

# REPORT



EMBASSY OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM IN INDIA

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION ON

## THE LEGACY OF HO CHI MINH – A GREAT FRIEND OF INDIA

*Celebrating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the State visit to India by President Ho Chi Minh*

New Delhi, December 17, 2018 Time: 2:00 - 4:00 pm



School of International Studies  
Jawaharlal Nehru University  
New Delhi, India



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*Organised by:*

*Centre for Vietnam Studies*

*In association with*

*Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam*

*School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi*

## Concept Note

In the world of multiple peculiarities, there have been some extra-ordinary people of exquisite smartness and leadership qualities coming from revolutionary zeal and purpose. One such leader was President Ho Chi Minh, who was the most beloved by the Vietnamese people. He had an emblematic brilliance of a comet as an activist in national liberation and international communist movement. Ho Chi Minh encouraged his people to first combat with the Japanese, then the French colonial power, and last but not the least the US-backed South Vietnam.

Apparently, such a great achievement could not have been realised without the inspirational leadership and personality of Ho Chi Minh and his people-oriented policies and strategies. Under the most able guidance of Ho Chi Minh, the people of Vietnam not only liberated their country from the control of colonial powers but at the same time wiped out the age-old feudal structure and liberated its people from the feudal system prevalent in the society and its impression in a shortest period, unmatched in the history.

Even today countries across the world take inspiration from his anti-imperial and anti-hegemonic thought when it comes to freedom of navigation and regional conflict, particularly in case of South China Sea. One needs to closely monitor Ho Chi Minh's ideas in order to understand his role in strengthening the ties between nations. Ho Chi Minh's visions were fundamental and comprehensive which conditioned the Vietnamese revolution for liberation. It sought ways to save the country and liberate its people, establish a social model associated with modern institutions, finding ways to develop his country, handling international relations and affairs with nations and developing the dignity of Vietnamese nationals so that they could cope with regional and global integration.

He greatly admired the determination of his predecessors to gain national independence, but he did not agree with their concepts of national salvation. By understanding exactly the characteristics and trends of his times, Ho Chi Minh found a path for development of the nation, working through national independence and socialism. After understanding the characteristics of the new era, Ho Chi Minh worked actively to integrate the Vietnamese revolution with that of the world. He not only worked towards national independence and social progress, but also worked for the rapid development of the world's productive forces. It was the appealing leadership of Ho Chi Minh that had its enchanted inspiration over the people of Vietnam, who were ready for any sacrifice in order to share the fruits of liberation. The fact remains that after freedom from foreign regimes, the desires of the Vietnamese people never contradicted, something that is highly commendable.

In his mind, international cooperation was meant to eradicate poverty and backwardness and catch up with the world, and with this in mind, he would link his country's developmental strategies to the evolution of the times. In the midst of 20th century, Ho Chi Minh was notable for his success in mixing communism with nationalism. All these factors matches to ideals of our Indian freedom fighters, be it socialist model of development, regional integration, autonomous foreign policy or independent path of development.

It was not just Uncle Ho as a charismatic leader, but also his ideals and ideologies were responsible for the robust ties between India and Vietnam. His ideals were in concurrence with the ideas of Indian civilization as well as those imbibed during the Indian freedom movement. The concept of anti-imperialism acted as one of the most significant binding factors between two countries.

President Ho has been a significant link in strengthening India-Vietnam ties. His exceptionally friendly and cordial relations with Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru laid the very foundation of India-Vietnam relations. India and Vietnam reflects the common style of struggle for independence in many ways. Both the leaders in a joint statement had reaffirmed their faith in Panchsheel, the five principles of peaceful co-existence and said that the applications of these principles in international relations would help to relax international tensions and provide the basis for peace and understanding among nations.

He had been the focal point among the intellectuals and political activists since the 1950s and 70s. This was the period when too much was written in the various Indian languages about Ho Chi Minh, particularly in West Bengal where numerous poems and essays eulogizing him were composed. His major works and his Prison Diary was translated into most of the major languages of India and was highly appreciated by the readers.

Therefore, Ho Chi Minh's role in bolstering the relations between two countries remains decisive as they share commonality of ideology and vision for the world as well as international institutions, and this commonality further brought India and Vietnam together and continues to inspire the two nations till date. There would barely be any individual, who would be uninformed of the great legendary leader of Vietnam – Ho Chi Minh or who would be unacquainted of the determined spirit and nationalism exhibited by the people of Vietnam in liberating their nation from the colonial masters like France, Japan and the US, who not only faced defeat at the hands of the Vietnamese but were also driven out of Vietnam.

Given the great bonds Ho Chi Minh shared with India, Centre for Vietnam Studies in collaboration with Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and School of International Studies, JNU organized a Round-table Discussion to commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the State visit of the legendary leader and a 'Great friend of India' on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2018.

***(Compiled by: Ms. Niharika Saikia, Researcher at Centre for Vietnam Studies, New Delhi)***

## Programme Schedule

**Registration** **02:00 pm**

**Inauguration** **02:30 pm**

**Welcome Remarks:** **02:30 pm**

Prof. Ajay Patnaik, *Dean, School of International Studies, JNU*

**Special Address:** **02:40 pm**

H.E. Mr. Pham Sanh Chau, *Ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam*

**MEA's Remark:** **02:50 pm**

Col. Sanjeev Sethi, *Director, Southern Division, Ministry of External Affairs, GOI*

**Special Invitee Remarks:** **03:00 pm**

H.E. Mr. Pham Vu Hong, *Chairman of the People's Committee of Kien Giang province, Viet Nam*

**Roundtable Discussion:** **03:10– 4:30 pm**

**Panelists:**

Prof. Baladas Ghoshal, *Secretary General, Society for Indian Ocean Studies, New Delhi*

Dr. Ash Narain Roy, *Director, Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi*

**Open House Discussion**

**Remarks by:**

Nguyen Thanh Le, *Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of Viet Nam*

Dr. Sonu Trivedi, *Director (Hony), Centre for Vietnam Studies, New Delhi*

**Closing Remark and vote of thanks:**

Ms Sonia Dey, *Research Fellow, Centre for Vietnam Studies, New Delhi*

**High Tea** **4:30 pm**

## **REPORT**

Centre for Vietnam Studies, New Delhi in association with Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University organised a Roundtable Discussion on the Legacy of Ho Chi Minh on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2018.

The roundtable discussion was observed to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of President Ho Chi Minh's State visit to India in 1958, where he met his all-weather friend Prime Minister Jawarharlal Nehru. Speakers and panelists at the discussion highlighted the historical and contemporary trends of India-Vietnam relations, with special mention given to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, with a strong bilateral relationship based on mutual trust, understanding, convergence of views and ideas as well as strong cooperation in regional and multilateral levels.

The welcome remarks for this occasion were given by **Shri Ajay Patnaik**, Dean, School of International Studies, JNU. He welcomed the Roundtable Discussion which aims to focus on the historic visit of President Ho Chi Minh to India and how the legacy of Ho Chi Minh as a nationalist leader inspired the struggle for freedom in India.

The Special Address for the discussion was **H.E Mr. Pham Sanh Chau**, Ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. He highlighted the fact that it was Prime Minister Narendra Modi's initiative that elevated the 60 years old India-Vietnam relations to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, which is an added milestone to the already existing relationship. He also mentioned that India and Vietnam are natural friends because both the nations have a lot in common, not only in culture but also in values.

The Special invitee remarks were given by **H.E. Mr. Pham Vu Hong**, Chairman, People's Committee of Kien Giang province, Vietnam. He stressed on the fact that how the relationship between India and Vietnam, as laid down by Ho Chi Minh and Nehru, strengthened the close attachment amongst people of both the nations.

Another special Invitee for the occasion was **Colonel Sanjiv Sethi**, Director, Southern Division, Ministry of External Affairs. He explained that the emergence of the Asian Century also facilitated the closer relationship between India and Vietnam. India's bilateral partnership with Vietnam not only left an impact on the country's leaders but also in very household of India. In this context, the initiative taken by Nehru and Ho Chi Minh should always be given a priority.

The two panelists for the roundtable discussion were **Professor Baladas Ghoshal** and **Dr. Ash Narain Roy**. Professor Ghoshal reiterated how the blend of three factors, that is history, ideology and pragmatism, shaped the Vietnamese nationalism, which helped in instilling the feeling of patriotism amongst the people of Vietnam. He also explained how pragmatic was Ho Chi Minh as a leader, and how he geared up and designed his strategies to free his country from foreign regime. Dr. Roy specially mentioned that people across the world have got largely inspired by Ho Chi Minh and his revolutionary styles as well as his simple way of living. His simplicity is sometimes compared to that of Mahatma Gandhi's way of living. Dr. Roy also

glorified the freedom struggle of Vietnam because Vietnam being a relatively smaller nation could achieve what sometimes bigger nations cannot.

Also present in the discussion were Heads of Missions from different Embassies in New Delhi and they shared with thoughts on Ho Chi Minh. Scholars, students and media person were amongst the other who attended the discussion.



***Speech by Prof. Ajay Patnaik, Dean, School of International Studies, JNU***

Vietnamese people need to be free, come what may, whatever might be the strength of the opposition (the colonisers), but it will be the people's struggle which will make the free. We also in our student days used to march on the streets, demanding that the American forces to leave Vietnam. We were chanting slogans which the current generation of students may not be doing so much, we were chanting the slogans "Ho Ho Ho Chi Minh, We Shall Fight and We Will Win". This still continues to be one of the inspiring slogans of any protest movement because fighting and winning is associated with Ho Chi Minh in our part of the world.



Who can forget the long struggle, who can forget the great victory at Dien Bien Phu in 1964 against the mighty strength of the US. Then the continuous struggle against the mightiest power in the world, so many people perished, and we learnt about so many bombs in this war that we never heard of. We saw the pictures of small girls running and being burnt by those bombs. It touched the hearts of millions of Indians, and we are proud and I still have a portrait of Comrade Ho Chi Minh in my office standing with Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister who also stood and championed the cause of colonised people, who supported all the people's movements even he didn't agreed with the ideology. He supported the Communist movements in China and Vietnam because he ultimately believed in a free, peaceful, and democratic world where people will not be exploited by any colonisers and will not be subjected to any racial abuse and any form of discrimination. So when these two great leaders met in Delhi, to commemorate the occasion, we were celebrating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary today.

We also heard several interesting stories, that when Comrade Ho Chi Minh was staying in Teen Murti House, which was Nehru's house, and he had to address the Parliament. So they were waiting outside and Comrade Ho Chi Minh asked why we are waiting, to which he got reply Sir we are waiting for the car. He asked where is your Parliament, so he was showed a building which was very near. He asked to go that building we need a car? So he and Nehru walked till the Parliament together on the streets. This shows the kind of simplicity Ho Chi Minh had, just look at his dress code, how such a great leader whom millions adore could was so simple in his lifestyle and so humble. That's why come what may, times may change, people may change, generations may change, but these kind of people will never be forgotten in the history and will always have a place in our memories as the greatest leaders of the world who broke the national boundaries and national identity and inspired millions of people.

When I was a student here in JNU, I remember lots of Vietnamese students and students from Cambodia came to study here, where there were special English language programmes for them. I became friends with the Ambassadors of Cambodia and Vietnam who also attended my marriage reception. And those photographs are still there. So Vietnam is a country which we loved, and this is a country whose people have shown tremendous amount of dynamism.

Imagine a country of people suffering so much, yet in some sense like in India we hated colonialism, but we didn't hate the British people. Today we can see this signs of gaps among the Vietnamese, as they still remember the sufferings, the humiliation, the killings, but here is an example where we have harmonised and harnessed the market, the needs of the people, and the country, so that inequality doesn't grow. And we salute the people of Vietnam, many of those who struggled and the younger generation also who carries those memories, yet is not a prisoner of those memories, who is willing to move forward and develop and become a part of the globalised world.

So with these few words, I welcome you Ambassador Sir to this meeting and I also welcome all the Vietnamese delegates and colleagues who are here to inspire us. Since I have heard of this programme, it has flooded back my memories of demonstrations which I used to do during my student days, and there were meetings organised all over the country by many organisations on Vietnamese cause. And today, Vietnam is a very prosperous country in Asia, and we wish them all the prosperity they deserve, and cherish the kind of friendship India and Vietnam share.

***Speech by H.E. Mr. Pham Sanh Chau, Ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam***

Gratitude for taking the initiative for glorifying the role of Ho Chi Minh as a leader in today's event. I want to thank our Chief Justice, equivalent to the Indian version, Chairman of Peoples Committee of Kien Giang Province of North Vietnam, who has come all the way to be present at this event with us. We feel pleased and honoured by the very presence of three ASEAN colleagues, H. E. Dato Paduka Haji Sidek Ali, who is the High Commisioner of Brunei to India and the same time Chairperson of ASEAN Ambassadors here in Delhi. H. E. Sidharto Reza Suryodipuro, Ambassador of Indonesia to India, we are pleased to having you with us, the reason why he is here because 60 years ago our President Ho Chi Minh visited Indonesia, Myanmar and India at the same time together with Soviet Union. I also welcome the representative of The Lao People's Democratic Republic, a close neighbour of Vietnam, who is also with us today. Great thanks go to all other Indian and Vietnamese friends present here at this roundtable discussion.



Ladies and Gentleman 60 years ago President Ho Chi Minh visited a set of countries as I mentioned earlier. India was one of them and it led to the firm affection towards the relationship between India and Vietnam. From the Indian part, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was the first high-level dignitary of a foreign country who visited Vietnam. When President Minh visited India, our country Vietnam was divided between the north and south and both the halves were in heroic shackles. At that time India was developing fast as an independent nation and was active in NAM with a number of other countries like Indonesia. Therefore the selection of the Soviet Union, Indonesia, India, and Myanmar for the visit trip of our President Ho Chi Minh symbolises the importance of Vietnamese to their neighbouring countries. It also reflects

the style of foreign affairs that we are following now that is being friends with all the countries across the region. For your information, President Ho Chi Minh is not only the founder of Vietnam Communist Party but also the first President of Vietnam. He was also the first foreign minister of Vietnam.

Before visiting India, in an answer to an interview at an airport he stressed that the purpose of his visit to India was to strengthen the bilateral relations between Vietnam and India as both the countries occupy important positions at international affairs. His statement came at a period when India celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Republic Day. So it is important to realise how certain nations and their positions in world affairs stands significant. Now what messages can we draw back from that visit? The First message is that both the countries have a lot of things in common. We not only have cultural similarities, originating from 5000 years ago when Buddhism started to spread in Vietnam but most important thing that is we share are the values of our nations who fought for national independence, national sovereignty, and national integrity. We want to show the world that we are peace loving countries. Even if we strike on national ratification and national integrity, we also know to uphold the flag of peace. It has also been noted at the Geneva Conventions that India and Vietnam attach themselves at larger aspects and at all times.

Secondly, India and Vietnam have the desire to prosper and develop good relationship with all the countries in the world. With that message, this year alone witnessed a set of bilateral visits by Vietnam's Prime Minister and President to India and the recent visit of Indian President to Vietnam. India and Vietnam are continuously striving to take the bilateral relations further, carrying forward the intentions laid down by President Ho Chi Minh and Prime Minister Nehru and all the successive generations of leaders of both the nations.

In conclusion, Ladies and Gentlemen I want to share with you that I just visited Mumbai where I had the opportunity to see the house where Mahatma Gandhi stayed for 17 years, from where he directed the freedom struggle of India. I am moved by the simplicity of Gandhi and Ho chi Minh. President Minh and Gandhi lived very simple lives, simple clothes and simplicity in way they spoke to people.

So ladies and gentlemen thank you very much for your presence. I appreciate how simply and successfully we are carrying out this roundtable discussion today. It is always important to stress how close the two nations are. Thank You very much to JNU and Centre for Vietnam Studies for organising this discussion, Thank you very!

**Speech by H.E. Mr. Pham Vu Hong, *Chairman, People's Committee of Kien Giang, Viet Nam***

*Excellencies*, - Prof. Ajay Patnaik, Dean of the School of International Studies - Jawaharlal Nehru University; - Mr. Pham Sanh Chau, Ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in New Delhi.  
*Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

First of all, on behalf of the People's Committee and the people of Kien Giang Province, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, I would like to express our warmest regards and best sentiments to all of you. I



would like to express my sincere thanks to the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in New Delhi and particularly His Excellency Ambassador Pham Sanh Chau, for significant supports to delegates of Kien Giang Province, visit and work and attend the Roundtable Discussion on “The Legacy of Ho Chi Minh – A Great Friend of India”.

I was very touched when I know that this is the University named Jawaharlal Nehru – name of the India’s Prime Minister, who with Vietnam’s President Ho Chi Minh laid the foundation for the relationship between Vietnam and India.

As Vietnamese people, we could not forget the precious feelings of the Government and people of India for us in previous national independence wars. 60 years ago, that mark was shown when the invitation was received from the people and Government of the Republic of India. On February 4<sup>th</sup> 1958, President Ho Chi Minh led the official Delegation of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (now the Socialist Republic of Vietnam) to the Government and the people of India. President Ho Chi Minh was the hero of national liberation, an outstanding cultural writer of Vietnam, the father of modern Vietnamese diplomacy. His diplomatic career has left for Vietnam's diplomacy the huge and quintessential heritage, including the heritage of peace and friendship among peoples. In any condition, under any circumstance, President Ho Chi Minh valued the “making friends with all democratic countries and not inflicting hatred on anyone”. And in that Heritage, Vietnam - India relations, a “great country” is very concerned by him. The great relationship was built up by President Ho Chi Minh and the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, grew more and more beautiful.

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Kien Giang is a province located in the southwest of Vietnam, which with forests, mountains, plains and islands in the Mekong Delta of southern Vietnam. It is known as a most famous cultural and tourist destination in the Mekong Delta region. Economic growth with high speed and stability in a long time, along with continuous application of scientific and technical achievements in production to increase labour productivity, create high added value and the average income per capita in Kien Giang has increased rapidly, currently reaching about 2,100 USD/person/year. The total number of tourists in 2018 is 7,620,000 arrivals, which international visitors are 580,000 arrivals.

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Vietnam - India relation was built by President Ho Chi Minh and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, is a traditional friendship which has been tested through time. In 60 years, under any circumstance, India has always been a trusted and faithful friend of the Vietnamese people, always willing to support for the cause of the righteous struggle of Vietnamese people in the past as well as in the cause of innovation and developing the country today, especially since the leaders of two countries signed the official Joint Declaration to establish the Vietnam - India strategic partnership in 2007.

Assert once again, Vietnam-India relations have a strong foundation that President Ho Chi Minh and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru have built, which is the foundation that could not hinder the relationship between the two countries, the two governments and the two peoples. I believe that our young generation people will continue to follow in the footsteps of his father

to build the relationship between the two countries in the future more and more beautiful and sustain.

*Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Today, we Delegation from Kien Giang province very touched when attending the Roundtable Discussion on “The Legacy of Ho Chi Minh – A Great Friend of India”, on the occasion of 60 anniversary of Ho Chi Minh’s state visit to India. Following the traditional relationship between the two countries, I am looking forward to the enterprises of the two countries having more practical economic, trade and investment cooperation.

Once again, I would like to represent the delegates from the People’s Committee of Kien Giang Province to *wish you all good health, happiness and successes to all of you*. Wishing the relationship between Vietnam and India is more and more durable.

Thank you to the Embassy of Vietnam in India and Jawaharlal Nehru University for arranging for the delegates to visit and attend the Roundtable Discussion on “The Legacy of Ho Chi Minh - A Great Friend of India”, on the occasion of 60 anniversary of Ho Chi Minh’s state visit to India. *Thank you very much!*

**Speech by Col. Sanjeev Sethi, Director, Southern Division, Ministry of External Affairs**



The rise of Asia has been a phenomenal development of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In these changing times, India & Vietnam have come closer. Not only we have aligned interests, our long-lasting friendship is a testimony to our historical ties.

President Ho Chi Minh was a great friend of Pandit Nehru and that of India. Today, Ho Chi Minh is a household name in India. It’s the efforts of Ho Chi Minh that India-Vietnam relations have prospered. As early as in 1943, although imprisoned, the Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh composed these heartfelt verses

addressed to Indian leader Jawaharlal Nehru:

*“My cause striven, yours assayed,  
To prison you went, in jail I stayed;  
Though countless miles our meeting part,  
Our sympathy, no words need impart.”*

During his visit to India, President Ho Chi Minh asserted that *“India is an independent and mighty nation that has made many invaluable contributions to peace in Asia and the world”*

On this memorable occasion, it will be pertinent to reflect on the past achievements of the bilateral relations. India and Vietnam have been linked together over the centuries through trade and the message of compassion and kindness of Lord Buddha.

India-Vietnam friendship is special and historical. Our relations have been exceptionally warm and cordial since their foundations were laid by founding fathers of our countries – Prime Minister Nehru and President Ho Chi Minh.

Our ties go back to the ancient Cham civilization when people from Orissa travelled to Vietnam and found a home there. We look back with satisfaction and gratitude to the sustained efforts by the leadership on both sides in keeping this friendship alive and fruitful. The traditionally close and cordial relations have their historical roots in the common struggle for liberation from foreign rule and the national struggle for independence.

Leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and President Ho Chi Minh led our peoples in the heroic struggle against colonialism. Even prior to the formalisation of relations, India's then-Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was considered a "great and close friend" of Vietnam and was the first foreign leader to visit then-North Vietnam in 1954, at the behest of then-President Ho Chi Minh, after its victory against the French in 1954. President Ho Chi Minh visited India in February 1958. President Rajendra Prasad visited Vietnam in 1959. India maintained Consulate-level relations with the then North and South Vietnam and established full diplomatic relations at Ambassadorial level on 7 January 1972.

In the period that has followed, relations between the two intensified and ultimately led to the elevation of the partnership to a 'comprehensive strategic partnership' in 2016. Hon'ble President of India visited Vietnam recently. It was the first visit in 60 years after the 11-day historic State Visit of the then-President of Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh, to India in 1958. Both the countries emphasise on the importance of building a peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific region on the basis of respect for national sovereignty and international law and agreed to further strengthen our bilateral cooperation in defence, peaceful uses of atomic energy and outer space, science and technology, oil and gas, infrastructure development, agriculture and innovation-based sectors.

As Comprehensive Strategic Partners, India and Vietnam have a strong bilateral relationship based on mutual trust, understanding, convergence of views on regional and international issues and strong cooperation in regional and multilateral fora. The two cornerstones of the relationship have undoubtedly been defence and security cooperation on one hand and economic ties on the other. Defence and security have traditionally been the bedrock of Indo-Vietnamese relations.

The advances in defence, security and trade have also been accompanied by cooperation in sectors such as regional/multilateral diplomacy, energy solutions, and cultural linkages. For example, Vietnam has backed India's bid for a seat in the United Nations Security Council. It has also provided concessions for Indian exploration of oil off its shores. From a cultural perspective, a 'Year of Friendship' was celebrated in 2012 and 2017, coinciding with the 40th and 45th anniversary of relations respectively. Thus, the Indo-Vietnamese relationship has evolved into a deeply potent one which has opened up avenues to step up cooperation in other sectors.

Before closing, I would like to highlight that India and Vietnam have completed a decade of their 'strategic partnership' which has seen the two sides grow closer than perhaps ever before. Vietnam has become one of India's "strongest, trusted and privileged partners" while Vietnam regards India as "one of its most important partners". On the foundation of a relationship grounded in strategic and economic interests, the two sides would do well to increase the bonds between their people as a means of ensuring that future relations are multi-faceted. India-Vietnam economic relations are on an upswing. Our bilateral trade last year stood at US\$ 12.8 billion. I am confident that our efforts in facilitating our business interactions will enable us to achieve our bilateral trade target of US\$ 15 billion by 2020. Education and tourism provide two pragmatic, complementary gateways for the countries to build such bonds. While education can leverage upon the youth capacities of the countries, tourism can promote knowledge and goodwill on both sides. An effective combination of the two could set the course for the next decade of the partnership. The true legacy of Ho Chi Minh lies in the prosperity and well being of the people of the two nations etc.

In the end once again, I wish the round table discussion a huge success. Thank you!

**Professor Baladas Ghoshal, Secretary General, Society for Indian Ocean Studies, New Delhi**



Professor Baladas Ghoshal described the relationships between the two nations as historical, pragmatist and shared ideology. He specially hailed Ho Chi Minh as person with great personality which at many instances even admired by many of his opponent. Also hailed President Ho Chi Minh as someone who can tactically balance the pressure and challenges from major power at that point of time. He outlined three factors, that is, history, ideology and pragmatism, and how they blended together seamlessly to give a shape to nationalism. Vietnamese nationalism reflects the same blend. This concoction not only helped Vietnam's nationalism to develop but it also helped in instilling a feeling of patriotism amongst the people of the nation. Ideology played a major role in Vietnam's national struggle for freedom. Ho Chi Minh as a leader had his ideologies strong and steady for developing sentiments for the national independence in the minds of his people. He always believed that some room should always be left to accommodate alternate ideas in order to achieve what the people of the country were fighting for. And this explains how pragmatic he was in developing his strategies to free his nation.

In the context of how ideologies, in this case Communism, can share room for other alternative ideas, the argument to that is, when Ho Chi Minh started to revolt against the French colonial powers in 1946, the international community feared the spread of communism further in Asia and hence Ho Chi Minhs' initiatives were received with suspicion to some extent. Therefore, Ho Chi Minh realized that only on the basis of communist ideology, it could have been difficult for him to gain international support for his fight. Therefore he modified his ideological model with a little help of socialism to gain the confidence of international powers.

The Vietnamese victory of *Dien Bien Phu* in 1954, defeating the French colonial powers, was one of its landmark victories and it was then when countries across the world realised the potential of the Vietnamese people and their abilities to fight for independence. India, more so specifically Jawaharlal Nehru, got clarity on Ho Chi Minh's actions and finally supported their struggle for freedom. Therefore, Ho Chi Minh's individuality needs to be studied very deeply in order to understand how leaders across the world shaped their strategies to achieve the desired.

**Speech by Dr. Ash Narain Roy, Director, Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi**



Ho Chi Minh, the name says it all. Ho Chi Minh means in English “he who enlightens”. Shakespeare in the *Merchant of Venice* writes, “How far that little candle throws his beams! Ho Chi Minh indeed threw his beams far and wide. Though small and frail with long ascetic face and sunken cheeks, Ho had luminous eyes. He was a patriarch. One American writer called him the George Washington of Vietnam.

In the Global Context, he focused on, “History is littered with turning points that never were and fulcrums that failed to move the earth”. In 1972 Henry Kissinger told the Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci, described by *New York Times* as a ‘guerrilla journalist’: “The history of things that didn’t happen” has to be considered before passing a verdict on things that did happen.

According to him, all revolutions are the children of war. The French and Russian revolutions were big and successful. But they did not change the world. On the other hand, the two failed revolutions—the 1848 revolution and the 1968 revolution—changed the world.

In 1848, a series of republican revolts (Sicily, France, Germany, Austrian empire) against European monarchies took place but all ended in failure and repression. But 1848 was also the year when Marx wrote the *Manifesto*. The work of Marx and Engel brought the movement of the working class into a perspective which spelt out a goal to be reached, namely a revolution-- a classless communist system.

What was the 1968 revolution? Adolescent hormones, the death of communism, the death of capitalism or, as André Malraux suggested at the time, the death of God? The revolution was defeated. No one seized power. But the world changed. The fire of 1968 has died down but memory and legacy haven't. According to him, the Vietnamese revolution was successful but it also changed the world. History rarely repeats itself but its echoes never go away. The dominant mood of the 1960 s and 1970s generation was --if Vietnam could defeat the world's most powerful state, surely they too could.

Ho Chi Minh's real legacy was that “people are not powerless”. Thanks to him, revolution became “the ecstasy of history”. When we remember Ho Chi Minh, we also remember the Glorious Decade (1965-1975). It consisted of multiple concurrent narratives—idealism, protest,

rebellion. To some, revolution was at hand. To others, it was an era of subversion and moral turpitude.

The decade embodied upheavals—artistic, political and sexual which rocked the world. Politics was the high point. It was also an era of sexual liberation. The 1960s was an era of hope, idealism, and the promise of emancipation. It was also an era of a glorification of youth. As Jerry Rubin, anti-war leader and counter-culture icon during the 1960s and 1970s, put it: "We were permanent adolescents." The dreams and hopes of the Vietnamese revolution and the Golden Decade are still alive—better future for humanity.

Ho Chi Minh was undoubtedly one of the greatest men of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His power didn't come from a persuasive ideology or from the miracle solutions that he offered. While building mass support, he gave ordinary men and women a feeling that they had the political voice; they were the masters of their destiny. Ho Chi Minh offered political voice to the voiceless masses. He echoed the voice of the people. He spoke the language that most Vietnamese could easily understand.

Ho Chi Minh blended Communism with nationalism. *Stalin and Ho met in 1952. Stalin pointed to two chairs, "Here is one for nationalists and one for internationalists. On which do you wish to sit?" Ho replied, "Comrade Stalin, I would like to sit on both chairs."* Ho was an enormously pragmatic Communist, a doer rather than a theoretician. He was a Communist, but he was a Vietnamese Communist. Ho read widely Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Marx, Zola and others. He was an ascetic and something of a puritan, who was offended when sex workers clambered aboard his ship in Marseilles. He reacted: *"Why don't the French civilize their own people before they civilize us?"*

Ho regularly visited villages and towns. Simply clad, he was especially fond of dropping into schools and chatting with the children. Even as a Communist leader, Ho pursued an essentially Vietnamese course. He led a Communist party that never had a major purge or a major theoretical dispute. From Gandhi, Ho Chi Minh learnt the art of saying no. Every change begins by saying no.

Ho was a born rebel. He came to Marxism through Lenin in 1920. But in 1907, when he entered the prestigious National Academy in Hue, he was already a rebel. The following year he was thrown out of school for lending support to peasants demonstrating against high agricultural taxes. *Hannah Arendt, eminent political theorist says, "Revolutionaries don't make revolutions. The revolutionaries are those who know when power is lying in the street and then they can pick it up."*

Communist leaders like Lenin and Mao were both loved and hated in equal measure. Not Ho Chi Minh. Even his enemies found it difficult to hate. While many people around the world are reevaluating -- and condemning -- their past Communist leaders, Vietnam is burnishing "Uncle Ho's" image and looking for new guidance in his teachings. There has never been a personality cult in Vietnam like Mao in China and Kim Il Sung in North Korea. Since he was never canonized,

there is no demythologizing of Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam. His power was not based on fear like Stalin. There is real esteem for Ho Chi Minh.

While Ho was a Marxist, his philosophy included elements of Confucianism, Buddhism, Catholicism and Western thought. When Ho declared Vietnamese independence at Hanoi's Ba Dinh square in September 1945, he began with a quote not from Karl Marx or Vladimir Lenin, but from Thomas Jefferson: "All men are created equal."

Dr Roy mentioned that, Ho Chi Minh was 'Half Lenin, half Gandhi'. Some say, he was half Lenin and half Gandhi. Others say, he was a cross between 'Mao of the Long March' and 'Gandhi at the Spinning Wheel'. Ho Chi Minh was both a Confucian humanist and a Communist revolutionary. Ho was also influenced by Gandhi and his teachings of non-violence. Ho said, "I and others may be revolutionaries, but we are disciples of Mahatma Gandhi, directly or indirectly, nothing more, nothing less."

India had a special place in his heart. At a press conference in Delhi, a journalist asked him, "how do you compare yourself with Mahatma Gandhi?". He said, "Compare myself with Mahatma Gandhi? I am his school boy". As Natwar Singh writes, "Ho's attitude to the Mahatma was one of respectful ambivalence". Ho and Nehru were real friends.

He concluded his speech by quoting Ho's poem to Nehru in 1943:

I am struggling, you are active  
You are in jail, I am in prison  
Ten thousand miles apart, we have not met  
We communicate without words.  
*Shared ideas link you and me  
What we lack is personal encounter  
I am jailed by a neighbouring friend  
You are chained and fettered by the enemy.*

**Concluding Remarks by: Ms Sonia Dey, Research Fellow, Centre for Vietnam Studies, New Delhi**

Ms Sonia Dey concluded the Roundtable Discussion on the Legacy of Ho Chi Minh with a few thoughts learnt from the discussion. As read from an article that Ho Chi Minh was given a title by his beloved people, and they called him the "bringer of light" she affirmed as to why he was called so. Uncle Ho is the perfect example of how a leader should be. Ho Chi Minh was deeply engaged in all activities that had the potential to liberate his people and country from foreign rule. Not only that, he also aimed to liberate his people from difficult situations and hardships.

On 13<sup>th</sup> December 1946, Ho Chi Minh's rise against the French Colonialism for the national independence of Vietnam resulted in a commendable victory at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. This historical victory witnessed the rise of Ho Chi Minh as a nationalist leader of Vietnam. The next victory came with the US withdrawal from Vietnam in the year 1975.

Ho Chi Minh was known as the "Father of Nation" because he was very passionately loved and deeply respected by his people. Not only that, his charisma touched and influenced people

across the world. The revolution started by Uncle Ho created ripples across different states in India. West Bengal is one such example. Apart from that, around 20 countries across Asia, Europe, America and Africa have built statutes in the remembrance of Ho Chi Minh. The deliberations in the Roundtable discussion reflected some of the distinguished facts about Ho Chi Minh that came from one of the most learned scholars.



**Report prepared with inputs from:  
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