

Beyond the smoke and mirror

The real Winston Churchill



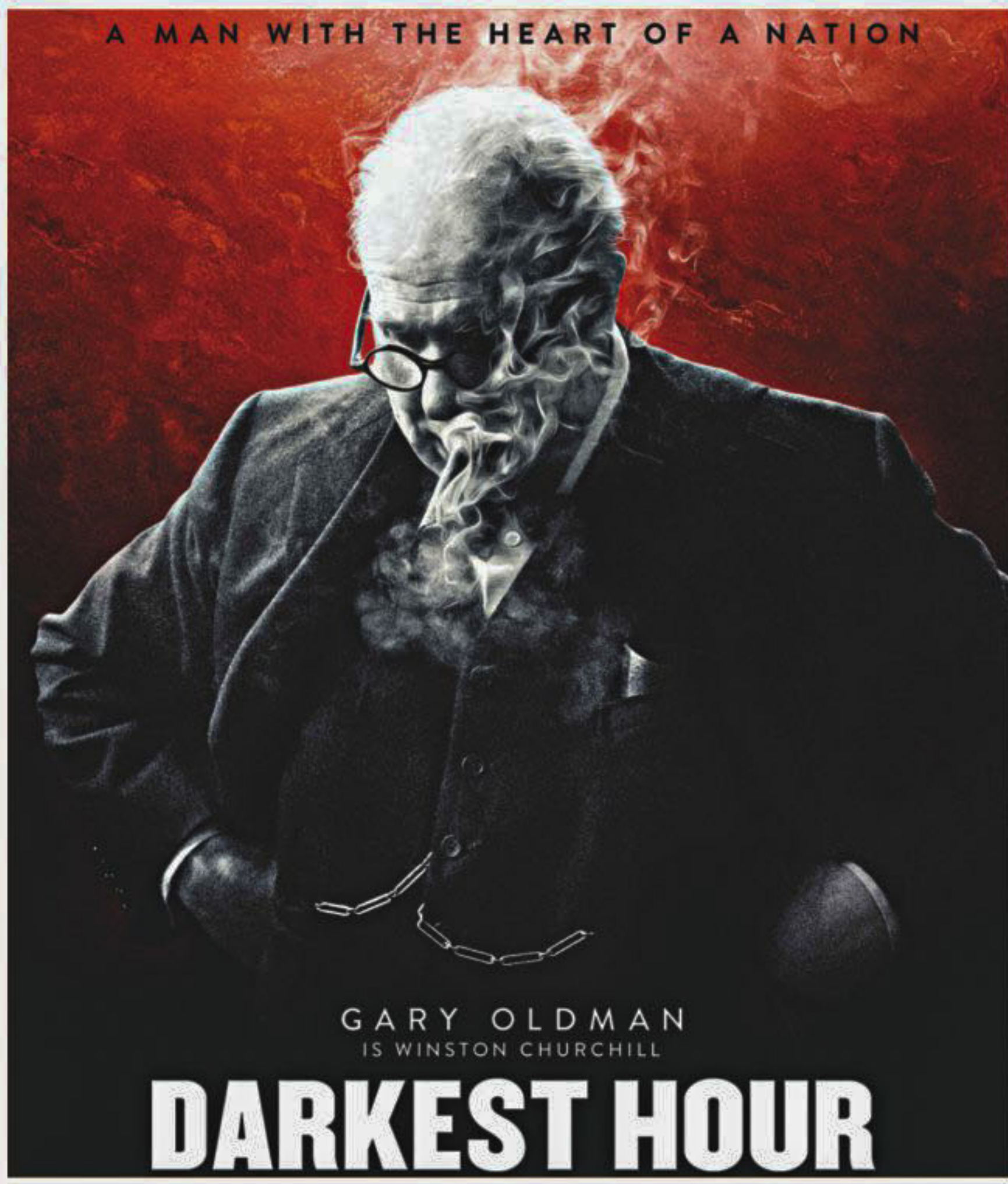
AWAKENING INDIA
SHASHI THAROOR

"HISTORY," Winston Churchill said, "will be kind to me, for I intend to write it myself." He needn't have bothered. He was one of the great mass murderers of the 20th century, yet is the only one, unlike Hitler and Stalin, to have escaped historical odium in the West. He has been crowned with a Nobel Prize (for literature, no less), and now, an actor portraying him (Gary Oldman) has been awarded an Oscar.

As Hollywood confirms, Churchill's reputation (as what Harold Evans has called "the British Lionheart on the ramparts of civilisation") rests almost entirely on his stirring rhetoric and his talent for a fine phrase during World War II. "We shall not flag nor fail. We shall go on to the end...We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets...We shall never surrender" (The revisionist British historian John Charmley dismissed this as "sublime nonsense").

Words, in the end, are all that Churchill admirers can point to. His actions are another matter altogether.

During World War II, Churchill declared himself in favour of "terror bombing." He wrote that he wanted "absolutely devastating, exterminating attacks by very heavy bombers." Horrors



Gary Oldman's portrayal of Winston Churchill in *Darkest Hour* won him an Oscar for Best Actor this year.

Dealing with unrest in Mesopotamia in 1921, as secretary of state for the colonies, Churchill acted as a war criminal: "I am strongly in favour of using poisoned gas against the uncivilised tribes; it would spread a lively terror." He ordered large-scale bombing of Mesopotamia, with an entire village wiped out in 45 minutes.

In Afghanistan, Churchill declared that the Pashtuns "needed to recognise the superiority of [the British] race" and that "all who resist will be killed without quarter." He wrote: "We proceeded systematically, village by village, and we destroyed the houses, filled up the wells, blew down the towers, cut down the great shady trees, burned the crops and broke the reservoirs in punitive devastation...Every tribesman caught was speared or cut down at once."

In Kenya, Churchill either directed or was complicit in policies involving the forced relocation of local people from the fertile highlands to make way for

white colonial settlers and the forcing of more than 150,000 people into concentration camps. Rape, castration, lit cigarettes on tender spots, and electric shocks were all used by the British authorities to torture Kenyans under Churchill's rule.

But the principal victims of Winston Churchill were the Indians—"a beastly people with a beastly religion," as he charmingly called them. He wanted to use chemical weapons in India but was shot down by his cabinet colleagues, whom he criticised for their "squeamishness," declaring that "the objections of the India Office to the use of gas against natives are unreasonable."

Churchill's beatification as an apostle of freedom seems all the more preposterous given his 1941 declaration that the Atlantic Charter's principles would not apply to India and the coloured colonies. He refused to see people of colour as entitled to the same rights as himself. "Gandhi-ism and all it stands

for," he declared, "will, sooner or later, have to be grappled with and finally crushed." In such matters, Churchill was the most reactionary of Englishmen, with views so extreme they cannot be excused as being reflective of their times. Even his own Secretary of State for India, Leopold Amery, confessed that he could see very little difference between Churchill's attitude and Adolf Hitler's.

Thanks to Churchill, some 4 million Bengalis starved to death in a 1943 famine. Churchill ordered the diversion of food from starving Indian civilians to well-supplied British soldiers and even to top up European stockpiles in Greece and elsewhere. When reminded of the suffering of his Indian victims, his response was that the famine was their own fault, he said, for "breeding like rabbits."

Madhusree Mukerjee's searing account of Churchill's role in the Bengal famine, "Churchill's Secret War," documents that while Indians starved, prices for food-grains were inflated by British purchases and India's own surplus grains were exported, while Australian ships laden with wheat were not allowed to unload their cargo at Calcutta (where the bodies of those who had died of starvation littered the streets). Instead, Churchill ordered that grain be shipped to storage depots in the Mediterranean and the Balkans to increase the buffer stocks for a possible future invasion of Greece and Yugoslavia. European warehouses filled up as Bengalis died.

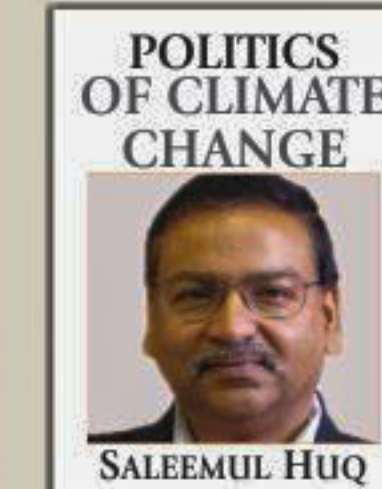
This year's Oscar rewards yet another hagiography of this odious man. To the Iraqis whom Churchill advocated gassing, the Greek protesters on the streets of Athens who were mowed down on Churchill's orders in 1944, sundry Pashtuns and Irish, as well as to Indians like myself, it will always be a mystery why a few bombastic speeches have been enough to wash the bloodstains off Churchill's racist hands.

Many of us will remember Churchill as a war criminal and an enemy of decency and humanity, a blinkered imperialist untroubled by the oppression of non-white peoples. Ultimately, his great failure—his long darkest hour—was his constant effort to deny us freedom.

Shashi Tharoor, a former UN under-secretary-general and former Indian Minister of State for External Affairs and Minister of State for Human Resource Development, is currently Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs and an MP for the Indian National Congress.

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Tapping the potential of our youth



POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE
SALEEMUL HUQ

MANY oil-rich countries like Norway, United Arab Emirates and Brunei have put billions of US dollars into Sovereign Wealth Funds through which they invest in interest-bearing assets around the world, either enhancing the amount in the fund, or for subsidising costs of selected services for their own citizens.

Bangladesh has the potential to develop its own sovereign wealth assets over the coming decades if we are able to make strategic investment in these potential assets and enable them to give significant returns on our investment.

I am not referring to money but rather to the potential of our young girls and boys, especially those who will be studying at universities in the coming years.

Bangladesh now has over a hundred universities stretched across both the public and private sectors. This means that we have hundreds of thousands of boys and girls studying at these universities every year.

Although the quality of the universities may vary a lot, the potential of each student is no less than his or her counterpart in other countries, including developed countries. They have the same intelligence, energy and enthusiasm for learning.

Thus Bangladesh has the potential to harvest this demographic dividend if we are able to not just educate them but also make them realise their full potential.

I will describe below some of the ways in which we can do so.

Firstly, I will argue that even though we must invest in both girls and boys, the emphasis should be more on girls. As the African proverb has it: "If you educate a man you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate a family (nation)."

Secondly, we need to rapidly enhance the quality of education provided in our universities and change our emphasis from rote learning aimed at answering examination questions only. The new kind of quality education needs to enhance creativity of students and unleash innovation in both students and teachers.

Thirdly, we need to inculcate a cultural shift away from job seeking to job creation amongst our students. This is perhaps the most difficult of the tasks but one that will allow the full returns on investments. Thus we need to teach and promote innovation and entrepreneurship amongst the best students.

Finally, there is a very strong climate change connection to educating and empowering our young girls and boys as they will be the ones who inherit a significantly changed climate from us adults and they will have to be the ones who clean up the mess we will be leaving for them.

For Bangladesh there is thus an urgent need to make our future citizens climate-resilient women and men who can tackle and indeed solve many of the problems that Bangladesh will inevitably face with climate change. By making our girls and boys climate-resilient problem-solvers, we will not only be able to tackle climate change in Bangladesh, but globally as well.

Saleemul Huq is Director, International Centre for Climate Change and Development at the Independent University, Bangladesh. Email: saleem.icccd@iub.edu.bd

Many of us will remember Churchill as a war criminal and an enemy of decency and humanity.

such as the firebombing of Dresden were the result.

In the fight for Irish independence, Churchill, in his capacity as secretary of state for war and air, was one of the few British officials in favour of bombing Irish protesters, suggesting in 1920 that airplanes should use "machine-gun fire or bombs" to scatter them.

A successful formula

Engaging students in classrooms

MUHAMMAD FOYSAL MUBARAK

VYGOTSKY, a Soviet educational psychologist, describes learning as a social process in his socio-cultural theory of human learning. According to this concept, learning takes place first at the social level through interactions with others.

Another aspect of his theory is the idea that the learners are mentally prepared to a certain level and they require support from a teacher or more experienced peers in order to fully develop. These theories have several implications for teaching in the classroom.

Teachers need to plan activities using cooperative learning so that learners can be meaningfully engaged. Student engagement is the fundamental component of successful academic achievement. If students are active in the learning process through interactive activities, they are being provided with the opportunities to strengthen different interpersonal skills. Students increase their understanding through interaction with their teachers and peers.

It should be the goal of a teacher to create a congenial classroom environment where students have the freedom to contribute and debate their ideas. It is very likely that students will participate in class activities if they

find the classroom environment-friendly. If teachers are highly engaging and set clear expectations, students will feel as if they belong in the classroom. If teachers encourage students to be engaged with the contents of their studies through various activities, students are more willing to commit themselves to hard work. This helps students take ownership of their own academic progress and to become self-regulated learners.

For a highly functional classroom, high-quality peer support is also important. Two heads are always better than one. A team can accomplish a lot by combining their individual ideas. When students have the opportunity to interact with each other and share learning experiences, they feel that they belong in class. If they interact with classmates, they practice giving and receiving feedback, providing help and setting academic goals. They negotiate activities in the classroom, cooperate on group projects, explain assignments to each other, develop the ability for deeper understanding and, most importantly, they don't rely on rote learning.

Thus, peer support joined with teacher support is instrumental in the engagement process. A faculty member of a private univer-



It should be the goal of a teacher to create a congenial classroom environment where students have the freedom to contribute and debate their ideas. PHOTO: COURTESY

sity was asked why and how he engaged students in collaborative work and he replied: "Employers today not only look out for academic qualifications but also keep a close eye on a candidate's communication, networking and various other inter-personal skills. I point out the set of skills the students

can acquire through collaborative working and I then communicate with the students on how these skills can become a precious set of transferrable skills which they can essentially exploit in their career ahead. As a result, I notice in many of the students that they are not taking the collaborative work as an im-

sition, rather they are encouraged to reveal the skills they can acquire through means of working in association with others."

However, it is not an easy task to bridge practical classroom application with pedagogical theory and apply interactive teaching strategies effectively. It requires skill to engage students with a variety of activities in order to develop their abilities in critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, problem-solving and communication. Accomplished faculty members are not scared of these challenges, but early career faculty members may face a number of challenges as they begin their role as academics. Resources for professional development should be available in the institutions to meet their teaching needs. The institutions should offer good quality and sustainable Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes which will help the faculty members to develop their skills. In order to promote innovation, universities should focus on keeping campus community up to date with pedagogical knowledge and support professional development. The basic principle behind this is that a good teacher should never stop being a learner.

Muhammad Foyisal Mubarak is a lecturer at the Professional Development Centre, BRAC University.

QUINTUS HORATIUS FLACCUS
(65 BC-8 BC)
Roman poet

If you study the history and records of the world, you must admit that the source of justice was the fear of injustice.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS	33 Resistance units	differences
1 Accords	34 Slapstick weapons	9 Ship storage
6 Secret supply	36 Race finish	10 Cuts off
11 Dome home	38 Locker room need	16 Chiding sound
12 Manmade fibre	40 Dove's desire	18 Spice from
13 Strips	43 Tuned in	nutmeg
14 Handle	44 Starry hunter	19 Shepared in space
15 Heaps	45 Authority	21 2006 Pixar film
17 Wanders (about)	46 Components	23 Marquee name
18 Earth neighbour		24 Paper pack
20 Fight memento		25 Laments loudly
22 Saloon order	DOWN	27 Pencil parts
23 Rink bunch	1 Card spot	30 Sulky state
26 West Point	2 Get older	33 Verdi forte
student	3 Removed obstacles	34 Sch. orgs.
28 Cowboy contest	4 Rings	35 Corn Belt state
29 Catches	5 Mediocre	37 Each
31 Bar bill	6 Pasture grazer	39 Summer sign
32 Fast runner	7 Tokyo thanks	
	8 Dispelled	

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

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BEETLE BAILEY

BY MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT