

A Rising-India Story Despite Global Recession

By Lt Gen Dushyant Singh, PVSM, AVSM(Retd)

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Higher growth – stable internal and external security environment – sustained economic growth of India despite adverse conditions. There were continuous efforts to give a reasonable living condition to the low middle class by keeping inflation relatively lower than most of the countries in the world including the U.S. and China.

How has India managed to keep its house not only in order but kept it on a rising trajectory despite the twin onslaught of COVID and the Ukraine war is a question that is becoming an enigma for political and economic pundits across the world.

India's Strength

India's GDP growth in 2022 was approximately around 7 percent. The Gross Value-Added rose 6.7 percent, with trade, hotels, transport booking the biggest gain (13.7 percent), followed by construction (9.1 percent), utilities (9 percent), financial and real estate (6.4 percent). Meanwhile, manufacturing grew a meagre 1.6 percent and agriculture 3.5 percent as per Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation- MOSPI.

- India became the fifth largest economy in the world leaving behind the size of the UK's economy by USD 34 billion.
- In PPP terms, India's GDP stands at USD 8.9 trillion with only US and China being ahead of it.

If we look from the perspective of inflation, It is around 5.1 percent in India. Inflation in OECD countries is around 10 percent and importantly, out of the 38 OECD countries 18 recorded double-digit inflation. Although China has recorded a low inflation rate, its rural and urban divide is increasing gradually which is leading to internal unrest, especially in the view of COVID related policies.

Moreover, as per OECD baseline projections, India would overtake the U.S. to become the second largest economy in terms of size of GDP in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms by the late 2040s. It is projected to reach \$30 trillion by 2048.

Therefore, India is well on track to lift itself from the developing to a developed economy in one's lifetime only. India is expected to become 1.5 times of the world per capita GDP by 2057.

Another argument that busts the per capita argument is that the share of the middle class, with an annual income between Rs5 lakh to 30 lakhs has doubled since 2004 to 2021 from 14 % to 31% and is projected to rise to 63 % by 2047 when India celebrates 100 years of Independence.

The table below tells the India story quite vividly. In 26 years, India's super rich will show an 18-fold rise.

BIGGEST CONTRIBUTOR IN TERMS OF INCOME, SPENDING AND SAVINGS					
Category	Household	Population	Income	Expenditure	Saving
Rich (>₹30L)*	3	4	23	17	43
Middle Class (₹5L-30L)	30	31	50	48	56
Aspirers (₹1.25L-₹5L)	52	52	25	32	1
Destitutes (<₹1.25L)	15	13	2	3	0

*Annual household income at 2020-21 prices | Source: PRICE (figures in %)

Challenges Ahead

There is no ambiguity that India is well on its way to emerge as the third pole in the global order. That too without compromising on its core principle of value based international relations and internal functioning.

However, its vision of becoming a “Vishwa Guru” can only materialise if it ensures that the challenges facing the country are dealt with seriously.

The population must become productive

To achieve this, the government needs to invest at least 6 percent of the GDP and 3-4 percent of the annual budget on health. A related point with population is the utilisation of the women work force – 18.6 percent as of 2020 as per ILO.

Investment in education and skilling along with an awareness program to encourage female participation must be ensured. The National Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of girls in secondary schools improved from 77.45 (2014-15) to 81.32 (2018-19) – a betterment of 3.87 points in four years.

[Read complete article on website thesouthasianimes.info](https://thesouthasianimes.info)

In Afghanistan, China's Double-Dealing Is Coming Back To Bite It

By Srikanth Kondapalli

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The Taliban has promised not to allow terrorist attacks on others from Afghan soil, but it is unable to keep its word.

Last month's attack on Chinese nationals at a hotel in Kabul has rattled Beijing. For it had hoped to overcome the “graveyard of empires” and reap the benefits of its resources as well as fill the geopolitical vacuum in Afghanistan.

The December 12 attack by the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) on Longan Hotel, which housed scores of Chinese nationals, left five Chinese national seriously injured and four militants dead. This followed a series of attacks on Pakistani and Russian missions and on the airport.

It took more than a month for the new Chinese foreign minister Qin Gang to call his Taliban counterpart Amir Khan Muttaqi to urge “strong measures” to protect “Chinese personnel, institutions, and projects” in the country.

The ISKP’s renewed focus on China comes as the Taliban is seen moving close to Beijing. China has also been close to the Taliban’s interior minister Sirajuddin Haqqani and his faction in the Taliban over the past two decades. However, Beijing has not officially recognised the Taliban regime.

The Taliban has promised not to allow terrorist attacks on others from Afghan soil, but it is unable to keep its word at a time when Afghanistan is teeming with terrorist and militant groups -- the ISKP, Al Qaeda, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, the Balochistan Liberation Army and others – and all of them are attempting to recruit or poach cadres.

The violent attacks at Dasu hydro-electricity dam, Karachi Confucius Centre, Gwadar port and other areas signal the rise in militancy in Pakistan-Afghanistan. China’s gambit of softening the leaders in these countries through investments is thus not working.

Nevertheless, China is enticing Kabul to link up with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor by proposing to build cross-border railway networks from Peshawar to Kabul and Quetta to Kandahar. Beijing is also using the trilateral cooperative arrangement with Afghanistan and Pakistan since 2017 to extend CPEC to Afghanistan.

However, with India opposing CPEC projects, Afghanistan has been circumspect about them. The June 2004 attack on Chinese railway workers at Had Bakshi, when 11 of them were killed, is fresh in China’s memory.

China signed in June 2012 a “strategic cooperative partnership” with Afghanistan. It also signed an MoU with Afghanistan on the Belt and Road Initiative in May 2016. In April 2019, Beijing signed a BRI energy cooperation agreement with Afghanistan. Last year, Xinjiang Central Asia Petroleum and Gas Co and the Afghan government signed a \$540 million agreement to drill for oil in the Amu Darya basin and to create an oil reserve in Sar-e Pul province.

Several Chinese companies are keen to invest in Afghanistan. The 14th Bureau of China Railway, the 19th Metallurgical, Huawei, ZTE and Zhengtong Construction Engineering have all participated in the construction of Afghanistan’s telecoms, power transmission, water and road projects. China’s Shuangdeng Group has signed a 5.5-MW photovoltaic project contract in Daikondi province.

But several factors, such as lack of connectivity to the resource-producing areas, scarcity of water and power, and the high operating costs for Chinese companies, hamper China’s efforts. The rise in militancy means that these companies have to pay “protection” money to different central and local governments, militants and warlords. Life is scary for Chinese workers in the eight most vulnerable provinces in Afghanistan.

China is taking countermeasures to counter the slide in the security situation. It has begun construction of the crucial \$5-million road through Wakhan Corridor that connects to Xinjiang. It is also financing a military base in the bordering Badakhshan province, hoping to create a buffer zone.

China also intends to tie down Afghanistan in a mesh of multilateral arrangements such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation dialogue mechanism on Afghanistan, Himalayan Quadrilateral with Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nepal, or in a quadrilateral with Pakistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan. However, none of these initiatives have helped Beijing make much headway.

China provided military equipment and training to the Mujahideen during the anti-Soviet days of the 1980s. In post-Soviet Afghanistan, Beijing kept the Taliban, Al Qaeda (specifically, the Hekmatyar group) and the Pakistani ISI close, with the bottom line that they would not aid the Uighur insurgency in Xinjiang.

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Contestations In Latin America - Opportunities For India

By Dr. Arnab Chakrabarty

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The United States and China are competing for influence in Latin America. The resource rich region saw dominance of American influence which has considerably waned over the years. This also led to gradual involvement of other countries in the region. The region faces a series of economic, social and political crisis partly due to the effects of the pandemic and due to structural weaknesses. Violence and unrest in Haiti, Peru, Bolivia and Venezuela in addition to economic problems in Argentina, Panama, Brazil and Chile have added to the concerns facing the region. As the US is preoccupied with the Russia-Ukraine conflict and in the Indo-Pacific, China has made steady inroads in Latin America which is strategically important for Washington. India's presence in the region is turning out to be stronger and India may emerge as an important partner for these countries in the future. In this paper an attempt will be made to gauge evaluate China's and US's positions in Latin America and opportunities for India.

Donald Trump's approach towards Latin America

Former President Donald Trump's approaches towards Latin America was coloured by keeping American interests above regional interests. During his tenure relations with these countries were lukewarm. Notably issues with Central America achieved prominence due to problems related to migration. Donald Trump was keen to stop migration from this region and built a barrier along the US-Mexico border. He also enforced clauses such as 'Remain in Mexico' for similar purposes. The administration held discussions with Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador and enforced slowing down the flow of migrants. Policies such as separating migrant families earned the fury of independent and opposition lawmakers and the judiciary.

He also had to contend with Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua which oppose the US on many issues and warmed up to China and Russia. His policies targeting Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro by extending support to his rival Juan Guaidó did not yield desired results. By economically blockading Cuba and sanctioning Venezuela it only added to their financial troubles which gave more reasons for China to approach. Particularly Trump did not attend the 2018 Summit of the Americas signalling distance from the region, which was not well received by the Latin American states. The heralding of the USMCA Agreement left a trail of hard negotiations which reflected his 'America First' policy. Even during the pandemic, the Trump administration shied away from allocating meaningful resources for Latin America, which gave room to China to fill in the gap.

President Biden's attempt to reinvigorate ties with Latin America

President Biden on assuming office faced an enormous task to repair relations with Latin American nations. While Trump approached punitive actions in order to enforce commitments across the region, President Biden has adopted a mollifying approach in a bid to keep the region closer to Washington and away from China. Trump's warnings to Latin American states regarding China did not cause much effect, a policy which the Biden administration is using with soft undertones. For starters, President Biden is all out to repair relations with Mexico and the Central American countries where migration and drug trafficking are the two major issues. Apart from that the rise of China in the region which occurred rather quickly during the Trump years needs to be addressed. Russia has also turned to be an important player and in view of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, Moscow will look to make further inroads in the region in order to undercut American influence. Nicaragua has openly turned against the US and even severed ties with the OAS while in other countries the Biden administration is seen with some amount of hope and hesitance. The current administration has adopted a mixed-bag approach of offering economic aid and options while taking punitive measures against regimes which does not fit in line with the US's

position. For instance, it has taken measures against corrupt officials from Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador. It has so far maintained its stance on Nicaragua calling for democratic reforms.

One of the biggest challenges that President Biden faced last year was arriving at a consensus at the 9th Summit of the Americas that was held in June 2022. Refusal to invite Nicaragua, Cuba and Venezuela evoked negative reactions across the region with some countries refusing to participate in the summit. Undeterred, the US has launched various initiatives such as the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity to boost regional trade. Other initiatives such as funds for Central America for economic development, allowing concessions to migrants from the region are key takeaways in a bid to improve relations.

Challenges to US and Chinese influence in the region

Changing global dynamics has affected Latin America and despite the preponderance of problems in the region, it has turned out to be assertive in foreign policy choices. These countries are looking beyond the hemisphere for cooperation in various fields. Notably, India, China, Japan, the EU, Russia and other Asian nations are filling the void. What these countries require are genuine partnerships without political interference. The region does witness ideological divides between various governments which at times creates issues for the US and China. The US especially under the presidency of Donald Trump focussed on an ideological battle with China and took strong measures. The Chinese on the other hand may have pretended to strictly stick to economic issues but Beijing's military and security cooperation with Latin American states cannot be underplayed. As the US asserts its positions in regions sensitive to Beijing such as the Indo-Pacific, the same approach is being applied by the Chinese in Latin America which is sensitive for the US. The Latin American countries are unwilling to become a battleground for these powers.

While China has turned out to be a dominant player, becoming the largest trading partner to many nations India is not far behind. China has deep strategic interests with reference to extraction of rare earth minerals such as Lithium and other natural resources.

In fact, Chinese investments in extractive resources is a cause for concern as most of them are not environment friendly. Its investments in infrastructure and critical assets have raised eyebrows compounded with its generosity in offering opaque loans and aid. China practices debt trap diplomacy in the region taking into account the need for fiscal aid and investments. Challenges to US influence in the region ranges from China's predatory policies, the question on Taiwan and the overwhelming presence of left oriented governments. The US has to deal with historic baggage which is marred with political interference and military interventions, policies which hampered growth in the region and resistance from leftist governments. On the other hand, China is gradually being seen as a predatory power and there is considerable opposition to its ventures in the region.

The struggle for dominance between the US and China can be an opportunity for India. India, with annual trade of US\$ 50 billion and export of medicines, pharmaceutical items, finished products which include cars and motorcycles has turned out to be a vital player. India's investments in the IT and infrastructure sector are rapidly increasing. India is also known to the region as a stable, democratic and benign power which offers equal opportunities to local residents in the region. India has also made inroads in the Central American and Caribbean region; it has opened new diplomatic missions to expand its presence and relations are ushering towards a new productive phase. India has untapped advantages in the region, it is recognised as a responsible democratic power devoid of ulterior motives in the region. Its investments even though smaller in comparison are stable and aimed in mutual benefits. Although distance and logistics are challenges there are options to surmount them. It would not be wrong to say that Latin American nations have expressed greater interests in India and have understood the potentially mutual beneficial relationship.

Conclusion

Although India's presence in the region is still in its younger stages there are no dearth of opportunities. Latin American countries look forward to better opportunities with the rest of the world and in the context of Sino-US rivalry, India may soon be in a position to develop deeper relations with the region. It will require comprehensive policies and approaches from both the sides to cement relations between India and Latin America.

A new Great Game begins in Afghanistan

By Nishtha Kaushiki & Nikhil Sharma

Author Nishtha Kaushiki is Associate Professor in Central University of Punjab, Bathinda. Author Nikhil Sharma is research scholar

Pakistan might be tempted to test Indo-US strategic ties by launching terror strikes in Kashmir through proxies.

After the withdrawal from Afghanistan, the relations between the US and Pakistan have strategically declined. However, Pakistan's fight with TTP, apart from the China-induced economic crisis and the denial of a loan package by the IMF, has renewed American interests in Pakistan.

Reasons for the American interests are varied and have deep connections with the history of South and Central Asia. Despite Islamabad's active support to the Taliban, the American interests will bring the much-required finance and military support, as it has done in the past. The development increases opportunities for Washington to adopt a leapfrog approach again in the two regions to enhance its strategic outreach.

Pakistan lies at the cusp of the two regions. To be more specific, its location to the south of Russia and its 'strategic backyard,' i.e. Central Asia makes it relatively important. Historically, the US and Pakistan were joined by China, and their efforts were based on shared interests against the Soviet Union apart from limiting India's political and geostrategic influence in the South Asian region.

From Pakistan's perspective, the US interest allowed it to put forward its 'geostrategic marketability' and extract military leverage against India. In 1954, the US government announced a military aid package of \$500 million instead of its mutual defence assistance agreement. Further, from 1967-1980 the US provided military and technical assistance of around \$6 billion.

Pakistan used this aid against Indian interests. Thus, it adopted the approach of buck passing, which was relatively cheaper than internal and external balancing and band wagoning. Before any conflict, Pakistan expected the US to guarantee its security. In the first case, before the 1965 war, Ayub Khan had demanded that the United States should accept securing Pakistan against India's "aggression" as an essential component of guarantees provided through an alliance with the US. Although defeated, one cannot deny the US military supplies to Pakistan that made it believe that it could fight India. But Islamabad, too, realized that Washington was not prepared to issue a "blank check" against India. The tables were turned again against India in the 1971 war. Even though Pakistan launched a pre-emptive war against India in 1971, the US' seventh fleet ensured that India did not consider retaking PoK while liberating East Pakistan.

Later, during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan gained financial support \$3.2 billion from 1980 to 1990, aiding the Mujahideen to fight against the Soviet Union. Additionally, the US supplied Pakistan with F-16.

After the nuclear tests, Pakistan adopted a similar approach and always used its Islamic state status quo of possessing nuclear weapons, thereby extracting substantial advantages through its

nuclear blackmailing. Despite India's readiness to take a limited military action against Pakistan after the Kargil crisis and the attacks on Parliament, it was the US that intervened on the grounds of restoring "normalcy" and substantially limited India's response.

The 9/11 again brought the US and Pakistan in a more tactical embrace with each other. Pakistan became a major non-NATO ally, and as per the SIPRI data, during 2002-14, it got military aid worth \$5.81 billion, of which the arms sales component was \$3.2 billion. After the killing of Osama in Abbottabad, as per the C.R.S. report, in 2014-15, the total financial and military aid decreased to 40 per cent from 2011-2015.

[Read complete article on website dailypioneer.com](http://www.dailypioneer.com)

Why Abul Kalam Azad And Hussain Ahmad Madani Were Not Convinced About Pakistan

By Ishtiaq Ahmed

Author is Professor Emeritus of Political Science, Stockholm University, Honorary Senior Fellow, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore.

75 years of Pakistan with TFT-ND: these two prominent Muslim scholars made some predictions about the proposed new state. Why were they so pessimistic?

North India's Persian- and Urdu-speaking aristocracy and literati, known as the Ashraafia or noble-born of putative foreign ancestors, was overly represented in the Mughal Empire and princely states ruled by nawabs. They were employed as military commanders, advisers and custodians of Islam and experts of Islamic law, the sharia and in various state services. After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, the Mughal Empire was beset with irreversible decline and decay. Inevitably the Ashraafia suffered loss of power causing considerable consternation and anxiety amongst them.

The majority population of India had remained Hindu despite centuries of Muslim rule, while the more numerous Muslim converts from modest backgrounds were looked down upon by the Ashraafia. With the British becoming the paramount power in India and upper castes Hindus becoming the harbingers of nascent nationalism, the fears of the Ashraafia increased that with the advent of elections and democracy, their privileges would become increasingly untenable.

Famously Sir Syed Ahmed Khan advised the angst-ridden Ashraafia to align themselves with the British against the Indian National Congress, although the Congress from the onset was an open, secular party which only in the 1920s radicalised and became a mass party. Those wedded to such a strategy were to become the vanguard of Muslim separatism, which from the late 1930s, rapidly became a movement for the Partition of India to create Pakistan in the north-western and north-eastern zones of India.

Among the literati, the ulema of the Sunni majority were divided on a sub-sectarian basis. Among Deobandis a majority organised in the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind decided to hitch their future to the freedom movement of the Congress Party on the grounds that as a secular party it would keep India and the Muslims united. However, a minority aligned itself with the All-India Muslim League. The much larger Barelvi ulema initially remained quietist shunning politics but were later to become the vehicles for the Muslim League's electoral campaign of 1945-46 for Pakistan and their support was crucial for the Muslim League's great electoral victory. For them, Pakistan would mean the resuscitation of Islamic glory and power.

In this background we shall look at the objections to the demand for Pakistan by two leading scholars of Islam. Both were convinced that the Muslim League was dominated by Muslims who had never opposed British power in India, and that the British were using the Muslim League to oppose the freedom struggle being spearheaded by the Congress Party.

The theoretical Islamic basis for opposing Pakistan was set forth by both Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, who was the most famous Muslim leader of the Congress Party; as well as by Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani, the head of the Deoband seminary and president of the Jamiyat Ulem-e-Hind.

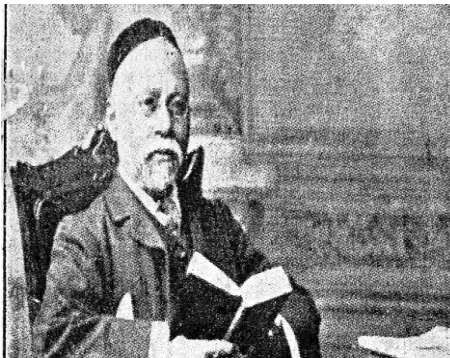
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Nation is Indebted to:

Behramji Malabari

18 May 1853 – 12 July 1912



Malabari is a force behind the Age of Consent Bill 1891 that helped end ‘matrimonial slavery’.

Could a Parsi activist call for reforms of a regressive Hindu practice of ‘matrimonial slavery’? These days the answer might be a simple yes, but back in late 19th century Western India it wasn’t. Behramji Malabari, a journalist and a poet, was faced not just against those who believed in upholding these ‘traditions’, but also personalities such as Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who opposed it.

Malabari’s presence in the chapters of the Indian reform movement might have disappeared, but his legacy lives on. Often criticised for being a ‘western reformer’, he was the force behind the passage of The Age of Consent Act in 1891, which redefined the institution of marriage—a subject that continues to make the news to date.

In the Notes on Child Marriage and Widow Remarriage, he wrote: “Even though still an infant, her life is a social failure. In most things, she is at the mercy of others because the average Hindu widow is not able to appreciate and protect her rights as a member of society... To many, it is a wonder that the world hears so little of the results of such social inequality. I believe that is so because woman is the sufferer. It is not in her nature to publish her wrongs, however great”.

Despite his contribution to the rights of Hindu women, Malabari’s ‘heavily anglicised’ Parsi identity was a cause of distrust for many. The efforts of Malabari to reform Hindu society irked even legendary freedom fighter Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who claimed that “No one but a Hindu can possess that intimate knowledge of the Hindu Shastras, and the daily observances enjoined therein which is essential in any writer who attempts to prepare papers on the questions now placed before the government”.

However, this criticism didn’t stop Malabari from voicing the concerns of Hindu women and demanding riddance from practices like child marriage and enforced widowhood.

Marred by poverty and early parental death, Malabari had a troubled childhood.

Born in the princely state of Baroda on 18 May 1853, Malabari spent most of his childhood pinching pennies. His mother was Bhikhibai and father was Dhnjibhai Mehata, a poor clerk.

Malabari was only 12 when his mother passed away. He came to Bombay (now Mumbai) to make a living. A relative of his late mother helped him get a tutoring job (teaching English to school kids) that eventually earned him Rs 150 per month.

Malabari was good in English and Gujarati. His examiner, Reverend Joseph Van Someran Taylor, was the first to discover his poetic prowess. Struck by the beauty of his verses, Taylor introduced him to Scottish missionary and educationist Reverend Dr John Wilson. Malabari's 'poetic imagination' impressed Wilson and he sponsored the publication of the Parsi poet's first work, called 'Niti Vinod' or 'The Pleasures of Morality' in 1875. The government subscribed 300 copies of the same. And with this Malabari began his career as a Gujarati poet. Although he was reluctant to let go of the joy of being a poet and felt that he could "serve his motherland better by his songs than by his newspaper articles", Malabari believed that it was his "duty to deny himself this satisfaction for the good of the country".

In 1880, after working under Martin Wood, the editor of the Times of India, he acquired The Indian Spectator. In reformer and poet Dayaram Gidumal's words, the "little paper that was a rag in 1879, after a creditable early career, rose into fame and compelled its editor to remain in harness. The Indian Spectator was alive, and, like Frankenstein, refused to die", he wrote.

The Indian Statesman in 1882 called it "The best paper in India", while The Pioneer spoke of it as "The ablest native paper in the Bombay presidency".

The Bombay Review, shortly before its surcease, spoke very highly of him, saying "The editor is peculiarly fitted for being a trustworthy interpreter between rulers and ruled."

One of the most essential deeds, for which Malabari is still known, is his espousal of women's rights, especially those of young widows.

From calling infant marriage "matrimonial slavery" to calling it "a sin to ignore the expressed desire of a widow for remarriage", Malabari routinely encouraged the British government to get rid of Hindu practices such as enforced widowhood and child marriage. Some of his famous articles include The Indian Problem, An Appeal from the Daughters of India, and Notes on Child Marriage and Widow Remarriage, all of which influenced the Indian judiciary to pass The Age of Consent Bill in 1891.

One of the most prominent cases of child marriage he fought was that of women's rights activist and India's first practicing physician, Rukhmabai, who was 11 years old at the time of her marriage to 19-year-old Dadaji Bhikaji. Later, her refusal to go back to him at the age of 25 resulted in her husband moving the Bombay High Court, which ordered restitution of his conjugal rights.

In his articles, An Appeal from the Daughters of India and Notes on Child Marriage and Widow Remarriage, Malabari "championed Rukhmabai's case not only in Bombay but in Britain as well."

Malabari shamed the colonial government for its order saying, "The High Court of Bombay professes to administer the Hindu law and yet it imports into this Hindu law a point of the English Church law which has nothing to do with the marriage law of the Hindus. Henceforth we are to understand that Hindu parents may go on perpetuating infant marriages and that in cases of dispute the benevolent British government will aid and abet them, in the triple capacity of marriage-broker, policeman and jailor". However, in a remarkable move, Queen Victoria granted Rukhmabai's request to dissolve the marriage.

Malabari stands high as a poetic genius as well as a sensitive human being who fought for the rights of innocent underage girls.

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