

DF Karaka Jr., A Neglected Indian War Correspondent of the Eastern Theatre of War

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The ecology of journalism in the field of political discourse, scientific research, socio-cultural examination or even the war studies was dominated by the West till the inception of WW-I. They were those who decided the mobility as well as the flow of news, reports and information, but the situation soon began to change in the post-war atmosphere. In such a scenario, the British educational hub willingly offered some opportunities to non-Europeans including Asians, Africans and even Blacks, which enabled them to examine the cross boundary culture of difference. By cashing in on this opportunity, the non-Whites offered their views with anger that was different from that of the other contemporaries. Thus, a new kind of discourse emerged in media which could be called, in a narrow sense of the word, counter flow of information from low to high. On a different note, this flow was neither Indian nor European but a mongrel breed of two, so as to say a hybrid form. Undoubtedly, this phase in India was colored with nationalism and at times affected by the storm of socialism, if not Marxism, not as "red" as the Russian Revolution. Two phases of nationalism and socialism added confusion among the Indian intelligentsia simply because they found themselves caught "between cultures" of the East and the West, as Homi Bhabha termed it. Despite it, most of the Indians over there rejected feudalism, Nazist socialism, and even colonialism, and in addition to this, they were angry with the British for the illegal occupation of India. It should not be taken for granted that they were hyper revolutionary or extreme radical, they were in fact those pro-British Indians who were against any kind of colonization, either of mind or land. However, their pro-British attitude did not divert their mind from thinking about their country. After all, most of them were self-proclaimed liberals, humanists, cosmopolitarians, and even modern. Indeed, it was a transitional phase of

journalism when local people from colonial lands started to present their views on the existing situations and their views were welcomed, well received as well as reviewed positively by the White masses, if not by media. It was, in true sense, a new beginning for the young Indians living in fourth decade of twentieth century that is infamous for seeing the horrors of Spanish Civil War, Jap-Sino War, and World War II, as well as the rise of Hitler.

The political upheaval in 1938 sealed the promise of the arrival of WW-II, an event which consolidated the career of many emerging writers as a war correspondent. Sometimes also referred as the special correspondent, a war correspondent is a reporter recruited along with the army in war-ridden areas to report his first-hand experience in the form of news, opinions, and reports. His primary task is to cover war stories, investigate issues and interview military personnel to support the truth behind the published articles and reports. Dossabhai Framji Karaka Jr. (1911-74), after having served as a war correspondent, maintained that it is "distinct from an Army observer, does not belong to the Army nor is he paid by the Army." However, like soldiers, they too wear the "uniforms and have status of officers," but they are, in reality, not more than civilians. He acknowledged that Indians "are unclear" about the status of a war correspondent. Debarred from carrying lethal weapons and restricted to visit a battleground, the job of a war correspondent is "result of the privilege given by the army to the Press in wartime" which enables them "to cover the war for" their respective newspapers, radios, magazines and journals. Most of the war correspondents recruited in WW-II were too the "subject to censorship and can, therefore, be restrained from writing what may be undesirable from the point of view of security." Thus, they were "not compelled to write anything" (D.F. Karaka, *With the Fourteenth Army*, 7). Though it is one

of the riskiest, thankless and dangerous to life job, yet it is propelled by the conviction that an event must be introduced to the worldwide audience.

I

Visiting war and writing about war, either by a writer or a journalist, was never the subject of Indian writings, but it does not mean that Indians never visit a battlefield. It is, perhaps, in the late 1930s that T.C. Worsley recognizes the earliest hint of this in *Behind the Battle* (1939). Based on his 1937s first-hand experience in Barcelona, this autobiographical book mentions an Indian journalist, "Krishna". The essay "Gopal Mukund Huddar: An Indian Volunteer in the IBs" by Nancy Tsou and Len Tsou talks about six Indians who visited the Spanish Civil War, 1937. Out of those, one was a journalist called Gopal Mukund Huddar; one was a novelist, Anand; three were doctors Menhanlal Atal, Ayub Ahmed Khan and Manuel Rocha Pinto; and one was a student named Ramasamy Veerapan.¹ One more writer-cum-critic, Saros Cowasjee, also highlighted in another study *So Many Freedoms: A Study of Major Fictions of Mulk Raj Anand* that Anand too visited the Spanish Civil War in 1937. He performed the role of a journalist, rather than a war correspondent, whose experiences are noted in a famous wartime novel *Across the Black Water* (1939), and in the four articles that are part of the journal *Congress Socialist* (1937). The Indo-Sino War, which erupted by the Japanese attack on China in 1937, enabled five Indian doctors to visit China to serve its wounded soldiers.

These Indian writers and doctors, who were humanist by nature, started a practice that was then carried forward by other Indians as war correspondents, reporters, broadcasters, and journalists. However, there are hardly any official names between 1938 and 1942 in documents, or to say, Indians were nearly non-existent in the initial years of WW-II. The gap then was filled in by Karaka with his small visit to Chungking in March 1942. Till that time, the battlefield of WW-II was the business of the West, men and women altogether. But, the WW-II opened new doors of opportunities for Indian journalists in numerous ways by allowing their entry into the restricted jobs, the lands, and even places. Though temporary, yet it was this occasion that enabled Indians like Zafarulla Khan, K.P.S. Menon, Ahmad Ali, Sudhindra Nath Ghose, Jawaharlal Nehru, ZA Bokhari, Indira Devi, Aubrey Menen and G.V. Desani to work as war correspondents or journalists who reported from the conflict areas.

The WW-II fought on the lands of all five continents, but the wartime Chungking of the Far Eastern Theatre remains the centre of attraction for Indians like Karaka, Zafarulla, and Menon. The journey began with Karaka

who was "the only Indian in Chungking and will be till Zafarulla Khan comes here" (26) to steal his thunder. Both Indians recorded their experience in books, for example, the former explained the Japanese atrocities in China with pity and fear in *Chungking Diary*. Whereas the latter's journey is in the form of interviews that were conducted by two professors Wayne Wilcox and Aislie T. Embree for Columbia University and published under the heading *The Reminiscences of Sir Muhammad Zafarulla Khan* (2004). Zafarulla was even requested by the Viceroy, Victor Hope, the 2nd Marquess of Linlithgow, to visit Chungking in order to "establish direct diplomatic relations with each other" (Zafarulla 115). Later, this place was also visited by Menon in 1944, but he printed this historical-cum-topographical book *Delhi-Chungking: A Travel Diary* in 1947. The work published by the trio proved that the then Colonial Government recruited them as the official Indian representatives in China at different times and occasions.

If looked worldwide, the Indians, whether working in radios, newspapers or journals, were active in different lands and places to fulfil their duties of war correspondents, journalists, and broadcasters. Susheila Nasta approved this in her essay "Sealing a Friendship" by stating that Sudhindra Nath Ghose, Z.A. Bokhari, Indira Devi, and Aubrey Menen were part of the BBC Eastern Service, London.² Walking on the line of differentiating, instead of taking direct participation in the War, Indians in England had broadcasted war news from the BBC room. But, as a journalist, Karaka's recommending his name to Nehru for this opportunity suggests his seriousness, love to the job and even enthusiasm to visit a war-affected country. Karaka's race to forgotten popularity began some five ago of the Indian Independence when Nehru recommended his visit to China. On the other hand, some figures like Anand, who visited French Civil war but for him doors were closed never to open again after the Spanish Civil War. While for Karaka, entering in war remains barely ajar for the future generation. He is not only one of the unlucky war correspondents, but also the most neglected, unmentioned and even forgotten name. If compared with his contemporary Indian and Western war correspondents, then his heroic achievements remain unsung, unmentioned and even completely wiped out of the history of canon-making. In fact, the case of other Indian contributors was not different than Karaka. No doubt, India forgets its writers, but the West recognized their contribution in the rebuilding of history.

The West sensitized, if not romanticized, their war correspondents to a level that some of them grab the Pulitzer Awards, and the Emmy Awards and even the Nobel Prize. Martha Gellhorn with her husband Ernest Hemingway are such names that hold a position among the most famous and heroic war correspondents representing

America in WW-II. The respect conferred on Gellhorn by American Government by the commencement of Martha Gellhorn Prize for Journalism (1999) and later by inducting her—the only women—among the five war journalists in the *American Journalists* stamp series for the year 2008. Her husband, Hemingway, a literary sensation, famously captured the Nobel as well as the Pulitzer Prize. The list of award-winning correspondents would be incomplete without John Hersey (Pulitzer) and Eric Sevareid (Emmy), William Golding (Nobel) and some non-prize winner like Joseph Haller, Kingsley Amis, Norman Mailer, J.D. Salinger, Kurt Vonnegut and many others too received international attention. The historicization continued even after the war when American government in 1948 paid homage by displaying an exhibition related to those forty-five correspondents who lost life in War.³ But the Indians, who gave their time, talents, labour and even life, are not even wandering in the historical wilderness, but are invisible from historiography.

Any celebration, utopian or dystopian, was absent in case of Indians, who were in fact out of the larger frame. Neither any museum nor any display or even exhibition dedicated in their memory—the column in newspapers was a far-off thing (14th Army, 101). For the second reason, the history of war is written by the Europeans who reflected their bravery by rejecting Indians. Hence, Indian failed to get the deserved position and status. Thirdly, they will, and rightly too, remain out of the pages of history until the Indians take responsibility in their hands to write on their subject by expositing the intellectual hypocrisy of the West. Due to these reasons, not only the Indian wartime correspondents but also the journalists and even broadcasters remain unsung, uncelebrated and forgotten despite their unmatched services for the Crown. Karaka is one such example. In his lifetime, he was one of the most popular war correspondent, who reported from England, Germany, America, and the Eastern Theatre of War, particularly in China and Burma, but still invisible from the history.

Born as a Parsee, Karaka was the great-grandson⁴ of another Dosabhai Framji Karaka whose remarkable book *History of the Parsis* (1884) remains one of the most authoritative texts on the customs, manners, and life of Parsee community. Throughout the career, he was a trendsetter and simultaneously a failure. Before becoming the first Indian President of the Oxford Union in 1934, he served as a Secretary of the Union when the unexpected, controversial and ignominious debate “King and Country” took place (February 9, 1933). By visiting Chungking, he earned the honour of being the first Indian war correspondent in China, and its proof is recorded in *Chungking Diary*. Before Karaka reached Rheims to witness the “unconditional surrender” of Germany, he

had successfully inspected the wonderful handiwork of Hitler called the Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp. In *I've Shed My Tears: A Candid View of Resurgent India*, Karaka interviewed a recently liberated Jew on 16 April 1945—one day after the camp is liberated by the British 11th Armoured Division (1). He goes on saying that the Jew “was nothing more than a skin-covered skeleton, wearing the dirty and tattered striped suit of the concentration camp. The stench of Belsen was strong on him” (1-2). This pitiable and horrible description seized him the opportunity to be “the first of eleven hundred war correspondents” to enter in “any” concentration camp (*Then Came Hazrat Ali: Autobiography*, 210). In this book too he painfully portrayed the grim, filthy, unhealthy and hell-like picture of the Camp by drawing:

pike of dead bodies, extremely naked, lying one top of the other with only skin covering the bones, mouths open, an indication the state of agony in which they have died (212).

In the guise of “a British war correspondent” working for *Bombay Chronicle*, he later counted two more piles, total three in number, of dead bodies around eight feet high. Furthermore, as mentioned in *Then Came Hazrat Ali: Autobiography*, all these accounts are “the eyewitness report of an Indian war correspondent of the first concentration camp that civilized man saw” (213). If the entry in *New York with its Pants Down* is right, then Karaka again was the only Indian War Correspondent in New York when America decided to drop the nuclear bomb on Japan in 1945. Thus, if one side of his career has a long list of achievements, then the other side was blown with failures.

At the close of War, he returned to England with a desire to cover up the Pacific Theatre of War via New York which ended in a fiasco. Furthermore, while writing *Chungking Diary* in 1942, he expressed another wish to visit Moscow (136) in order to be an international war correspondent which too remains unfulfilled. This Parsee writer longed for recognition when he printed *New York with its Pants Down* in the hope of winning a Pulitzer Prize, but here too he confronted failure. Thus, the success and failures combined become synonymous for Karaka, the war correspondent. Edgar Snow might be right when he remarks that the energy, enterprise, and sense of responsibility displayed by Karaka “demand tribute and congratulations from any fellow journalist who flatters himself to think he has a mission in the world to disseminate useful knowledge about his fellow men to each other” (Edgar Snow, Foreword, i-ii). His career, whether as a novelist, journalist or a war correspondent, testifies that he was at the right place and at the right time, but he was born in a wrong country that forgets his contribution soon after he dies.

II

The various early visits of Karaka in the fronts of North East India, China, Burma, and later in France, Germany, Italy, Rome, England, and even in America reduce him to a wanderer of warfield, or simply a war correspondent.

Chungking Diary

The sponsorship of Alywn Ezra⁵ that was strengthened by the recommendations of Nehru⁶ enabled this avant-garde bohemian to secure a place in China. As a war correspondent who was appointed in the wartime capital called Chungking, he covered the atrocities of Japan in China in the first quarter of 1942. Appointment as a correspondent heralded the extraordinary career of journalist Karaka, who disclosed causes, effects and the wounds of war in *Chungking Diary*. In Chungking, he was expected to join the famous war correspondents like Colin Macdonald, Spencer Moosa, Tommy Chao, James Stewart, Harrison Forman, Douglas Wilkie, and Roderick MacDonald and Robert P. Martin for a temporary period.⁷ With this team, the “press gang” as he called it, his residence was a Chinese hostel, not a hotel, where “typewriters click all the night and as late as two and three in the morning” (19). The condition of Chungking at the time of Karaka’s visit was dangerous to live which makes it one of the worst places for correspondents during the war. That is why Edgar Snow praised Karaka for “devoting a whole book to the travels in China” (I).

China’s historical battle against Japan in the background of WW-II, the Indo-Sino War, the Nanking Atrocities, the Chungking Bombing, the cooperation of Chinese amid air raids, nationalism, democracy, and livelihood are key points to which Karaka puts his pen. This diary, rather than a war book, described the nationalism and resistance of the Chinese, men, and women altogether, against the Japs under the leadership of Chiang Kai Shek (hereafter Chaing). Chungking has testified 117 air raids of Japanese between 1937 to 1942 with a “blast of 22,000 bombs which killed some 20,000 people and maimed and wounded a little less than 10,000” as Karaka reported from an official entry.⁸ He added that the continuous bombing left six million homeless refugees, including ten thousand war orphans.⁹ It invites the shattered lives, demolition of cities, rampaged through towns, destruction of houses, vandalizing property, and unnumbered loss of life. Karaka noted the unmentioned characteristics of War by writing about the rises of price, shortage of articles of daily needs, moral corruption that disturb the normal life of China and its people.

Despite so much destruction, the Japanese plan to conquest China failed due to the compromise between

the Communists and the Kuomintang. It was possible after the destruction of the War Lords in 1928 by Chiang that strengthen his position. Thus, under his leadership “China has presented a tougher proposition than the Japs ever expected” (163). He doubled his reputation after a successful campaign against Japan. Thus, Chiang could roughly be named a hero warrior of this dairy. The weight of the spirit of China’s fighting power, as Karaka added, is underestimated by the European in their calculations about China’s surrender within “five or six months after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war” (163). But, China proved them wrong and stood firmly with the slogan “We unite to defend.” Karaka’s mentioning of pain, suffering, and vandalism of Chinese by the Japs has the characteristics of a tragedy in which Chiang is the hero. Thus, the legacy of Chiang along with the struggle of his wife, which is attached to the difference between Kuomintang and Communist are brought together by Karaka to boost up the morale of Chinese. Whether it was love for China or something else, Karaka failed to write any book on “cultural revolution” that followed soon after the War. To say in different words, he was more a Kuomintang rather than a foreign war correspondent.

Karaka’s exemplary and praiseworthy war correspondent role received attention as well as admiration in China. T.F. Tsiang, a Chinese wartime official then, promised that he “would not be forgotten” even after his return to Indian soil (188). The words of Tsiang bring fruit and Karaka left his footprints on the sands of time by publishing *Chungking Diary*, just three months later when his visit comes to an end. With minimum five reprints in less than two years till March 1944, it remains one of his most successful, if not a bestseller, books. If the entry on the page of the fifth edition is right then, all the copies of its fourth edition were sold soon after its publication. Thus, Karaka had earned popularity as a war correspondent when he, either by chance, luck or talent, was assigned another opportunity to visit wartime Burma in 1944.

With the 14th Army

If Karaka’s journalistic assignment of China was “the first instance in which encouragement has been given to an Indian journalist,” then *The Bombay Chronicle* had the honour to give him second opportunity to visit Burma. His stay with this largest army of the WW-II, and of the world till that time, is inscribed in just 116 pages of *With the 14th Army*. Stationed in Burma, this Army was a multinational force that fought against the Fifteenth Japanese Army that comprised some 85,000 soldiers under the leadership of Renya Mutaguchi. Consisting chiefly the Indians, a polyglot force¹⁰ of around half a million men marshaled together by one man, William

Slim, who was given an additional support by the planes of Joseph W. Stilwell.¹¹ Excluding Karaka, Mankaker of *Reuters*; Gardiner of an Australian paper; and Sharp of the BBC, are some notable names that risked their lives to report news from the remotest war. All these reporters, like the battle itself, are uncelebrated in history till date. Karaka is one of such unfortunate names who was not only there on ground but also published a book on his unforgettable visit, *With the 14th Army*, which is more a diary rather than a war book.

The diary opens on Sunday of March, on or 4 March 1944 that is the birthday of Karaka, and ends somewhere in April 1944. Thus, it was just a two-month journey, and even the 14th Army took two more months to taste the victory by destroying the Japanese Army. Beginning with the picture of dying Indians in the Bengal Famine, this small book re-narrates the hard life not only of the Indian soldiers in Burma, but also of the war correspondents, members of the armed forces, native people, and even the censors. The tragic atmosphere, or to say dramatic war effect, spared not even the Raja of Manipur, Bodchandra, and his subjects. Karaka complained that the international journalists gave less importance to the heroic struggles of natives and hence, there were no records about them. Telling the history of the excluded, if not invisible, is difficult in the absence of written records. Karaka filled these fissures by the mentioning of Burmese, Naga, Chin, Shan tribes, Malabar mechanics, railwaymen, cooks, refugees, and cipher clerk (Army, 10). Thus, whether it is Burmese, Chinese, American, British, Indian, war correspondent, or a common man of any race, everyone is acknowledged by Karaka for their contributions, pain, and suffering, but it is a fact established that he reserves some special respect for the 14th Army.

This wartime work, in this sense, is a striking mixture of two valuable inputs: first as an eyewitness account of him for those who cannot write, and second as a historical record packed with soldiers' anecdotes, official documents, and information collected from different war correspondents. All the sources are recollected together in one single book to share a forgotten, even to say unwritten, global past of Indians in the WW-II. In the Eastern Theatre, Japan was powerful and so strong that even doing something looks too much:

With all the writing up of morale and the writing down of defeat, it was difficult to dismiss the predominant fact that the Far Eastern situation had deteriorated and that the best we could do was the retreat according to plan. But even retreating according to plan looked a little overdone when in the short space of four or five months the Japanese had climbed the Burma map from Rangoon to Myitkyina leaving the Allies not a single airstrip in Burma on which they could land (9).

When Karaka landed in Burma, Japan had already scaled the map of Burma. The primary activity was then in Arakan, "where only a few weeks ago had been fought the battle of Ngayedauk Pass... It was there that the Jap had succeeded in encircling the 7th Indian Division in what was known as the Adam's Box, cutting it off from our other forces for some twenty-two days, till another Indian Division went to its relief and cleared the pass. To date this had been the epic of Arakan and the most dramatic action of the Burma war" (5-6). It was the Adam's Box, also known as Box Fights, which change the face of war for Japan as well as the Allied. In such a fight, a small regiment is cut off from the main army, and the battle is fought with this separated and outnumbered army that is left with no communication with the main army. Such types of conflicts in Army language are called the Box Operation.

The 14th Army rejected the traditional trenches warfare by preferring the box fights, sometimes referred as the Blobs of Blotches. In the peculiar terrain of Burma, Arakan, Kohima, and Imphal, it was nearly impossible to fight in the old familiar way. So, the fighting is in boxes. They defend in boxes, staying in it without budging, no matter how many circles the enemy may have made around them. The box becomes a sort of stone wall by nature of its formation. In such a box as this, slightly east of Buthidaung, 7 Div. had drawn itself in and stayed in against the sporadic attacks of the enemy (6-7).

Two years of experience of the 14th Army against the enabled them so much perfection that "the Jap not only failed to keep 7 Div. surrounded, but he had to withdraw to points South of Adam's Box and later to forego and abandon Buthidaung itself, which the Japs had long held" (6-7). Thought the bloodiest battle between these two armies which cost around 70,000 lives including casualties from both sides (Japan nearly 53000 whereas the British around 16,500) it failed to find a place on the pages of newspapers, journals and even historical books (Army 45; 54; 101). For this reason, this army "has been largely forgotten in India as an emblem of the country's colonial past."¹² Whatever was or is the status of the Eastern Theatre, but Gardiner Harris and Jasper Copping has a different view about Indians. In two separate articles for *New York Times* and *The Telegraph*, they stressed on the unmentioned truth how the battle of Burma "gave Indian soldiers a belief in their own martial ability and showed that they could fight as well or better than anyone else."¹³ Harris even headed, "A Largely Indian Victory in World War II, Mostly Forgotten in India." It is surprising that what was mentioned in the small essays of Harris and Copping was already written by Karaka even before they were born. He cited a long list of some of the accomplishments by Indians which were historical

and praiseworthy. For example, Mehar Singh as the first Indian DSO (42-44); Indian's first Tank Regiment (94-95; 112); the Air Force Regiment (43; 96; 98; 100-101) and many other Indians on various relevant posts in Burma (46; 61; 61; 73).

One of the most significant characteristics of this small historical output is the balance of Karaka's positive, humanistic and civilized approach of looking at things and persons, if not the countries. By presenting the accurate picture of the war, the author, unlike in his previous book *Chungking Diary*, avoided identifying heroes, villains, and victims. Karaka, who was nearly a Kuomintang writer in China, was substituted by a nationalist of the core when he remembers the achievements of Indians in the Far Eastern Theatre. Overall, Burma remains important, if not historical, for two reasons: first, the East and the West had fought hand in hand against the Japanese despite their barriers. Second, the harsh conditions of life forced even the war correspondents to befriend each other, for instance, the friendship of Sharp and Karaka, or to say of the BBC and *The Bombay Chronicle*.

Censorship

Though based on the first-hand experience yet the absence of violence drive Karaka's war works far away from what is defined as the "horror of war" or the "pity of war." But, many real-life incidents are recorded with pain and accuracy by him. The minute details and descriptions are enough to make these books valuable, if not necessary, for the new critics. It was censorship that shackled the feet of Karaka to write with an open mind. The active censorship was so strict that it restricted correspondents to write even the headline "Japs Cross Indo-Burma Border."¹⁴ He expressed his anger thus, "whatever be the fault, the fact remained that a war correspondent in Calcutta was able to do more than what we could be on the spot" (Army 63-64). This point makes the book even more attractive and a new source, or to say, an archival source.

As an official Indian war correspondent, Karaka too was "subject to censorship" and, therefore, restrained from writing from the concern of "security" (14th Army 7). Sometimes, especially in *Chungking Diary*, he referred to controversial statement not directly, but as a quote which is narrated to him by someone. For example, James Stewart was his mouthpiece while he records the behaviour of Chinese during the Japanese air raids, (Chungking, 22-23). Dr. Wang Shih-Chieh was his instrument to report the first Allied bombing of Tokyo and Yokohama (28), and the statement of the Domai Agency was employed to define the Japanese atrocities on Chinese, in particular on the Nanking city (31-33). Therefore, Karaka remained heavily dependent on the narratives of returned

soldiers rather than visiting it by own. These unwanted restrictions also forced the war correspondents not only to spend their time together, but also to report from the *bhasas* that is a tent for media personnel in Burma. Thus, censorship tailed with lack of eyewitness account of direct war reduces the book *With the 14th Army* only a romanticized version of an Indian praising his soldiers on respected posts (Air Force, Tank, Navy, Foot soldiers and others). Similar was the case of *Chungking Diary*, in which the real battles, victories, defeats, and violence take place in the background as nothing is seen by the writer with his naked eyes.

In both different works, one of the most significant characteristics of Karaka is his balance of positive, humanistic and civilized approach of looking at things and persons, if not the countries. Though he was a war correspondent from the British side in Germany, yet his description of this land of Hitler has similarities with that of China and Burma. He defined how the towns like Frankfurt-am-Main with a population of over half a million in the upper Rhineland, was destroyed by the bombing (Autobiography, 206). While pointing out the situation of Belgian border, he defines how "this area was a gaping wide desolation, with its towns systematically destroyed, wiped out street by street, alley by alley sometimes even house by house. Not a factory, not a bridge, not a railyard was left uncutted" (*Autobiography*, 206). The acute description of towns, districts or even states, underlines the loyalty of Karaka towards his job. Though he hated Hitler yet, he did not forget to mention the suffering and pain of Germans. He was, indeed, a true war correspondent, who did not fall on ideology while reporting from the lands of Germany, China, Burma, America or even India. In the actual sense of the meaning, he undeniably was one of the most realistic war correspondents. However, the length of his realism can be interrogated when compared with media propaganda.

III

Establishing Karaka

Karaka was aware, and very well conscious too, of the dangers of media propaganda and the war was certainly a time when media became a weapon not only to register their resistance, but also to promote propaganda against one's enemy. It was not only in the words of newspapers, magazines, journalism, but also in the air via radio broadcasts. Most of the Indians, who were registered in the British universities, especially in Cambridge and Oxford, were their first target and under the enchantment of big career they easily attracted towards the popular media houses like *New York Times*, *BBC*, *Reuters*, *Life*, *Left*

Review and others. After looking at the careers of Anand, Bokhari, Ali, Sudhin Ghose, Indira Devi, GV Desani and others one could easily conclude that these were those misguided Indians who caught up in the web of media's propaganda that was propelled by these famous heroes. However, there was a name, Karaka, who gave a perpendicular resistance to these houses by joining a nationalistic newspaper *Bombay Chronicle*, an anti-British newspaper in nature.

After scrutinizing his *Chungking Diary* and *With the Fourteenth Army*, one could conclude that Karaka was not directly a part of any media propaganda, but it does not mean that he did not propagate anything. The statement could be interrogated by stating that from the beginning of war, he was in support of the Allied. He goes beyond that directly introduced Allied Armies as "we" (C 69) and frequently uses the epithet "enemy" (C 51, 109, 121) for Japan. The success of Allied becomes "our victory" (C 204) however, the victories of Japan remained unmentioned. A new but negative, reverse and opposite kind of "realism"¹⁵ is preferred by Karaka to inject the dose of "moral"¹⁶ effect among the Chinese and the Burmese so that they could stand together against Japan. Quite opposite to the exact meaning, this version of realism is solely based on the statements of authorities, leaders, military observers and approved by the censors, thus, it can be called reverse realism. In Karaka's such realism, interviews, real accounts and sufferings of the common people, refugees, soldiers and even of war correspondents have no place. To level more charges against him, Karaka remained unsuccessful to record the experiences of soldiers and common men and even of those who survived the air raids, if not the battles. Instead, he kept himself busy in interviewing high military personae, leaders and some famous security persons by ignoring the common masses. Thus, in Karaka's realism the very word "real," or to say "common," was a subject that was missing.

In simple words, this type of realism is highly examined, censored, and the exact situation or event is changed, filtered, misinterpreted, or even ignored as per the requirements of state. Instead of defining what the narrators have seen, it is just an authorized version of history that is written under the pressure of military and of the censors. It has less portion of realism in it and more elements of hidden propaganda, an action in which Karaka too involved even without knowing it. By using the insulting word "Jap", Karaka perhaps reflected his anger, if not hate, against the Fascist forces, or to say the Axis. He recorded the heavy loss of property, even without mentioning the number of casualties, to keep the morale of the Chinese and the Burmese high. Karaka preferred the propaganda of democracy by rejecting dictatorship or totalitarianism and even the socialist structure of rule and

governance. Such actions locate him in the paradigm of hidden propagandist working for the Allied by showing his rage against the Axis. Thus, Karaka, as a newcomer in the field, could be charged with faults, some are of even big in nature, which he tried to overcome by blaming censor. Despite it, at many places Karaka offered realistic, accurate and honest picturization of war, yet it does not mean that he is without mistake. He distorted the truth by playing down the news, and sometimes misinterpreted when he was in China, Burma, England, France, Germany and later in the US. But, to defend him, every correspondent was doing the same in order to earn cheap name, quick fame and undeserved popularity as well as a large chunk of audience. The only reason behind it was the readership as their published books are purchased more in the Allied countries and less in the Axis.

Karaka's success is definitely blocked by his speedy publication, as charged by K. Srinivasa Iyengar in *Indian Writings in English* (189-193). He blamed him for writing in "hurry" and with "careless speed" which clearly obstructed his way to "rise to the height of stern creative endeavour." And continuing the charge he, at once, compared it with "which he dashes off a half-column article for the *Bombay Chronicle*" (191). He suspects that it is perhaps this fault that "Karaka's admirers are still in doubt whether he lives only to write or writes only to be able to live—or, perhaps, to Mr. Karaka, there is no essential difference between the two proposition" (190). The same instability, according to Iyengar, remains the biggest problem in securing his status as a writer.

Karaka, who published in record time during WW-II, rightly was in "hurry" at least in case of publication but he, in the literal sense of the word, was not "careless," as projected by Iyengar (191). All of his books are written with care and authenticity and under the surveillance of censors to spread hidden Allied military propaganda. To add it more, the reason for writing in hurry was Thacker and Co, a publisher that not only published his books, but also paid in advance to him. Even if all the charges of Iyengar are accepted in toto then too his carelessness will not lead one towards obscurity and absurdity. Apparently, his war time publication has an archival importance, and easily readable. Their publication years makes them even more interesting. If one examines his oeuvre, whether historical, biographical and war-time or even journalism, then he can be called a scribble. It is perhaps this scribbleness that Karaka's wonderful career entrapped in scum progress due to the alteration of career in which he performed the character of a novelist, journalist, biographer, historian and a war correspondent. Iyengar famously writes that his "very versatility as a quick-change artist has apparently stood in the way of his doing anything indubitably creative" (Iyengar 191).

This transition from one role to another mar not only his success as a writer, but also is responsible to bring defame by establishing his reputation as a writer of anti-authority. Despite all faults, Iyenger recognized the talent of Karaka by calling calling him an indefatigable writer, who writes "right on" and "wields the English language with a nervous and easy freedom that is truly astonishing" (Iyengar 190-91).

After reading Karaka's career as a war correspondent via some of his famous books, it is not easy to establish him as a talented writer, yet not impossible. Undoubtedly, his career has a glimpse of that forgotten past which could easily attract a new critic to write on, and his unnumbered achievements would make the task easy. It will remain hard for the future critics to sideline his heroic execution of duty during the war. Karaka, as approved by the setting his works, had seen the bloody panorama of Eastern Theatre, Pacific Theatre, England, Germany, USA, and many other countries during the WW-II. It is remarkable, if not a wonder, that he survived even after visiting the most dangerous continents, what if historically neglected even today. In fact, Karaka visits were bound to the most uncelebrated war and armies. For example, Burma and China failed to get the attraction of the West then, while the 14th Army is still a "forgotten army"—similar is the story of Red Army of China.

Another problem is that the West remained more occupied in celebrating the victory of Europe and paid less attention in securing and protecting the Eastern Theatre till 1944, and even after that. Hence, this theatre, its armies and even the sacrifices of soldiers, Indian or Chinese, remained invisible from the columns of influential newspapers. This case is also applicable to the war correspondents. In the absence of it, Karaka, a bold socialist who is entirely different from the conventional, is vaguely remembered today not as a celebrated writer but as a relic who existed sometime in the twentieth century. Thus, the career of Karaka is enough to invoke a mixed feeling of pride and shame inside the heart of an intellectual.

One can feel proud that Karaka was an Indian war correspondent of a high order. But, it is a shame when the world celebrates their past writers, the Indian forget them even without acknowledging their contributions regardless of their achievements in various fields. One's mind filled with filth after knowing the fact that even the famous foreign publication houses documented Karaka's talent by publishing his books as soon as possible. Some like JM Dent, Victor Gollancz, Derek Verschoyle, Thacker & Co, Fredrick Muller, Michael Joseph, Sound Magazine, Kutub Publishers, D. Appleton-Century Co. came forward to publish his books. It is a pity that even those publication houses failed to ripe the fruit of success for the

author. It is an irony that we failed even to write a single paper, chapter, critical note and even an academic book to his contributions as a war correspondent. However, we can feel relief that the revival of old Indian literature in English has seen a resurgence with the beginning of the twenty-first century. There are certain chances that Karaka will find his place in this revival and critics of different genres will come out together to write on his works. In relation of Karaka, one could easily conclude that an on-duty foreign correspondent is an iconic loner, if not an icon itself, but Karaka is same even on off duty. Until the alarm of revival awakes the critics, he will remain peaceful in his historical grave.

Notes

1. The essay is published by the journal *The Volunteer*. <http://www.albavolunteer.org/2016/08/gopal-mukund-huddar-an-indian-volunteer-in-the-ibs/>
2. Susheila Nasta, "Sealing a Friendship" (2011)
3. However, it posted the picture of only forty four correspondents which makes one picture missing. <http://www.54warcorrespondents-kia-30-ww2.com/>
4. The family tree of Karaka is well defined by him in *Then Came Hazrat Ali: Autobiography* (11-16) as well as in *I've Shed My Tears: A Candid view of Resurgent India* (7-8).
5. Page 113
6. "one little telegram of Nehru's has certainly been my passport into China" (93)
7. *London Times*; Associated Press of America; *Reuters*; *Times* and *Life* magazines of Columbia Broadcasting System; *New York Times*, and *NBC*; *Melbourne Herald*; *Sydney Sun*; United Press of America (69-70).
8. Page (21; 99)
9. (61, 99)
10. *With the 14th Army* (page 10)
11. India contributed nearly 2.5 million soldiers in the WW-II (Frank Owen, "General Bill Slim", Burma Star Association, Paragraph 8)
12. as noted by Gardiner Harris in an article for *New York Times*,
13. <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/22/world/asia/a-largely-indian-victory-in-world-war-ii-mostly-forgotten-in-india.html> and <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/history/10008053/Second-World-War-clashes-named-as-Greatest-British-Battle.html>
14. (Army 63, 108)
15. (C-20-27; 54; 56; 58; 59; 61; 67; 71-75)
16. (C-17; 22; 24; 28; 30; 35; 56; 93; 96)

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