end?"

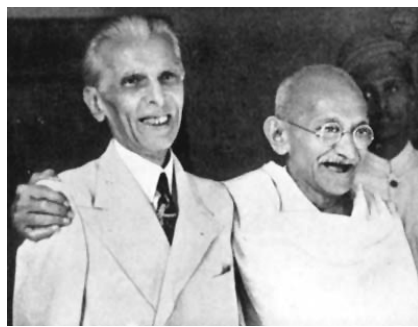
It still endures, this all-too familiar story with India versus Pakistan now, a game of

one-upmanship seeded with the freedom struggle and these two subsequent icons.

The modern history of the subcontinent is crafted by these two individuals and ideologues, Jinnah steered the finale by his persistence in demanding and attaining Pakistan. Gandhi defined the non-violent nature of the campaign for Independence, which eventually won him global renown. They spearheaded freedom in their respective countries. If they bore similarities in being Gujaratis, British-educated lawyers, there is a similarity in the legacies they bestowed to their nations. They became trump cards to be used at the opportune moment.

Gandhi's non-violence is used to masquerade our sullied image by our politicians or even as a global brand for marketing or manoeuvring his ideology as a symbol of religious fundamentalism. Similarly, the Qaid-e-Azam is merely ensconced on a pedestal in Pakistan and the liberal spirit he envisaged, is often quoted to alleviate the radical imagery prevalent.

Jinnah and Gandhi have "been acclaimed as the father of a modern state, but parenthood was not kind to either of them ...", says the author. The reassess-



Jinnah & Gandhi: The icons were a study in contrast

ment and reinterpretation of history is a continuous process and each writer has his own analysis. This body of work is backed by intensive research. It commences with a very powerful prologue on September 4, 1939, as both men are driving up to Simla to meet the Viceroy. "In the backseat the pair sit closer than they have ever been before, looking strangely ill-matched. One is immaculately dressed in a suit of smooth-finished fabric, the other wears nothing grander than a two-piece ensemble of loincloth and shawl, both of coarse khadi cloth. One coughs occasionally, the other does not. They share, perhaps, only

one thing — an unnatural thinness. Like a crane and chaffinch, the two most recognizable men in India are perched so closely together that the contrasts between them seem almost absurd, but this is no more than an unfortunate moment, born of grave circumstance." (Page 2)

Matthews has counterpoised these two eminent personalities, their views in politics, the divergence in religiosity, the seeding of the two-nation theory, Gandhi's rise, the reinvention of Jinnah through the 1930s, 1939 and the final departure of the Congress after the resignation of the ministries in 1939. Interestingly, in 1938 Gandhi had quipped, "I miss the old nationalist, are you still the old Jinnah?"

Further on, he blames the Congress and Nehru for not acquiescing with the League in forming ministries which had been earlier agreed to. This betrayal, snowballed into a final parting of ways, Pakistan and large-scale genocide — an oft-repeated accusation in historiography. Matthews believes that the British held the scales between the two opponents evenly and that Mountbatten was a wise statesman rising above the fray. Facts tell a different story. He held back the con-

figuration of the Radcliffe Line for three days, until after the Independence Day celebrations. This hampered the deployment of boundary forces; of course, he blames all the three vital players for Partition — the British, Gandhi and Jinnah for the eventual debacle.

In the conclusive analysis as he posits the two, he obviously rates Gandhi a notch above as in being far more astute in laying a deep-rooted foundation and a sustainable democratic tradition, which has survived despite all odds. Jinnah, on the other hand "sacrificed one essential element in nation building — the laying out of a common ground for the future". He did not address the problems of insecurity at the formative stage. "The result was a paranoid country too small to sustain its own defence without compromising other obligations." This will be the subject of an endless debate raging for decades.

A comparative analysis between the practical idealist in a loin cloth and the sharply dressed realist will be continuously interpreted in historical interpolations, it is too late to rectify any damages done by either. We can only imbibe lessons that history unravels.

Taking the roads much travelled

H. KISHIE SINGH

NOT many people have a job that is suited to their disposition. Bob Rupani does. He loves driving and loves the wide open spaces that India has, from the jungles to the mountains, the desert to the seas. The space is sprinkled liberally with temples, palaces, caves and ancient monuments whose architecture delights and defies definition. India is a haven for tourists, it caters to every individual taste, whim and fancy. Bob Rupani's latest book *India's 100 Best Destinations* is a gem in itself.

It presents some unheard of places. Just about every man-made marvel finds mention. It is the little-known ones that make this book a delight for the armchair traveller and a very useful compendium for a traveller who has done the Delhi-Jaipur-Agra circuit and wants to see the magnificence that was India and still exists today off the beaten path.

Ever heard of Rawla Nalrai? Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones thought it was "Such a wonderful place!". The 17th century heritage hotel is owned by fashion designer Raghuveendra Singh Rathore's family.

Did you know, Kumbalgarh Fort has a 36-km-long wall, the longest in India and second only to the Great Wall of China? Bhimbetka, 50 km from Bhopal, is a treasure trove of cave paintings that are 98,000 years old. The paintings date back to the Paleolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic periods and have much in common with the rock paintings in Tanzania, aboriginal



Bob Rupani's book is a delight for the armchair traveller

paintings in Australia and the Kalahari Desert paintings by the pygmies in Namibia. Figure that one out.

There are stunning photographs of the Ranakpur temple. Set in a jungle and hills, the outstanding piece of this architecture in white marble are the 1,444 pillars. No two pillars are the same.

Khajuraho, a 1000-year-old temple, the most sensuous and erotic temple in the world with explicit photographs, finds mention. The Sun Temple of Konark, a massive edifice in stone is best described by Rabindranath Tagore, "The language of man here is defeated by the

language of stone!"

The Buddhist Monastery at Tabo, also over a 1,000 years old, is referred to as the "Ajanta of the Himalayas". Indeed, definitely one of the hundred destinations.

A more contemporary temple but just as important is the Golden Temple in Amritsar. The living magnificence of India is of course the wildlife parks. Bhandavgarh, Kanha, which inspired Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Book*, Manas in Assam. Corbett named after Jim Corbett, the shikari-turned-conservationist. The Ranthambore, Panna national parks are part of the

100 Destinations. Backwaters of Kerala, the moonscape of Ladakh, the vale of Kashmir and its unique shikaras, the sun, sand, sea and churches of Goa are also amongst the 100 Destinations.

Content is expansive, accurate and personal. The coffee table book will become a bedside table book. The layout is selective and the photographs superb. Bob has used the works of half a dozen photographers from India and abroad.

The images are stunning and the quality of printing is excellent, there is no shift of colour or bleeding.

A special feature of the book is that each topic is colour coded. The titles for mountains is green, wildlife is brown, heritage is red, coastal is blue and leisure is pale blue. The font for the titles is good, the font for the text could have been more reader-friendly.

For each destination there is a "getting-there" box which gives directions, distance, travel time with a "Top Tip". Very helpful, like in the case of Lucknow - "Checkout the *nautch* girls, it's very entertaining!"

Bob has taken the roads much travelled (over a million kilometres in three decades) been there, seen it, photographed it and written about it.

I recalled Bing Crosby's song, "Those far away places with strange sounding names". These places are not far away, nor are the names that strange. With the new breed of cars we have and the roads improving, a trip to anyone of these places will be a wonderful experience.

Waiting for change

ADITI GARG

CHANGE in society is not just anticipated but also imperative; and a change for the better is an indication that the society is evolving. But some situations remain as they are over the years, impervious to improvement, regardless of the growth all around. In India, we have many communities and people whose situation has only gone from bad to worse.

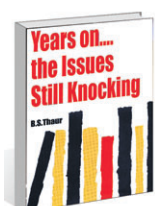
B.S. Thaur is an authority when it comes to dealing with the financial plight of the marginalised due to his exposure to various strata during his tenure in bank service and subsequent retirement as Regional Bank Manager. An avid writer, he has been penning his thoughts and has had many articles published over a course of more than 30 years. The book, *Years on... the Issues Still Knocking*, is a compilation of 55 of his articles written over the years for varied publications, which not just make for an insightful read but have also attracted the attention of the authorities concerned and persuaded them to introduce changes where required. He also has to his credit a book regarding the *Formation of Punjab Speaking State* that forms a part of a book for SGPC.

He starts with the article *Rural Moneylenders* that shows how small farm owners are gradually reduced to mere labourers on their own land as they fall prey to the vicious and scheming local moneylenders. For the many problems that he highlights in most of his articles, he puts forth a set of solutions that he believes can help the situation. While waiving debts for the poor seems good on paper, he discusses how it can greatly affect the economy in a negative way.

He talks about the efforts of every single person like Srilata Swaminathan and how they can bring about change. From concerns about neglect of North India's onion belt to disregard for the cauliflower seed producer in the Sproon Valley, he shows regard to all. He discusses the need of the government to consider the viability of policies before launching them. He describes how various people have benefitted from taking up newer avenues like growing roses, engaging in poultry farming, beekeeping, shoe-top cutting, screw manufacture and many more. Unlike many who keep quiet when they see a problem or a scope for improvement, he has brought forth issues plaguing the banking system, offered viable solutions and even held the institution in good light where praise is due. From encouraging savings to increasing the efficiency of banks, he covers all aspects with the deftness of a seasoned writer.

Correction

The prices of the science bestsellers given last week were incorrect. The following are the books, given by Capital Book Depot, Chandigarh, and their correct prices: *The Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin. ₹299 *A Brief History of Time* by Stephen Hawking. ₹350 *The Meaning of Relativity* by Albert Einstein. Routledge. ₹325. *The Selfish Gene* by Richard Dawkins. ₹325 *A Short History of Nearly Everything* by Bill Bryson. ₹599



Years On... the Issues Still Knocking
By BS Thaur.
Unistar Books.
Pages 210.
₹395

Glimpses into the mind of a genius

JAYANTI ROY

SATYAJIT RAY, known more as the lifetime achievement Oscar-winning film director, was a multi-faceted personality, being an illustrator, cartoonist, music director and a short and detective story writer. In Bangla literature, he created many memorable characters such as Feluda, Professor Shonku, and Jatayu etc. This volume includes 49 of his short stories first published in Bangla from the years 1962 to 1983. Nine of the stories are translated by Ray himself, while Gopa Majumdar, a Sahitya Akademi Award-winner, has translated the rest of them.

The stories are a medley of different themes which range from science fiction, mysterious, inexplicable happenings to



Satyajit Ray has created memorable characters

stories of encounter with aliens, supernatural beings or ghosts. A pattern can be recognised in the supernatural stories where most of the times some inanimate objects like robots, scarecrow, doll, twig or stones or non-human beings such as

plants, birds, ants or dogs behave in an animate or strangely human ways.

Yet there is no blood and gore in these situations, so prevalent nowadays even in adolescent and children literature. Even the ghosts are of a benevolent, kind and have a humane side to their personality. Where the short stories are based on social situations, the values of kindness, gentleness and sympathy are highlighted. The longest story in the book, titled *Fotikchand*, tells about a young boy who finds solace in a poor juggler, the story *Pikoo's Diary* is an experiment in conveying the narrative of a family conflict by writing in child-like, grammatically incorrect half-sentences. The language is easy and the translation does not seem contrived. Readers might be familiar with many of the stories which have been

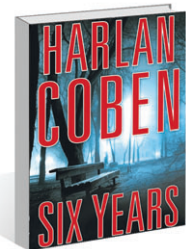
turned into television serials. The flavour of the stories is well known to Indian readers who grow up on a staple of ghost stories told on a dark, winter night by an old uncle as the children listen wide-eyed and with an occasional shiver.

We cannot call these stories extraordinary literary creations but they are entertaining glimpses of a creative human mind which sees forms in tree stumps or patterns in the starry sky.

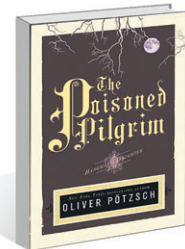
Though the stories are light, enjoyable reads but these do engage the reader and leaves them enchanted with a twist in the tale. The book can safely be referred to teenager readers for a lazy read on a summer afternoon without the fear of them picking up wrong messages and can equally hold the attention of adult readers for their interesting yarn.

KINDLE STORE (PAID) >>

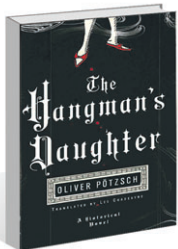
THESE BOOKS CAN ALSO BE BOUGHT THROUGH KINDLE APPS, WHICH CAN BE DOWNLOADED ON SMARTPHONES AND TABLETS



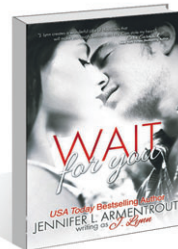
Six Years
By Harlan Coben.
Dutton Adult.
\$15.18.



The Poisoned Pilgrim:
By Oliver Pötzsch.
AmazonCrossing.
\$9.19.



The Hangman's Daughter
By Oliver Pötzsch.
AmazonCrossing.
\$9.19.



Wait for You
By J. Lynn.
Self-published.
\$2.75.



Clockwork Princess
By Cassandra Clare.
Margaret K. McElderry Books.
\$10.43.