

## Of Empires Gone – Raja Arasa Ratnam

DALMENY, NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA, November 25, 2015 /EINPresswire.com/ -- “When I ponder about empires, I do so both as a former vote-less colonial subject, and a present-day free citizen. I now belong to a satrapy, a country subservient to a great power, but I am not in the least fussed about that. ... ..

My feelings dominate my thoughts about colonialism. These are about the loss of personal freedom and political independence; the imposition of foreign religio-cultural values and the consequent denigration and attempted destruction of the cultural beliefs and practices of the conquered and



oppressed people; and the subversion of the local economy and much of the way of life of its workforce to suit the trading and other economic wants of the coloniser. After all, the interloper was not there for the benefit of the so-called natives; for instance, to teach us how to govern ourselves (as an English friend of mine was taught at school).

My family’s exposure to empire was somewhat prosaic, until I pushed a young British police officer through a hedge at about 2 am one night. ... ..

Racist attitudes and discriminatory behaviour were par for the course. All the minuscule colonising nations of Europe were smugly superior in their newly-acquired technological superiority, allied to a religion whose founder had allegedly died on the cross for their salvation. Asian servants, waiters and other workers were routinely addressed as ‘Boy’ by the British, especially the women; such people did behave in public (for example, in the shops) in a supercilious manner.

This ‘superior’ class of humanity was grandly supported in substantial homes by Asian cooks, maids for any children, drivers, and gardeners. They must have felt awfully superior – and so fortunate. So said my elders.

My elders used to refer to the British as ‘upstarts’ – in private of course. The British referred to us as Asiatics. The denigration associated with this term was such that, after independence, it was replaced by the term ‘Asians.’ Not all of our rulers were, however, ignorant.

The Orientalists of Europe recognised the artistic and craft skills, as well as the writings and philosophies of the ancient civilisations of Asia. The thoughts underlying the philosophies relating to governance, the nature of the Cosmos, and humanity’s place within it, are probably the most insightful, complex, and durable of anything ever written or spoken of. The civilisations of China, India

and Persia come to mind. Pre-colonial India and Persia were very much larger in size during historical times.

Asia produced beautiful art, poetry, fabrics, new technologies, mathematicians, astronomers, and ships which traded seemingly in all the seas long before European seamen took to searching for the route to the spices of the so-called Indies from about the sixteenth century. It is said that Vasco da Gama was shown the route past Cape Good Hope by Indian sailors then in Portugal.

In contrast to the Orientalists, some sectors of academe in Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries supported the spurious claim that European (viz. white) people are innately superior to coloured people everywhere. ... ..

What puffery! Athens is believed to have been established by ancient Egypt, and Athenians such as Pythagoras are known to have studied in Egypt for years. The contributions of knowledge and of technology to mankind by the ancient 'black' civilisations, and the role of the Arabs in introducing these to Europe are now well documented. ... ..

A Hindu will realise that, since everything in the universe is cyclical, the durability of foreign control, of attempted empires, is likely to be governed by the movements of the planets. Could the life of an empire average about 300 years plus or minus 60 to 120 years? Something to do with Saturn's trajectory?

My elders therefore expected that the British Empire, probably the least brutal of the European empires, would soon end. Our civilisation would simply outlast the dominance of our temporary overlords. ... ..

Our colonial rulers did leave, albeit reluctantly. As they left, they reportedly expressed great regret (shedding crocodile tears) that they had not been able to teach us about democracy, Western democracy that is. ... ..

What was the legacy of colonialism? In British Malaya, now Malaysia and Singapore, the positive gains were: the English language, now the language of international relations; Western democracy (for what that is worth); respect for law and order in the British way (but needing some serious improvements to deliver justice); and a form of multiculturalism which is potentially more equitable than the traditional forms."

These are extracts from Chapter 11 'Of empires gone and going' in my book 'Musings at death's door: an ancient bicultural Asian-Australian ponders about Australian society,' available as an ebook from amazon.com at \$US 2.99.

Raja RATNAM  
None  
02-4476-7655  
email us here

---

This press release can be viewed online at: <http://www.einpresswire.com>

Disclaimer: If you have any questions regarding information in this press release please contact the company listed in the press release. Please do not contact EIN Presswire. We will be unable to assist you with your inquiry. EIN Presswire disclaims any content contained in these releases.

© 1995-2015 IPD Group, Inc. All Right Reserved.