

In search of the great

While the term "great" has fixed meaning, unfixed standards lead to its misleading uses and we have a bumper crop of great men and women. Is their greatness true of take? How do we detect the frauds and revere really great? This is an attempt to analyse the essence of greatness. "Greatness" is linked with (1) art, architecture, literature, literature and science (2) Public Affairs (3) Wealth and (4) Professions and Services.

Third and fourth areas are distinctly

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Schmid — an example both on and off the track — European hurdling champion has come up with the right successor.

inferior to first and second. Location of great among the rich is the easiest because the standard is only the size of wealth. One with the largest wealth is the greatest. If the sting of scorpion lies in its tail, the weakness of wealth lies in its collection. The means of money-making are neither clear nor pure. Greater the fortune, higher are the suspicions. Hence, even the wealthies frown when they are valued by volume of wealth. There cannot be great among the rich and rich among greats.

The bureaucrats and professionals are mediocrities pure and simple. Their claim for greatness is, therefore, the most ridiculous. Both show what Coleridge called "shopboy cleverness". A bureaucrat may flatter himself as secretary or secretary-general. He is basically a "glorified clerk". Lenin correctly judged the administrators when he asserted that even a cook can administer the state. However, Lenin was unfair to the cooks. Anytime, a culinary artist is far superior to drab administrator. When King George VI tried to snatch their cook, the Rothschilds retained him by giving salary higher contemptuous of the so-called steel-frame of the British Raj. Nehru dismissed the ICS as the pageboys of the British viceroys and as Prime Minister created a variety of pageboys who are literally the doormats of the rulers in Swaraj. Every

profession has a tendency to exaggerate its importance. None is known for soaring high in the sky of creativity. Bureaucrats and professionals acquire skills through rote. As these skills are useful to the rulers and money-makers, they reward them with crumbs. What, then, is their place in

social order? It was artistically shown by proverbial painter who told the cobbler not to look beyond the shoes.

A large number crave for greatness through public affairs as it offers glamour, limelight, privileges and perquisites. World over, leadership's claim for greatness is based upon "sacrifices" made and "services" rendered to the people. Self-preservation is the most cherished goal of humankind. Hence, in the rating of sacrifices, the sacrifice of life is the highest and those who make

it are the greatest. Modern India was blessed with such greats only between 1857 and 1947. Names that shine like shining stars are Mangal Pande, Vasudev Phadke, Madantal Dhingra, Chandrashekhar Azad, Bhagat Singh, Jatin Mukherji and Babu Guenu.

They and their valiant comrades were perfections in Sarfaroshiki Tamana for the sake of their country. But for their sacrifice in the prime of life, India would have never won her freedom. Next to them are those who dedicate themselves entirely to the public cause and bear sufferings and tortures without a murmur. Such persons are as rare as those who sacrifice their lives. India knows only Tilak, Aurobindo, Lala Lajpat Rai, Savarkar and Mahatma Gandhi. They are the embodiment of integrity and purity in public life. They never

exploited their positions to build family fortunes and to perpetuate family succession in public life. Such outstanding types of sacrifice and service have disappeared from India with the attainment of Swaraj.

Eversince 1947, India witnesses a curious breed of "great" leaders. They claim greatness by virtue of office they hold. Indian Constitution creates many offices to which persons nominated and elected. Only serviles and sycophants are nominated. Gandhiji highlighted this established fact whilst exposing the hand-picked Indian nominees of the British at the Second Round Table Conference in London. What was true then is true today of all nominated offices in Swaraj. Crows sitting on the top of temples do not become eagles. Elections, by definition, are anti-great. Democracies of the world boast of fair elections but fairness means a prudent mixture of force, fraud, manipulations, money and muscle.

These leaders also claim "sacrificing" their lives and talents for "serving" the people and at the same time have large fortunes, give expensive education to their children abroad and secure for them jobs with little work and high salary even before they are twenty-five. What a fantastic feat! Either they are Alladins with magic lamp or Alibabas with magic mantra. To a large extent Gandhiji's non-violent movement is responsible for the growth of this breed. In the last phase of his life, Mahatma found himself cheated by clever constitutionalists whose non-violence was that of the cowards and whose patriotism was that of the opportunists. Our public life in Swaraj is full of pigmies. How sad that this great country has become a land of Liliputs.

Every civilization stands or falls by its cultural achievements. Art, architecture, literature and science are vital components of culture. The standards deciding their quality should be rigorous to guarantee the great of the highest order. In our times, the pretenders to the throne of activity use

methodically subtle techniques but they do not survive for long. The great in arts, architecture and science are discernible by their inherent elegance, originality, superiority and splendor. It is possible to distinguish between peacocks, jackdaws and jackdaws in peacock's feathers. Not so in literature.

In literature, usual standard to determine greatness is the prizes won. Great literary works can never be known by the prizes. Prizes are awarded by the state and the philanthropists. It has been well said that he who pays the piper calls the tune. He who gives the prize fixes its parameters. The selection by committee is a game where canvassing, connections, intrigues and manipulations, decide the prize. Nobel prizes, the most prestigious prizes of the world, prove the point. A great literary work is always known by its intrinsic merit and nothing else as could be seen from the works of Kalidas and Shakespeare. Great works are evergreen and are like angels short and bright.

True, authors and poets are not born but made. It is a blunder to believe that they are not born but made. It is a blunder to believe that they are made by the Sahitya Academies and Business Foundations. The difference between masterpiece and common-place is the difference between Ganges and gutter. The state can patronise commonplace, it cannot make Ganges out of gutter. Patronage of state is bad. That of the philanthropist is worse. All admit that philanthropy is an outlet for tainted money and once again the Noble prizes are an excellent example. Prize money comes from the Noble industries. How the Noble industries make their money has been shown by their main subsidiary the Bofors.

The readers may disagree with this analysis. They would surely agree that there must be definite criteria and sterling standards to know greatness if the world is not to be flooded with the "great" that are "dirt-cheap."