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THE CONTOURS OF HISTORY THROUGH THE LENS OF THE PRESENT: READING S. SHANKAR'S *HINDUSTANI*

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ABSTRACT

The title of my paper being *The Contours of history through the lens of the present: Reading S. Shankar's Hindustani (1996, in Hindi)* connotes different meanings and may not be a suitable departure in the mind of a lay reader. The review in question departs in some sense the propaganda of either dealing with the notion of India's achieving independence, or the fight that have been fought by the freedom-fighters in order to achieve freedom to our country. Until recent years, Indian Cinema was denied legitimacy as a discipline worth studying but the recent productions of films concerning issues related to gender, family values, terrorism and nationalism in Indian cinema are proliferating, and not only that, it seems somehow Cinema and Nationalism with specific reference to Indian Nationalism are interrelated and is attempting to rejuvenate the value system of our country at the socio-cultural and political level.

For quite some time now, one has seen a certain increase in the production of films dealing with a construction of Indian nationalism. So many films have been made under the aegis of this theme that they can even qualify to comprise an altogether separate "film genre." Either the context of such films is to rejuvenate in the spectators' minds the bitter sense of India being partitioned, along with resistance to combat the British Empire along with tangents intersecting the outcome of pre/post-independent India. This 'genre' of films has to a certain extent, managed to posit a position of challenging the aura of history and historiography trying to bring under a combated whole the poly-ethnic and multi-dimensional cultural structures of our country. One's mind might be preoccupied with questions and queries with this 'genre' of films particularly of a decade or two which can be seen to re-present a search of re-constructing Nationalism by trying to enmesh the plethora's of social layers irrespective of caste, class, gender and religion. This paper wishes to look into this 'genre' and trace the likely reasons behind its sudden emergence. Shankar Shanmugam's *Hindustani* (1996) deals with nationalism in the post-independent situation where the question of corruption and thus a betrayal of the dreams of free India get dealt with has forced one to recast the question of nationalism.

Shankar's Hindustani (1996), the story of an old freedom fighter Senapathy, who, disgusted at the current state of affairs take recourse to a classical Indian martial art to exterminate corrupt officials, is a treatise of how nationalism and patriotism can be resurrected by taking the laws in one's own hands is well manifested. Senapathy is shown to rebel against the existing State machinery and its corrupt officials in a

violent way with the help of a rare martial art, in the course of which he even kills his own son Chandra Bose, a corrupt RTO official. It can be noticed that India enjoyed a relatively peaceful relation with her neighbor, Pakistan, from 1971-89. However, after which her relations with Pakistan have once again soured substantially which is directly evident with the making of films like J.P.Dutta's *Border* (1997), J.P. Dutta's *Loc Kargil*(2003), Farhan Akhtar's *Lakshya* (2004), Ketan Mehta's *Mangal Pandey:The Rising* (2005), Raj Kumar Santoshi's *The Legend of Bhagat Singh* (2002), and Rakesh Omprakash Mehra's *Rang De Basanti* (2006) and lots more. Could it be that this 'genre' is in response to this renewed need to incite patriotism in the average Indian psyche and interrogate the question of nationalism anew? Could it be that this is the reason behind the rise of this 'genre,' either on the part of the proponents or the opponents of the nationalist ideology in politics? While it may be difficult to answer this question straightway this is what I intend to explore in my proposed paper.

As I have already said above the question of nationalism has acquired a position of utmost importance in current cultural production, therefore I think that my proposed research is deeply rooted in the problems of contemporary Indian life and is of utmost relevance.

Key-words: Historiography – Indian Nationalism – Anarchy– Nepotism

Hindustani (released in Hindi 23 August 1996)

Tagline: 'The biggest Indian film ever made'

Director: S.Shankar

Writers: S. Shankar (Story), Sujatha Rangarajan (Dialogue)

Producer: A.M. Rathnam

Music: A.R.Rahaman

Cinematography: Jeeva

Also known as: *Indian* (Tamil), *Bharatheeyudu* (Telugu)

The Cinema in discussion has received three National Award in July 1997 for the Best Actor (Kamal Hassan), Best Art Direction (Thotta Tharani) and Best Special Effects (S.T. Venky) but missed out the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film in 1997, though it got shortlisted as part of the Indian submission for the same.

There is a saying that 'we all live in our past,' and this philosophical construct to my understanding must have created an impulse in the psyche of S. Shankar, the aftermath of which is the celebrated and promising departure of the Cinema *Hindusthani* which has acclaimed merit and have established the contours of history in co-relating or lest say resurrecting the in-betweenness of the bygone pre-independent colonial era with the independent post-colonial presence along with tendrils of its legacy.

Hindustani (1996) with a tagline of 'The biggest Indian film ever made', directed by S.

Shankar has been released on the Indian screen in three languages in India – Tamil, Telugu and Hindi, and my concern is the third in the series of languages. The departure of this paper, and specially this film, revolves around the variation of the present state of bribery, corruption and the helpless struggle of the contending middle-class to make themselves subject to the inept attitudinal hierarchy that exists in the Indian society and the helplessness that this particular class is suffering. This cinema, like other cinemas of Indian origin looks promisingly into the contradictions of failed State Apparatus, and the supposed role the political class should have played in ameliorating the downtrodden, helping them too at par with the advanced classes of the Indian polity. But, nevertheless it seems that the orders of the day after independence have filled its place with corruption, bribery and nepotism. The common man came under tremendous unforeseen and unexpected pressure from all ambits of life creating a void to review his

conceptions about politics, politicians and national priorities. For instance, in Maniratnam's *Roja* (1992) and *Bombay* (1995), which too were made in Tamil and later on, dubbed and subtitled in to Hindi and English smashed all-India records in the box-office. All these three films, *Hindustani*, *Roja* and *Bombay* have coalesced and shared a theme conceptualising primarily the colonial and the postcolonial era and its aftermath along with its adverse differences centering on pulp patriotism, terrorism and religious differences in all its vanity and full measure. Looking at the cryptologist hero of *Roja*, who dousing a burning flag and rolling over it to the ground - the plot revolves around the emerging terrorism of Kashmir and how the hero escapes under a deal been set between the terrorist and the army. The film comprehends the aftermath of 1989 Indian political scenario; the releasing of terrorists as a ransom to the release of the hero. Similarly, Maniratnam's *Bombay* revolves around the notion of pulp-secularism trying hard to bring unity amongst the two communities of the Hindus and the Muslims by unleashing middle class sentimentality. S. Shankar's *Hindustani* aligns itself on the commitment of a freedom-fighter with enabling self-righteous patriotic contours. Shankar, the director has meticulously merged the idea to retain hope in the system by enabling the state judiciary display its function and the purpose it is meant to serve. We are shown that irrespective of the State machinery being fuelled with corruption, the CBI (Central Bureau of Investigation) is full of honest impeccable officers strengthening and restoring the will power of the citizens promising hope and justice.

The film has brought in to our vicinity the adjunct role of what the freedom fighters have played in order to safeguard our future but somehow the sacrifice of their patriotic fervour and dream get itself challenged in post independent India. To see and witness a free and independent India devoid of social evils, the awakening of the oppressed castes and class, the rise of peasants and workers subjected to social oppression and inequalities, the demand for industrialization and the introduction of modern science and technology, were all an integral part of our struggle from Imperialism and Colonial penury,

and seeking these dreams to be true is what our freedom fighters have fought for giving way to build a nation where all sections of society can conglomerate under the aegis of being an 'Indian'. But somehow, there is a persistence of a long-lasting debate surrounding the plethora that constitutes in narrating the order of discourse to define Nationalism and its farfetched tentacles.

The cinema, *Hindustani*, opens with a refuse machine followed up by a map of India, probably a newspaper cutting hung on a door. The film unfold its plot by making the cinema goers introduced with the grim and bitter reality of our citizens which stands as a critique to the dream, an anti-thesis surrounding the sacrifices of veteran freedom-fighters which they wouldn't have ever thought of as a near possibility in pursuance of life in independent India. A respectable citizen of India has to pay a sum of hundred rupees as bribe in pursuance of a 'certificate of death' to the concerned department which to our dismay is a practice which create a disjuncture to the subscribed cultural value-system and the extent to which the matrix of our value-system is engulfed with cancerous growth. The director of *Hindustani* (1996), S. Shankar tried to foreground the present situation of our country, and how a freedom fighter, and the leading protagonist named Senapathy (played by Kamal Hasan), takes measures to deracinate corruption and is successful with his attempts to instill fear in the minds of the ones practicing corruption on Indian soil amidst the undergoing present order of discord. The plot construction of *Hindustani* revolves around the story of an old man, a septuagenarian, seen to be representing the earlier generation of the late 1950's, the years following India's Independence, and the value system of which majority of Indians including himself were an integral part to it. The participation and practices of the 'older' generations during this historical time frame in which the film has been rightly framed, offers to its succeeding generations the ambits of strength, endurance, and moral unrighteousness which stands as a major challenge introspecting all spheres of life. The cinematic text represents a thorough critique of how the succeeding generations are getting themselves

submerged in to practices and self-centred projections of hierarchy and hence unleash a sense carving patriotic fervour by re-introducing to the inhabitants of a socio-politico-geographical entity to their bygone history and unheard voices, who continued to resist against the British raj by not only sacrificing the pleasures of their life but also by taking foreign bullets in order to give us a secured shared time and space in which we live in.

The world around Senapathy, the projected hero, has literally changed overtaking him and his shared values and prejudices. The present generation has engulfed and submerged itself in to the already existing so called psychic supremacy of the West, thus challenging itself in merely appropriating brims of Gandhian traditionality and Nehruvian modernity. Senapathy (literally means the commander of a wing), who having been accomplished his footage and his continuing war first; to free India from the British has now resumed his self to fight corruption which seems to be the order of the day. He is shown in the film as an INA (Indian National Army) veteran, who receives an invitation from the INA Chief, Subhas Chandra Bose. It is to be noted that Subhash Chandra Bose, the Chief of the INA, attempted to lead a radical revival of the Congress steering it to a more radical and socialist direction. It is also to be noted that in the year 1939, he defeated M. K. Gandhi's nominee Pattabhi Sitaramayya to be re-elected as the Congress president but not being prepared to deal with a campaign of non-cooperation launched against him by Gandhi, he had to resign a few months later to launch an alternative and more radical a platform that eventually became the Forward Block in independent India. The outbreak of the Second World War further opened up avenues and lubricated new and more determined phases of the struggle against British raj. The year 1939 and 1940 mark and is associated with strikes and peasant uprisings escalating the already dissipated seeds of resentment against the British. The year 1941 recalls the historical time and space of the *Indian National Army* (INA) with its launch by General Mohan Singh in Malaya with the help of the Japanese. A native of Sialkot (Punjab, now in Pakistan) he had been greatly influenced by the

killings of Jallianwala Bagh massacre (13 April 1919) and hangings of the Ghadar Party members during his younger years. In 1943, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose took over the *Indian National Army* renaming it as the *Azad Hind Fauj*. More than two million Indian civilians living in South-East Asia responded to his call for 'total-mobilization.' In his Azad Hind Movement, Netaji successfully demonstrated of how unity, amity and a sense of 'national – brotherhood' can be attained enabling women as well as empowering them to get their rightful role in public affairs with dignity and equality. The film on Netaji, *Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose: The Forgotten Hero* (2004) directed by Shyam Benegal has tried to epitomize the role that Netaji has actively played to fight against the British, a rebellion with arms and his appeal to the citizens of his country though 'tum mujhe khoo do, main tumhe azadi dunga,' (You give me blood, I can promise you freedom), and his remarkable say, 'Dilli Chalho' at every cost turn the nerves on and makes us feel nostalgic about the forgotten past of a Nation's cry for freedom.

S. Shankar introduces us to Senapathy and his wife Namrata through a flashback:

Senapathy: [directing towards his wife] *INA main jaane ka bichaar hai mera . Mera neta Subhash Chandra Bose Singapore main hai. Singapore se hamari Azaad Hind Fauz rawana hoke, Burma border se hoke, Imphal se India main ghusegi... aur Dilli pahuch ke Goron pe humla karegi . Iske liye mujhe bhi nimantran aaya hai.*

(I have thought of joining the INA. My leader, Subhash Chandra Bose is in Singapore. From Singapore our Azad Hind Fauz will enter India by crossing the borders of Burma and then through Imphal...and after reaching Delhi we will attack the British, and I have received an invitation for this cause).

Translation mine

Senapathy (played by Kamal Hassan), his wife Namrata (played by Sukanya), and their son Chandru (Kamal Hasan [in double role]), and daughter Kasturi (played by Kasthuri) were shown to live a happy and peaceful life. Chandru asks for a

ransom of twenty thousand rupees from his father in order to meet his ends of getting a job through underhand means but joins as a smalltime broker outside the RTO (Road Transport office). He is assisted in this work by his crony Subbaiah (played by Goundamani). Chandru is in love with Aishwarya (played by Manisha Koirala) who works for an organisation against cruelty to animals. Sapna (played by Urmila Matondkar) is the daughter of a senior officer in the RTO who promises to make Chandru employed if he can run errands for them to which he agrees. Chandru's family receives news of his employment but amidst this good news an accident surrounds the family where Kasturi, Senapathy's daughter gets burnt, they bring him to Government hospital where the doctors demand a ransom to be paid refusing which they won't attend the burnt body of Kasturi. Senapathy visits the nearby police station where the inspector demands money for an FIR so does the village official...:

Senapathy: *Mere pass paise hai de sakta hoon... garib ka kya hoga.* (I have money and can pay, but what about the poor?).

Village official: *Garib jiye to kya mare to kya?* (Who cares about the poor?).

Senapathy gets aghast of the situation and goes back to the hospital and finds her daughter dead as treatment was not given to her. He breaks down completely. His thought is directed at the root cause of his predicament. He decides to fight against corruption and plans to deracinate the cause of corruption – bribe. Being a farmer, he firmly decides to neutralize the weeds which have taken resort of his farm; metaphorically his farm is his Motherland:

Senapathy: *Aaj desh ko hara bhara rakhne wale adhikari log, khar patwar banke ugg rahe hai. Is desh ko sudharna hai to who khar patwar hatani hogi. dharm nayay, saare jahan se aacha swatantrata divas samahroh, inki samarahoh inki zaroorat nahi haiDusre hatihar aapnana honge. Darr, saza ka darr, iski zaroorat hai ...* (The custodians of the state machinery are vitiating the atmosphere, and one has to stop it. Mere internalisation of the fact that we are independent won't suffice One has to look for stringent alternatives. Fear,

the fear of punishment, is what should be imposed now).

Translation mine

Senapathy being skilled in the ancient Indian martial art *Varma Kalani*, takes resort to it in order to propagate revenge and angst against those, who purposefully failed in order to bring justice to their profession and shape India for a better tomorrow. He commences his mission by killing the Commissioner of corporation in an attempt to root out corruption to which the political statesmen, ministers, Government officials and the Police are appalled. Senapathy gets hold of the doctor who refused to attend his daughter Kasturi, the proceedings of which are accidentally forecasted on TV. Krishnaswamy (played by Nedumudi Venu), an intelligence officer manages to somehow trace his way to Senapati's house and finds through archival records and showpieces that Senapathy is a former freedom-fighter, an INA veteran. While interrogating Senapathy's wife, we are taken to the era of the 1940s through a flashback:

Krishnaswamy: [intelligence officer undercover] *Gunda tyagi ban raha hai.* (Look, an anti-social is trying to be a gentleman)

Namrata: *Kisko Gunda bola toone? Who kyon hai maloom hai tujhe? Swatantrata wala yuddh kya tha malum hai tujhe?*

(Whom did you refer to as a gunda? Do you know who is he? Do you have any idea of what the National Movement for freedom was all about?)

Translation mine

Namrata, is projected as a progressive Indian nationalist who outreached the masses by deploying in them a sentiment of resistance against the British taking resort to her puppet shows, which acted as an agency of change in order to spreading awareness to the all-inclusive call for the Indian National movement. If we look back to the history of Indian freedom struggle, we can decipher the agencies that have been brought to force by the native intellectuals, who were successful in sending the message to combat imperialism and its agenda through multiple genres of literature which has served to legitimize successfully the call for

freedom from foreign rule. To name Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's *Anandamath* from where the *bani* (phrase) 'Vande Mataram' have been taken serves till today as a catch-all phrase this is deeply seated in the minds of almost all Indians. The song *Vande Mataram* first appeared in Bankim's book *Anandamath*, published in 1882 amidst fear of a ban by the British, though the song itself was actually written six years prior in 1876. 'Vande Mataram' was the national cry for freedom from British oppression and hostility during the freedom movement. The British, fearful of the potential danger and its upcoming effects of an incited Indian populace, at one point banned the utterance of this *bani*(phrase) in public forums and jailed many freedom fighters for disobeying the proscription. There came a lineage of the *bani*'s use by many personalities of the then India. For example, Rabindranath Tagore sang 'Vande Mataram' in 1896 at the Calcutta (Kolkata) Congress Session. Poet Sarala Devi Chaudurani sang 'Vande Mataram' in the Benaras Congress Session in 1905. Lala Lajpat Rai named a journal called *Vande Mataram* from Lahore.

Though a major aspirant for being the national anthem of India, *Vande Mataram* was eventually overtaken by *Jana Gana Mana*, which was ultimately chosen as the National Anthem of India. The choice was slightly controversial, since the *Vande Mataram* was the one song that truly depicted the pre-independence national fervour. The song was rejected basing on the grounds that Muslims felt offended by its depiction of the nation as "Maa Durga"-a Hindu goddess- thus equating the nation with the Hindu conception of shakti, divine feminine dynamic force; and by its origin as part of *Anandamath*, a novel they felt had an anti-Muslim message. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the first President of the Republic of India who while presiding the Constituent Assembly on January 24, 1950, made the following statement which was also adopted as the final decision on the issue relating to as which one should be the National Anthem of independent India:

The composition consisting of words and music known as Jana Gana Mana is the National Anthem of India, subject to such

alterations as the Government may authorise as occasion arises, and the song Vande Mataram, which has played a historic part in the struggle for Indian freedom, shall be honored equally with Jana Gana Mana and shall have equal status with it. (Applause) I hope this will satisfy members. (Constituent Assembly of India, Vol. XII, 24-1-1950).

Going back to the flash back of *Hindustani*, the fervour of *Vande Mataram* is witnessed in all its charm, vigour and vitality as a force of combat against the British. When Namrata is being asked by a British officer to salute the flag of England, she grossly rejects and thereby we are taken aback of how Senapathy and Namrata came to know each other:

Officer: Salute the flag.

Namrata: *Hindustan ki jhande ke siwa, dusre jhande ko sammaan nahi dungi main.* (Other than the flag of India, I won't bow before any other).

Officer: Oh... woh! Who is she [the officer asks a sepoy?]

Sepoy: *Namrata naam hai iska. Katputli ki khel ki aar main swatantrata ka prachar karte hai.* (Her name is Namrata. She spreads the message of National movement by putting up puppet shows).

Officer: *Oh tab to tumhe iss jhande ko salute karna hoga.* (Oh then you have to salute this flag).

Come on do it.

Namrata: *Bilkul nahi ...* (no, not at all). [She gives her hand to the officer. The officer beats on her hand]

Officer: Salute the flag ...

Namrata: *Vande Mataram* [she shouts]

Officer: Salute the flag ...

Namrata: *Vande Mataram* [she shouts again]

Officer: I said salute the flag.

[Senapathy is shown at the terrace of the Cook Town Police Station. Unable to withstand the inhumanity of the Officer, Senapathy picks up the flagpost of England and throws on the Officer's chest]

The entire incident fills up an interest of its kind between Namrata and Senapathy. Namrata along with others take part in a rally against use of British manufactured products commemorating the *Swadeshi Movement* - an early form of economic Nationalism that was first seen to be observed in

Shikarpur (Sindh), when the Pritam Dharma Sabha, set up in 1888, which initiated various social reforms, among which the setting up of the use of *swadeshi* sugar, soap, and cloth mills were the ones to be located first. Even the partition of Bengal along communal lines in 1905 by the British ("*Banga Bhang*") also triggered a nation-wide *Swadeshi* movement, giving a great hype to the freedom movement throughout the country. A boycott of foreign goods was proclaimed on 7 August 1905. At this time, the Indian National Congress gave only conditional support to the plan of boycotting of foreign manufactured goods, but a year later, under the influence of more radical leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak from Maharashtra, Bipin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghosh from Bengal and Lala Lajpat Rai from Punjab, the Calcutta session of the Congress in 1906 proclaimed for the first time, the concept of '*swaraj*', i.e. self-rule and called for support to the boycott movement against all manufactured goods by the British. The *Swadeshi* movement was a successful economic strategy to remove the British Empire from power and improve economic conditions in India following the principles of *swadeshi* (self-sufficiency) or self-rule. *Swadeshi*, as a strategy, was a key focus of Mahatma Gandhi who described it as the soul of *Swaraj* (self -rule or Home-Rule). But the pitfalls of the rage against the foreign manufactured goods had to be paid with the self-esteem and dignity of Namrata and other women who joined the protest. When Collector, Right King, enquires about the leader of the rally against foreign goods, he comes to gather information that it is a woman, and asks his soldiers to arrest all the women in to their jeeps and disperse the men from the crowd. We are shown that Namrata and all other women are taken to a secluded place and are ordered by the Collector to take off all clothes from their bodies and burn them, and out of sheer shame all of them commits suicide, but Namrata somehow manage to keep herself alive and coincidentally she meets Senapathy who comes at the tragic site and is narrated about the atrocities.

[Senapathy hears some voice behind a tree and intends to see who is it]

Senapathy: *Kyon hai?* (who is there?)

Namrata: *idhar matt aaiye.* (Please don't come here).

Senapathy: *kyun?* (Why?)

Namrata: *humne videshi kapde jalaye, isiliye Collector Right King ne hum sare aurat o ki saare kapde jala diye. Sharm ke mare saare aurato ne khud khushi kar li. Is attaychar ki khabar kisi ko dene ke liye main yahaan jaan hatheli pe liye baithinn hoon . Aapko saab batadiya hai aap jaiye.* (As we had burnt the foreign clothes, the Collector ordered to take away our clothes and asked them to burn. Out of shame all women have committed suicide. Just to narrate this incident I kept myself alive. Now that I have told you everything you please go).

Translation mine

Senapathy promising her to marry leaves for Singapore to join Subash Chandra Bose as part of the Indian National Army. He returns after independence and finally marries her.

On the one side of the film Chandru is a corrupt RTO officer who takes bribes from people in order to issue driving licences. Chandru parts ways with his father because of his excessive insistence on honesty and considers these values to be dead and worthless and stays at his senior official's house whose daughter is Sapna (Urmila Matondkar). He does everything that Sapna tells him to do as he wants to get a job materialising Sapna's father's sources. Chandru manage to a job in the RTO and had earlier taken a bribe in order to assure a fitness certificate to a school bus with foiled brakes which were in an abysmal condition. The bus meets with an accident killing schoolchildren and Chandru is held responsible. He applies fraudulent means to camouflage the case but is caught in due process by his father Senapathy while injecting alcohol in to the corpse of the bus driver in order to save his life falsifying actuality. But Senapathy is bent on giving Chandru the same punishment as he gives to others, i.e. death. Chandru tries hard to save his life from his father but he is unable to do so, Senapathy kills Chandru and flee from the hands of the police as well.

Senapathy: *jahan bhi anyay hoga main wohan zaroor aayunga.... Hindustani ki*

maut nahi hogi. (I will always be with my presence at the site of corruption and ...this 'Indian' will never die.).

It is said that Cinema in India reflects the popular perception of current affairs being it's political, sociological or religious. But there is also the other side that the Indian Popular Cinema reflects and that is the mechanizations of the ruling classes or the minority elite who try to deflate and modify the narrative process of the masses. *Hindustani*, the film reveals all possible corruption and shows the despair of the middleclass at the hands of the bureaucracy and other officials. Government corridors, ministries, police, health departments all have been entrenched with the tentacles of corruption. Bribes are offered and accepted without a wink. The film hits the bull's eye – the middle class, who are mute spectators and participants are sufferers of the consequences of corruption in public offices.

If we look into the history of corruption in post-Independent India, it starts with the Jeep scandal in 1948, when a transaction concerning purchase of jeeps for the Indian army needed for Kashmir operation was entered into by V.K. Krishna Menon, the then High Commissioner for India in London with a foreign firm without observing normal procedure. Over more than half a century of democratic rule have made India so immune to corruption that we have learnt how to live and adjust within the system even though the cancerous growth of this malady may finally kill us. The repercussions of this growth are well portrayed in S. Shankar's film *Hindustani*. According to World Bank report 1997 'Corruption' is an abuse of public power for private gains'. But this appears to be too simplistic an explanation of corruption. In fact, it is a multi-faceted evil, which gradually kills a system's backbone and hinders economic growth. A basic conflict between the ethos and system has weakened the Indian polity.

"The freedom struggle was not merely a struggle for political freedom from the foreign rule but also for laying the foundations for building a new India. The struggle for freedom brought the people of India together on the basis of a new unity

based on the concept of nationhood. It battled against forces that divided the people, the forces that were fostered by and allied with imperialism. The concept of unity that the struggle for freedom aimed at and which formed the basis of Indian nationhood, was not a unity based on language, religion or monolithic culture, but based on the acceptance of diversity, multiplicity of religions, languages, customs and beliefs- a composite culture. The struggle for independence also represented the awakening of the people of India into the modern World. It came to represent all the best and forward-looking features of the modern era in World history."¹

The struggle against social evils, the awakening of the oppressed castes, the rise of peasants and workers against social oppression and inequalities, the demand for industrialization of India and the introduction of modern science and technology- all became an integral part of our freedom struggle.

Talking of nationalism, whose definition is being widely debated nowadays, has become an imperative for all of us to let sustain its meaning in all its variants and manifested structures, and to relook of what went missing which is serving its purpose in order to cultivate such structures of ambiguity.

Notes:

¹ NibandhVinodh. 'A dream yet to be realized'. <http://www.Nagpurcity.net/netzine/990901a3.htm> l.

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Production: Kamal Hassan

Music by A.R. Rahman

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