

Flagship Dialogue

Churchill and India – Manipulation or Betrayal?

Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP)
CSEP Research Foundation

6, Dr Jose P Rizal Marg, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi 110021, India

Ph: 011 2415 7600

CSEP Research Foundation

Regd. Off: Second floor, 6, Dr Jose P Rizal Marg
Chanakyapuri, New Delhi 110 021 India
T: +91 11 2415 7600 E: info@csep.org W: www.csep.org

Speaker(s)**Ramu Damodaran**

Non-Resident Senior Fellow, CSEP

Kishan Rana

Author and former Indian Foreign Service Officer

Know More Details: <https://csep.org/6YK0jx9>

Watch the full event video here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_-dQ1dI0Mc

The following is an edited and revised transcript from the event. It has been generated by human transcribers and may contain errors. Please check the corresponding video for the original version.

Riya Sinha:

As of this morning I have learnt that that it continues to be sold out across book stores in Delhi. This is a testament to the book's compelling narrative and meticulous research. So, congratulations Ambassador Rana on achieving this. Now a book on Sir Winston Churchill and India is no small feat. Sir Winston Churchill is widely known as a force who shaped the British politics and led the empire to victory in World War II. However, his actions in the colonies and his views on race and imperialism have resulted in somewhat of a mixed legacy that has divided opinion, particularly in the Indian subcontinent. In this book Ambassador Rana takes a closer look at Churchill. Examines the backstory of this complex and multifaceted figure through extensive research and analysis Ambassador Rana has sought to uncover the experiences and events that led Churchill to be viewed both as a hero and a villain at the same time. Now it is evident that Ambassador Rana has invested several years in research and writing of this book and I do remember reading in the book as well that the first inspiration came in 1999. This explains how the book is rich yet a lucid exploration of Churchill's life and legacy and Ambassador Rana draws on the immense archival work in historical scholarship to present a very nuanced perspective on this iconic figure. I won't speak much more about the book because we have two stellar people in conversation today talking about the book. We have Ambassador Kishan S Rana in conversation with Mr. Ramu Damodaran who is joining us very early from the United States. Thank you to both of you for being here and being a part of our flagship dialogue. I will just give a brief introduction and then Mr. Damodaran it is over to you to begin the discussion. So, Ambassador Kishan Rana joined the Indian Foreign service in 1960 and served in the Indian embassy in China. He was later the Indian ambassador high commissioner to Algeria, Czechoslovakia, Kenya, Mauritius, Germany and he also served on Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's staff. He speaks Chinese and French in addition to English and Hindi of course. He is the professor emeritus diplo foundation Malta and Geneva. Emeritus fellow institute of Chinese studies, archives by fellow at the Churchill college Cambridge and a public policy scholar at the Woodrow Wilson center in Washington DC. He has authored and edited 11 books, 12 now and we are delighted to host him today for his latest book on Churchill and India – Manipulation or betrayal. Mr. Ramu Damodaran is a nonresident senior fellow at CSEP. He has worked at the United Nations for more than 30 years most recently as the chief of partnerships and public engagements in the United Nations department of global communications until May 2021. He has also been the secretary of the United Nations general assembly committee on information from 2011 to 2021. He has been the member of the Indian foreign service where he was promoted to the rank of ambassador and he also served as executive assistant to the Prime Minister of India between 91 and 94 as well as in diplomatic missions in Moscow and to the United Nations apart from holding a range of national governmental ministries. It is our pleasure to have you both for this discussion today. Mr. Damodaran over to you to take this forward. Thank you very much.

Ramu Damodaran:

Thank you so much Riya. Good evening, everyone and thank you for joining us. Thank you, Sir ambassador Rana, for having invested the time this evening. I was told that one of the cardinal rules of conversation in a discussion like this is to avoid three words. 'I remember when'. But I am going to break that rule because Riya you mentioned ambassador Rana's career

beginning with the Indian embassy in China in the early 60s. My father was fortunate to work with ambassador Rana at that time. And I was fortunate to be with my parents at Beijing. I remember we used to have a very closely knit embassy community and every few weeks one of the uncles and aunties at the embassy used to call everyone else home for dinner. I remember one such evening in January 1965 when we all met at one of the aunt's homes. Winston Churchill had just died and the conversation that evening was all about him. I recall how positive and generally mournful everyone was about him and his memory. As you said Riya, he was a force that shaped not just British but global politics. I think of that evening and the approbation that Churchill received and I think of the world what is it now half a century later when there has been so much research and investigation, most recently ambassador Rana's pivotal work, which show Churchill in a completely new, transformed and frankly much less likeable light. And I thought we will begin our conversation ambassador Rana by asking you, how did this change in perception, in attitude, shape had occurred.

Kishan Rana:

Thank you very much Ramu. It is wonderful of you to evoke the old connections. But it wasn't that your father was fortunate to work with me, it is somebody like me completely raw, completely untutored who had the privilege of working with such a great man as ambassador A K Damodaran, Damu as we called him. It is to my great regret that in those years I was perhaps not as wise as I ought to have been in sitting more at his feet and learning from him. Your father Damu really has been one of the iconic figures in our service. I don't say this to flatter you, this is a universal opinion in this service. When did things change about Churchill? The Churchill archives has just published something they call in a very British way 'the Churchill companion'. This is really a collection of 20 essays on Winston Churchill and the introductory essay written by the director of Churchill archive Allen Packwood begins with this very point – the change in the perception about Churchill. I have truthfully not studied this closely enough to give an authoritative answer. But I understand a marked evolution began around 2018 or so, when a couple of statues were disfigured. And a wave of criticism began to emerge. This is something worth examination. I plan to delve a little deeper in this. It is also evident that in Africa, there are African intellectuals who have raised serious questions. And then of course, there are South Asians living in the UK, Prof Priya Gopal is one, Tariq Ali a well-known Indian figure who made his home in the UK a long time back has also published a book which came out in May last year which also makes some rather sweeping attacks on Churchill. So, there is new stuff beginning to come out. Mind you, even before this, several biographers had begun to take a more critical view. Thank you.

Ramu Damodaran:

I think the point that you make about a deeper understanding that has come about Churchill in recent years is in a sense mirrored by the what you describe as a very shallow understanding that Churchill had of India. And in particular his inability to realize that we were a nation which welcomed, not always but some of the times, but we did assimilate influences that came into our land, foreign influences and absorbed them. So, there was a constant in your lovely phrase a sense of visitors finding their harmony within India and becoming Indian. That sense of a unique Indianness which was beyond Churchill's capacity to understand. He thought that we were in a sense bound to be subservient. That when a visitor or invader came to India, we would in effect play second to them. How far did that feeling despite the fact that many of his earlier

years were in India, his first published book was set in India. How did that influence Churchill about whom you researched and have written?

Kishan Rana:

There are two points I would make in response. The first is that, after my book went to press, in fact after it was published, I read the remarkable diary of the soviet ambassador in the UK, who used to have conversations with Winston Churchill. There is a conversation that is cited in one of the major biographies in which, in effect Churchill says that all kinds of invaders came into India from the north and the Indians were defeated by them and they had no capacity to resist. And he saw India as a land of __ people. Although he doesn't use that word. As people who are easily conquered, yes, I think that is the phrase he uses in some fashion. This was his overall assessment of India as conveyed to this soviet ambassador in London in 1942 perhaps. The citation is available. The second point connected with that, it is often said that Churchill learnt everything important about the Victorian approach and the Victorian ethic from his father. Like many sweeping statements it is only partly true. Churchill worshiped his father. And father mind you, Lord Randolph had an attitude of disdain and one might almost say contempt, but let us say disparaging attitude towards his son. Lots of evidence. Somebody has calculated that while Churchill was in two different schools total of eight years or nine years, he sent some 500 add letters to his parents. And he received 31 replies. And most of those replies berated him for being a bad student, for not paying attention and for his underperformance. But, put that aside. There was one important dimension of lord Randolph which Churchill failed to understand. Lord Randolph came on a visit to India in 1885 just before he became secretary of state for India. He spent five months in India in the typical grand tour of those days. And in Bengal and I think also visiting Banaras as it was then called or Varanasi, he learned that the water carriers from these regions were being sent off to the northwest frontier province and even to Sudan. He wrote to the governor of Bengal saying that this is outrageous. Why are these poor people being sent away? They will never come back alive from these places. In parliament Randolph Churchill made a remarkable demand before he became secretary of state. He said that a commission should be set up to enquire into the way in which Britain was ruling India. He criticized the British government for not paying enough attention to the welfare of Indians. A remarkable insight for a man in the 19th century. Churchill imbibed none of this. Churchill had an attitude of contempt and indifference. I won't say more on this but lots and lots of evidence is available. Thank you.

Ramu Damodaran:

Contempt and indifference, it is actually fascinating to think that Churchill never as you pointed out visited India in the 20th century. His last visit was in 1899. And a generation later the British empire was at its height with the quarter of the earth's land surface some 460 million subjects. And it was at this point that Randolph Churchill coined a phrase which I know that you have challenged on petrochemical grounds, as India being the vast sheet of oil to keep the ocean free of storms.

Kishan Rana:

Sorry Ramu, saying that 'British rule was a sheet of oil which kept India's dissensions and upheavals under control'.

Ramu Damodaran:

How do you react to that?

Kishan Rana:

First as I try to say a sheet of oil simply removes the surface turbulence but it does nothing to what is happening inside. But of course, that analogy is false in the sense that there were periods of great tranquility, harmony and creativity India. The word syncretic culture, a country that would absorb ideas, influences, objects, methods from others without feeling uprooted or without losing its own inner balance, that was India. And Churchill never understood that. It is a huge tragedy that Churchill never talked to anybody in India who could give him information. He wrote to his mother within weeks of reaching Bangalore that there is nobody here who can tell me anything about India. Because he was ensconced in the regimental ethos in the ways of living of young, in the cavalry regiment. Mind you, cavalry regiments are among the most ethos driven, if I can use such a phrase. If only Churchill had reached out to one of the old ICS officers, he didn't do that for a trivial reason. He said, these guys over here, these Anglo - Indians... very interesting Ramu, the word Anglo – Indian was initially used to describe British officials, army or civilian who had spent many years in India and it was only with the census of 1901 that Anglo – Indian came to be used to describe the off springs of mixed marriages essentially British fathers and Indian mothers. Anyway, Churchill didn't meet or connect with any of them. That left him with a completely superficial understanding of India. He just took what was on the surface without getting any deeper.

Ramu Damodaran:

Absolutely. Last night I chanced upon a rerun of Gurinder Chaddas Bride and Prejudice. There is a line where Lalitha tells Darcy your problem is you want to go to India, but you don't want to deal with Indians. And I think that really sums up with Churchill the way you describe.

Kishan Rana:

I think that is about it.

Ramu Damodaran:

We are at the center for socio economic progress and one fact that you bring out in your book about the fact that the economy in India barely grew for about a 100 years from 0.3% per annum between 1820 and 1870. Peaking at 0.97% between 1870 and 1913. And then declining to 0.23% between 1913 and 1950. How does this very bleak economic picture of the jewel in the crown relate to the policies and if I may say indifference of Winston Churchill?

Kishan Rana:

I have used two quotations from Churchill's speeches in parliament. In one, that leads to the 30s and when he was in the middle of his pig headed opposition to the government of India act of 1935 which was in a way giving a little bit of power to India at a glacial pace. Meaning, that provinces would be ruled by governments elected on communal rights or communal ballots. So, Churchill said in parliament in what shall I say the expansive enlightened picture, I don't have the quotation in front of me, but he basically said that 'we are there for the welfare of Indians, we are there to do good for them'. I am sorry, I turned it upside down. He said 'we are there because we have rights in India. And our rights in India come from the sacrifices we have made in India. So, we have a right to exclusive trade with India' etc. He was incidentally a

former president of the board of trade meaning the commerce minister of Britain way back in 1908 or 1909. So, he understood that commercial argument very well. And he made another speech in parliament in 46 when he was in the opposition, where he talks about the trust reposed in us by the people of India as members of the empire and how we have worked for their welfare and all this was utter nonsense. I mean basically as you say there was very low growth. There is a lovely story from the 30s where apparently there was a drought of some kind in Northern India. And Chamberlin was chancellor of the exchequer during that period. It is probably 34 or 35. He writes to his sister that we have discovered a gold mine in India. That vast amounts of gold are coming into Britain from India. Gold that was hoarded by Indian farmers who are now in distress and are selling their gold to survive. That is the story of exploitation of India. And there are many other stories. Shashi Tharoor and Dalrymple have written eloquently on this subject and I salute them for having gone into this.

Ramu Damodaran:

The point that you made Kishan on the commercial aspect is something which I really found striking in a book because it is not an avenue really trodden by many writers and you suggest actually the commercial argument deserves more attention than is usually received. While India as you say was a captive market, Churchill saw the empire as essential to the well being of the governing, as much as, it governed. In his famous illustration he said that – had Britain addressed itself the moral material problems that are the root of the Indian life, it would have been much better for working folk of Burnley and Bombay, Autumn and Ahmadabad. But, how to reconcile that really with what you describe in a sense is the last years from 1942 to 1945 when victory in the war became increasingly imminent but absolutely no thought was invested by Churchill in the future of India beyond that date? And its economic and yes commercial standing in a global world order.

Kishan Rana:

That period of the early 40s when Churchill was Prime Minister from May 1940 to August 1945, it deserves very close study. But sadly, many documents relevant to the study of the India connection are missing. Narendra Singh Sarila's book 'in the shadow of the great game' published in 2005 I think talks about British strategic planners who decided, who recommended that at the end of war a Muslim state would be the best protector of British interests. If and when Britain had to leave British India. The reasoning is pretty evident that this Muslim state would ally itself with western powers, UK in particular, because of its hostility towards the Hindu part of India and because of its logical connections with the Muslim states of the middle east as they called it or west Asia as we would call it today. Now, Churchill evidently supported this argument without saying so openly. And the lovely piece of evidence is Roosevelt's letter of 11th April 1942. When the Cripps mission is ending and Roosevelt wants Cripps to stay on to make one last effort at via media in India between British India, the national movement and the Muslim league. Roosevelt uses a kind of mocking argument with Churchill when he says that 'while you talk about not giving self-rule to the national movement because you don't want to split that entity, you are willing to create a Muslim state over there by breaking up that entity'. I mean, he is literally mocking him for what he was doing. That letter produced probably the sharpest outburst from Churchill in the war rooms and we know the story from Roosevelt's special emissary who was present with Churchill over there and who has written in his memoir that Churchill swore and cursed for an hour. He wrote out a letter to Roosevelt

in which he threatened to resign. I mean, it is strange for the British prime minister to threaten the US president that he would resign if you are pushing me in a corner like this. And of course, that letter was not sent. Churchill was a master of that lovely twist he gave to diplomatic communication. The letter not sent but handed over to somebody for transmission, in this case Roosevelt's personal envoy and put on record but not as an official document. You know, we diplomats we love these kinds of what shall I say, these innovations that people work out to communicate. So, in effect Churchill was communicating at two levels. So, what I am getting at is that was the British plan. The creation of a Muslim homeland in British India way back in 42 and the creation of Pakistan is a product of that. Now, if that was the intent why did Churchill not begin to prepare for partition? For me this is the most powerful charge to be laid at Churchill's door that you wasted those three years from August 42 to middle of 45 when Nehru, Patel and Jinnah and Moulana Azad and others were released and he literally fiddled during those years **as a hero**.

Ramu Damodaran:

Actually, this last comment of yours brings to mind three important points in the final chapter of your book. One is of course, on Pakistan where you use a phrase that he patched together an ungovernable Pakistan. Institutional viability, coherence and sustainability were never really studied. It simply became a matter of conceding Jinnah's claims in a momentum created out of divisive politics. Then on the Roosevelt angle, I would like to refer to what you mentioned not so much about Franklin but Eleanor Roosevelt where Churchill told both of them that the western parts to decide the future of Indian subcontinent. And Eleanor Roosevelt said – democracy should decide with India in mind. The third point which really intrigues me from where I am looking is your reference to the Atlantic charter which Churchill finalized with Roosevelt which in many ways was the inception point, if you will, for the United Nations. You make the point that in that there was no possible provision at all for a future India to be a permanent member of the security council. But what strikes me is the fact that India, despite being a dominion at that time in 1945 was invited to the San Francisco conference that drafted the charter of united nations. So, there seems to be a certain ambivalence or waveringness, if you will, on the part of Churchill when it came to India's standing in the world and what would benefit Britain in the long run. A visible India or a thwarted below the radar India? How do you react to that?

Kishan Rana:

Let us put aside the Atlantic charter for a moment. The points you make on that are very interesting and worth examination. But the point you raised before that related, just jog my memory please,

Ramu Damodaran:

That the democracy should decide the future of India...

Kishan Rana:

Yes. That is right. See, that particular conversation took place at the white house in the end of December early January. Pearl Buck had sent a private communication or a letter to Eleanor and they were friends. And she said, mind you this is just after Pearl Harbor, weeks after Pearl Harbor, Pearl Buck wrote to Eleanor that 'there is a kind of unity of colored people that is

emerging'. That is the non-whites are in a sense coming to some kind of unity in the face of all this. Roosevelt got the point immediately and he told Eleanor that I will force Churchill to give self-rule to India as a dominion or whatever. He couldn't do that. He failed completely. Churchill boasted afterwards that he responded to Roosevelt with such ferocity that he said Roosevelt did not raise this issue with me directly after that. There is a little truth in that, what Roosevelt did afterwards was that he used his emissaries to tackle Churchill on self-rule in India. They had their heads bitten off by Churchill in his flamboyant fashion etc. But you know, Ramu, there is a subtle... what shall I say... message that is conveyed when one major leader does not personally raise an issue but leaves it to his senior assistants to raise it and it is actually quite insulting to the other leader. This is part of the shifting balance between Roosevelt and Churchill. That is another ball game altogether. Another huge area worth research etc. I won't get to do that, it is not part of my story in any case. There is another aspect to the FDR interest in India. FDR was motivated by India as a major market for the United States. This was never spoken out openly. The third point about the US India Britain connection, on the Indian side we completely failed to connect with Roosevelt. In 1940 there was a plan for Krishna Menon to go to the US. Nobody stopped to think that the British would never give permission because they had to give permission. Krishna Menon travelled on a passport issued by the British. And they simply said we don't give you endorsement to go to the US. You know how passports are. They are specific to countries or all the countries. Now all Country passports were not a fashion in those days. So, the sending country or the country that issued the passport indirectly had control over where a person could go. Nehru had planned in 1940 to visit the US. And he couldn't go. Of course, he was preoccupied with the events in India. But why did we not better connect with Roosevelt? This is a mystery. What else I have left out? The Atlantic charter. The point I make is debatable. And I have said that there are people who will disagree with me. You know, the Atlantic charter was almost an accident. It was issued as a general statement. Nobody thought that the Atlantic charter would become a foundational document that would lead to the post-war world order. The Atlantic charter document repeatedly talks about all countries, all people, regardless of political, color etc. and Churchill simply said it doesn't apply to India. This was by end of 1941 I think it was September 41, that Churchill denied in the British parliament that the Atlantic charter categorically does not apply to India. It relates only to the European countries. Essentially white countries. That is how Churchill reasoned. Now if Churchill had not taken that position would it have altered India's status in the post-war order? I just don't know. You are completely right that India did attend the San Francisco conference. I think India and the Philippines were two entities which were not full states in those days which attended. But I have another question Ramu which no great multilateralist has clarified for me. And this has nothing to do with Churchill. But it is all to do with India, it is also all to do with global south. When we were present at San Francisco and I think it was San Francisco discussions that led to the UN charter on the human rights. How come the right to development, the right to a decent life, right to food and security was not placed in the human rights document? You are a great multilateralist. Nobody has clarified for me or told me why we didn't do that. Yes, we say that we brought in women's rights which was a great Indian achievement and that was highly commendable. But we all forgot about the right to economic development.

Ramu Damodaran:

It is a very critical point. And it also in a sense echoes the reference that you made to frankly to white and non-white, European and non-European or the phrase of Pearl Buck about non-white people. You have headed three of India's key missions in Africa all of which were former colonies. I recall your writing about the time when you came to Algeria and the Hindi film 'Aan' was being screened there and virtually every Algerian had seen it. And the passions it aroused about what that country had suffered under colonialism, this is obviously not British colonialism. And you used a wonderful word there called 'depersonalisation'. I think that really comes back to the human rights poser that you just brought forward. Was there an element of depersonalisation in the British attitude to India under Churchill just as there was in French and Algeria?

Kishan Rana:

That is a lovely question. My personal view, I think Indians were too smart and too deeply rooted in their sense of Indianness and their identity that we could not be depersonalised. But, if you want to really read a fine book on how particularly the British liberals tried to depersonalise India, read Uday Mehta's 'Liberalism and empire'. I think it was published a good 12 or 15 years back but for me it is a powerful book which really talks about these enlightened people that the liberals were, actually put forward the hypothesis or the thesis that India had no culture. It was a tabula rasa and therefore anything could be written on that slate of material with whatever letters you wanted. Which was utter and total nonsense. And it took a Max Mueller, a German, living in Oxford who had never been to India to write the definitive first translations of the great Indian books of religion, philosophy, logic and everything else. And those books were accessed by Emerson and Thoreau. And that made the bridge between India and United States which I think is again a beautiful story how ideas travel across continents and across historical times.

Ramu Damodaran:

Before we go into questions from our audience I would like to circle back to where we began and two completely different references to Churchill both of which you quote in your book. One was the Nobel citation when he was awarded the literature prize in 1953 which said it was awarded for his mastery of historical and biographical description as well as for brilliant oratory in defending exalted human values and I note the word oratory because it seems to suggest that he spoke beautifully however short it felt in practice and then you come to another point you have cited. The website if you will of Churchill College of Cambridge which says on race he was backward even in his day. So that I think is in a sense the conundrum which you really resolved though I still remain with one question, the title of the book. Where is the contradiction between manipulation and betrayal? What was in your mind when you coined that?

Kishan Rana:

Ramu, you catch me on the weak point there. Aren't manipulation and betrayal kind of related? They are. What other title could I find. My publisher has a delicious method for book titles. Authors are told that the title should not occupy more than I think 45 spaces. But the shorter the better. So, I was struggling with that and I used this. Somebody else has also commented on it in a book review that the two words are really related and you are right there. But, the deeper issue of racism or of reassessment of Churchill, I think the Churchill archives website used those expressions that you have quoted, those points about how Churchill was on race

backward even by his times. Unfortunately, Ramu, not everyone quite buys into that. There are defenders of Churchill not just in the western world, I dare say even in the global south and I think even in India, who would say that Churchill was not really a racist. He simply reflected his times. I think Churchill's racism was deeply ingrained and I would end this part of the conversation with the letter that Gandhiji wrote to Churchill on the 15th of July 1944. It is a beautiful letter of eight lines. Gandhiji had just been released from prison maybe two months earlier after two major events in his life. The death of Kasturba and his last major fast in jail when he came close to dying. He begins that letter by referring to himself as the naked fakir. He says - you called me a naked fakir and I write to you in that capacity. He says basically... I am trying to locate and remember the exact words. He says 'trust me and use me for the sake of my people, your people and the people of the world'. Now, I am tormented by the thought that Gandhiji probably racked his brains before he decided on how to write to Churchill. His first direct communication to Churchill. And what happened to that letter sent through viceroy's office? Churchill said he never received it. The viceroy's office said he never received it. So, two months later when Gandhiji's staff enquired, they were told that letter was not received. I am sure they sent a copy of the letter. But Churchill had the audacity, the ill judgement and the crass rudeness of not responding to the only effort that Gandhiji made to him directly, person to person asking for some action to anticipate the partition. That is what he was talking about really in the name of humanity. And Churchill did nothing about that between July 44 when he of course received the letter, till July 1945 when he lost the election. How, with what temerity could the Nobel literature jury give him a prize for his writing which was probably deserved in some ways evoking human values?

Ramu Damodaran:

Actually, audacity and crass rudeness might have fitted into 45 spaces. So, you could have had that as an alternative. Thanks so much sir. Let me throw this open to questions we have received. We have one from Malvika Sharad who asks whether Churchill's background in trade affected his indifference and exploitative attitude towards India? Had he been what she calls a pure statesman, would he have dealt with India differently?

Kishan Rana:

I don't know what is meant by that question? What is the difference between being a pure statesman and what?

Ramu Damodaran:

Just to add she elaborates. How can we reflect on statesmanship from a liberal democrat lens versus capitalist conservative lens?

Kishan Rana:

I am sorry, I am not the right person to be able to respond to that. Because I don't see the ideological divisions as you see them perhaps in this respect. I think, Churchill was a major leader and leaders have to lead. And they have to decide on important issues. Churchill utterly failed to do that. Please remember, in 1943, Churchill told Phillips who was one of Roosevelt's aides who raised the question of India with him, he said, there will be a bloodbath in India which will make every other event look like a picnic. So, he anticipated the bloodbath of partition in 1943. But he did not lift one finger to prepare for it. How can this be rationalised?

Ramu Damodaran:

There is a question from Karthik Banser, who quotes you about Churchill's contempt coming from ignorance about Indian heritage, philosophy, political statecraft and yet the fact that he made such limited efforts to modernise India for Indians. Do you see this as a dichotomy in this person?

Kishan Rana:

Well, it is not so much dichotomy, it is actually very simple, his hypocrisy. When Wavell went as viceroy to India he took over in October 1943. He received instructions in the shape of three points. He was asked to overcome the differences between communities. The very differences that Britain had fostered and engineered going back to Minto's 1906 decision to have communal electorates in India. I mean, that is where it all started. Number one. A second demand made to him was to end the caste system. It beggars the imagination that the instructions given to the viceroy how to end the caste system. And the third demand to raise the living standards of Indian people. How do you raise the living standards of the Indian people after having looted and raped the country for 250 years? And reducing it from a major one-quarter contributor to the global economy in 1750 to a two percent contributor to the global economy. This is the biggest, shall we say, tribute to the achievements of British colonialism. This fraudulent man that Churchill was had the audacity to give these instructions to Wavell. And mind you, Churchill only had contempt for Wavell which he articulated on numerous occasions.

Ramu Damodaran:

You have quoted the correspondence with Wavell. But I just wondered sir, in your reading of the archives did you have a sense since most of it emanated from the household as it were, that there was to use your word a winnowing that they were selective in what is put out in the public domain or do you really have access to the entirety?

Kishan Rana:

Ramu, we just don't know. It was Winston Churchill who personally screened the papers that were sent to the archives. This is known. The Churchill archives has scrupulously retained every piece of communication that they received and Ramu, you remember, I am the fellow who located in the national archives Jinnah's first letter to Churchill which is dated 2nd January 1941. In which, Jinnah makes the preposterous claim that 90% of the Musalmans of British India are his supporters. That is a total nonsense. In Punjab there was a Sikandar Hayat Khan who was the chief minister of Punjab under the devolved provincial administration who died tragically of a heart attack sometime in late 41 or 42. And then there was the Khilafat movement and all their supporters in the Northwest frontier province where a congress ally won the power. It was not won by a Muslim coalition in the Northwest frontier province. So, the point I want to make is that, this was really part of a deeper British plan to leave behind a fractured, fragmented India. That aspect deserves much closer examination. I am not the person with the capacity or the ability to make it. But I hope somebody takes this up and the archival documents mind you are slowly emerging. I am told that the Wavell papers are possibly going to be transferred to Churchill archives. I believe they are negotiating, the archives and the Wavell family, his descendants are negotiating the transfer of those papers. There must be something in those papers which is pretty important.

Ramu Damodaran:

We have the president of CSEP Rakesh Mohan with us. Did you wish to intervene sir?

Rakesh Mohan:

Yes. I just wanted to thank first of all Kishan for sharing his deep erudition. I learnt a lot from the last half of the session because I was unfortunately had to be in another international call for the first half hour. I wish I would have learned even more had I been in the first half hour. That will induce me to read the book finally. Kishan is a man of many talents and interests. I always relate to how I first got to know him. He has heard this a hundred times. Ramu you will recall also just when the 1991 economic reforms were announced the most excited letter I got was one Mr Kishan Rana as high commissioner Mauritius. So, I thought he must be mad to be so excited for what the things that we were doing and you were of course the centre of it as well Ramu. So, that started a long, long friendship. Regrettably because I was away from India for almost ten years off and on, we have not seen each other very much but that doesn't seem to make any difference because of course I also saw him when he was ambassador in Germany. Ramu, I wanted to thank you very much. Some said this is your first appearance for CSEP where you are our visiting senior fellow. Is it the first or you have done before?

Ramu Damodaran:

First one.

Rakesh Mohan:

Oh. First one. So, I hope that this first one means that this will allow... our association will continue in a more detailed fashion and more frequently. I just want to make a couple of comments. When you talked about some people regarding Winston Churchill as a liberal. As it happens, I am currently reading the biography of Macaulay. Thomas Macaulay. And there also it comes out that in the British environment at that time he was of course a member of the Whig party. He was also regarded as a liberal at that time. But his contempt for India was despite the fact that he served here for five years or six years, he had from this biography, he had nothing but contempt for India. So, one his famous statement of course is all of Indian literature was not equivalent to one shelf of European books. There is a quote apparently. Also, interesting that those days the voyage to India took about four months plus and he was a real polyglot. In those four months he apparently learnt Latin, French and Spanish I think, if I am not mistaken or Greek. But the point is that coming to India he was learning these European languages. Of course, he was brilliant in the sense he could do it in four months. And took all the materials with him to learn it. But he had no interest in any Indian language. Despite being a polyglot and very good at languages, all his time in India he never learnt any Indian language whether Bengali, Hindi or anything else. So, my point is that it is very similar to what we described with Churchill. That, on the one hand some people think of Churchill and Macaulay at different times as liberals. But at the same time this is the kind of attitude they had to India and Indians. However, one also has to say that both, Macaulay's father and himself were leaders in the abolitionist movement of slavery. And also, his famous minute in English, at least all of us here, Macaulay's children. His famous minute on introducing English in Indian education. Whereas he had contempt for Indians in general, but he through this minute with English he wanted to get natives to learn English so they could become part of the elite and also join in the governance of India. Of course, he meant this for others also in other countries. There are

always these kinds of contrasts and some of these historical personalities who have had a huge impact on India till today. For example, I will just say personally that even though I grew up as a Hindi speaking person and always spoke Hindi at home, I sort of feel ashamed that because all my education and particularly professional education has been in English, as secretary ministry of finance and chief governor advisor, as deputy governor reserve bank, I couldn't give interviews in Hindi. Which is ridiculous actually. But anyway, this is going off the topic. I just wanted to make this point that there was, for 150 years or whatever, this kind of racism where the whole British raj made us feel that we were inferior. They were clearly convinced that we were. That has got into our heads for a long, long time. Finally, just one other comment. I talked about India being represented in San Francisco. It is very interesting because Indians also represented in Bretton woods in 1944. So, I often say on a lighter note that I was there because the person who represented us was the first economic advisor ministry of industry. So, I was in that position maybe 50 or number of years later. I always said I was there since my predecessor was there. Although he was British. Colonel Gregory. I was always surprised didn't quite understand how India was invited to the Bretton woods conference. It seems is the same thing for San Francisco conference for the UN charter. I will leave it at that. Thank you very much Kishan and thank you very much Ramu for this really absorbing, very interesting flagship dialogue. Of course, as I said now, I will have to read your book.

Kishan Rana:

Thank you very much. I won't say anything except to convey my deep thanks to CSEP, to Rakesh personally, everybody else concerned and all the friends at CSEP who have helped me over some period of time. thank you very much.