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First among Equals

Kuldip Nayar

Whether it was a proverbial storm in tea cup or something else the fact remains that the judiciary has been exposed. The impartiality with which it is known has been shaken. For the first time judges face people. This is the best headline which I found in an Urdu daily. It told the story and still left many things unsaid. Four judges of the Supreme Court—Justices J. Chelmswar, Ranjan Gogoi, Madan B. Lokur and Kurian Joseph—have created history when they held a press conference to tell their side of story on what Chief of Justice of India Dipak Mishra has been doing. Their contention is that he is only first among equals, nothing more or nothing less. But the Chief Justice, they allege, has spread himself all over.

The questioning of the Chief Justice publicly by the four most senior judges of the apex court has put everybody in a fix. But the government has been correct in not interfering and letting the judiciary to settle the matter itself. Understandably, former chief justices have also expressed their “shock” over the unprecedented press conference by the four judges.

In his reaction, former chief justice R.M Lodha has questioned how such a boiling issue had remained pending for two months. “I am disturbed by today’s development. What happened today is unfortunate and painful for a person who presided over an institution like the Supreme Court. Reacting to the letter made public, the former chief justice is right when he says that the chief justice ought to have discussed it with them addressed those issues.

The issues, as pointed out by the four judges, may not be big. But they need to be addressed because both the chief justice of India and Justice J. Chelmswar, the second senior most, have been at loggerheads after the latter assigned a petition which sought probe into the medical college scam—former Odisha High Court judge I.M. Quddusi was suspected to be involved in it—to a bench of top five judges. But this decision was overturned by a five-judge Constitution bench which ruled that the CJI was the master of roster and he alone could assign cases to different benches.

Even otherwise, in recent times

the bench formation in the Supreme Court has been against the text of the Constitution which is very clear on constitutional issues because such matters have to be heard by a five-judge bench. But what has happened in recent times is that they have been referred to two or three-judge benches. This has not only eroded the confidence of fellow judges of the highest court in the land but has, as a result, created a crisis-like situation.

Differences among judges are nothing new. There have been past instances where judges of the apex court have fought over certain issues. The tussles between Justice Y.V. Chandrachud and his successor Justice P. N. Bhagwati in the 1970s and 1980s or the one between Justice A.M. Ahmadi and Justice Kuldeep Singh in the 1990s were considered examples of "indiscipline" rather than "rebellion."

Whatever may be the differences, the press conference by the sitting judges has definitely irretrievably dented the integrity of the institution and also the moral authority of the Supreme Court. In the letter addressed to the CJI, the four judges have rightly pleaded with him to take corrective measures so that they can apprise him about similar judicial orders that need to be dealt with by him.

In our legal system, based on rule-of-law, no one including the Chief Justice is above it. No doubt, the CJI has the powers to form benches but the powers are supposed to be exercised judiciously and not arbitrarily. The government is looking for a window of opportunity to enforce the National Judicial Appointment Commission Act which the judges have rejected.

Unfortunately, the judges have not realized that they have already provided that by the current row which the government may use to have greater say in judicial appointments and transfers.

India is fortunate to have independent judiciary since freedom. But two judges, H.R. Khanna of the Supreme Court and Jagmohan Lal Sinha of Allahabad High Court, raised it to great heights at a time when the judiciary was timid and when it was a fashion to feather one's own nest. Khanna, during the emergency, spoke the truth knowing well the consequences he would face. He differed with his other four colleagues and upheld the inviolability of fundamental rights. He was superseded and he resigned in protest.

With Justice Ranjan Gogoi next in line to succeed Justice Dipak Misra as CJI when the latter retires in October this year may face a situation similar to the one that Justice Khanna faced many years ago. But the latter's judgment gave hope to the people of India that there were judges to uphold the truth even when the tallest in the country had compromised to stay in office. Khanna told the nation that the fundamental values of a democratic society demanded that every person must display a degree of vigilance and willingness to sacrifice. This is still a distant goal for India.

Despite such examples, the judiciary is losing sheen. People's faith in obtaining justice is weakening, not only due to inordinate delays in getting the cases heard but also due to the increasing impression that the judges can be managed. Clients and lawyers reportedly conspire to have hearings fixed before a particular

judge. The word, corruption, was not heard some years ago. Today, it is on everybody's lip.

Not long ago, judgments were pro-people, pro-weak and pro-environment. Laws were interpreted in such a manner that a common man got relief and the greenery was protected against the marauding builders. The judiciary, particularly after the globalisation, has tended to side with riches, power and those who destroy the flora and fauna. The judiciary has also tried to arrogate to itself the authority which belongs to the legislatures.

The judiciary has become a very important segment of public life. Politicians can be disciplined only through the law. If the Supreme Court judges think about themselves and not the law, democracy can be in danger.

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Gandhi Namesake, Operates as Mafia

Sandeep Pandey

Jagdish Gandhi is the founding manager of City Montessori School in Lucknow which enrolls more than 55,000 students in its 18 branches. This school has been listed in Guinness book of world records for highest enrollment of students. It has been awarded UNESCO prize for peace education for promoting the values of peace and tolerance. Jagdish Gandhi is also a recipient of Uttar Pradesh government's top honour Yash Bharti.

But Jagdish Gandhi has refused to admit a single student from the disadvantaged category or weaker section for the last three years under section 12(1)(c) of the Right to Education Act, 2009, for free education from classes I to VIII, whose admission is ordered by District Magistrate or Basic Shiksha Adhikari. Eighteen children in academic year 2015-16, 55 children in 2016-17 and 296 children in 2017-18 were denied admission by Jagdish Gandhi violating their fundamental right. Thirteen children belonging to Valmiki community were admitted in the Indira Nagar branch of CMS due to a High Court order in 2015-16 after a case which took several months.

Recently under the Right to Information Act 2005 the Housing and Development Board of the UP government revealed that the building of Indira Nagar branch of CMS has been built without permission, the land use is still residential, thereby precluding the possibility of any commercial activity here, and most shockingly, that there

is a demolition order against the school building. The school building has been erected by combining two adjoining plots A-823 and A-903. Whereas the manager of CMS had bought the plot A-903, he took A-823 on rent but without the permission of owner R.B. Pathak, retired IAS, he constructed the school building. The owner complained to Commissioner, Housing and Development Board, but to no avail.

The question that now arises is how can a school be run from an illegal building? The school doesn't even have a play ground which is mandatory for seeking recognition. What will happen to the future of children studying in this school if the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations decides to withdraw the ICSE affiliation of the school?

The demolition order of A-823 dates back to 1996 whereas the demolition order of A-903 is of 2015. Once the authorities tried to implement the order but as it was during school hours the manager made all the children sit in front of the demolition squad. The complicity of school manager and government officials is quite obvious as no other attempt was made in the last 21 years in non-school hours or on a vacation, which would have been the appropriate time to demolish it.

Now that the information about demolition orders is out, Jagdish Gandhi went to the High Court on 4 January, 2018 and obtained a stay

order against demolition making a plea that future of 1,700 children studying upto Intermediate level and hundreds of employees and teachers is at stake. He urged the court to give a direction for shifting of the school rather than demolishing its building. The court has been requested not to take harsh action.

Jagdish Gandhi must be asked whether only rich children have a future? What about the future of those children whose admission he has denied under the RTE Act for the last three years? Did he not feel that he was being harsh on those children? It is significant that in HC he claims school enrollment as 1,700 whereas in a reply from Fire department in response to a query under the RTI Act, the school has reported an enrollment of merely 600 children. HC has been told that school runs till Intermediate or class XII where it merely has a ICSE affiliation, which is meant for class X.

The CISCE website shows recognition to only 12 of the 18 CMS branches, which implies that 6 of its branches are being run without recognition. Under the RTE Act the authorities should impose fine on these branches.

Jagdish Gandhi has a strategy to retain only 'bright' kids beyond class VIII so that his school delivers a good performance in Board examinations. A girl in the Aliganj branch wanted to choose Mathematics as a subject in class IX. However, because of her low scores

in class VIII she was allowed to select only Commerce with Hindi. She left CMS and is today pursuing the subject of her choice, Mathematics, in Delhi Public School.

The CMS charges fees for two months together. For parents from lower middle class background it becomes really difficult to make two ends meet. The school charges fees for vacation months much in advance. It is a well oiled money making machine.

The CMS offers concession in fees to children of its teachers but doesn't offer the same concession to its lower level employees like maids, sanitation workers, rickshaw pullers who bring children to school, etc. It is an open secret that Jagdish Gandhi offers concession in fees to children of IAS officers, politicians in high places, judges and most importantly journalists. This is how he manipulates his way through the system and operates by blatantly violating various rules and laws. He manages to keep himself in the good books of the chief minister of the day, irrespective of political affiliation. Hence no official, politician or judge takes action against him.

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Pardon me, this isn't a story by Manto

Dr. H.S. Anupama

One

It was an unfortunate evening—everything around had transformed into something else. He was just 19. He had dropped out of college to earn his living and had started to work with his elder brother and father in the port.

That evening, he was preparing to observe the rituals that one observes before visiting the Shabarimala Ayyappa Swami temple the following morning. He had parked his bike at the site where there had been a clash between two groups earlier. He left his home to go to the site to get his bike, but never returned.

His worried family started looking for him. On realising that it was impossible to track his whereabouts, they approached the police. Even they could not find him. Two days after he went missing, an unrecognised body was found in the river of the village. When the police examined the body, it was of the same boy who had gone missing. He who had drowned to death was on the shore and his family had drowned in a sea of tears.

Two

Those three people in the truck had never imagined something like this could happen. A few men on the road, at the outskirts of a village, had seen the driver of the truck and had decided his religious identity.

They stopped the truck and started to interrogate the driver—his name and other details—and then started beating him black and blue. The other two with him somehow managed to escape from the site.

The driver too managed to get away from his assailants, and ran as fast as he could from the site, but was soon attacked by another group. The attackers started beating him with iron rods. They were about to torch him, but upon hearing people coming towards them they fled the site, leaving the injured driver on the road.

He had managed to save his life for the second time that day. He was brutally injured and couldn't stand or move. He crawled up to a house of a brahmin family living close by and pleaded for water. The family, on seeing his condition, mistook him for a mad man and offered him some water and food.

He was scared. He hid in a pit near this house for three days. The family was confused and he was scared. He then learnt that the riot that had broken out in the village had ended, and he felt safe enough to come out in the open. The police took him to the hospital. His family had concluded that he was dead and the villagers had already lodged a complaint in the police station.

He is now with his family and has managed to survive a brutal attack.

Three

I got a call at 11:53 pm. The lady who had called me said, "They have surrounded our house. They are pelting stones on our house. The windows have all been broken. We are scared to go out and fight them. What should be done, madam?"

What should be done?

The people who had surrounded their house were hurling abuses at them and were saying, "We have

burnt the car of a policeman. We do not care about burning these people alive." The attack had begun early in the morning and went on till late midnight.

The person who had called me said, "We are here in this village for forty-five years now. Our children were born here. We are very sad today. We feel like leaving this village for good. We think they are going to set us on fire. How can we escape? Where do we go? Where do we deposit our documents, money and gold we have in the house? What should be done, madam?"

What should be done?

A glass piece from the broken window had injured a six-month-old baby in the house. The mother of this baby was crying. The grandmother had no energy to utter words. The sister of the baby, who was now bored of being locked inside the house for the last five days, was annoyed; she said, "Why are you all crying? Why don't we go to the hospital? Why aren't you giving me my milk? Why shouldn't I go out and play? Why are they pelting stones on our house? What wrong have we done?" She kept asking such questions. And the mother asked me, "Tell us madam, what should be done?"

What should be done?

They knew each other since their childhood. They grew up together. Their religious identities had till date not affected their friendship. They would attend the village fair and eat the food available there. They would watch *yakshagana* together. They had learnt how to drive together. They had also eaten biryani together and had partied several times.

For him, it is disheartening to see the very same friends attacking him

and his family because of his religion. He is shaken and he asks, "Is this fair, madam? Isn't there anything called justice left? Could we file complaints on our friends? What should be done?"

What should be done?

It is a family without a patriarch. The single mother had struggled really hard and had saved some money to marry off her daughter. The wedding celebrations were due and were being organised in front of the temple close by. Relatives started to force her to postpone the wedding, and the groom's family suggested that they would like to reconsider the match, as it was not a good omen.

She now had to take care of the expenses of the wedding, all over again. This worried mother asks me, "What should be done now, madam?"

What should be done?

Please excuse me; this is not an excerpt from a story by Sadat Hasan Manto.

This actually happened. No one had anticipated something like this would happen till December 2017. Honnavar was a peaceful coastal small town in the foothills of western ghats. There never was any communal tension here. Our port was safe and nice, but not anymore. It is a violent sea that we see. We do not see a stop to this in the near future.

Who do we trust? Who do we complain to?

It is very hard to fix the broken

We are all taken aback by the developments of the last two weeks in the North Canara district of Karnataka following the death of Paresh Mesta, a 19-year-old boy. His dead body was found two days

after he went missing, and became the excuse for the spread of communal violence in the district.

Nineteen is no age to die. His unfortunate death would sadden anybody, irrespective of who killed him and why they killed him. His family has lost its much loved son and also an earning hand. No compensation would help the family overcome the pain that this loss has caused. All that we can do now is wish that such incidents would not repeat themselves in the future. The murderers have to be arrested and punished, and we need to make sure that the circumstances leading to his murder would not arise again.

On the one hand, we are saddened by the death of Paresh, and on the other hand, the violence that followed. Instead of mourning his death, people have succumbed to the rumours being circulated on the internet and have taken to violence. Those who are mourning his death are enraged and are destroying public property and accusing the people of other religion for his death.

Even small villages have started to become communal. We are also hearing news of inhuman attacks. It is always very easy to break things, but what is hard is making them.

The responsibility of maintaining communal harmony rests with every responsible citizen. We wish the communal harmony that existed in the scenic Uttara Kannada district is restored and this should be the goal of all those in the seats of power irrespective of the difference among the parties that they are affiliated to.

Mine — yours, theirs and ours
come, Let us join hands,
Then you see a new world,
A new world for everyone.

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Gandhi - A Revolutionary ? - II

A. Raghu Kumar

“The ideal of one world or human unity cannot be imposed from above. It could only be brought about if existing national and class contradictions and other social inequalities were resolved. Those who call themselves Marxists should have been the first to realize this. But the Marxists of this country were so self-deluded that they thought nothing of brandishing expression like ‘frog-in-the-well’ and ‘bourgeois nationalism’ to the anti-imperialist national struggle that Gandhi inspired and led. ... If the Marxists could commit such a blunder, why should not Rabindranath, poet and dreamer that he was?”³⁶ Gandhiji has no love for revivalism, and Rabindranath never suspected or believed that Gandhiji had any. However, he thought that there was a predilection for the traditional way among Gandhians or Gandhiji’s followers. Gandhiji himself was aware of such a trend, and lest in his name wrong things should be done, he often cautioned people. “.... I must not attempt to revive ancient practices if they were inconsistent with, call it you will modern life, as it must be lived....”³⁷

Gandhi–Bose differences have led to lot of political controversy, especially in the recent past. Bose was tried to be owned or appropriated by both the left and the right. Being a contemporary and a direct witness to the debate, Pannalalji tried to put the facts straight with utmost respect and sincerity to both. He comes out with eleven points of convergence and divergence between them most

succinctly.³⁸ These differences were basically on the ideological as well as struggle tactics. These differences appear in their most sharpened forms between February 1939 and January 1941. Bose was more inclined that Gandhi shall give an ultimatum to the British government during the early stages of the World War-II, which was not accepted by Gandhi. Gandhiji felt that a dangerous atmosphere of violence was prevalent in the country, and any decision for final assault at that juncture would lead to disastrous effects. Moreover, he was also doubtful of the preparedness of satyagrahees at that time. Communal frenzy was all pervasive due to divisive politics and hate campaign of both the British and Muslim League, which was another factor running through the mind of Bapu. In fact, even Subhas Bose was not a believer in violent revolutions. He was a complete believer in Gandhian leadership. In his analysis of the strained relations of Gandhi and Subhas, more than anything else, the author blames the Pant Resolution, during the second term of the Congress Presidentship of Subhas Bose, which mandated the President seeking Mahatma’s approval before nominating new members to CWC, as the major reason for the rift.

There are several controversies and contradictions on the issue of Gandhiji’s role in respect of the upliftment of dalits, adivasis and workers. But one thing needs to be said that Gandhiji at one point declared that he would not step into

Hindu temples so long as they denied entry to the Harijans (the description Gandhi invoked for Dalits during his struggle) and other suppressed classes. He kept this vow till his last day, although he remained a devout Hindu throughout his life and acknowledged the need for temples. The Muslim League and the Ambedkarites carried on the propaganda that Gandhi’s Harijan movement was but a clever political ploy aimed at winning wider support. Even the leftists were, according to Pannalal, openly critical of the Harijan movement. The Left parties believed that the Hindu-Muslim divide as well as the Harijan problem would disappear if there were no religions at all. To them, the movements for securing entry for Harijans into temples or for bringing about Hindu-Muslim unity, will only help perpetuate man’s bondage to religion and were thus reactionary.³⁹

After discussing various stands on this issue of dalits, Pannalal considers that in fact it is Gandhi who elevated caste problem into class-struggle. By looking at the problem as not of caste, but of high and low, the exploiter and the exploited, he contends that Gandhi projected the problem more as a problem relating to the class struggle.⁴⁰ Pannalal contends that “Gandhiji also put into practice the fundamental ideals of communism and socialism in a way that the communists or socialists of his time could only envy”. “In his outlook as well as his personal life, Gandhiji attained the level of the truly classless human being. “Gandhiji may not have been a communist, but

he could certainly have been a worthy member of a classless society.⁴¹

This particular part of the book, on “Harijans, Adivasis and Workers” offers a new and rich insights into Gandhi’s actions towards these issues. He elevates Gandhi to a better communist than many communists. Few quotes from Pyarelal’s Last Phase, and some other sources, was cited by the author to fortify his proposition. The one was Gandhiji reply to a question at a public meeting in January 1946 at Medinipur regarding his views on class struggle⁴² where he said that class struggle there had been always, it could be ended if the capitalists voluntarily renounced their rule and became labourers. The other was to realize that labour was real capital, in fact, the maker of capital. On another occasion it appears Gandhi said⁴³ “It is a most dangerous thing to make political use of labour until labourers understand the political condition of the country and are prepared for the common good. ...”.

Another most controversial subject of Gandhian ideas or theories has always been “Trusteeship”. This almost goes against the grain of many western social or political philosophers and also their followers in India. The basic question that lingers in the minds of any socio-political philosopher since Hobbes has been: “Whether human being is naturally a social being?” “Whether human beings are good or selfish by nature?” Both Marx and Gandhi consider human beings as basically social beings. For Marx it’s the alienation of human being from nature that forms one of the bases of his social theory construction. For Gandhi also the alienation of man

forms the basis, but totally in a different way. He considers western civilization and the models of production and development, distribution and organizing the society as degrading and inhuman. From the above consideration of Gandhi flows the idea of “Trusteeship”. His concept of “Trusteeship”, as many of his other concepts, remains undeveloped further, and thus lacks sufficient philosophical explanation as an economic theory.

But, Pannalal Dasgupta, though a Marxist makes a major attempt in reconciling this contradiction between the Marxist tradition and the Gandhian thought. Probably it can be considered as a major contribution of Pannalal towards understanding the idea of ‘trusteeship’ from a Marxist view. “As far the communists and socialists, they wanted people to believe that trusteeship was just another of Gandhiji’s strategies in trying to perpetuate capitalism and the Zamindari system.⁴⁴ But according to Gandhi, land owners and other moneyed people could keep their property but they should not view it as their own or use it as they wished. He postulated that they should consider themselves as the custodians or trustees of the place or money they owned and they could take out of the property only as much as was due to them as its caretakers. Gandhiji himself was not consistent till his last days in his interpretation of the concept and he often spoke about it from different angles.

It was Gandhiji’s firm faith in the basic goodness of man that led him to evolve the trusteeship doctrine. In 1930 on the eve of Salt Satyagraha, he expressed his ideas on the

capitalists’ interests in very unequivocal language. “The greatest obstacle in the path of non-violence is the presence in our midst of the indigenous interests that have sprung up from British rule, the interests of the moneyed men, speculators, scrip-holders, land-holders, factory owners, and the like. All these do not always realize that they are living on the blood of the masses, and when they do, they become as callous to British principals whose tools and agents they are.”⁴⁵ “I would be very happy indeed if the people concerned behaved as trustees, but if they fail, I believe we shall have to deprive them of their possessions through the State with the minimum exercise of violence.”⁴⁶ “...I desire to end capitalism, almost, if not quite, as much as the most advanced socialist or even communist. But our methods differ, our language differ. My theory of ‘Trusteeship’ is makeshift, certainly no camouflage.”⁴⁷ “My fundamental difference with socialists is well-known. I believe in the conversion of human nature and in striving for it. They do not believe in this. But let me tell you that we are coming nearer to one another.”⁴⁸ “Communism of the Russian type, that is communism which is imposed on a people, would be repugnant to India....”⁴⁹

Both Communists or Socialists, and Gandhi are equally concerned with human nature, alienation and how to resolve the class contradictions, which was the consequence of the advent of capitalism. But the allegation of communists or socialist about the integrity or sincerity of Gandhi may not be correct, according to Pannalal. Gandhi being firmly rooted in the Indian concept of spirituality

considers non-possession or voluntary relinquishment of property or ownership can be invoked in human beings. Therefore, says Pannalal in conclusion, that in this socialist era of the world, it is not impossible for non-possession to become a universal trait.

How did Gandhi understand the role of women in the society? Indian women liberation activists never considered Gandhi's ideas in this regard as progressive or useful, though in his life time, he could bring in most women into the freedom struggle, probably more intensely than any other political leader in the world politics and women could work along with him more comfortably. His two-fold view of women in the traditional way and as a companion in struggles or in modern society offers most controversial reading at the outset. Commenting on the position of women in society Gandhi said: "A society cannot rise above the level of its womenfolk."⁵⁰ "... Many of our movements stop halfway because of the conditions of our women..." However, he differs with the western liberal ideas on this subject."He believed that men and women played complementary roles. His views regarding the man-woman quotient were very similar to Tolstoy's. Professor Nirmal Bose has given many insights into this aspect of Gandhi's personality in his book "Last Days with Gandhi". He says that in some ways Gandhi's personality was exactly like that of women and that he acquired this trait through conscious experiment and effort. Manuben Gandhi, Gandhiji's grand-niece, even chose for her book on Gandhiji the title "Bapu - My Mother."

One of the most typical statements

of Gandhi on the subject matter of 'socialism' has been what he said in Harijan, July 6, 1947: "Socialism begins with the first convert, if there is one such; you can add zero to one and the first zero will count for ten and every addition will count for ten times the previous number. If, however, the beginning is a zero, in other words, no one makes the beginning; multiplicity of zeroes will also prove zero value. Time and paper occupied in writing zeros will be so much waste".⁵¹ The socialists and communists persist in their belief that there is no need to reform the lives of individuals, and if the society is reformed it could take care of the lives of its individual members.

The major purpose of Pannalal Dasgupta's work has been to contextualize Gandhi in a historical purpose in terms of Marxist ideology and also to question certain narratives of Gandhians in placing him beyond time and, as something as eternal. Pannalalji considers that 'The Indian Marxists failed to fully learn their lessons from the Russian Revolution. They took the Russian Revolution to be more of an exception than a rule. They neither tried to understand the meaning of all the new ideas that had come into Marxism as a consequence of that revolution nor did they have any notion of the possibilities of developing those ideas. As a result of this blinkered view, they could not conceive any form of revolution other than the one leading to proletarian dictatorship. For them, any revolution which did not have the leadership of the communists was no revolution at all, even though it may include the working classes. "Caught in this narrow outlook, they remained aloof to the vast movement.... Saw the freedom struggle of colonial and

semi-colonial countries as pro-bourgeois".⁵²

While quoting from various correspondence between Marx and Engels and, Marx and others, especially the letter Marx wrote to Meyer and Vogt, which was further developed by Lenin, where Marx said: "After occupying myself with the Irish question for many years, I have come to the conclusion that the decisive blow against English ruling classes (and it will be decisive for the workers' movement all over the world) cannot be in England but only in Ireland".⁵³ For Pannalal, the meaning of this new line of thought, (also according to the secret circular of the General Council of the International Working Men's Association he cited), was that the revolution had to be triggered off in England only through the freedom struggles in her colonies. "Firstly, the working class was not the only revolutionary class (as claimed in the Communist Manifesto). Secondly, the liberation of England's colonies was the chief condition for the emancipation of England's working class. Again quoting Stalin's caution "... what is right for one historical situation may prove to be wrong in another historical situation"⁵⁴ and of Mao's, Pannalal argues that Gandhi's historical role was profoundly revolutionary from the Marxist point of view.

After thirty years of writing in Bengali, when sending the manuscript for printing Pannalal added "Notes" to the chapter on "Gandhi and History", where he observes with hindsight that 'the limitations of ideals and ideologies, like freedom, democracy and socialism, which have inspired humanity during the past three

hundred years are being experienced at every step in all spheres of action. ...Hence there arises the necessity to re-examine Marxism, Leninism, Mao's thoughts and Gandhism, for the virtually blocked path of revolution has to be reopened for its onward march and a way have to be found to inspire faith once again in the hearts of men".⁵⁵

The concluding chapter of the book "Gandhism" considers Gandhi as a votary of both God and Truth – concepts which the modern intellectual would often regard as offending and mutually contradictory. "Gandhiji tried to equate science and philosophy by defining Truth as God." Pannalal writes that Gandhi was a many faceted personality-an experimenter of truth, a great pilgrim and a supreme leader. If Marxism has made a great contribution towards laying the foundation of that (socialist) culture from the point of view of economics and state craft, Gandhi's contribution in the domains of morality and public life will make their foundation considerably more natural and elegant. In Gandhi, we find a leader and a prophet rolled into one. "Men like Gandhiji do not appear often on the earth. No single individual or group can fill his place. It is only mankind in its entirety, which is capable of being a true successor to a person like Gandhiji. "Deluded as we leftists were," he says, "we shut our eyes to our own history and tradition. Consequently we lost focus on our goal, became self-complacent and engaged ourselves in imitating others".⁵⁶

In "Epilogue" he says, "my purpose has been to show Gandhi in a new light to the Indian leftists and to present the historical Gandhi to

the so-called diehard Gandhians. I look upon Gandhi, Marx, Lenin and other men of the age as forming a powerful giant telescope and introscope, if I may use that word to mean an instrument which shows what goes on within my mind. The epilogue indicates the purpose of the work as a critique of the works of Gandhians, and as well of the Left, and ends saying 'when they review Gandhiji's life and struggle they do not make the least effort to understand the gradual painful evolution of a very ordinary, peace-loving man of liberal temperament into an anti-imperialist fighter. On the contrary, they dig up a weak spot or a drawback and blow it out of proportion in order to show up all his work in poor light. "The sum and substance of my discussion in the foregoing paragraphs is that in their attempt to prove Gandhiji a bourgeois leader by means of a labored fallacious thesis, the Communists came up against an even greater obstacle on their way. In their concern to keep up consistency, they have had to ignore actual events or distort them. They have been at great pains to fit the whole history into the straight-jacket of a petty thesis; little knowing that it will all be in vain".⁵⁷

Pannalal Dasgupta's "**Revolutionary Gandhi**" is a rare piece of writing in the Marxist-Leninist tradition, which has appreciated Gandhi as a part of the dialectical movement of current history. It attempts to clear the Indian Marxist air filled with nothing but ridicule and abuse on Gandhi, and also endeavours at placing Gandhi in a historical setting of anti-colonial and anti-imperial struggles of many Asia-African countries of the nineteenth and early twentieth

century. Pannalal dispels myriad of Marxist's doubts on Gandhi's Non-violence, Satyagraha and Constructive Programmes. As a an eternal truth seeker, and a person who was always ready to discard any of his opinions or ideas, even those held by him quite preciously, at the instance of impeccable proof or convincing argument, Mahatma Gandhi is the first and foremost social scientist, contends Pannalal. Even on the most problematic issues such as God, religion, ethics and morals etc., Pannalal, though a believer in Marxist-Leninist path, considers Gandhi on par with or as above many so called secularists, and presents Gandhi's ideas in a fresh and modern milieu.

By appropriately placing Gandhi's ideas vis-à-vis Rabindranath Tagore, and Subhas Bose, Pannalal argues that Gandhi was more correct, if not absolutely correct, on the methods and strategies of conducting the freedom struggle, while simultaneously appreciating the counter narratives of Tagore and Subhas. During past several decades heated arguments have filled the political space on Gandhi's role and ideas on the issues such as dalits, women and workers which were also ably countered by Pannalal and consequently it may offer new insights into these areas. By redefining the ideas on class, class war and the employment of armed struggles in resolving class contradictions, through Gandhi's inputs, Pannalal invites all of us to relook our theory and practice. On an overall assessment of the work of Pannalal, we may say that Gandhism is shown in a progressive setting both in terms of history, and Gandhi as an individual in the course of history, and also as continuum of

the progressive tradition initiated by Marx and Lenin. It's rare more so, because it has come from the Marxist-Leninist activist of yesteryears, and a contemporary of Gandhi. In the end, it urges both the Gandhians, and the Leftists for fresh dialogue, and to re-appreciate the areas of congruence and difference, for the progressive purpose of both and also in the interests of people's struggles for a more socialist state of affairs.

(concluded)

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³⁶pp.276-277 ibid

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³⁸pp.294-314 ibid

³⁹pp.315-317 ibid

⁴⁰p.325 ibid

⁴¹p.329 ibid

⁴²p.331 ibid

⁴³p.332 ibid from N.K.Bose, Selections from Gandhi, p.177

⁴⁴p.335 ibid

⁴⁵p.337 ibid quoted from N.K.Bose who in turn quoted from Young India, 6th Feb 1930

⁴⁶p.339 ibid quoted in N.K.Bose studies in Gandhism

⁴⁷p.339 ibid quoted from Harijan, 16th Dec, 1939

⁴⁸p.342 ibid quoted from N.K.Bose, studies in Gandhism, p.88

⁴⁹p.345 ibid quoted from R.K.Prabhu (Ed), India of my dreams, p.98

⁵⁰p.359 ibid quoted from B. Kumarappa, Capitalism, Socialism or Villagism

⁵¹p.376, Ibid

⁵²p.395 ibid

⁵³p.397 ibid

⁵⁴p.400 ibid from Works of Stalin, vol.7, PP.226-7

⁵⁵p.422 ibid

⁵⁶p.440 ibid

⁵⁷p.475 ibid

Lessons from Lohia for Disturbed Times

Justice B. Sudershan Reddy*

At the very outset, let me state that it is with utmost humility that I have accepted this task of delivering this brief speech in memory of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia. It can only be with utmost humility that one could possibly make an approach to one of the makers of modern India. After all, how does one seek to encapsulate the life and works of a person like Dr. Lohia, who in the course of his life wrote prodigiously; as a young man, barely in his twenties, led a protest against the representation of India at the League of Nations in Geneva by Maharaja of Bikaner; formed the foreign affairs department in the All India Congress Committee; helped lay the foundation of the Congress Socialist Party; was imprisoned and tortured by the British; and in a free India founded the Socialist Party and indeed the humanistic socialist movement in India? Where does one begin to comprehend the vision, the mind and the integrity of a person who throughout his life worked, without respite and with only the remit of an unyielding conscience, to bridge the rich-poor divide, fought against the horrors of caste and gender inequality, warned us of the dangers of the big machine, not merely as a technological artefact but as a social machine, and above all the conditions of endemic inequality that perpetuates oppression of the many by the few, generation after generation, and lead to cycles of violence and repression?

Every time I think of Dr. Lohia, I am first reminded of an anecdote about him – something that is very pertinent in this day. In one of the elections that he contested, post-independence, he was approached by leaders of a particular community, asking him to deliver an election speech at a place of worship, assuring him that such an act would get him a lot of votes from that particular community. Dr. Lohia refused, and he lost the election very narrowly. His refusal was founded on the value that a space for worship, so intimately connected with the inner spiritual core of human existence, could not be used as a space for political propaganda. Fiercely independent, and never wavering from a concern for ethical implications of an action, and prioritizing the pursuit of the good of the broader society, within the framework of social justice, Dr. Lohia was indeed forever the “top-class scholar, civilized gentleman, liberal” and a person of “high moral character”. It is widely discussed in many a quarters, either openly, or in hushed whispers, as to whether India is turning or is likely to turn into a fascist polity, where the tenets of secularism are set aside, institutions of governance and justice compromised, of murders of journalists and open threats to do so too many others who may speak on behalf of the Constitution, one cannot but help asking, on recollecting that great man: “Jinhenaazhai Hind, par

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wohKahaanhai? Kahaanhai?"

Yet, I would not suggest that the life of Dr.Lohia be remembered for mere valorization and hagiographic speeches. It is precisely in these unsettled times, when arguments are made that "nothing has happened" for the past six decades, and there are unthinking claims only now we have a deliverer, that one needs to draw sustenance from the lives and works of great men and women of history. However, the prospects of sustenance can be enhanced only if we can analytically grasp the core principle or principles and apply it / them to our own times, modifying it and/or expanding the concepts in the light of new knowledge, institutional experiences and shocks faced by the democratic polity and the Constitutional structure.

I will humbly submit that one of the keys to the thought and life of Dr.Lohia is his lifelong struggle against the "Monotonic Mind". Of course everybody agrees that he used that expression in the context of "big machine" technology, and it then seems logically simple to conceive the political economy suggested by Dr.Lohia as one with E.F. Schumaker's "Small is Beautiful" and with the search for alternate technologies that enhances, rather than eviscerates, the role of labour in production. That would be a correct conception, but essentially an incomplete conception. After all Dr.Lohia also argued and fought for the empowerment, and capability enhancement of the downtrodden. Can any one claim that Dr.Lohia for instance would have disapproved of the use of internet by womenfolk in a village in India to direct their men folk to trading centres where they would be able to get higher price for their milk?

Or our youngsters getting access to the entire corpus of human knowledge? In many instances, that comment of Dr.Lohia has been taken to imply a blind anti-science and anti-technology stance on his part, and often misused in the more notorious politics by lesser men of recent times. I believe that we need a more nuanced, and a more detailed appreciation of Dr.Lohia's work, to go beyond the trivial, and contextual, extensions.

But prior to identification of that core principle, we must acknowledge the great perspicacity of Dr.Lohia's concerns with allowing unguided technological choices, and social choices uninformed with deep ethical concern for equality and human welfare, to destroy prospects of a democratic order, and the enslavement of the ordinary man. Recently, I was reading an interesting book "The Driver in the Driverless Car: How our Technological Choices will Create the Future" by Vivek Wadhwa and Alex Salkever. They posit, in much more stark terms what Amartya Sen has been saying for some time now – that our existing technology, and the ones that are impending, are more than capable of eliminating many of the ills that have plagued human beings throughout their existence. The issue is of choices we make, and the values we choose to undergird our choices. So far so good. But they present a dystopian alternative that they say is equally possible. In a world of "Homo Deus" – Human as God, beating death –run by Artificial Intelligence, as posited by Yuval Noah Harari, Vivek Wadhwa and Alex Salkever, it is equally possible that:

"we are capable too now of ushering in a jobless economy, the

end of all privacy, invasive medical record keeping, and an ever-worsening spiral of economic inequality: conditions that could create an unstable, Orwellian, or violent future that might undermine the very technology driven future that we so eagerly anticipate. And we know that it is possible to inadvertently unwind civilization's progress."¹

A dystopian vision such as this one ought to make us wake up in cold sweat. For most of our youngsters, we have not even managed to build educational systems to give them quality primary education. It took the ruling classes in our polity 14 years to even start thinking of enacting a bill to give the sanction of law to what Justice Jeevan Reddy had found to be an essential component of Right to Life guaranteed in our Constitution: the right to free and quality education for our children at least until the age of 14. Implementation has been shoddy at best, nearly a decade later, with great divides between regions, between rural and urban areas, between upper castes and the lower castes. Increasingly the talk is about most of the entry level jobs disappearing in the near future, even in technology fields that our policy makers hoped would lift most of our youngsters out of poverty. We cannot afford to let our demographic dividend go abegging, lest it might turn into a demographic curse. The pace with which the slipsour nation by only seems to have quickened.

With the intensification of inequality, something that Thomas Piketty has brought to the forefront of economic discussion brutally in the past 5 to 10 years, both within nations and across international regions, as a result of the globalised

neo-liberal order that the social and economic elites across the world have pushed through relentlessly over the past forty years, the prospect of the gaps between the haves and the have-nots may become unbridgeable in any foreseeable future. Take the levels of inequality between nations that emerged as a result of the Second Industrial Revolution and colonial exploitation. In mid 20th century, scholars and policy makers could intellectually conceive and argue that gaps can be lowered in a few generations and maybe even 100 years or so. But not so now, and inequalities could become unbridgeable. Yuval Noah Harari posits that in an increasingly data driven world “humans agree to give up meaning in exchange for power.” That power could be the ability to create many of the marvels we may breathlessly wished for, including mastery over death. However, the massive price could be its inegalitarian spread, creating a new global elite. Tim Adams summarised this rather brilliantly in the Guardian: “The new longevity and super-human qualities are likely to be the preserve of the techno super-rich, the masters of the data universe. Meanwhile, the redundancy of labour, supplanted by efficient machines, will create an enormous “useless class”, without economic or military purpose.... Again, if nothing in our approach changes, Harari envisages that “Dataism”, a universal faith in the power of algorithms, will become sacrosanct. To utopians this will look a lot like the “singularity”: an all-knowing, omnipresent data-processing system, which is really indistinguishable from ideas of God, to which humans will be constantly connected. To dystopians it will look like that too.”²²

But we have had intimations of the formation of super elites for some time. Have we not? In a relentless pursuit of wealth, where greed has been dubbed to be good, we have created a layer of elite decision makers whose writ runs large in what happens in nations, and the globe, and what happens to the lives of billions of human beings, and who disproportionately bear the costs of externalities of this economic monstrosity. A scholar by the name of Manuel Castells called this a “Network Economy” way back in the year 2000. He also warned that as economic uncertainty grows, and inequality intensifies, the sociopsychological disconnect that citizens experience between their belief that their governments and policy makers, in response to electoral compulsions ought to work assiduously for their welfare versus their impotence in demanding and getting the ear of their democratically elected governments, could unleash forces that undermine liberal democratic structures and also drive groups of people into more primal identity groups, such as fanatical religious groups or cults.

It would seem that the political developments over the past few years indicate a steady retreat from the values that we had hoped would inform our liberal constitutional democracies. Increasingly we hear the shrill voices of unreason from a fragmented world, fragmented nations and fragmented societies.

How did we come to such a pass? And that too so quickly? What words of wisdom, and intellectual insights of people like Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia did we ignore?

I would suggest that we ignored Dr. Lohia’s fears of and warnings

regarding Monotonic Logic and Mind, and its consequences for the society, and especially of the disempowered. It is that, coupled with his dictum that action without moral reasoning would be like a sentence without a verb, that drove him to be one of the more ardent advocates of civil liberties, articulators of liberal constitutional democracies that seek egalitarian goals and also be an agent provocateur throughout his life. In his thought, and in his actions, he was forever guided by the epistemic principles of Non-Monotonic logic, or rather a group of philosophical frameworks that encapsulate defeasible inferences — i.e., where reasoning is expected to lead to tentative conclusions from everyday life, reserving the right to change those inferences in light of new information. The times that he grew up and lived in, and in which he led a life of civil disobedience, were marked by extreme and visceral horrors that were visited upon mankind by Imperialism, Colonialism, Fascism, Capitalism, and yes, even Marxist-Leninism. In a certain sense, they were all the products of Monotonic Logic, a pure deductive schema of conception, in which observable phenomenon could be explained from a-priori definitions of nature that were posited to hold universally and without exception. The danger of such conceptions, is that every consequence, howsoever horrific, could be rationalized away as being inevitable. Such a mind and logic, at the individual and at the level of collectives, blinds us to the adverse consequences, even impending massive human tragedies, because we have denied the possibility of fallibility of our assumptions, and denied the possibility of alternate conceptions.

John Gray, a philosopher, points

to a fundamental cleavage in liberalism.³ On the one hand liberalism posits that there is one objective truth, which through exercise of rational thought, is comprehensible and upon which a consensus ought to be arrived at. On the other hand, liberalism also posits the view that toleration of different beliefs, experiences, views, and needs, and empathy for those who are deprived or left behind, is a *sine qua non* for social stability, an indicia that justice prevails, and the path to progress. The danger of the former view is that it is easy for us to come to the erroneous belief that the “truth” we have arrived at is the absolute truth. Consequently, it is easy to conclude that those who do not agree with us are the “others”, the evil, the “disorderly” elements, the anti-progress luddites, and the anti-development anti-nationalists. Having conceived the “other” as irrational, it would but be a logical step to tyranny: elimination of voices of dissent. On the other hand, with the other view also we have problems: of argument for the sake of arguments, of every argument being posited as the right argument, and hence denial of possibility of any action. The consequence is immediate: in the din of a million mutinies, the voices of cynical pragmatism, often called realism, advocate the loot and plunder of disembodied, de-socialised and de-humanised individuals, for whom the society has become but a market; a market of values, of ideas, liberties and rights. Again, the big machine takes over — the social machine of the elite comprising of, in Dr.Lohia’s terms, those who possess at least two of the three attributes, viz., knowledge, wealth and felicity of speech in the language of power. This in turn seeks to create a collective monotonic mind, numb in

its ethical value structures, dead to innate human empathy, uncaring of the suffering of fellow human beings, infantile in its demands on the social matrix, and blind to the impending doom of social conflagration.

History is littered with examples of social orderings and ideologies, that were promoted, and in turn, been sustained, by such minds. The rise of fascism and the emergence of Nazi Germany are but particular instances, and arguably among the more gory ones. The singular aspect of German Nazi regime, we must remember, was that ordinary folks, like you and I, had turned a blind eye, to the rising tide of intolerance and inhumanity. People who otherwise were capable of ordinary courtesies, and indeed even great empathy for one another, had given into xenophobia, based on the singular belief that nothing overrides the redemption of their national pride, and development of the economy that projects their might abroad were to be the over-riding goals. Further, they also believed that the path to such a goal was one, and anyone who advocated an alternate vision or path was to be treated as immediately suspect — and indeed even to be eliminated, all debate, and conceptions of the alternate modes of social organization were eliminated. A cultural blindness was created that failed even to perceive the holocaust — because the people being exterminated were made to be the others, and hence a stumbling block for the uni-dimensional national goal propagandized by the Nazi party. Indeed we must remember that democratic elections brought the Nazis to power, and it was popular support that kept Nazis in power. Democracy, by itself, cannot be the arbiter of truth, and always necessarily conducive to promotion

of human welfare. Preservation of alternate voices, the ones that question both the goal and the means, are vital for survival of understanding what is humane and inhumane.

Dr. Lohia was a student of human history — or more specifically, of the struggle of humanity against the monotonic mind of the elite that normalises the indifference of rulers to the plight of the disempowered and debasement of civil liberties. It is best to recall Dr.Lohia’s own words in this regard:

“The concept of civil liberties is an outcome of the struggle that the citizen has eternally waged against his State. Throughout history, the State and its laws have given rise to manifold types of abuses..... wrath of the State fell down on the citizen who tried to be critical. He suffered long and solitary confinements, quite often death, and his most precious possessions were snatched away from him. He, therefore stood in need of basis of safety from where he could launch attacks on the abuses and evils of his times.... If a resistance of civil liberties prevails, resistance to oppression is not attended with frightful consequences.

It is such a historical conception that animated the thoughts and actions of Dr.Lohia. His was a nationalism that was based on an appreciation of the specificity of India’s conditions, the particular needs, and the particular problems. Nevertheless, his was an open mind that could arrive at deducible inferences from the broad swath of human experiences, as a mode of guidance for immediate action, with a deliberately constructed appreciation of epistemic uncertainties, and fostering of monotonic mindset by the big State

to be experiential facts, that forever made him alive to the possibility of oppression. Hence, for him civil liberties were never about mere textual promises, but about an actual existential necessity, for the individuals, the groups and the nation itself. For him, civil liberties were the essential foundations on which social stability, and a constructive and progressive democracy could be constructed. I would dare say that Dr.Lohia's thought and life are early precursors to the kind of deliberative and capability enhancing democracy that Dr.AmartyaSen has been espousing for the past three decades. It pays to quote Dr.Lohia himself, in extenso:

“Civil liberties comparatively smoothen society's march towards progress. Society is being eternally pulled between reaction and progress.... In this pull, the State has more often been controlled by forces of stagnation and....

...Lest the State should turn into a terrible obstruction to progress and continually block it by its repression, its supreme authority over the citizens stands in need of description and curtailment.... In this manner orderly social progress becomes possible and society is not continually faced with the choice between tyranny and revolution. The concept of civil liberties is thus essentially a liberal concept which acts as a shock absorber of the cruel impact between State tyranny and mass revolts. “

Given Dr.Lohia's justifiable fear of the monotonic mind, and its social ordering, whether of the Marxist kind, or of the Capitalist kind, his greatest worry was about sustaining the feasibility of arguing for change without resort to violence. In this regard, Dr.Lohia's thought and life,

and more particularly his conception of the virtuous life, epitomizes what Paulo Freire, the eminent educationist from Brazil, had articulated as the search for a humanized condition. In every struggle for freedom from oppression, the quest for equality could and often does degenerate into an equal opportunity for the oppressed to oppress the oppressor in his or her turn. The dehumanized condition of oppression, thereby gets perpetuated. While violent agitations may be indicia of a social dialogue that has gone horribly wrong, one needs to appreciate two facts. One, people normally do not take to violence if the society, and the State, had allowed the expression of dissent, within the framework of diligently guarded civil liberties, which act as the safety valves. Second, the expression of violence cannot be met with unlawful and unconstrained violence of the State — for that will surely breed more resistance and violence. Dr.Lohia was acutely alive to this, and in his book “The Struggle for Civil Liberties” he cites Senator Borah: “Repression is not only the enemy of free government, but it is the breeder of revolution. It is the enemy of progress and human happiness. And above all, it is neither a test of error nor of truth.”

Over the past few decades, we have seen a systematic demolition of the legitimacy and validity, of civil liberties in many countries. We, I would submit, in this country are no exception to this rule. Even as neo-liberal economic thought took its evil roots again, as Washington consensus, and as necessary structural reforms in India, it systemically built a monotonic mind, ideology and culture. A knee jerk nationalism that condemns any

expression of dissent as anti-national and anti-development has been systematically built into our popular discourse. Every expression of dissent has at some point or the other, and more often than not, been portrayed in our popular culture and elite discourses as a potential threat to a development that is conceived as billion dollar homes for the one or two and shining towers of glass for the few, even as hundreds of millions are dispossessed of their land and livelihoods, of their water and clean air, of their social roots, and the informal sector swells with hundreds of millions of displaced, dispossessed, and dehumanized humanity. And when that humanity expresses its dissent, because the political process no longer properly encompasses its demands, the elite culture, in reaction, immediately asks for restoration of order, by use of extreme state repression, so that they can go back to their ever thinner TV's, a culture of glitz, and fads that define lifestyles. To all of this we have added the vilest discourse possible that demonizes, in the name of religion, in the name of God and in the name of construction of a monotonic spiritual order. All to be relentlessly pushed forward by subversion of constitutional structures and small armies of hate filled youngsters.

Dr.Lohia recognized the need for assiduous protection of civil liberties because they, in his words:

“lay bare political and social abuses which are the fountainhead of all suppression. An enquiry into a case of violation of civil liberties is simultaneously an enquiry into the particular abuse against which the individual had fought and for which the wrath of the State and other interests had descended upon

him....The special front of civil liberties maintains the backbone of the people. The spirit of opposition against injustice is kept intact. The individual gets strength from the knowledge that his resistance to police or executive oppression will awaken common interest. Again, such a common interest serves to convulse the conscience of the people against encroachment of their liberties. The people are taught to be vigilant, so that they clear the road to progress.”

Why was Dr.Lohia talking about the individual resistance against oppression ?Dr.Lohia believed that in the modern world, organization has become so embracing and powerful that the individual is completely subservient to it. “No matter where the origins of modern civilization lay, it is today the civilization of the collective, where the individual is only a number in the mass and his effectiveness exists in so far as he is a part of the mass. Individual is often an isolated item surrounded by a hostile world and, when a suitable organization is lacking, he is reduced to the status of the rats. Individuals unsupported by organization and weapons are negligible in the context of modern civilization. He observed when Hitler came to power in Germany, “it was easy enough to notice how those brave and valiant and thinking Europeans belonging to the Socialist and Communist parties had lost all their manhood and, although I regret to have to say this word, they behaved more or less like rats, scurrying to and fro for shelter from Hitler”. Lohia believed in civil disobedience and course of action suggested by Mahatma Gandhi. The weapon of “Satyagraha/civil disobedience is always available to individuals in their hands when

injustice and oppression go beyond bearable bounds. He believed that Satyagraha as a weapon will prevail as long as injustice and oppression prevail, and it should prevail, because if it does not, the gun or the bullet will”.Lohia rejected the theory propounded by some eminent and great thinkers of this country, that Satyagraha as a weapon is not permissible in a State of freedom and it was permissible only when the British rule prevailed. In his inimitable style he characterized the theory as “childish prattle”. It is worth to recall what he said “should our century, before it dies out, learn this lesson all the world over, that the individual as well as the mass have had placed in their hands this unique weapon of civil disobedience to defeat their tyrants, we may be ushering a new civilization”.

Ultimately what we allow to come true depends on how we make collective choices, and what values and aspirations inform them. The first of that value would have to be a commitment to an essential belief in innate human dignity of every human being. Constitutions, much less socio-political orders, do not survive in an environment of apathy. Ultimately, the greatest lesson from Dr.Lohia’s life maybe this – that he spent more years in prison in an independent India, notwithstanding his many longer decades of struggles against the colonial yoke. It tells us this , freedom, assertion of human dignity and creation of conditions for protection of some minimal content as a part of that human dignity are not one shot games, but matters of continuous struggles. Struggles at the political level, at the social level, and above all, at the level of values.

I conclude this lecture with what ShahidBhagat Singh said:

“You go and oppose the prevailing faith, you go and criticise a hero, a great man, who is generally believed to be above criticism because he is thought to be infallible, the strength of your argument shall force the multitude to decry you as vainglorious. This is due to the mental stagnation. Criticism and independent thinking are the two indispensable qualities of a revolutionary. Because Mahatmaji is great, therefore none should criticise him. Because he has risen above, therefore everything he says—may be in the field of Politics or Religion, Economics or Ethics —is right. Whether you are convinced or not you must say, “Yes, that’s true’. This mentality does not lead towards progress. It is rather too obviously, reactionary”, in the hope that we learn the right lessons, again and again, from the lives and thoughts of great men and women like Dr. Ram ManoharLohia.

Jai Hind.

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