

Budget: All Hype Again

Neeraj Jain

This year's budget speech of the Finance Minister is remarkable for the fact that it contains absolutely no mention absolutely of India's external accounts situation. That is simply amazing, as a key aspect of our economic policy making for the last nearly three decades, ever since India began globalisation in 1991, is tackling our foreign exchange crisis. By the late 1980s, the Indian economy was entrapped in an external debt crisis (our foreign debt was nearly \$84 billion dollars) and was on the verge of external accounts bankruptcy. And so in mid-1991, the Indian Government, in return for a huge foreign loan to tide over the foreign exchange crisis, signed an agreement with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, agreeing to implement what are known as neoliberal economic policies. Since then, each and every government that has come to the Centre has been implementing these economic reforms; the Modi Government has been implementing these economic reforms at an even more accelerated speed.

There is a reason why there is no mention of our external debt or current account deficit in the Finance Minister's budget speech.

That is because the situation is going from bad to worse. Our external debt crossed \$495.7 billion in September 2017, making India one of the world's most indebted countries. The Indian economy has become totally dependent on foreign capital inflows, including both foreign direct investment inflows and speculative capital inflows, to stay afloat. All the glib talk about our large foreign exchange reserves is meaningless; as we have shown in several of our writings, our foreign exchange reserves are much less than our 'vulnerable external liabilities' (foreign capital that has come into the country that can leave the country very quickly). This means that if foreign investors decide to pull out their money from India—which they can do at the tap of a computer key—our foreign exchange reserves are simply insufficient to prevent the economy from once again plunging into foreign exchange bankruptcy, similar to what happened in 1990-91.

In financial year 2017-18, our external accounts situation is getting worse. During the first half (H1) of this financial year, India's current account deficit (CAD) rose

to \$22.2 billion, or 1.8% of GDP, as compared to \$3.8 billion or 0.4% of GDP during H1 of 2016-17. Our trade deficit for the first six months of this year zoomed to \$74.8 billion from \$ 49.4 billion in H1 of 2016-17.

Regarding growth figures too, the Finance Minister continues to behave like an ostrich sticking its head in the sand to hide from realities. He continues to claim that the economy is doing very well. The fact of the matter is, even after the government twice revised the methodology of calculating GDP growth rate to make the GDP growth figures look good and above 7%, GDP growth rate started falling again from 2016 onwards. It fell consecutively for six straight quarters, from 9.2% in first quarter of 2016 to 5.7% in the second quarter of 2017. Now, the government claims the economy has started recovering once again, it grew at 6.3% in the third quarter of 2017 and is expected to grow even faster after that.

In actuality, this claim of the growth rebounding is based on incomplete data, and so is not correct. That is because this official estimate of the economy growing at 6.3% is based on quarterly data, and this quarterly data is largely based on information provided by the organised sectors of the economy only. It does not include data from the unorganised sectors of the economy, and this sector contributes to 93% of the employment and 45% of the total output. Data for the unorganised sector is collected by the government through periodic surveys. This unorganised sector that was hit hard by first demonetisation (announced in November 2016) and then by GST (rolled out in July 2017). However, the government has carried out no

surveys to estimate the impact of these policy measures on the unorganised sector. Therefore, the data used by the government to estimate the quarterly growth rate of the economy does not include the shock experienced by the unorganised sector. This means that the official growth rate figure given by the Finance Minister at best shows that the organised sector growth accelerated from 5.7% in the second quarter to 6.3% in the third quarter. Data provided by private surveys point to a large negative rate of growth for the unorganised sectors. Combining the two, the rate of growth of the economy for not just the third quarter of 2017, but for the first and second quarter too, is probably only around 1%, and not the 5 to 7% being claimed by the government.

There is no formal data to show the job creation in the economy—the government very conveniently does not collect this data. Unofficial studies show that job growth in the economy has probably fallen to its lowest ever level since Independence, with formal job growth plummeting to near zero.

With the Finance Minister not willing to admit that the economy is in crisis, he is obviously not concerned about increasing government spending, specially in the social sectors, to give a boost to economic growth. He has reiterated the fraudulent fiscal deficit theory in his speech, stating that the government attaches utmost priority to controlling fiscal deficit, and therefore he promised to bring it down from the revised estimate of 3.5% in 2017-18 to 3.3% in 2018-19. As had been demonstrated by Keynes several decades ago, the economic theory that governments must balance their expenditure with income and bring down the fiscal deficit to near zero is plain humbug. The reason why global capital and

India's foreign creditors are insisting on the government reining in its fiscal deficit is because it serves as an excuse to cut our social sector expenditures. And that is precisely what the government has done in this budget too. The budget speech as usual makes tall claims about the government's concerns for the poor and improving the social sectors to provide everyone an opportunity to 'realise their full potential'. But as has been the norm for all of Jaitley's budgets so far, this is not matched by financial allocations. We shall be discussing this in greater detail in subsequent issues of Janata.

The finance minister also claims that his government is committed towards welfare for farmers, but again, this is a big lie. What matters is not claims but financial allocation, and the allocation for the Department of Agriculture has been increased by only 5%—a cut in real terms!

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Unique Symbol of

Non-violence and Brotherhood

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Awards Losing their Sheen

Kuldip Nayar

I do not find the enthusiasm which marked the early Republic Days. I recall how we would get up early in the morning to be ready to line up on the Rajpath leading to India Gate where different battalions of Army, Navy and the Air Force personnel and armed police displayed their martial prowess.

The President comes down in a buggy, drawn by horses from Rashtrapati Bhawan to the saluting dais. Prime Minister receives him. He takes the salute. Normally, India invites one Guest of Honour from a foreign nation and he or she is hosted with all pomp and show.

But this year, the Republic Day had several guests of honour, mostly from the ASEAN countries. To accommodate all the guests the dais, which used to be about 35 feet, had to be stretched to 90 feet. A huge departure, one should say. The invitations to all ASEAN heads was "to celebrate our long-standing friendship" and the government of India has made elaborate arrangements to strengthen the bonding with these countries.

Republic Day is also the day when awards are given to the people who have excelled themselves in various fields, especially to the services personnel who have shown gallantry in times of troubles on the border and those who had sacrificed their lives defending India. These are deserving people

But over the years, the other awards have come to be given to the workers of the ruling party, at present, Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP). This is, however, contrary to the thinking of framers of the

constitution. They banned awards. That is the reason that when the Janata Party came in the wake of the popular movement, led by Gandhian Jayaprakash Narayan, stopped that practice. The person who initiated the awards was India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. He wanted the recognition of people, who had excelled themselves in the fields of literary, economic or scientific. No money is given because the award was too valuable to be weighed on the scales of monetary benefit.

Nehru also did not want the award to be linked with politics. He did not envisage that one day the entire exercise of selection would get politicized. The government would pick up its chamchas (sycophants) to reward his or her services to the ruling party.

I recall that initially the Republic Day awards, started some 60 years ago, were under the Ministry of External Affairs which Nehru headed. Subsequently, the job was entrusted to the Home Ministry which gave the responsibility to one deputy secretary. He had too many things on his plate. He passed on the task to the Information Officer attached to the ministry. That is how I came to handle the job because I was then the Home Ministry's Information Officer.

The mode of selection was arbitrary. The Prime Minister and other ministers would suggest one or more names which I, as information officer, went on stacking in a file. Almost a month before the Republic Day I had to shortlist the names. I must admit I followed no rules while preparing

the list which went to the deputy secretary in charge, then to the Home Secretary and finally to the Home Minister. I found very few changes in the list I sent.

But the toughest job was preparing the citations. I would have the dictionary and Roget's Thesaurus before me. In some cases, I had the bio-data to guide me. Mostly they contained a mere cryptic description of the person whether he was a scientist, an academician or economist. That helped me somewhat but preparing the citation on that basis was challenging.

The entire process was so haphazard that the Supreme Court had to intervene to ask the government to constitute a selection committee, including an opposition leader as its member. Some order came to prevail once the committee was in position. Yet, preparing the citation was my task. The draft gazette notification of names was issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan. I recollect that once the name of Ms Lazarus was suggested by the President. We, in the home ministry, thought that the honour had been conferred on the then famous educationist Ms Lazarous. Accordingly, the gazette notification was made public.

But when President Rajendra Prasad saw the notification, he said the name he had suggested was that of a nurse. She had attended to him while he got a bout of asthma when he was travelling to Hyderabad from Karnool in Andhra Pradesh. We were all embarrassed that the honour had been bestowed on a wrong person. But we could do nothing because the name was

already in the public domain. That year two Lazarous' were given the awards.

In the past, when the Congress was in power it conferred the Padma Bhushan award to the US hotelier Sant Singh Chatwal despite some criminal cases pending against him. There was a furore in the country but home ministry justified his selection on the plea that he was a known Indian who had served the cause of the country abroad. But there are several cases of eminent people refusing to accept the award on the ground that the panel of selectors was not capable enough to judge their work.

The lesson to be learnt is whether there should be any award at all. The experience is that the ruling party tends to give "recognition" to the people who are either members of the party or are connected with it in some way. The real purpose is lost because the recognition is extended only to those who are close to the party.

This only emphasizes the argument that the awards are not according to merits. This charge will remain because the selection is done by people who are nominated by the government. Government should have included the opposition leader in the selection panel but he or she would be in the minority. There should be a debate in the country on the importance of awards. They have outlived their utility which was not there even when we they were introduced.

When the Constitution has banned awards why should they be there. They violate the spirit of the constitution and the general understanding. Even their introduction was wrong. Prime Minister Narendra Modi should initiate the debate in the country to know whether the awards should continue or not.

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Letter to the Editor

Sir,

In the article captioned 'Gujarat Elections' (Janata: December 31, 2017) by my esteemed friend, Justice (Retd.) Rajindar Sachar, the year in which the Congress Socialist Party walked out of the Congress and renamed it as the Socialist Party has been inadvertently mentioned as 1946. It was 1948.

The same article mentions that Dr. Lohia was elected to the Lok Sabha in 1964-65 (only one year can be mentioned). The fact is that Dr. Lohia first contested the election to the Third Lok Sabha in 1962 against Pandit Nehru from Phulpur constituency in Allahabad District but lost. Later in 1963 he was elected to the Lok Sabha in a by-election from Farrukhabad. He was re-elected to the Fourth Lok Sabha in 1967 from Kannauj (UP) but unfortunately passed away the same year on October 12.

I beg to differ with Justice Sachar in his assertion that the relations between Dr. Ram Mahohar Lohia and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru 'never became low'. There was a time when as the Congress President Jawaharlal Nehru was so impressed by the young Lohia when he returned from Germany with a Ph.D. degree that even though Lohia was only aged 26 Nehru appointed him as Secretary of the Foreign Affairs Department in the AICC in 1936. They were close to each other. But after the Socialists left the Congress in 1948, the relations between the two leaders gradually started deteriorating. We need not go into the details here. In the late 1950s, Dr. Lohia started calling him as 'Nehru Pandit' instead of Pandit Nehru. Those familiar with the rural areas of eastern UP and Bihar will

know that the word 'Pandit' is used after the name of poor and less educated Brahmans given to performing poojas at the homes of their jajmans and preparing janmapatris or kundalis. The episode in the Lok Sabha where Dr. Lohia incorrectly traced the ancestry of Pandit Nehru is well known. He thought it fit to mention that the grandfather of Pandit Nehru was a chaprasi (peon) in Delhi. Pandit Nehru gave a repartee: "I am grateful to Dr. Lohia for acquainting me with my ancestry. To put the record straight, my grandfather was the City Kotwal of Delhi. However, even if he had been a peon it would have been a matter of pride for me and it would have been a matter of pride for Indian democracy that the grandson of a peon could become the Prime Minister of India." The House roared in laughter and Dr. Lohia had to cut a sorry figure. Such personal remarks were not considered becoming from a great intellectual like Dr. Lohia.

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Tribute to Badshah Khan on his 128th birth anniversary

Khan AbdulGhaffar Khan- Unique Symbol of Non-violence and Brotherhood

Chandra Bhal Tripathi

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan nicknamed Badshah Khan or Bacha Khan (1890-1988) was a unique leader of the Indian freedom movement. The Frontier Gandhi will be ever remembered as the true inheritor of the Gandhi legacy. There is no parallel in world history to the miracle achieved by him in converting the dreaded gun-toting Pashtoons into firm believers in the twin principles of non-violence and satyagraha. There may be a solitary case of the dreaded dacoit Angulimaala of Sravasti, so named because he used to chop off fingers of those whom he looted and wore a garland of those fingers, who surrendered before Bhagawan Buddha and became His disciple, or there may be stray cases of such metamorphosis scattered in pages of world history, but the phenomenon of conversion of the Pashtoons into non-violent KhudaiKhidmatgars (servants of God) in such huge numbers (about one lakh) is indeed nothing short of a miracle.

During the freedom struggle there were several outstanding selfless devotees to the philosophy of satyagraha and non-violence who were popularly known as the Gandhi of a particular Province or even a district including my home district Basti in eastern UP. But there were only two national leaders with whose names the title Gandhi was inseparably linked: Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan aka Frontier Gandhi and Khan Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai aka Balochi Gandhi (1907-73). I was privileged to have seen Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and the other two Gandhis identified with him.

Badshah Khan was born on

February 6, 1890 in village Utnmanzai near Charsadda in NWFP. His father, Bahram Khan, was a local landlord. The erstwhile British Province is now renamed as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan and Charsadda has been made into a district. He died at Peshawar on January 20, 1988 at an unusually ripe age of 98. A citizen of India for 57 years he was forced to accept the partition of his motherland and decide to live in his homeland as a Pakistani citizen for 41 years a significant part of which he had to spend in Pakistani jails fighting for democracy and justice.

His elder brother, Abdul Jabbar Khan famously known as Dr. Khan Sahib (1883-1958), nearly eight years older than him and a medical doctor, was a shining star of the freedom movement. He will be remembered as the popular Premier of the NWFP at a time when the Muslims practically all over India were emotionally blackmailed by the Muslim League slogan of 'Islam in danger' and voted for the Muslim League candidates from the seats reserved for the Muslims in 1946 elections to the Provincial Assemblies under the pernicious scheme of separate electorate designed by the British to 'divide and rule'. In that vicious atmosphere all the Congress Muslim leaders including Rafi Ahmad Kidwai were defeated in UP. The only exception was Bijnor District from where Hafiz Mohammad Ibrahim and two of his Congress colleagues won all the three Muslim seats. In the whole country the North West Frontier Province stood like a bedrock of nationalism, the Congress winning the majority of the Muslim seats and Dr. Khan Sahib anointed as the

Premier of the Province. After Partition the two brothers decided to stay on in Pakistan among their own Pushtoons. But they were soon imprisoned. However, Dr. Khan Sahib joined the Central Cabinet of Muhammad Ali Bogra as Minister for Communications in 1954. This led to his split with his brother, Badshah Khan. Dr. Khan Sahib also became the first Chief Minister of West Pakistan in October 1955, later founded the Republican Party, in June 1957 was elected to the National Assembly of Pakistan from Quetta and was assassinated on May 9, 1958 at Lahore.

For the biographical details of Badshah Khan Wikipedia provides a good reliable source. Two other important sources are: (i) Freedom Movement and Indian Muslims by Prof. Santimoy Roy (National Book Trust, 1979), pp. 58-59, pp. 61-70 (ii) My Life and Struggle: Autobiography of Badshah Khan as narrated to K.B. Narang.

The years 1945-47 were very tumultuous in the history of the twentieth century India and in the history of the freedom struggle of our motherland. The Second World War had ended. In the latter half of 1945 the national leaders lodged in Ahmednagar Central Jail were released. These included Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Maulana AbulKalam Azad, Acharya Narendra Deva, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and others who were all arrested at Bombay on August 9, 1942 when Mahatma Gandhi asked the British rulers to 'Quit India' and gave his countrymen the call 'Do or die'. The sad news of the fatal accident of Netaji on August 18,

1945 at Taipei airport was still fresh in the minds of the Indian people who were greatly inspired by the saga of the INA formed by Netaji in order to liberate India from the British rule. There was fervour all around among all the sections of the people-- the peasants, the working class, the students and the youth, the writers and the poets. The naval ratings revolted against the British officers in Bombay. The war-time hero of Britain, Sir Winston Churchill, had been ousted and the Labour Party led by Clement Attlee saw the writing on the wall and decided to leave India. But the British Government laid out a plan to divide India as if following a scorched earth policy. Till the end Mahatma Gandhi was opposed to the division of the country on the basis of the Two Nation Theory.

At the session of the All India Congress Committee in Bombay on June 3, 1946 the proposal for partition of India was adopted. The only three members who opposed it were Badshah Khan, Babu Purushottamdas Tandon and Sri Jayaprakash Narayan. When the Congress declared its acceptance of the partition plan without consulting the Khudai Khidmatgar leaders, he felt very sad and told the Congress: "You have thrown us to the wolves." At that juncture great national leaders like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had acquiesced into the British plan of partitioning India into India and Pakistan and setting up of an Interim Government. An uncharitable view of the situation is that both Patel and Nehru were anxious to become the first Prime Minister of India. However, when the occasion arose Gandhiji is reported to have preferred Nehru to Patel. The process of formation of the Interim Government was accelerated on account of the 'Direct Action' plan of the then wily Premier of Bengal, HasanShahidSuhrawardy, leading to mass killings and cruelties in

communal riots triggered by the Muslim League. In the first flush of the riots Hindus of Calcutta were reported to be the main victims but soon reprisals followed in Calcutta and elsewhere, mainly in Bihar. All kinds of rumours were afloat. In Allahabad where I was a student the rumour reached that a well-known Marwari Seth had announced a reward of Rs.500 to anyone who would bring the head of a Muslim and that professional killers were commissioned from Mirzapur in UP. (A rumour similar to the Buddhist story that the Hindu King of Ayodhya, PushyamitraShunga, had announced a reward of one gold coin to anyone bringing the head of a Buddhist monk.)

In those disturbed conditions the Interim Government was sworn in on September 2, 1946 with the following twelve Ministers: Jawaharlal Nehru (Prime Minister), Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Sarat Chandra Bose, C. Rajagopalachari and Jagjivan Ram (Congress nominees); SardarBaldev Singh, CH Bhabha and John Matthai (representatives of three minorities); Asaf Ali, Sir Shafat Ahmad and Syed Ali Zaheer (three Muslim representatives while two seats for Muslims were left vacant). The Muslim League observed September 2 as the Black Day. Later the Muslim League realised its mistake and the loss it had caused to itself and joined the Coalition Interim Government on October 25, 1946 necessitating the reshuffle of the Interim Government with the following 14 Ministers: Congress (6): Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, C. Rajagopalachari, Asaf Ali and Jagjivan Ram; Muslim League (5): Liaquat Ali Khan, I.I. Chundrigar, AbdurRabNishtar, Ghazanfar Ali Khan and J.N. Mandal; Minorities (3): John Matthai, C.H. Bhabha and Baldev Singh. This Coalition Interim Government proved a miserable failure. The Muslim

League Ministers merely created obstacles and I presume they were awaiting creation of a separate Dominion Status of Pakistan in less than ten months.

The latter part of 1946 witnessed some of the worst communal riots India had ever seen, in Noakhali (now in Bangladesh) and Bihar. On August 16, 1946 the All India Muslim League proclaimed Direct Action Day in Calcutta as part of their demand for a separate state for Muslims. In the city about 4,000 people were killed. These riots triggered communal violence across the country. Serious and large scale riots occurred in Noakhali District from October 10 to 21, 1946 which provoked violence in Bihar. Earlier riots over local issues had taken place in Bihar in June and September but the largest riots of the year occurred from October 27 to November 6 during which period a large number of Muslims were killed by Hindus in retaliation for the Noakhali riots. The riots were severe enough that Jawaharlal Nehru, then the head of the Interim Government, threatened to bombard rioters from the air. On 5 November, Mahatma Gandhi, who was in Calcutta, visiting riot-stricken areas, stated that he would fast unto death if the violence in Bihar did not stop within 24 hours. His statement was broadcast nationally by Dr. Rajendra Prasad. At the time, official reports stated that 400 people had been killed. The Muslim League stated that Hindu mobs had killed 30,000 people in the province. Historians have referred to the Great Calcutta Killings of 1946 as the first explicitly political communal violence in the region.

Mahatma Gandhi's Noakhali padayatra has historical importance. He started for Noakhali on November 6. On November 9 he embarked on his padayatra for seven weeks, covering 116 miles

and 47 villages. He organised prayer meetings, met local Muslim leaders and tried to win their confidence. He discontinued his mission halfway and started for Bihar on March 2, 1947.

In his mission to restore peace and stop communal riots Mahatma Gandhi took with him very few selected companions and the foremost among them was Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. I had the privilege of having his darshan at Allahabad Central Station when he and the INA hero Major General Shah Nawaz Khan were accompanying Mahatma Gandhi to Bihar in 1946 to restore peace and provide succour to the riot victims, the Muslims. It was a memorable occasion for me as I requested Babu for his autograph. In those days one had to contribute Rs. 5 to the Harijan Fund for getting his autograph. I could not have afforded Rs. 5 in those days. My maternal cousin, the daughter of the Additional District Magistrate of Allahabad, had given me her autograph book and Rs. 5 for the purpose. Babu asked me: "Poisha de diyahai?" With folded hands I replied: "Haan, Babu, paisa de diyahai." Then he signed in Devanagari: Mo. Ka. Gandhi.

I got another opportunity to see Badshah Khan from closer quarters at the Meerut Congress in November 1946 where I was working as a volunteer of the All India Students' Congress and our camp was close to the camp of the KhudaiKhidmatgars. His son, Wali Khan (1917-2006), President of the NWFP Students' Congress, also stayed in the same camp. While all the other members of the Congress Working Committee stayed in well furnished tents near the venue of the Congress session Badshah Khan stayed with his KhudaiKhidmatgars in an ordinary tent at a place far from the venue PyareLal Sharma Nagar. (Sri PyareLal Sharma was a prominent Congress leader of

Meerut and was the Education Minister of UP in 1937.) One cannot believe today how simply Badshah Khan lived. His belongings comprised only three pairs of salwars and long Pathankurtas of grey colour known as 'militia', he would himself wash his clothes daily and did not bother if the clothes he wore were ironed or not.

A remarkable fact about this important Congress session at Meerut on November 23, 1946 is that except Mahatma Gandhi all the important national leaders and Ministers of the Interim Government (barring of course the Muslim League Ministers) were present there. It is only Mahatma Gandhi who attached more importance to his padayatra mission in Noakhali than to this historic Congress session. The same stoic attitude in the Mahatma was discernible when he refused to attend the Independence Day celebrations in Delhi. Only Babu was capable of doing so.

When the Partition became a reality Badshah Khan decided to stay with his people and suffered incarceration by successive Pakistani Governments. When he was invited by India on the occasion of the birth centenary of his mentor, Mahatma Gandhi, in 1969 he visited many places, condemned the communal riots going on at Ahmedabad and elsewhere, appealed for sanity and peace and criticised those Congress leaders who had accepted the Partition plan. He said at several places: "We fought for the freedom and unity of India but you threw us before wolves."

Badshah Khan's son, Khan Wali Khan, followed the legacy of his father, was imprisoned five times in Pakistani jails and survived several assassination attempts in his 48-year long political career. He nourished the National Awami Party

founded by his father in 1956. He valiantly carried on his struggle for autonomy for his Pashtoon people and for restoration of democracy. Wali Khan's son, Asfandyar Wali Khan, had strayed from the path of non-violence in his younger days but today, at the age of 68, he too is carrying on the torch of his father and grandfather. He is a Member of Parliament and President of the Awami National Party. He got his land renamed as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2010. But he has not forgotten the torture inflicted on him in prison by the ZA Bhutto regime and his conviction for 15 years. I recall that at the ShahidiDiwas observed by the Society for Communal Harmony and the Khudai Khidmatgar organisation at Sabka Ghar in Okhla, Delhi, on November 18, 2018 I had observed that in my view maximum sacrifices for the country were made by two families, those of Badshah Khan and Sardar Bhagat Singh. It is gratifying that my friend Faisal Khan and his band of idealistic youth drawn from various corners of India have revived the old spirit of sacrifice and service of the poor by restarting the KhudaiKhidmatgar movement since 2011. One has to visit SabkaGhar in Okhla area of Delhi to see how these young and idealistic followers of Babu and Badshah Khan belonging to different faiths lead a commune-like life with perfect understanding and peace and engage themselves in several constructive activities in the service of the poor and the deprived. I was privileged to attend the inaugural function of Sabka Ghar on January 18, 2017 and the All India meet of KhudaiKhidmatgars at Rajendra Bhawan, New Delhi, on November 26, 2017. May its workers prove true to the ideals preached by Babu and Badshah Khan.

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Fact Finding Report of Bhima Koregaon Riots

Bhima Koregaon is situated on the eastern side of Pune on the Pune –Ahmednagar highway, 25 km from the city of Pune, on the banks of Bhima River. Its population is about 7000-8000.

Bhima Koregaon valour day was initiated by Dr B.R. Ambedkar 90 years ago in 1927, to commemorate the Battle of Bhima-Koregaon on 1 January 1818. From 1927 to 2018 the size of the crowd consisting of depressed classes from all over Maharashtra went on increasing from a mere thousand to about 15 lakhs this year. Prior to this year's gathering, many conferences were held all over Maharashtra in which hundreds of anti-caste groups under the banner of Elgaar had participated, which included our group too, Rashtra Seva Dal. These conferences had facilitated the record crowd at Bhima-Koregaon this year. The administration was well-informed about these developments.

In 1990-91, on the occasion of the death anniversary of Mahatma Jyotiba Phule and the birth centenary of Dr B.R. Ambedkar, a decision was taken to celebrate certain historical events, such as the establishment of the first women's school at Bhidewada, Pune, the birth place of Savitribai Phule at Naygaon, Pune, the first statue of Gautam Buddha installed by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar at Dehu road near Pune, and the victory memorial of the battle of Bhima-Koregaon initiated by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on 1 January 1927.

The war at Bhima-Koregaon was fought between the British and the Peshwas, in which Peshwas had 20,000 soldiers and the British regiment known as Bombay Native Infantry, 2nd battalion, 1st regiment had only about 1,000 soldiers but was armed with superior

ammunitions. This regiment had a majority of Mahars in it. The battle was won by the British which ended the Peshwai. During the Peshwai, the caste system was at its climax in which women and Dalits were victims of caste-oppression and humiliation. The Dalits were required to carry a pot hung from their chest for spitting and a broom was tied to their waist while walking on the streets. This humiliation was one reason why the Mahars fought so bravely on the side of the British. This is the reason why Ambedkar started celebrating this event as a victory day.

Another version of this history is that the end of Peshwai did not result in the end of caste oppression but rather, after 1857, the British assured the Brahmins and Muslims that they will not interfere in their religious affairs. They disbanded the Mahar regiment in accordance with this assurance. Hence we should look at the British strategy with suspicion and refrain from celebrating this day as a day of valor which amounts to appeasement of the British and is therefore anti-national. The heirs of the Peshwas and some Hindutwawadi forces hold on to this view and had approached the court to ban celebration of this day as a day of valor which was rejected by the court. The war memorial however is at that place for the last 200 years and the names of martyrs are inscribed on it, which include the names of not only Mahars but also names of a few Marathas and other backward caste soldiers.

A few kilometers away from this memorial is located the samadhi of Chatrapati Sambhaji at a place called Wadhu (Budruk). A famous historian V.C. Bendre had discovered this samadhi in 1939 which is situated in the Maharwada. Sambhaji was a scholar of Sanskrit

which became an eyesore for the Brahmins since knowledge of Sanskrit was prohibited for the non-Brahmins on the basis of Manusmriti. It is the Brahmins who advised Aurangzeb to punish Sambhaji in accordance with the code of Manusmriti, which called for his eyes to be taken out for the crime of reading the Vedas, his head be cut for memorising them and his body be cut into pieces. A fatwa was also taken out that no one should cremate his body parts. However Govind Mahar took the responsibility of his last rites and cremated his body after sewing up these parts. Historians V.C. Bendre, Kamal Gokhale and Sharad Patil have corroborated this version.

However there is another version coming from Hindutwavaadi forces, which claims that the body parts were not sewed by a Mahar but was done by a Maratha. Hence the Marathas of the village are claiming that it is the ancestor of a Maratha family named Sevale who had performed the last rites of Sambhaji. The Hindutwavaadi forces in western Maharashtra are giving this twist to the story of punishment to Sambhaji for the last 25 years which has added fuel to fire in the riots on January 1 this year.

On 28 December 2017, the present family members of Govind Mahar had put up a hoarding indicating the direction towards his samadhi. Some miscreants from the same village gathered and removed the hoarding. They also removed and threw away the tin shed over the samadhi of Govind Mahar. The family of Govind Mahar lodged a complaint in the police station and 49 people were arrested from the village. On 1 January 2018 a rumour spread that there was something suspicious over Sambhaji Maharaj Samadhi. A Hindu Aghadi

organisation was active for quite some time in this area. They had been holding public meetings for the last three weeks and were giving warnings to people that those who would assemble on January 1 are anti-nationals. One of them held a press conference on 28 December 2017 at Pune and said that India is probably the only country where some anti-national people can celebrate the victory of a foreign power.

On 29, 30 and 31 December 2017 there was complete peace in Bhima-Koregaon, Wadhu (Budruk) and Sanaswadi. However some unknown people were found loitering around in these villages. The Bhima-Koregaon gram panchayat had passed a resolution to observe a bandh in Bhima-Koregaon on 1st January 2008 and had submitted a copy of the resolution to the Police station at Shikrapur. The police underestimated the situation and ignored it.

On 1 January this year, people were approaching Bhima-Koregaon from all sides. The open space around Bhima-Koregaon were filled with vehicles parked by those who had come to celebrate the Bhima-Koregaon memorial of valour. After parking their vehicles, the people which included women, children and elders came walking 3-4 kilometers to the memorial.

On the other side, thousands of people with saffron flags had assembled at Vadhu (Budruk) at 10am. They launched their attack on the people who had come to pay their respects to the Bhima-Koregaon memorial with stones and other weapons at about 11am. Hundreds of vehicles were burnt down. Petrol was freely used to burn the vehicles. The rioting crowd then went towards Sanaswadi and Chakan-Shikrapur road. They burnt a shop belonging to one Salim Inamdar. A godown belonging to Salim Khan was put on fire. A tyre

shop belonging to Asgar Ali Ansari was burnt. His younger brother who had taken shelter inside the shop fled when the shop was put on fire. A cylinder in the next hotel burst which burnt the adjoining shop Sarvesh Autolines belonging to Bhausahab Khetre. Two trucks (nos. MH-12-786 and MH-12-2757) in front of Razzak Bhai's garage were put on fire. A shop Ranabhai Marble belonging to Shivraj Prajapati was looted. A godown of firewood belonging to Haribhau Darekar was burnt down.

At about 6 pm, a crowd attacked the house of a Dalit by the name of Sudam Shankar Pawar. He is a project affected person who has been rehabilitated in Sanaswadi and has received two acres of land. There is cane sugar cultivation in 1 and ½ acres of this land, and in the rest of his land he has built a Buddha Vihar and a meeting hall along with an open space. He has also built 29 one room row houses (chaal). The crowd entered his field, put on fire his sugar-cane field from all sides, damaged the vehicles parked in the open space and also broke the glass panes of the Buddha Vihar. The houses and the fields of Darekar and Hargude that are located just in front of his house were left intact. From this fact, it is apparent that the rioters targeted Sudam Pawar's house and field because he was Dalit. Similarly they pelted stones at the houses of Ravi Kamble and Athwale. The studio of a famous painter and sculptor, Elvin Fernandes was also burnt. The property of Mutha Jain was put on fire. People were stopped and harassed on the Pune-Ahmednagar road. A fire brigade vehicle was also put on fire. In all, a total of 5,000 vehicles were destroyed. 50 cars and luxury buses were burnt.

A few questions can be raised regarding the whole incident.

1. Who took the decision for the bandh on 1 January 1918? How come a village which claims to

provide hospitality to outsiders every year gave a call for bandh on this day this year, as a result of which visitors did not even get a glass of water to drink.

2. We noticed a tremendous fear psychosis among the common people in Bhima Koregaon. They requested us repeatedly not to write their names in our report. Due to this same fear, the present family members of Govind Mahar of Wadhu (Budruk) who had filed a case have now taken it back. All 49 people who were arrested in the case of destruction of Govind Mahar's samadhi have now been freed. What is the cause of this fear psychosis?

3. The Hindutwawadi forces clearly involved in this entire episode are roaming free, giving interviews and circulating clippings distorting facts on the social media, putting all the blame on the Dalits for the incident. What is the administration doing?

4. This whole episode is clearly an attempt to divide the Dalits and the Marathas, and is aimed at disrupting the social fabric of Maharashtra. Why are the law and order agencies not paying attention to this grave polarisation taking place in front of their eyes?

- Our demands
- 1) Arrest immediately the main culprits involved in the riots of Bhima-Koregaon.
 - 2) A judicial enquiry be immediately instituted and its report published forthwith.
 - 3) The role of the police and the administration be enquired upon and the guilty persons be punished
 - 4) The role of the media in the entire episode be investigated.

Team members of Rashtra Seva Dal who conducted this fact finding: Dr Suresh Khairnar (President), Allaaddin Sheikh, Vinay Sawant, Feroz Mithiborwala, Puja Badekar and Shivraj Suryavanshi, in association with Bharat Patankar and Kishor Dhamale.

- **Rashtra Seva Dal Team**
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BJP onslaught on Primary Education

Pannalal Surana

It must be borne in mind that in far off villages, attendance is going to be limited because the parents themselves are illiterate and hard pressed for earning means of livelihood. It is necessary that sustained efforts must be put in by social organisations and teachers to persuade the children to attend schools. Closing down schools is not at all warranted.

One is forced to arrive at the conclusion that it is the national policy of the BJP to revive the old system which had kept doors to education closed to poorer sections which are also socially backward. A real revival of Manuwaad seems to be on their cards!

The BJP is bent upon spreading the red carpet to corporate lords even in the field of education. Great social reformers of the 19th century, like Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Jyotiba and Savitribai Phule, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Ramasamy Periyar and so many others had

suffered a lot at the hands of orthodox people in their endeavour to spread education for women and the downtrodden sections. Mahatma Gandhi had lent great support to all these efforts. Saintry persons like Gadge Maharaj and Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil had built up large networks of schools and colleges in the rural areas. The cultural nationalism of BJP seems bent upon undoing all this and turn the wheels backward.

In a number of States, there is a ban on filling the vacancies in the secondary schools and colleges caused by retirement. The usual argument advanced is that there is paucity of funds. But the governments are spending lavishly on propagandist advertisements, pompous ceremonies, etc.

It is high time all progressive forces to join hands to pull down this regressive regime.

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In their invitation, Smt Asharfi Khan and Priyanka Varma, convenors of the Madhya Pradesh convention referred to above, have mentioned that according to a CAG report, 4811 schools are without teachers, another 5000 have only one teacher per school, there is no library in any school, no water in 5176 and no playground in 45,000 schools. If the State Government is so negligent in providing basic amenities, how can it dare to complain about poor student attendance?

Sensitive Issues Bangladesh Faces

Mrinal Biswas

Elections in Bangladesh are due to be held towards the end of this year. The country is facing several important issues whose repercussions extend to even beyond her borders. It is important to address these issues. But the issues nevertheless will persist in some forms or others with whatever the outcomes of the elections.

First of course is how far Myanmar is prepared to take back the staggering number of 6,88,000 Rohingya refugees who fled to Bangladesh after a severe army counter-insurgency operation against the Rohingya people that followed the August Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) strikes on Myanmar military establishments on August 24. The international outcry on the fast developing refugee issue was caustically articulated by Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussain, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, as 'a textbook example of ethnic cleansing'. He even saw elements of genocide in the attack on the Rohingyas while speaking at the UN Human Rights Council last December at Geneva. (UN defines genocide as acts intended to destroy a national, ethnic, racial or religious group in whole or in part).

The Rohingya extremists' violent attacks on Myanmar's military establishment had missed international attention till the refugee crisis began. After that, the potential of it assuming the character of pan-Islamic extremism has made India and some countries quite concerned. India then moved in multiple directions. It asked Myanmar to exert restraint while dealing with Rohingya extremism, helped Bangladesh in her relief

operations during refugee influx, struck an agreement with Myanmar to provide help in economic development of Rohingya-concentrated Rakhine province, looked positively at the Bangladesh-Myanmar agreement for repatriation of refugees, while making it known that some 40,000 Rohingyas taking shelter in India will be sent back to Myanmar.

The Bangladesh government of Sheikh Hasina will politically gain both domestically and internationally if it can effectively implement voluntary repatriation of Rohingya refugees in the next two years, as agreed. The first phase of repatriation set to start on 23 January was held up for lack of preparations on both sides. There are reports of continued army operations in Rakhine. But the Hasina government is understandably keen to send back a sizable number of Muslim Rohingyas before the elections to circumvent any possible opposition ploy of exploiting the situation pregnant with Islamic fundamentalism. This is a hard test for Bangladesh.

For Bangladesh, and for the Hasina government in particular, it wants to resolve with India the issue of accessing Teesta river water before the coming elections. After former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's failure to conclude an agreement for sharing of the river waters because of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's intransigence, his successor Narendra Modi could only go a half way to assuage Bangladesh's feelings of deprivation. The present rulers of Bangladesh are hardly enthused by Modi's assurance to his

counterpart Sheikh Hasina Wajed for an eventual agreement on the Teesta river water. Since elections are not very far away, Bangladeshi leaders belonging to Awami League want some tangible results to prevent the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and its diehard anti-India ally, Jamaat-e-Islami, from alleging that Sheikh Hasina is a pawn in the hands of India and thus benefiting in the polls.

In the coming elections, it is certain that BNP will enter the election fray, and will not take a poll boycott stand this time. After Begum Khaleda Zia's failure to win India's support for her demand that the next Bangladesh elections be held with a caretaker government, that is, without Sheikh Hasina's Awami League being at the helm, Begum Zia's BNP has not only hardened its attitude towards the Awami League government, it has also launched an anti-India tirade to the satisfaction of Jamaat-e-Islami. Significantly, both Awami League and BNP seem eager to hold talks with the Modi Government. BNP, sensing a declining Hindu support for its traditional attachment for the Awami League, is trying to balance its political moves so as to prevent the 12 percent minority votes from going to the Awami League.

Insecurity surrounds the Sheikh Hasina's government, considering that reports of coups keep emanating from Bangladesh time and again. Apart from some military men wanting to directly involve themselves in government affairs, the Islamist radicals remain a potential threat. Most of them are rallying under Jammāt ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh and

Ansarullah Bangla Team. Even Myanmar's Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) is quite active in Bangladesh and Rohingyas are known to provide foot soldiers to all these extra-parliamentary parties which are continuing their clandestine armed operations with or without the support of Pakistan's ISI and ISIS of the Middle East. Indeed, ARSA appears to be the headache of Myanmar, Bangladesh and India all at the same time. Bangladesh claim of demolition of all anti-India terror camps is significant in this context. The serial murders of professed secularists and bloggers have presently stopped, but there is no knowing when they may begin again.

The manner in which Sheikh Hasina has handled her differences with the Chief Justice S.K. Sinha of Bangladesh's Supreme Court is a severe blot on Bangladesh's democracy. This judge belonging to the minority community was made the chief of the judiciary at Hasina's promptings but lost her confidence when Justice Sinha approvingly referred to a Pakistan court order that led to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's disqualification from office. Soon after, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina came down heavily on the Supreme Court Chief Justice S.K. Sinha. Reports began circulating in the media about Justice Sinha's involvement in corruption; the President too called all judges of the Supreme Court, barring the Chief Justice, and handed over to them a list of charges against the Chief Justice. This concerted attack forced Justice Sinha to go on long leave to Australia on leave, and a month later, he resigned. It is obvious that Bangladesh's judicial independence has been compromised, which bodes ill for the country's future.

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Admiral Ramdas' Personal Testimony: Judge Loya's Case

Subject: Why Am I filing a Writ Petition and PIL on the Judge Loya case? How and Why am I concerned?

1. I have always been and remain a great believer in and follower of the Constitution of India which guarantees independence of the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary.
2. The Constitution guarantees every citizen various freedoms, including the freedom of speech, freedom to practice the religion of their choice, and Right to life.
3. Several events in the years since Independence have been indelibly imprinted on my mind from the time that I witnessed at close quarters, the horrors of Partition as a young lad growing up in Delhi in the 1940s. To mention a few - the ruthless slaying and pogrom let loose against the Sikhs in 1984; the inexplicable destruction of places of worship including the Babri Masjid in 1992, and the deliberate killing of large numbers of Muslims in Gujarat in 2002. I continue to watch with mounting dismay, the current and continuous violations of basic human rights, attacks on minorities - especially Muslims and Dalits, and the systematic weakening and debilitation of all our established institutions, including the judiciary. As we celebrate the 68th anniversary of our Republic - each of these events listed above, represents a serious violation of the Constitution, for which I hold the Governments of the day accountable. It is certainly a time to take serious stock of where we have reached and how do we make the necessary course corrections before it is too late.
4. I retired as Chief of the Naval Staff in 1993 after 45 years in the service of the Nation. I moved soon thereafter to live in a small village, Bhaimala, in rural Maharashtra. I have constantly and continuously maintained a critical position about these continuing attempts to undermine and weaken the Constitution and the Democratic framework of the country, and how these affect the most marginalised. I have never hesitated in expressing my views and my unhappiness at these developments in unequivocal terms. These have often taken the form of letters addressed to the topmost leadership in the country.
5. These include one written in October 2015 to the then President and the Prime Minister - expressing my shock at the series of events taking place around the country; then one in 2017 to Shri Ram Nath Kovind jee, the Honorable President and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, soon after his election, concerning the growing intolerance and deteriorating civil military relations among other matters.
6. The latest letter was written by me to the CJI and the CJ -

Bombay High Court, written in November 2017, raising my concerns about the mysterious circumstances surrounding the death of Judge Loya , as outlined in the Caravan Magazine in Nov 2017. This was mainly to urge the Chief Justice of India and the Chief Justice of Bombay High Court to constitute a high level Judicial Enquiry /SIT into the matter and to thus restore public confidence in the image of the judiciary and the highest court in the land – ie the Supreme Court.

7. I have been motivated primarily by an abiding consciousness of my duties as a citizen of India and a proud member of our Armed Forces. I have always sought to communicate my views and disquiet on matters of state, directly to the leadership of our nation from time to time, or whenever, in my perception, we seem to be losing our way and moving away from the broad pathway or Dharma as laid down in the Constitution – which has always been my guiding light.

8. So it is in this present case. I have already written expressing my strong discomfort at the series of disclosures and conflicting versions regarding Judge Loya's sudden and untimely death. The recent Press conference by four of the senior most Judges of the SC only confirmed my own fears that all was not well – and therefore this writ, as a Public interest Litigation, seeking the Courts Directive to set up a high level judicial Enquiry under the direct monitoring of the SC. I am hoping that by so doing, I would add further weightage to the pleas already made , to

inquire into this matter without further delay and further damage to our institutions.

9. I am sharing my reasons for taking this action of seeking direction from the Highest Court in the land, primarily to allay possible allegations of vested interests that might have motivated me. I am 84 years old – and have been keeping indifferent health. I could just as well have kept silent and enjoyed my retirement. However, do I feel deeply that each of us has a duty and a responsibility to work towards realising the dream of building an open, tolerant, inclusive and diverse India – as envisioned in that great document -the Indian Constitution.

10. My experience as a Lok Pal. It was this belief that led me to accept the responsibility of the role of Lok Pal of the Aam Aadmi Party from its inception till I was no longer required ! In keeping with my principled notion that such a role required complete and uncompromising objectivity and non partisan functioning, I never became a member of AAP or any other political party.

11. I have never held a post retirement paid post – either in Government nor in any private for profit entity. I live primarily on my pension and interest on my few savings – and this has enabled me to play the role of an independent voice and critic without any fear or favour. Born in Mumbai; domiciled in Maharashtra; I am perhaps one of the few retired Former Chiefs who continues to live on the land allotted to me for my gallantry award of Vir Chakra after the 1971 operations.

12. My wife and I have cultivated what was banjar land, and we continue to learn about organic farming and the struggles of our rural and farming community – the greatest education we could have had. For nearly twenty five years, we have worked with local communities and children in a number of educational activities ; have led struggles against take over of irrigated farmlands. We have both been deeply involved with work for Peace – in our region, especially with Pakistan, and for a Nuclear free India, a Nuclear free Asia and Nuclear Free World.

Laxminarayan [Ramuj] Ramdas
31 January 2018
Email: lramdas@gmail.com

(Admiral Ramdas filed a petition in the Supreme Court on January 30, 2018 asking the Supreme Court to investigate the death of Judge Loya and the circumstances around it)

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Indian Intellectual Slavery

E.P. Menon

government they wanted to rule over them.

Where is this kind of intellectual honesty today in favour of the poor and illiterate? If more than 1500 MPs and MLAs are reported to be 'criminals', what right do they have to sit in those respectable Houses and make laws for the poor and exploited millions?

Two incidents often come to my mind when I think about our Glorious Culture about which we trumpet a lot. I met a young French woman tourist on the Bangalore University campus some time ago. I asked her a simple question: 'Please tell me your very first impression of India as soon as you landed.'

After thinking for a while, she said: 'India is a Be-Iman country.' 'How come?' I wondered. 'Can you explain?' 'Yes, on the very first evening I took a stroll, saw a small shop and a huge bunch of ripe colourful bananas hanging. Felt hungry. "How much," I asked the man standing and selling. "One three rupees," he said with his fingers. I gave a ten rupee note and said: "Give me three." His hand went to the top, pulled three small bananas and gave them to me, and then he folded his hands in namaste and smiled. A few seconds later, I walked away wondering: why didn't he give me the big bananas and also the balance one rupee back? Then I remembered a fellow Indian woman passenger on the plane sitting next to me telling me: "You should be very careful, this is a Be-Iman country. This is how I learnt the first Hindi word Be-Iman and its meaning Dishonest."'

The second incident was in a me his car and driver for the visit. After an 8 hours drive, I enjoyed the great hospitality of the village and started hearing stories of their claim that 'Ravana had brought Sita to this village first.' A young boy of 14 asked me a question: 'Mr Menon, why do you people in India tell thousands of

lies to your children for years? Will any child in the world believe that there was a man called Ravana with ten heads?' I agreed with him and congratulated him for asking such frank question.

deep forest village of Sri Lanka where I had gone for my anthropology study. I was curious to read about a village called Ravanaguda and the director of the museum offered me his car and driver for the visit. After an 8 hours drive, I enjoyed the great hospitality of the village and started hearing stories of their claim that 'Ravana had brought Sita to this village first.' A young boy of 14 asked me a question: 'Mr Menon, why do you people in India tell thousands of lies to your children for years? Will any child in the world believe that there was a man called Ravana with ten heads?' I agreed with him and congratulated him for asking such frank question.

What is happening right now? The Union Government has sent a proposal to the Parliament for approval that the monthly salary of Supreme Court and High Court judges should be raised from the existing Rs 90,000 to 250,000 with retrospective effect starting from January 1, 2016!!! Is this not a fraud on the poor and illiterate people of India by the intellectual law makers? I would rather call it as Official Judicial Bribery In Advance.

What can be done? Where to begin to free India from Corporate Colonialism And Intellectual Slavery?

May be, we should begin by folding up the present National Anthem (Jana gana mana . . .), keep it in the museum. I offer an award of Rs 10,000 to any young man or woman who will write a new National Anthem For The Future Of India to encourage our honest law-makers to work for a society where Social Equality And Economic Justice Will Be Available To All. What do the intellectuals say?

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