

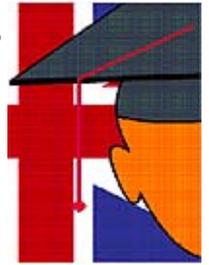
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escorted by the chancellor, the Duke of Edinburgh, to receive an honorary degree from this 800-year-old university. I went to Queens' College in 1967 and have been around the Cambridge pubs and galls one way or the other. Nehru was in Trinity College, next door to St Johns', living in Wheewells Court. I remember asking the Trinity porters, and going across to the corner room where he spent three years. Inside I found two long-haired guitar players! Nehru was the first to receive the Cambridge honour. Dr Manmohan Singh is the second from India.



In India, chamcha vice-chancellors readily offer degrees to men of power and influence, that too with the sanction of the chief minister. Not so in these western universities. The Hebdomal Council in Oxford is a very large body of all the graduates who are alive. They decide, sometimes in angry contention, whether an individual, howsoever high in the world of power, is fit to be honoured. I remember Zulfi Bhutto and daughter Benazir, both Oxford Majlis presidents, and both prime ministers later, were refused by the Hebdomal. Even more strange, the great Margaret Thatcher, a chemistry graduate from Oxford, was also refused. The Hebdomal had judged them, and simply found them wanting.

I try to visualise the frail Socratic egghead, Manmohan Singh, with a royal length of scarlet gown trailing him, accompanied by the tall, aristocratic, forbidding, polo and grouse moor aficionado Duke, taking a ceremonial walk around the Grecian Urn in the centre of the green lawn, next to the King's College cathedral, on his way into the small Senate House to make his speech to the first world about his concerns for the third. After Oxford, I am sure Dr Sahib will leave history to make a judgement on the British imperial record.

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