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Biography as History: A Personal Reflection History has illuminated every field of human endeavor—science as well as the arts—embracing countless modern disciplines, expanding its focus on change over time to comprehend entire nations, cultures, and civilizations, each far more complex than any individual life. But at its best, biography is the finest form of history. The story of individuals, their actions—heroic or tragic—and the impact of their ideas, has always fascinated me. Thus, my doctoral dissertation, “Tilak and Gokhale,” focused on the lives of the two most important leaders of India’s Nationalist Movement prior to Mahatma Gandhi, as prototypes of that movement’s “Revolution” and “Reform” mainstreams.¹

TILAK AND GOKHALE *Lokamanya* (Friend of the People) Bal Gangadhar Tilak was Maharashtra’s most popular journalist and cultural nationalist. His firebrand editorials inspired the first Hindu Brahman assassins of Poona (now Pune), where *Kesari* (Lion), his Marathi-language newspaper was published. To understand Tilak, I had to learn Marathi, reading through the *Kesari* archives. Marathi was the mother tongue of both Tilak and Gokhale, but Gokhale wrote primarily in English, whereas all of Tilak’s most important works were in Marathi.

Mahatma (Great Soul) Gopal Krishna Gokhale, like Tilak, was a Chitpavan Brahman, born a decade later, learning from his brilliant guru, Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade, to appreciate the “gifts” and benefits of English education and British justice. Gokhale emerged as Tilak’s primary nationalist opponent, repelled by Tilak’s Brahmanic Hindu orthodoxy as well as his violent opposition to all things British. Young Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who first met both men in Poona, compared Tilak to the “dark

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1 Wolpert, *Tilak and Gokhale: Revolution and Reform in the Making of Modern India* (Berkeley, 1962).

waters” (*kala pani*) of “the ocean,” which were always anathema to Hindus. But Gandhi loved Gokhale as “the Ganges,” which “invited one to its bosom.” He wrote of Gokhale as “my political guru,” calling him “Mahatma,” which troubled Erikson enough to comment in his *Gandhi’s Truth*, “Why should Wolpert call *his* Gokhale *my* Gandhi’s ‘guru’ and why should that bother me so much?” Before completing my dissertation I lived in India for almost a year, mostly in Poona, interviewing many people who had known or worked with Tilak or Gokhale or were related to them. Imbibing the culture and environment in which one’s subjects lived and worked is essential to the biographer–historian, as important as learning their language and understanding their viewpoints.²

JINNAH, GANDHI, AND MORLEY A scholarly historical biography requires full access to the personal archives of its subject and the public papers or documents of any national figure, should the biographer choose to write about an important public leader. We can find a paucity of letters, papers, or documents in the archives for one chosen subject, or a daunting superfluity in the archives for another. I was faced with the paucity problem in writing my biography of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the father of Pakistan, and the opposite one when tackling my life of Gandhi. Scrupulously careful person and brilliant lawyer that he was, Jinnah committed nothing to writing that he would not be ready to defend in a courtroom. He kept no diary, wrote no autobiography, and penned virtually no “private” letters that survive. Were it not for my good fortune in meeting several of Jinnah’s closest barrister friends in London, before flying out to Pakistan, I could never have written my *Jinnah of Pakistan*. That work required many more years of research, and several more trips to Pakistan than expected, before I finally located and gained access to all the Jinnah papers that exist. Studying Jinnah, I often felt like a cryptographer in a dark room, spending long hours analyzing photos of him for clues to his personality and repeatedly interviewing those who had known him best, each time asking them some of the same questions, almost as though I were giving them polygraphs.³

Gandhi Everything that Gandhi wrote has been preserved in

2 Erik H. Erikson, *Gandhi’s Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence* (New York, 1969).

3 Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan* (New York, 1984).

triplicate at the library of his Sabarmati Ashram in Gujarat, much of which was published in his *Collected Works* (Delhi, 1958), and more biographies have been written about him than of any other Indian. But Gandhi's unexpected death, not his life, was what ignited my fascination with Indian history and the complexity of that human sage called *Bapu* ("Little Father") by his disciples, and Mahatma by the rest of the world.

My first passage to India early in 1948, at the age of twenty, brought me to Bombay on the very day when Gandhi's ashes were immersed in the waters of Back Bay. I had never seen so many people before, all mourning for their Mahatma. Gandhi was assassinated by a Brahman named Nathuram Godse, who believed that India's saintly father was a "Muslim-loving" traitor to his Hindu faith. The indelible impact of that day, and the tragic irony of the Mahatma's murderer being a "devout Hindu," not only inspired me to study Indian history but also to write a fictional account of the last day of Gandhi's life. Not for another forty years was I ready to attempt Gandhi's biography. My novel, *Nine Hours To Rama*, was published by Random House, then filmed in India, where the censors banned it after Jawaharlal Nehru and his cabinet watched its only screening there.⁴

I was never officially told why my novel or the film made from it was banned, though many kind Indian friends in the cabinet have tried their best for half a century to persuade the Home Ministry to lift its embargo. Some said that the reason was the fear of possible riots being incited by the re-creation of Gandhi's shooting, or something that I wrote about Home Minister Sardar Patel's failure properly to protect him. Jamie Hamilton, who republished my novel for U.K. and Commonwealth distribution (later to be impounded by Indian censors in the port of Bombay), invited me to dine with the retired Parsi director general of Bombay's Criminal Investigation Division at the time of Gandhi's assassination. The director general warmly shook my hand and said, "If I hadn't myself sealed the record of our investigation into that assassination and wrote on the outer envelope, 'Not to be opened for Fifty Years,' I should have sworn you read all those documents!" I had not seen any of them, in fact, but having lived in Poona while working on "Tilak and Gokhale," I absorbed the historic environment that had nurtured Gandhi's assassin and his co-

4 *Idem*, *Nine Hours To Rama* (New York, 1962).

conspirators, and since my first visit to Bombay, I had read everything possible about Gandhi himself and his philosophy. My educated “guesses” in the fictional account proved to be reasonably close to, as Theodor Mommsen’s classic definition of history would put it, Gandhi’s assassination “as it actually happened!” Nonetheless, my novel and its film version both remain banned, though my biography, *Gandhi’s Passion: The Life and Legacy of Mahatma Gandhi* (New York, 2001), has never been banned. Translated into six foreign languages, it is still widely read in India in its paperback edition.

Jinnah This is not to say that scholarly biographies are immune to censorship. My first full-length biography, *Jinnah of Pakistan*, was banned by General Zia ul-Haq, Pakistan’s Islamic martial dictator, for reasons that were immediately revealed to me by Zia’s orthodox Islamic cultural minister, who flew to Los Angeles to try to persuade me to delete “just a few sentences” from it. What I reported of Jinnah’s taste for ham sandwiches and pork sausages, he argued, must have been “wrong,” since “no good Muslim could possibly like those things.” He also naively insisted that Jinnah never drank whiskey or wine, because alcoholic beverages were forbidden by Pakistan’s dictator. I explained that I wrote only what I believed to be true, based on at least two impeccable primary sources for each fact—Jinnah’s legal assistants and his closest friends. Before he gave up, the old minister tried in vain to bribe me, promising that if I agreed to his deletions, 100,000 copies of a new edition of my book would be published by Pakistan’s Armed Services Press. I told him I had never approved of censorship of any kind, especially not of my own works.

Despite Pakistan’s fundamentalist Islamic objections to my book, I soon heard that my *Jinnah* was being illicitly published throughout Pakistan, without accountability to the Oxford University Press or any royalties to me, by private “pirates” in most of the big cities. Once, after the ban had finally been lifted, I was shocked to find a pirated copy in the gift shop of Karachi’s Sheraton Hotel. I asked the salesman where he had obtained that clearly illegal product, which fell apart when I opened it: “Oh, sir, everybody is wanting to read this book—*best book on our Quaid!*” I later learned from a friend in The U.S. State Department that Zia himself kept an impounded box of my Jinnah books under his desk in the event that a foreign dignitary were to ask him why “no good

history of Pakistan” had yet been published. He could then take one of the books out and hand it across his desk, saying “Read this!” My startled friend had asked the general, “But why can’t I buy this in any book store?”

Morley Literary figures are always tempting subjects for biographers, but the only one that I ever wrote about was John Morley—a brilliant writer and a truly enlightened man. My focus, however, was Morley’s impact on India during his tenure as India’s secretary of state from 1906 to 1910. Although he was deserving of a complete biography, I could never get permission to use his unpublished personal papers, which were kept under lock and key by a zealous Oxford don, who wrote nothing himself but whose control of those documents was enough to dissuade me from pursuing the secrets of Morley’s life any further.⁵

BRODIE AND BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY My dear friend Fawn Brodie, a great biographer–historian, was almost denied a full professorship in UCLA’s history department by several now-departed professors who considered her biographies nothing more than “fiction” or “fatuous gossip.” Brodie’s remarkable books on Thomas Jefferson, Joseph Smith, Richard Burton, and Richard Nixon need no defenders today. She was a scrupulous scholar, probing every available source to enrich her works with true, though often troubling, facts, long-ignored or viewed as too dangerous to publish by less courageous historians. Her brilliant biography of Smith, *No Man Knows My History*, was denounced by the Mormon Church, from which Brodie was excommunicated. Her revelations about Jefferson’s thirty-year romance and common-law marriage to Sally Hemmings, initially denounced by Jeffersonian guardians of his “purity” in Virginia, have now been proved beyond any doubt by DNA testing of their descendants. Brodie’s profound understanding of Nixon’s insecurities help to explain much about his otherwise frequently puzzling behavior.⁶

Brodie and I often discussed the lives of individuals that we were writing about, and she introduced the first course in biogra-

5 *Idem*, *Morley and India, 1906–1910* (Berkeley, 1967).

6 Fawn Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson, an Intimate History* (New York, 1974); *idem*, *No Man Knows My History: The Life Of Joseph Smith, The Mormon Prophet* (New York, 1945); *idem*, *The Devil Drives; A Life of Sir Richard Burton* (New York, 1967); *idem*, *Richard Nixon, The Shaping of His Character* (New York, 11).

phy ever offered by UCLA's history department, while I was its chair, attracting some of our best graduate students. She was hard at work on "The White House Years," which would have been the second volume of her biography about her "nemesis" Nixon, when she tragically died of cancer. Yet, two of the department's oldest, though hardly wisest, historians—one an American Civil Warrior and the other our British Imperialist—both tried their worst to convince the rest of us, "She's no historian. Biography is much closer to fiction than history. She belongs in our English Department, if they'll have her!" Both of these scholars devoutly believed that they were protecting history's turf from biographical invaders, once again trying in vain a year later to keep Clio's gates closed against a psychoanalytical historian that we had the good fortune to hire despite their narrow-minded opposition.

INTERVIEWS Biographies are often enriched by interviews, especially of old friends and close relatives, though sometimes they prove fruitless. I have been tempted at times to ignore the leads of peripheral figures but quickly learned the value of diligently pursuing every name and address, gaining some of my best insights from apparently obscure sources. Regretfully, I never managed to meet with Jinnah's only child, his daughter Dina, who lived in New York. I called her several times from Los Angeles, and she finally agreed to see me in New York, inviting me for "tea." When I finally arrived at her Madison Avenue building, however, I overheard her say to the doorman through the intercom, "Tell him that I am not at home." English friends had warned me of how "reclusive" she was, but I still regret never having met her.

By no means does every interview, even of close friends or relatives, necessarily prove useful to a biographer, as I had learned from interviewing several of Tilak's and Gokhale's dearest friends in Poona. One of these people, from whom I had expected profound insights and unique reminiscences, simply shook his trembling head, whispering, "He was a very . . . *very* . . . great man!" But one of Gandhi's old friends, his physician and disciple, happily surprised me at how sharp her ninety-year-old mind remained and how clearly she was able to recall intimate details and accurate dates.

BHUTTO While I was still working on my life of Jinnah, I became fascinated by the subject of my second biographical history of Pa-

kistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Like Jinnah, Bhutto was a barrister, but his flamboyant populist political personality was in many ways the opposite of Jinnah's austere, Anglophile style. Pilo Mody, an Indian friend of mine, contributed to my interest in Bhutto, having attended a posh school in Bombay with him and having written a brief personal memoir about him, *Zulfi, My Friend* (Delhi, 1973). I was also stimulated to write the life of Pakistan's most beloved and hated political leader when I learned that he left Bombay to attend the University of Southern California the same year that I departed for Bombay. Furthermore, while Bhutto was in Los Angeles, he dated a woman who later became a good friend of mine, and after transferring to the University of California, Berkeley, he shared a dormitory room with another of my good friends. But I could not begin to tackle Bhutto's life until after the demise of Zia ul-Haq, the dictator who hanged him in 1979. When Zia's plane went down mysteriously in flames, Zulfi's talented daughter, Benazir, flew home to Pakistan from London to lead her father's Pakistan People's Party to victory in that year's (1988) elections, and to govern Pakistan as its first female prime minister. Having met Benazir shortly before that time, I wrote to ask her if I might have unfettered access to her father's papers for a biography. She kindly agreed, as did her mother, Nusrat Bhutto, who still lived in their Karachi home at 70 Clifton.⁷

I had met Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto only once, in 1973, when he came to Washington to inaugurate the American Association of Pakistan Studies, chaired by Ralph Braibanti of Duke University, who, with Hafeez Malik of Villanova, invited me to join their board. Bhutto's dark pinstriped suit, bright red silk tie, and matching handkerchief seemed the perfect outfit for his flamboyant personality. His speech was less fascinating than the dark image that he kept doodling in pencil on a scratch pad while Braibanti introduced him. His sketch looked like an ominously black missile on a launch pad, which I later recalled when he vowed to "eat grass" rather than cut Pakistan's nuclear arms budget, over which he presided with particular pride. Even then, long before I understood his bipolar personality, he seemed a curious mixture of conflicting forces, at once arrogantly self-assured and yet too eager to please, his sensuously thick lips blowing words almost as if he were throwing kisses. He was a tragic figure—Paki-

7 Wolpert, *Zulfi Bhutto of Pakistan: His Life and Times* (New York, 1973).

stan's most talented, best loved leader, who wasted all of his remarkable advantages with reckless abandon, turning his closest colleagues and former allies into bitter enemies, destroyed by his own uncontrollable passions and fatally intoxicated judgment.

NEHRU Before I ever considered trying to write the life of Nehru, I had impulsively requested, and surprisingly received, permission to interview him in New Delhi, where my wife and I had just flown to complete my research on "Tilak and Gokhale" in 1958. I had not really expected Nehru to agree to the interview, knowing how many more important matters that he had to address. To my delighted surprise, however, I was invited within the week to see him in his office at Parliament. Nehru's charismatic brilliance and charm thoroughly captivated me during that first hour's meeting, but I had to teach Indian history for thirty years before I dared to delve into his enormous archive of papers and private letters. I had read his inspiring autobiography, *Toward Freedom* (New York, 1981), as well as his other published works during my graduate studies in Indian history, but never appreciated how complex he was until I dug much more deeply into his thousands of long letters and the many works written about him by close contemporaries.⁸

Regretfully, I was denied permission to read an important cache of letters exchanged between Nehru and Edwina Lady Mountbatten. Those still remain officially "closed," although two complete sets exist—one in England and one in India. The set in England is under the control of Lord (Louis) Mountbatten's Broadlands Trust. Lord Romsey, Mountbatten's young grandson, graciously invited my wife and me to Broadlands when we visited Southampton, but he could not let me see the letters without the agreement of Sonia Gandhi, who owned the other set in Delhi. Seeing how disappointed I was, he added with a smile, "The family *line* is that they (Nehru and Lady Edwina) were simply good friends." A few years later, when I flew to India, I managed to meet with Congress President Sonia Gandhi, Nehru's granddaughter-in-law, but I failed to persuade her to allow me to read the letters. "I think I must keep them for my daughter," she said vaguely at the end of our long meeting.

8 *Idem*, *Nehru: A Tryst with Destiny* (New York, 1996).

I am not sure whether the Nehru–Edwina letters would have taught me anything that I had not already learned about Nehru or added anything to our historical knowledge of the period, but human curiosity is part of what impels biographical historians to keep trying, especially when we know of a cache of primary source material assiduously kept under wraps. After leaving Madame Gandhi’s office, I felt much the same way as I did when I first saw a library of beautiful leather-bound books in a medieval monastery, chained and locked away from curious minds behind thick steel bars. I have always admired the wisdom of our nation’s founding fathers in drafting the first amendment to our Constitution, finding all censorship repulsive and counterproductive. I was amazed and flattered to find my own banned *Nine Hours To Rama* in a glass-enclosed library case in Mani Bhavan—the house in Bombay where Mahatma Gandhi stayed whenever he visited that great city—shelved next to Leo Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*. I regret only that neither of the books appears ever to have been opened.

In 1958, during my second visit to India, a few nights after we had first met Nehru in his office, my wife and I sat behind him and Lady Edwina at the opening of the Lalit Kala Akademi in Delhi. They looked like young and happy lovers, holding hands, laughing, and enjoying one another’s company at least as much as they did the classical dancing and music. I am sure that their letters would have made for good reading, not only because of the felicity of Nehru’s writing, prevalent in many other letters that he wrote—especially those to Indira, his daughter, and to his sisters—but also because that otherwise singularly private person might have been more frank in what he revealed to Edwina than to anyone else. She adored her brilliantly powerful “Jawaha,” as she lovingly called him. Nehru’s wife, Kamala, had died of tuberculosis after many years in Indian and Swiss sanatoriums, and their marriage, arranged by his father, had always lacked the romantic magic and poignance of Nehru’s geographically remote relationship with his “Darling Edwina.”

The night that Edwina died alone and asleep in British North Borneo, she had re-read Nehru’s letters, found on the floor near her bedside, where they’d fallen from her fingers. Mountbatten had wanted his wife buried in their family crypt in Romsey, but Edwina’s will requested that her remains be “set free” in the open sea. Nehru sent an Indian frigate, *Trishul*, to follow the British

navy's *Wakeful*, which bore her coffin from Portsmouth, and to drop a golden garland of Indian marigolds as a farewell gift to adorn Edwina's tiny body as it slipped into the sea.

Though my life of Nehru was not actually banned by India, all copies of it mysteriously disappeared from every book store in Delhi immediately after the Nehru family's Lucknow newspaper, *National Herald*, ran a page one editorial attacking it under the black banner headline "BLASPHEMY!" What a strange word to use, I thought. Secular rationalist and agnostic, if not outright atheist, that Nehru was, he never hesitated to attack and vigorously repudiate all religious dogma and intellectually restrictive doctrine, whether Hindu, Muslim, Christian, or Jewish. In my rebuttal letter, I reminded the *National Herald's* editor of how open-minded Nehru had always been, and how I had written nothing about him in my biography that was not directly quoted from, or inspired by, his own vast archive of primary work. But by then I was well aware that nothing was more bitterly resented or violently attacked in any biography than the truth. So though my *Trysts* were not replaced on Delhi's bookstore shelves, I had learned to accept with equanimity the harshest criticism of my work, no matter how offensive, since it was usually a reaction to my truthful revelations of a subject's darkest secrets.

THE LAST YEARS OF THE RAJ AND THE PARTITION My most recent book, *Shameful Flight: The Last Years of the British Empire in India* (New York, 2006), though not literally a biographical work, focuses on the historic roles that the leaders of India, Pakistan, Great Britain, and the United States played in that crucial era. Gandhi, Jinnah, Nehru, Patel, Stafford Cripps, Winston Churchill, Franklin Roosevelt, Lord Wavell, and Mountbatten, each played a part, heroic or ignoble, foolish or tragic, brave or cowardly, accelerating or retarding the decline and fall of that once mightiest Empire of modern times.

More than 10 million Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs were terrified into fleeing their ancestral homes during that last most tragic year of the Raj, following Mountbatten's foolishly hasty decision to partition South Asia. Among those many exiles were 1 million innocents who never lived to reach a safe haven in their new lands, the dominions of India and Pakistan. Several critics of my book felt that I was "too harsh" in blaming Mountbatten for

halving the time allotted to him by Prime Minister Clement Attlee's cabinet to resolve, if possible, the differences between Congress and League leaders. Had Mountbatten opted not for Partition and Pakistan but for a unitary federal transfer of power to India, I believe that countless lives could have been saved along the new, recklessly drawn borders that divided Punjab and Bengal, and that incalculable violence and damage to India and Pakistan could have been avoided during the next half-century. Perhaps he was too ignorant of India, too young, too royal, and too egotistical to worry about the impoverished refugees whose fate was consigned to his hands. Perhaps it was Attlee's fault for choosing him and Churchill's for suggesting him to his Labour successor as prime minister. There are always many "excuses" for failure, many "reasons" for stupid, brutal, and inept actions, but biographers must never "neutralize" the moral consequences of their subjects' decisions.

I met Lord Mountbatten once, when I was working on Jinnah's life, interviewing him in London, at his pied-a-terre behind Harrod's, in what would be the last year of his life. He was personally charming, but confessed that he could not understand why I should waste so much of my time working on the life of a man as "humorless as Jinnah." He suggested instead that I should focus on "*my* [Mountbatten's] life and the role *I* [Mountbatten] *played* in strengthening and redesigning the Commonwealth. There's a lot to be written about that!" Then he smiled, adding, "Alan can help you," and then instructing his private secretary to give me the home phone and address of Alan Campbell-Johnson (author of *Mission With Mountbatten* [London, 1951]) to help me "get to work on that." I explained that I was committed to finishing my book on Jinnah, and never regretted having done so.

BIOGRAPHY, HISTORY, AND TRUTH This incident raises the question of how a biographer's choice of subject might either enhance or diminish the value of his or her work. Biographers should always question their own biases when selecting a subject, and continue to challenge their prejudices at every stage of their research and writing. I was acutely conscious of the potential danger of such prejudice when I started writing about Tilak and Gokhale, because I felt a decided initial preference for the "revolutionary" Tilak and a radical student's distrust of the "conservative" Anglo-

phile Gokhale. I am not exactly sure when my view reversed, but I know that it happened during the year of my primary-source research in India. At one point, I was suddenly surprised to realize that I had come to admire Gokhale's secular humanitarian sagacity far more than Tilak's traditional Hindu religiosity and advocacy of political violence. I never again changed my feelings about them, but I tried to maintain an open mind regarding everything that I discovered about their actions or wrote about their historical significance in my published work.

Hagiography is probably the most common potential pitfall for any biographer, since all of us probably choose our subjects because we admire them. I admired Nehru more than any of the other subjects that I have studied, at least at the start of my commitment to write his life. His *Discovery of India* (New York, 1946) and *Toward Freedom* influenced me to learn all that I could about Indian history. He struck me then as a brilliant writer, a fearless revolutionary, and the most charismatic figure of recent times, and when first I met him in New Delhi, he did not disappoint. The longer that I worked on his life, however, the more disillusioned I became—first, because of the many inaccuracies and doctrinaire Marxist tendencies in his *Discovery of India* and later because of his failures as India's leader, refusing to open its economy and to free enterprise investments that could have helped to extricate the lower half of India's populace from its abject poverty. Nehru always said the right things, especially in articulating his socialist humanitarian values, but he rarely introduced the vigorous measures required to achieve his goals. His Hamlet-like intellect and reflective vacillation may have contributed to his personal charm, but it also inhibited India's development, as did his love of power, despite his claims to the contrary. His tragic flaw was his insatiable dynastic ambition for Indira, his daughter, and her two sons, all three of whom met violent premature deaths.

Students have often asked me when did I know that I was ready to write about a biographical subject. At times I would answer, "When I started dreaming about them." Once I decide to write a life, it usually takes me at least a year of primary-source research, and often two or more years before I feel sufficiently at home with my subject to dive into the writing—which, strangely enough, is sometimes the point at which I have a dream about him or her. I intended to try writing several women's lives, Indira

Gandhi's being the first and Annie Besant's the second, but in both cases, my work was preempted by well-written biographies published within a year of my initial research. Much later, when I had nearly finished my life of Bhutto, Benazir asked me to return to Karachi for a year to write about her. I never regretted not doing so but hardly expected the tragic end to her life to come as swiftly as it did.

Each of my biographies has helped me to understand and portray South Asian history more accurately than would have been possible had I chosen to focus exclusively on economic, ethnic, or cultural data. Since all of my biographies are of Indians, Pakistanis, or British officials of the Raj, I have been able to revisit many of the same historic events—eras of glorious nationalist success or tragic failure—from diverse points of view, often diametrically opposed. When I first started work on Jinnah's life, some of my closest Indian colleagues and friends questioned the wisdom or value of my choice, as had Mountbatten, though they took greater interest in reviewing it after it was banned in Pakistan. Two years ago, to my delight, my *Jinnah*, which had long since been republished in Urdu, Arabic, and Russian translations, was finally published in Hindi by Popular Prakashan Press, the first of my biographies currently available to India's vast non-English reading public. I hope that my Gandhi and Nehru biographies will eventually be published in Urdu for a Pakistani audience.

For millions of readers, biography is a high road to history. I like to think that if as many Pakistanis were able to read as much about Gandhi and Nehru as ordinary Indians can now read about Jinnah, they would be less dismissive of India's greatest leaders, less swift to react violently against India, and more appreciative of the two countries' common historic roots.

Despite the more than sixty years of tragic conflict about Kashmir that have plagued India and Pakistan since the Partition, I remain optimistic about the prospects for a permanent peace in South Asia before too long. The epidemic of global terror that has proliferated since Al-Qaeda's monstrous attacks on the United States in September 2001, the most recent deadly reincarnation of which devastated Mumbai in November 2008, makes the study of history and biography an urgently useful preoccupation for all of us. The better we understand human motives and aspirations, the closer we will come to realizing peaceful coexistence, friend-

ship, and cooperation in our daily lives, ideals that most of us share. South Asia's Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which originated in 1985, provides a frame on which this region's seven nations, and more than one-and-a quarter billion people, can build healthier relations. Economic and educational cooperation with India would certainly help to extricate Pakistan from the depths of fundamentalist-Islamic and medieval-tribal ignorance and brutality.

Mahatma Gandhi believed that Truth (*Satya*) and Love (*Ahimsa*) were "God" and that firm adherence to both could "move the world" and conquer the dreadful forces of darkness and falsehood. Jinnah believed that "Justice" and "Fair play" were the polestars of politics, cautioning his nation, in his stirring address of October 1947 to its Constituent Assembly, "The first duty of a government is to maintain law and order, so that the life, property, and religious beliefs of its subjects are fully protected by the State." Both of those great men begged Mountbatten not to divide Punjab and Bengal—Gandhi calling this mad scheme "the vivisection of [Mother] India." Yet Gandhi's assassin, and millions of ignorant Hindus who admired Godse's "devotion to Hinduism," falsely believed that Gandhi was behind Mountbatten's decision. At least as many Pakistanis have falsely maligned Jinnah for a hatred of Hindus, Parsis, Christians, and Jews, virtually all of whom were forced out of Karachi, Lahore, and Peshawar by fanatical Muslim terrorists, several of whom tried twice to assassinate Jinnah.

The most effective antidote to malicious historical falsehoods, our gravest "errors of judgment," is the light of truth embodied in biographical history. To that end, the Sanskrit national motto of India, *Satyam-eva jayate*, "Truth alone conquers," has much the same meaning as the Western homily, "Truth shall make you free." Biographical history may yet prove our most popular and effective high road to a clearer, sharper understanding of the past, which, as we all know, is "prologue." Learning about the roots of mistakes and errors of judgment in history may someday teach us to avoid repeating them. What greater reward could any biographical historian hope to reap from a lifetime of labor?