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**Lok Sabha Elections 2019:
A Perspective for
Opposition Unity**
Prem Singh

**People's Convention on
Infrastructure Financing
Mumbai Resolution,**
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Increasing Concern About Reports on Starvation Deaths

Bharat Dogra

Several recent reports about starvation death, particularly from Jharkhand, have been a cause of serious concern for all citizens concerned about food security in India. This concern has increased because of the widespread recognition that several aspects of the food security system in the country have been getting weakened in recent times. It is even more worrying that this weakening is related in several contexts to wrong policy decisions or persistence of implementation problems despite attention being drawn repeatedly to these.

The Right to Food Campaign, which is known for its careful monitoring of the food security and food rights situation in India, has prepared a review of recent starvation deaths. This was released recently on June 23. This review points out that over the past year, at least 20 persons have succumbed to starvation across the country—twelve in Jharkhand, three in Karnataka, three in Uttar Pradesh and two in Odisha. The deceased range from 11-year-old Santoshi Kumari to 67-year-old Etwariya Devi. All the

victims were either Dalits, Adivasis, Other Backward Classes (OBC) or Muslims. The review points out that in at least 11 cases, Aadhaar-related failures directly contributed to starvation. In all the cases, the victims' intake of food drastically reduced due to disruptions in access to subsidised foodgrains and social security pensions.

This review has looked closely at policy and implementation related failures. It has pointed out that seven of the starvation victims were not issued a ration card. In the latest case of Chintaman Malhar in Ramgarh (Jharkhand) the entire village had not been issued ration cards. Ration cards of two families were cancelled as they were not linked with Aadhaar. In five of the cases, either no member of the family could authenticate his/her identity through Aadhaar-based biometric authentication (ABBA), or the one who could was unable to go to the ration shop due to old age or illness. In one case, the dealer did not give rations even after successful Aadhaar-based biometric authentication.

In addition the increasing denial of pensions also had a role in these

tragic deaths, according to the analysis of the available information by the Right to Food Campaign. At least seven of the victims were entitled to social security pension. A few days before her death when Etwariya Devi attempted to withdraw her pension, she was told that the electronic transaction for withdrawal of her pension has failed. However, her bank records show a transaction of Rs 600 (the monthly old age pension amount in Jharkhand) on the same day. Savitri Devi was sanctioned a widow pension in 2014, but did not receive her first pension instalment till four years later as her bank account was not linked with Aadhaar.

These are by no means isolated

cases. Reports similar to these about the increasingly problems created by new Aadhaar related factors have been pouring in from various parts of the country. In addition there has been an overall decline in the implementation of the basic social security measures and food security measures in the country. This has happened at a time because of the effects of climate change there is an increasing need to strengthen and widen these provisions.

Unfortunately, instead of learning from these tragedies, the official stand has been to simply deny them. As the review of the Right to Food Campaign has stated, often the state government and local administration expend their energy

in denying starvation as the cause of these deaths—even harassing the surviving members of the family in some cases.

Clearly this must change and wide ranging measures need to be taken to strengthen food security and social security measures to prevent such tragedies. As a first step the Right to Food Campaign has demanded the strict implementation of all social and economic legislations and Supreme Court orders, universalisation of the Public Distribution System and social security pensions and delinking of Aadhaar from all public services.

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Lok Sabha Elections 2019: A Perspective for Opposition Unity

Prem Singh

Before discussing the complex subject of opposition unity, it would be appropriate to look at some obvious facts. Firstly, there exists no opposition to the neo-liberal policies that has prevailed for the past three decades in the country—none at the level of mainstream political parties, none at the level of intellectuals and 'thinking' class. Therefore, the process of selling the country's resources, labour and public sector enterprises / establishments to corporate houses and multinationals will continue in the same way unabated, even if a united opposition comes to power in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. There appears no possibility that the condition of farmers, unorganised / organised sector workers, artisans, small entrepreneurs and the unemployed

will change. The economic disparity will keep rising at the same or higher speed. Consequently, social tensions, alienation, suicides, crimes, superstitions, falsehood, obscurantism and deceit will continue to be deep-rooted in society. Secondly, even assuming that the current government is defeated in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, there will be no eradication of communal fanaticism. A point that needs to be noted with great seriousness is that the character of the current communal fanaticism is deeply and irrevocably related to the neo-liberal system. Opposition parties and secular intellectuals may cry themselves hoarse about the need to save secularism, but they always brush this truth under the carpet. They are not even ready

to understand that secularism and socialism are inter-related and secularism cannot be saved by abandoning socialism, which is a fundamental value embedded in the Constitution. Rather it can be predicted that communal fanaticism will increase and its havoc will be unleashed with greater intensity over society if this fact is ignored. Thirdly, it will also not mean that the devaluation of the Constitution and constitutional institutions will cease, because the fundamental spirit of the Constitution and the institutions based on it were not meant to 'develop' a neo-liberal India. The popular adage 'Shining India' and sometimes 'New India' given by the neo-liberal rulers under the umbrella of corporate colonialism or neo-imperialism is

against this fundamental spirit of the Constitution. Fourthly, politics that has been fed upon a blend of negative tendencies such as individualism, family-rule, communalism, casteism, regionalism, money power and muscle power will continue to flourish in the country if the dinosaur of neo-liberalism is allowed to swallow the world. Fifthly, given these circumstances, politics will continue to retain its character as a game of money power because political parties / politicians will continue to collect huge amounts through legal and illegal funding during the process of the sale of the country's resources, and in the process of disinvestment of public enterprises.

II

The hopeful and the forward-looking should not perceive this as a statement of pessimism; it is the reality today, the stark and plain reality. In the light of this reality, the unity of opposition parties for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections should mean 'electoral' unity but with a respect for democratic and constitutional values. This unity should be forged before the elections and should be done with a realistic approach, i.e. aiming at electoral victory but without forgetting the essence of democratic values. The Modi–Shah partnership has transformed the democratic process into a hunger to win elections. Democratic proprieties do not matter to them. The fight with the Modi–Shah partnership in the Lok Sabha elections of 2019 will be such an unethical and fierce battle that democracy will have to run around seeking some refuge! The opposition should not fall a victim to the hunting instinct of Modi–Shah in the election race.

It is true that elections are the most important aspect of democracy. But at the same time it is also true that elections are held only if there is democracy. If democracy continues, there will always be some possibility for a politics that would fight the menace of the neo-liberal–communal nexus. Dr. Lohia said that the task of politics is to fight evil. But in the present times, India's leaders and intellectuals do not seem to believe in that. Under the dictates of neo-liberal / neo-imperial wave, the current politics in India has become an evil process in itself, one that is unconcerned about the repercussions. Politics should not be allowed to turn into a permanent carrier of evil. For this it is necessary that the possibility of the government changing through elections should continue to exist. Therefore, the electoral unity of the opposition parties, which could change the present government and the power equations, will play an important role in the direction of making democracy more meaningful.

In the NDA, apart from the BJP, there are more than 35 other parties, big and small. Less than a year remains now for the Lok Sabha elections. Until the elections come, the possibility of this coalition breaking down seems unlikely. The dissatisfaction shown by some of the parties like Lok Jan Shakti Party, Apna Dal and Rashtriya Lok Samata Party is not about government's policies or failures. It is a ploy to bargain for a larger number of seats in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. The Modi–Shah team understands this intention very well.

In the recent past a strategy of ad-hoc alliances of the opposition parties was able to defeat the BJP in some parliamentary and assembly

seats. But this ad-hoc coalition strategy will not be effective in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. The national level elections should be fought with a national level strategy. For this, a coalition at the national level based on national understanding is a necessity. The contentious issue in this regard is whether such an alliance of the opposition parties will be formed with or without the Congress? At both levels, that of ideas and efforts, leaders and the intellectuals are taking initiatives and making plans. It is worth mentioning here that both the Congress and the BJP are in favor of two-party parliamentary democracy. During the previous UPA regime, both the then prime minister Manmohan Singh and senior BJP leader LK Advani had advocated a two-party system in the country, and had suggested that the rest of the parties should merge with the BJP or the Congress. The BJP has also been in favour of the presidential system in India on the pattern of the US. In fact, if India has a two-party contest like that in America, that would be the most suitable condition for corporate politics to flourish here.

Therefore, if a coalition is formed without the Congress, then the Constitutional system of multi-party parliamentary democracy will get validity and strength. The Constitution recommends a federal structure for the Indian state. But since independence, centralistic tendencies have gradually been getting encouragement and have reached the peak under the present government. The federal structure of the state is inseparable from the concept of decentralisation of power, resources and governance. If a pre-election coalition is formed

without the BJP and the Congress, there will be some defense for the federal structure and the idea of decentralisation. Whenever Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks about a 'Congress-free' India, he considers the Congress as the main opposition party. It means that he intends to eliminate the concept of a non-Congress non-BJP third force in Indian politics. Such propaganda suits the Congress. The voter would elect the Congress with a majority of its own in 2024, if not in 2019. Then, there would not be any hindrance at all for Rahul Gandhi becoming the prime minister.

The Congress has not come out on the streets to support the demands of farmers, labourers and the unemployed who have been agitating all over the country against government policies for the last four years. The largest minority of the country has been passing through a deep crisis under the present regime, but the Congress has not organised a protest in its support even once. The main reason for such behaviour of the Congress is its power-enjoying character. But there is also a strategy involved. And it is a serious one. The Congress probably believes that the Muslims, scared by the RSS/BJP and its affiliates, will blindly vote for the Congress in the coming elections. It is pertinent to note here that when they abandon the Congress, the majority of the Muslim votes go to the parties known as the third force of Indian politics.

Modi's falsehoods cannot always fool people. Nor can the *Chanakya-Neeti* of Amit Shah win elections every time. Modi has made the government a tool in the hands of the corporate houses to make indiscriminate profits. It has become a government which benefits the

richest persons first. Farmers—workers—artisans—entrepreneurs—unemployed, devastated by this oppressive government, will vote tomorrow, if not today, against the BJP. The money of the corporate houses and the support from a pliant media won over by money power would not be able to save it from defeat. The Congress seems to be waiting for this very situation. If the concept of the third force in politics is eliminated at the national level, then the Congress will get the anti-incumbency vote. And after the rule of the Congress for five or even ten years, it will be the turn of the BJP to come to power at the Centre. If a government of the third force is formed at the Centre in coalition with the Congress, the latter will not allow that government to complete its term. In the case of mid-term elections, again there will be a contest between the BJP and the Congress.

The formation of a third force of opposition parties independent of the Congress does not mean that the Congress is to be completely opposed as a political party. The Congress is a capable party on its own. It has a nationwide party organisation. In the last Lok Sabha elections, despite being badly defeated, it had the second place in the Parliament. It is second in getting corporate funding after the BJP. In the states where Congress has a stronghold, it would contest elections with full force. In case the non-Congress third force does not get a full majority in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the Congress can support the third force government from outside. It is also possible that in such a situation, some constituent parties of the NDA may also join this government.

III

This non-Congress third force coalition of the opposition parties can be named as the National Front for Social Justice. All the parties, including the Communist parties, can join this front. This will include all those who do not want to contest the next Lok Sabha elections in conjunction with the BJP and the Congress. The process of formation of the National Front should be started without delay. In order to move forward in this direction, it will be appropriate to form a co-ordination committee with a convener. Sharad Yadav could be a name for the post of convener of this co-ordination committee. There should be four or five spokespersons of the proposed front who would constantly explain the nature, policies and progress of the National Front directly or through media. A committee should be formed to prepare the election campaign strategy and election material.

The question of the role of small ideological parties in the National Front is also important. The mode of their co-operation should be drawn up. It would be better to keep away from the National Front such parties and individuals who advocate politics / governance without ideology (including the ideology of the Constitution). They are a direct product of corporate capitalism, hence direct supporters of the neo-liberal ideology. Civil society organisations and individuals, who work with a political understanding, should be linked to the National Front. These could be organisations and individuals associated with industries, mines, agriculture, education, services, commerce, trade, literature, arts, studies, sports and so on. Non-resident Indians,

who are politically conscious and concerned about the deteriorating condition of the country, could also be linked to the National Front. These efforts should be made with utmost seriousness so that an atmosphere of broad consensus and faith could be created in favour of the National Front all over the country. With such an approach, the prospects of the National Front playing an important role in the future politics of India would be enhanced.

The possibility of the victory of the National Front would increase if a common minimum program is prepared with the promise that the new government will review the neo-liberal economic policies and implement policies in favour of farmers, workers, small retailers, entrepreneurs, students and unemployed. The BJP and the Congress cannot make this promise. Apart from this, the leadership of the National Front, due to its social base, would not be able to implement the policies propagated by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organisation, the World Economic Forum etc. as promptly as the Congress and the BJP do. As a result, there will be at least some reduction in the loot of corporate houses and multinationals. Furthermore, with the victory of National Front, it should be once again be possible to make economic policies in accordance with the Directive Principles of the Constitution.

The decision of choosing the main leader of the National Front, who would also be the prime ministerial candidate, is going to be a very complex task. But in order to put up a strong and serious fight in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, there is no choice before the opposition

leaders but to make this decision honestly and wisely. I had written an article titled *The Relevance of Third Front* before the 2014 Lok Sabha elections which was published in several magazines and portals in Hindi and English. In that article, I argued in support of a pre-election coalition of political parties other than the Congress and the BJP. I had also suggested the name of senior CPI leader A.B. Bardhan as the leader of the proposed third front. However, the main opposition leaders, who were urging for a post-election coalition, did not agree to my proposal.

The names of Mamata Banerjee and Mayawati are in discussion for the leadership of the opposition alliance proposed to be formed for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Mamata Banerjee comes from an ordinary background. She was earlier in the Congress. After leaving the Congress, she worked hard to build up the Trinamool Congress (TMC). She has achieved her political status through a long struggle. As a result, she is the Chief Minister of West Bengal for a second consecutive term. Her government in the State is not dependent on any other party. The recent Panchayat election results in West Bengal show that she has a strong hold on the voters. The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati comes from the Dalit community. In today's politics, she is the only self-made leader. The BSP has the status of a national party. The party has its units and supporters in most states. In the 2009 Lok Sabha elections, her name was proposed for the prime ministerial candidate of the third front. Mayawati is opposed to capitalism at least verbally. Given her social base and verbal opposition to capitalism, her government's

political economy can be somewhat different from the prevailing neo-liberal economy. She is not currently an MLA or MP. Therefore, it is possible for her to give full time to the preparations of the National Front and for the elections.

The above mentioned two names are considered here because, apart from them, currently no other leader is being seriously discussed for the leadership of the third force. Senior DMK leader M. Karunanidhi is 95 years old. The age of Mulayam Singh is 78 years, but his health is not good enough for him to be the prime ministerial candidate of the National Front. Of course, he can play a significant role as an advisor. If he campaigns outside Uttar Pradesh, then it will be a big achievement for the National Front. Nitish Kumar's name was earlier being considered for the leadership of such a third force, but he has gone along with the BJP after breaking the grand alliance in Bihar. Even if he returns, he will not be able to restore his goodwill. Chandrababu Naidu recently came out of the NDA; there is no surety that he will not return to the NDA fold again. Naveen Patnaik is the Chief Minister of Orissa for the fourth consecutive term. In 2009, he left the BJP-led NDA and formed an alliance with the Left parties. He is not a vocal leader and does not go much out of Odisha. He is not involved in the political hustle-bustle related to the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. He was not even present for the swearing-in program of the Janata Dal (S) government formed with the support of the Congress in Karnataka recently. So far, he is non-committal. Efforts should be made to bring him into the fold of the National Front.

Last but not least, the person that

is agreed upon as the leader of the National Front will have to raise the level of her / his thinking. There is no substitute to sublimation in times of deep crisis.

IV

S.P. Shukla, former Secretary of Commerce and Finance, is a person who has been critical of the New Economic Policies from the very beginning. He seriously contemplated upon the anti-people consequences of these policies and put a sound ideological resistance to them in the initial round of the WTO talks. Recently I had a discussion with him in Pune on the question of opposition unity in view of the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. I shared my views and perception with him. He agreed to the idea and said that if the next elections are fought under the leadership of Mamata or Mayawati, it will be a step forward—an entry of the gender aspect in the stream of the subaltern politics which started in 1989 with the implementation of the Mandal Commission report.

The intellectuals and activists of the country, who are worried about the basic values of the Constitution—socialism, secularism and democracy—and the erosion of constitutional institutions, should play a positive role in the formation and acceptance of the National Front. In India, leaders have often inspired intellectuals and artists. Now it is a turn of the intellectuals, artists and conscious representatives of the civil society to extend their guidance and co-operation to the leaders in these times of crisis.

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People's Convention on Infrastructure Financing Mumbai Resolution, 23 June 2018

Challenging Undemocratic & Destructive Global Finance: Building Political and Economic Alternatives

Social movements and peoples organisations representing Adivasis, Dalits, indigenous peoples, women, farmers, fisherfolk, forest workers, hawkers, artisans, unorganised workers and civil society from across India, together with solidarity groups from Asia Pacific, Europe and Americas who have gathered at the Peoples' Convention on Infrastructure Financing in Mumbai, 21-23 June, 2018, resolve that undemocratic International Financial Institutions (IFIs) have no role in a democratic polity, and therefore need to be shut down. These institutions, including AIIB (Asia Infrastructure and Investment Bank), trample on peoples' rights, disregard national sovereignty, tear into the very fabric of constitutionally guaranteed governance and thus undermine India's economic and political security.

The China-led AIIB is being promoted as an institution that serves as a healthy and essential alternative to undemocratic International Financial Institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and International Finance Corporation that are controlled by Western powers. The Peoples' Convention rejects such rhetoric. We assert that the \$100 billion AIIB is designed and structured to function equally undemocratically. What's worse, AIIB invests in

projects that do not conform with necessary environmental and social safeguards. Consequently, billions of dollars invested by AIIB in critical sectors such as energy, road building and urbanisation is causing extensive environmental and social impacts. As a result, India, the largest recipient of AIIB loans, has become a site for corporate land grabs which is resulting in massive loss of livelihoods and displacement of rural and urban communities. The prime example of this is Amravati, the proposed capital city of Andhra Pradesh state, which is being developed on the fertile flood plains of the Krishna river and 50,000 acres of the most fertile agricultural land is being forcibly 'acquired' from farmers and workers.

IFIs are harbingers and promoters of corporate globalisation and neoliberal economic reforms that benefit the elite at the cost of the poor and working classes. These institutions have systematically disrupted evolution of democratic governance forcing governments to implement regressive policies, legislations and schemes that commodify and financialise land, essential services and food production systems, which attack environment, food security and labour.

IFIs operate with legal immunity and thereby their functioning is

outside the scope of review of even the Parliament and the judiciary. This immunity encourages IFIs to finance projects without proper appraisal of their environmental and social impacts, and due diligence of their financial and economic consequences. IFIs typically invest in massive projects in critical sectors. A slew of such highly destructive and economically disastrous mega projects include industrial corridors, Bharatmala (roads and highways expansion project), Sagarmala (creating sea-routes linked to tens of new ports), bullet train and smart cities. The massive scale of these projects has little to do with need and necessity. More often than not, a network of transnational corporations are the beneficiaries of the massive contracts that ensue. It's a way of making money out of money.

The shocking irony is that governments cry off investing in public welfare schemes claiming shortage of resources: to provide *roti-paani (food and water)*, *kapda (clothes)*, *makaan (housing)*, *swasthya (health)*, *shiksha aur rozgaar (education and livelihoods)*. But the same governments seem to find ways to divert public funds in support of IFI invested mega projects, even when the need for such projects is not tested by statutorily mandated participatory public review.

In recent decades, under the overbearing influence of IFIs, countries like India have outsourced the formulation of critical policies relating to labour, food security, defense, water, land, farming, etc., to a variety of think-tanks and foreign consultancies who work to maximise corporate control over peoples' lives and natural resources.

Private and foreign direct investment is being facilitated even in the defence sector. IFIs, such as China led AIIB, are gaining significant access to sovereign decision making processes. This when sacred and sacrosanct decision making institutions of democracy, such as the Parliament, are kept in the dark. This is resulting in dangerous portents for democracy and national security as global financial powers are making deep forays into sovereign decision making. We resolve and commit to tirelessly resist such efforts to destabilise constitutionally mandated governance.

In supporting such capital intensive projects, which are also predicated on privatisation of public sector and public services, governments are incentivising the building and ownership by the private sector of massive energy systems and urban and industrial infrastructure projects. This hegemony of capital is intended to maximise profits for the rich, promotes crony capitalism and loot of public resources. The aggressive privatisation of essential services such as electricity, water, health, food supply, public transport and education, is causing a rapid escalation of the living costs for the majority of the people. This must be halted immediately and public control restored over public services and sectors. We reject this model of 'growth' and also such governments and political parties who promote these extractive systems. We assert that such anti-people governments have lost the moral and political legitimacy to govern.

The result of such development is systemic human rights violations, social disruption and environmental destruction. These mega projects typically end up in massive financial

losses and lead to devastating economic instability in regional and national economies. Communities in farms, coastal areas and cities are uprooted in the process, accentuating impoverishment and unemployment on a massive scale. People end up being burdened with crippling debts merely to survive. Building on 'Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation' policies, which have miserably failed to deliver on their much hyped promises of financial and economic gains for all, IFI influenced economic policies are merely working to maximise wealth of the elite-rich, substantially weakening socio-economic security of middle classes and the poor. Such paradigms of development produce a police state and advances a climate of fear and xenophobia, which is often associated with heavy investment in defence expenditure and militarisation. All of this is resulting in a dehumanised pattern of growth that widens social divisions, and furthers the rapidly worsening civilisational and climate crises.

We note with deep concern that the Government of India is hosting the AIIB AGM at a time when the Indian economy is reeling from multiple crises, which is largely the outcome of a series of reckless and draconian actions by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi led administration. The colossal disaster of demonetisation (November 2016) was quickly followed by an unplanned unveiling of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime (2017). The autonomous functioning of the Reserve Bank of India and other such financial regulatory institutions, as also that of public sector banks, has been systematically derailed due to interference from the Finance Ministry of India. This has

endangered the resilience of the financial architecture of India which has withstood multiple economic and financial crises over time.

Prevailing fiscal indiscipline has also aided in such defrauding of public exchequer and deprived public budgets of necessary investments in social programmes. As a result, billions of dollars of bad debts remain unrecovered, and their volume is also mounting. Some of India's richest men, and the massive and powerful corporations they lead, are major debtors to India's banks. Because of their deep access to high political power, their bad loans and 'Non-Performing Assets' are being systematically written off without attaching their personal assets, thus obviating the need for legal action to tackle such serious economic violations.

The crisis in farming and SME (small, medium enterprises) sectors is extensive and being worsened further by short-sighted government policies. The long-standing demand that small, marginal and vulnerable farmers must be assisted with remunerative pricing is not being addressed, resulting in continuing spate of farm suicides (3.5 lakh farmers have taken their lives in the last 20 years) and distress driven migration. Regardless, corporations are induced into massive grab land deals, assisted with financial incentives, all of which results in hurting the farming community and causing their further displacement.

Instead of helping farmers in distress, the government appears to be assisting economic offenders escape the consequences of their crime, by providing them safe passage abroad. We demand that bad corporate loans must be immediately recovered by sparing no effort. People's resources

must be recovered and invested in eliminating hunger and poverty, and extending education, health and employment for all. The dharma of governance demands that the Government in power works to serve its people. We demand that the government must waive loans of those who are really deserving of such public support: small and marginal farmers, workers, Adivasis, artisans, indigenous peoples and small enterprises.

Communities on the frontlines of resistance to mega, undemocratic and socially and environmentally destructive projects, such as the Bullet Train project that Prime Minister Modi is wantonly promoting, are facing egregious forms of violence and terror and becoming victims of systemic abuse of executive power of the State. Such projects, often a result of Mr. Modi's frequent trips abroad and agreements with leaders of foreign powers, are being rushed through without any appraisal by regulatory and financial institutions for their financial, environmental and social viability. Such styles of administration result in social chaos. Instead of responding to popular and people's genuine demands, when farmers, Adivasis, Dalits and workers organise to demand just action by the State, they have often been met with State repression. The police firing in Tuticorin and Mandsaur, and a range of arrests of social activists across India based on fabricated cases are indicative of increasing repression. We strongly condemn such efforts and ask the governments to conform to the rule of law and constitutionally mandated processes of governance. We demand that governments assist communities in controlling their resources and their rights. Dignity

and sovereignty of people and the country must be protected.

Specific resolutions:

- We extend our solidarity to the communities across the world fighting against destructive developmental projects and financial institutions.
- We resolve to push for people-centred alternatives in all sectors of the economy and to advance an inclusive model of development in which finance and infrastructure support the vulnerable and the poor communities.
- We resolve to oppose IFIs which work to advance the financial clout of the super-rich and the elite, whose interests are clearly opposed to wider public interest.
- We resolve to build a movement towards creating dignified and decent jobs, promote sustainable farming, equitable access to public services, advancement of the entrepreneurial skills of artisanal and natural resource dependent communities, and labour intensive small and medium enterprises.
- We stand for democratic and decentralised decision-making (in the Indian context this would involve strengthening of the Local Self Government institutions and systems) based on the principles of cooperative federalism.
- We resolve to resist prevailing financial hegemony of undemocratic and unaccountable financial institutions such as the AIB.

We pledge and rededicate to build a new pluralistic society, nation and the world. We resolve to tirelessly work against subordination

of governments to corporate power, against exploitation of human and natural resources, against discrimination, against social, economic and environmental injustices, against corruption, loot and violence. We are dedicated to building a society based on democratic and secular principles that ensures freedom, equality, equity, dignity, fraternity, love and respect for all, all of which we assert is possible only by acknowledging and being deeply respectful of Mother Earth's rights.

(This resolution was adopted at the closing plenary of the three day June 21-23 Peoples' Convention on Infrastructure Financing attended by more than 1,000 delegates from 200 organisations, including trade unions, networks of hawkers, fishworkers, slum dwellers, adivasis, dalits, farmers organisations and peoples movements, from India and other parts of the world. The convention was organised ahead of the AIIB Annual General Body meeting being hosted by India in Mumbai.

About AIIB and India:

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the two-year-old multilateral bank, is investing in all major sectors, including energy, without robust policies on environmental-social safeguards, transparent public disclosure and an accountability/complaint handling mechanism. Out of the total 24 projects, it has financed, USD 4.4 billion has already been approved. India is the biggest recipient of AIIB aid with more than 1.2 billion USD supporting about six projects including transmission lines, capital city development at Amravati, rural roads etc. with another 1 billion USD in proposed projects.)

Yusuf Meherally, for Whom Bombay Stood Still

Danish Khan

On 3 July, 1950 bus and tram services in what was then Bombay stopped for few minutes as the clock struck noon. The city was in a state of shock. The city that never stopped, stood still. Several educational institutes, factories and mills remained shut. One of the most potent symbols of the city's financial strength, Bombay Stock Exchange, though officially opened, witnessed no trading. It was a collective mourning and significantly bereft of any fear or force.

A day earlier, Yusuf Meherally, a selfless leader of the masses had passed away. The man who had coined two of the most popular slogans associated with the freedom struggle 'Simon Go Back' and 'Quit India' had roused the same passion in his death as his slogans. Years of struggle had taken its toll and a heart ailment that had struck him while in prison for the 1942 Quit India agitation had rendered him weak, though only physically and not in spirit. Just few days after his death, he was supposed to chair a meeting in Madras. Meherally was only 47 when he died.

Born in a prosperous family in Bombay on 3 September, 1903, his father Jaffer Meherally and his family were pro-British and the young Yusuf was looked upon as a renegade. He studied at Bharda High School and took interest in extra-curriculum activities. A firm believer in the power of youth, he was the main architect of the Bombay Youth League formed in 1928. In February

1928, the Youth League put up an admirably strong opposition in the wake of unprecedented lathi charge while opposing the Simon Commission. Meherally's slogan 'Simon Go Back' was on the lips of every nationalist in the city and country.

Meherally believed in universal brotherhood cutting across race and nationalities. He belonged to that rare breed of leaders for whom personal gratification meant the well-being of fellow countrymen.

At 4 pm on July 3, his coffin draped in the Tiranga started the last journey from Congress House to the Dongri Kabrastan. The four-mile journey was a spectacle but without the key ingredients that have now come to be associated and identified as a barometer of love, popularity, respect and reverence. No live coverage, studio discussions, or array of platitudes thrown across by anybody who was somebody.

It only had mourners in dignified silence and utmost respect, united in grief and a collective sense of irreplaceable loss. Beedi workers in faraway Thallessery in Kerala sported black badges and observed a hartal for their beloved leader.

Active in the Congress, Meherally was among the key individuals who established and strengthened the Congress Socialist Party along with Jayaprakash Narayan, Achyut Patwardhan and Minoo Masani. This satiated his appetite for putting a forceful opposition to the British rule and at the same time working

to address the needs and concerns of the working class.

He was a legendary figure for the hawkers, small-time traders, and clerical staff who toiled in commercial firms. He founded the Gumastha Mandal which fought for the rights of the working class. But this was not what his family wanted.

Meherally did a BA in History and Economics from Elphinstone College. With the legal luminary H M Seervai and several other friends, Meherally did a penetrating study on the issue of university reforms. Speaking to students they covered a vast array of issues and came up with recommendations. Active in drama and debates, Meherally made the most of the extra-curriculum activities that Elphinstone College offered and was famous for. It was perhaps at Elphinstone College that he mastered the art of writing witty slogans and attractive posters – a quality he deployed to the maximum opposing the British rule. He then studied for a law degree at Government Law College.

According to Madhu Dandavate, his biographer, the days when Meherally received his Bachelor degrees turned out to be of national significance. He received his BA in History and Economics on 8th Aug, 1925 – the same day in 1942 when the Quit India resolution was passed - and Bachelors in Law on 26th January 1929 – the day that is now marked as Republic Day.

Armed with two degrees, Meherally plunged into the freedom movement to the much consternation of his family members. His father had spoken to Mohammed Ali Jinnah to ensure his son's law career treaded the right path. Meherally had different plans and perhaps the heavens too willed his way. Despite

being a qualified lawyer, the High Court, just months after he received his law degree, refused to allow him to practise. This again was a rarity as several leaders were qualified lawyers but none was barred from appearing in courts.

Meherally was a magnet for the city's and country's youth. He was a hero for a whole generation of educated, and well-meaning men and women. Much of the people he inspired, nurtured and worked with would graduate to become professors, scholars and social workers. They looked up to him in awe and reverence due to his organisational abilities and clarity of ideas. As Aloo Dastur, former head of the department of Civics and Politics, Bombay University described him '24 carat gold and the likes of him are very difficult to meet these days'.

In 1938 he led the Indian delegation to the World Youth Congress in New York and also attended the World Cultural Conference in Mexico. Inspired by the vast literature on contemporary issues available in the West he decided to to plug the gap in India. Taking the lead, he authored 'Leaders of India' which ran into several editions. It was translated in Gujarati, Urdu and Hindi. It would be illustrative to share some excerpts from the Foreword he wrote:

“The rise of the pamphlet and the booklet as a powerful weapon for the spread of ideas has been truly remarkable. During my visits to these continents (US and Europe) I was greatly impressed by the part that such brochures play in moulding public opinion. In Europe and America there exists a wealth of topical literature that is in

striking contrast to its scantiness in India. The Current Topics Series of Padma Publications is an attempt to meet this need. The idea is to publish every few months a booklet on a subject of topical or special interest having regard to present-day controversies and their bearing on the future. The series will not be restricted to political questions only. Every title will be published in a pleasing format, at a price within the reach of all.”

In 1942 when his name was nominated for the election to Bombay Mayoralty, he was lodged in Lahore jail. Vallabhbhai Patel was keen that Meherally stands for the election though a section of the Congress leadership was not in his favour. He was released from prison to take part in the elections and won comfortably becoming the youngest Mayor in the corporation's history.

Meherally had a fine taste for art and culture reflecting his aristocratic upbringing and genuine love for India's diversity and rich heritage. In October 1949, he organised an exhibition of pictures and paintings tracing India's freedom struggle beginning from 1857 in Bangalore. It had more than 200 pictures and was a much talked about event. It is said that he planned and designed a catalogue of another exhibition from his hospital bed. At Chetana, situated at Mumbai's famed Kala Ghoda, Meherally organised an art and cultural event inviting personalities like Ustad Allauddin Khan and others.

Meherally's motto was 'Live Dangerously' which he normally shared with friends and colleagues. On the morning of 17 December 1940 when the Britishers arrested

him, the cotton markets, bullion exchange, stock market did 'not transact any business'. It might be inferred that they must have remained close, but they were not. They were open for business, but

chose not to do any!

For Meherally 'Live Dangerously' meant working to ensure a safe, secure, prosperous and healthy life for fellow citizens putting his own life at risk.

***"I hate ugliness and cruelty.
That's why I am socialist."***
- Yusuf Meherally, Freedom Fighter

Tipu Sultan: The Proto Nationalist

Salil Misra

By all accounts, Tipu Sultan (1750–99), the ruler of Mysore during 1782–99, was a unique personality. This uniqueness has unfortunately been generally misconstrued in the available writings and records on Tipu. One important feature of these writings is that some crucial important facets of his personality have been overlooked and some myths and falsehoods have been exaggerated out of all proportions. In order to get the record straight, it is necessary to dispel the myths and highlight the facts. That would do justice to Tipu.

One dominant myth is the image of Tipu as a Muslim fanatic and a bigot, driven by excessive Islamicist zeal. The contemporary British writings accused him of it and the records of the Muslim courtiers and chroniclers praised him for it. The British had a reason for portraying him as a Muslim fanatic. Towards the end of the 18th century, Tipu posed the most formidable threat to the British authority. He was easily the biggest obstacle to the imperialist take-over of India by the British. The grand Mughal empire was nearing its end and most of the regional powers—the princes of Rajputana, Ranjit Singh of Punjab, Marathas and the Nizam of Hyderabad—had either compromised or given in to the

British might. None of them foresaw the long-term threat of a take-over by an alien imperial power. Tipu was the only one among his contemporaries who anticipated the real British design. He could foresee that the British were different from the rest. They were not simply one among the many rivals fighting each other for territory and other resources. He therefore resolved to resist the British till the end and not give in to them. It is therefore understandable that the British writers of the 19th century compared Tipu with 'Vandal Mahmud of Ghazni' or the 'bloodthirsty Nadirshah'.

If the English writings damned Tipu for being a Muslim fanatic, his contemporary Muslim writers praised him for his Islamic zeal and for successfully converting "thousands" to Islam. Since the condemnation and the praise converged on the same point, it easily established the image of Tipu as an over-enthusiastic Muslim zealot, determined to subdue and convert Hindus and Christians.

This image could have lived on for ever but for the discovery, in 1913, of 21 letters written by Tipu to the priest of the Sringeri Math. In these letters Tipu addressed the head of the Sringeri Math as 'Jagadguru'. Tipu wrote to him:

"You are the Jagadguru. You are always performing penance in order that the whole world may prosper, and the people may be happy. Please pray to God for the increase of our prosperity. In whatever country holy personages like yourself may reside, that country will flourish with good showers and crops."

Soon more records appeared of several instances of land donated by Tipu to many Hindu temples and other religious personae in South Malabar and Cochin. Some more evidences revealed that the instances of conversions of 'thousands' were simply not possible and that Tipu mercilessly persecuted all his political opponents who rebelled against him, whichever religion they belonged to. This persecution was obviously motivated by political ideas, not religious proselytisation. In 1791, Marathas invaded Sringeri, plundered the temple and killed a large number of priests. The Sankaracharya then appealed to Tipu who immediately sent money and other help for the re-building of the *Math*.

Who then was the real Tipu? And why should he be considered so important? Tipu's legacy can best be understood in the context of the times he lived in.

The 18th century was broadly

the time when the world had ceased being a flat world and started becoming vertical. Old empires and civilisations began to lose their power and eminence to one distinctive new civilisation located on the Atlantic shores of Europe. The new industrial civilisation, equipped with modern science and technology, surged ahead of the rest in a very short span of time. The countries of North-West Europe, particularly England and France, established their superiority and supremacy over the rest of the world. Importantly, this superiority was not just technological and economic but also ideological. It soon became clear that the new ascendance was not a mere shift in the existing balance of power. The new power equation had a significance that was neither local nor temporary.

Soon this superiority resulted in the subordination of the rest of the world to the new superpowers. A new system of imperialism and colonialism was born. This created an unprecedented dilemma for the countries of the rest of world. The choices for them appeared to be: they could either adopt the ways of new powers, but lose all their independence in the process; or, alternatively, they could retain their independence, but stay poor. It is painful to remain poor, especially if some part of the world has experience prosperity. It is also painful to give up ones traditions and independence, as a price for affluence. What to do? The dilemma could not be easily resolved.

Tipu, like all his contemporaries, faced this dilemma. But, unlike his contemporaries, he did think of a way out of it. For him the way out was to remain opposed to the British but reach out to other modern industrial

powers of the world. In other words, embrace modernity while trying to avoid the trap of imperialism. He tried to do this by fighting the British but reaching out to the other big European superpower—France. Tipu wanted to create a grand alliance of forces against the British both inside and outside India. He sent his ambassador to France to meet the king in 1788, one year before the French Revolution. Tipu wanted to help the French in their war against England and in return wanted French help for Indians in their battle against the British. Tipu also wanted craftsmen, artisans, cannon makers, clockmakers, doctors, surgeons and plants and seeds of different kinds from France. However, Tipu's ambassador could not meet the king and was told that the king of France was not in a position to sign a treaty with Tipu. The king also refused to send any French troops to India to help Tipu.

Quite apart from the global transition, 18th century was also marked by an important political transition in India. This Indian transition was engendered by the general weakening of the mighty Mughal empire and the resulting emergence of a number of regional powers. The boundaries of Tipu's Mysore were surrounded by hostile Hyderabad, Karnatik and the Marathas. Each threatened the other and was in turn threatened by the other.

The threat also came from a new force—the British. Almost intuitively and unlike any of his contemporaries, Tipu could see that the two threats—from Hyderabad and Marathas on the one hand and from the British on the other—were of a very different kind. He could see that the British designs were different

from those of the regional powers. The regional powers were interested only in territorial expansion; the British wanted a comprehensive domination over all of India.

In pre-modern times, the desire for territorial expansion was normal and a natural choice for most rulers. It was the only way in which a ruling dynasty could increase its financial resources. Financial resources would come primarily from land revenue. This necessitated conquest of neighbouring territories. Conquest required war. War required money. Money could be obtained through more revenue. More revenue required more territory. . . . The circle was closed and complete. All the major powers of South India—Mysore, Karnatik, Hyderabad and the Marathas—were faced by similar choices. Each wanted to encroach on the territory of the other. Each threatened the other and was threatened by the other. But unlike the others, Tipu really understood the difference between defeating a force and expelling a force. All the other powers only needed to be defeated; British needed to be expelled. Tipu wrote in one of his documents: "I want to expel them [British] from India. I want to be a friend of the French in all my life."

Tipu was really keen on developing a French connection. He was perhaps the first Indian to grasp the global significance of the French Revolution of 1789. Following the Revolution, he began referring to himself as 'Citizen Tipu'. He also got a special tree planted in his palace called the tree of liberty and started a club called the Jacobin Club. It was not till a century later that the modern Indian thinkers woke up to the universal relevance of the French Revolution.

Tipu was almost obsessed with the idea of a grand alliance cutting across boundaries. He sent an ambassador to the Ottoman Emperor in Turkey. He also sent his special agents to Pune, Hyderabad, Delhi, Rajputana, Nepal, Kabul and also to Mauritius. He incited all the regional powers in India to rise against the British. Unfortunately, some of his correspondence with the regional chiefs was intercepted by the British, and Tipu's plans of a grand alliance were nipped in the bud.

It was precisely this trait that set Tipu apart from the rest. All the regional rulers fought against the British and also against each other. This was natural because they all needed to protect their territories from British encroachment. Tipu did not simply fight on the battlefield. He planned and prepared a strategy. He decided to take on the British not just with sword and the gun, but also through diplomatic manoeuvring.

Tipu was also an able and keen administrator. As a ruler, he had a good sense of the welfare of his people. He initiated land reforms, a coordinated banking system, loan scheme for farmers, irrigation system, initiatives in horticulture, animal husbandry, sericulture, and commerce and manufacturing. Unlike other rulers, Tipu was very keen on transforming life around him. He paid special attention to coinage and calendar, weights and measures, banking and finance, revenue and judiciary, army and navy, and social customs and cultural affairs. He also understood the importance of both army and navy in building a strong empire. He built ships both for defence and commerce. His ships sailed as far as to Muscat in Oman where his government established a factory

around 1785.

Such was Tipu, dynamic, fiercely brave, combative and tiger-like, but also, unlike other ruler of his times, futuristic and a visionary. His reign fell between two major epochs of India history—the decline of a pan-Indian Mughal empire and the emergence of a new imperialistic alien British empire. Could Tipu have filled the gap and provided the pan-Indian alternative to the Mughal empire? That might have prevented the take-over of India by British imperialism. Tipu was certainly capable of it. But he failed in providing the alternative. Why?

The explanation for this failure perhaps lies not so much in Tipu but in the times in which he lived. There is no doubt that he had all the potentials of developing as an Indian nationalist. But he lived at a time when Indian nationalism was not much understood. None of his contemporaries understood it. None of them could tell the difference between the rival neighbours and British imperialism. Tipu needed to build a grand alliance of different regional forces against the British but he failed.=

Tipu died on the battlefield fighting the British in the fourth Anglo–Mysore war. That certainly was a fitting end for the tiger of Mysore. With his death ended all possibilities of there being any credible alternative to the British. The British too knew that they had succeeded in removing the biggest obstacle to their imperialist designs.

After Tipu 1857 was the next major challenge to British imperialism. That too was overcome because some parts of India did not support the rebellion and some actually opposed it. It became clear that British imperialism could not be

overthrown until the people of India got united in a joint struggle against it. Tipu's dream was fulfilled almost two centuries later, in 1947. So distant was 1947 from Tipu's times that nobody thought of any possible connection between Tipu and Indian independence.

Tipu thus had the misfortune of not being properly understood twice-over. The most important facets of his personality went unnoticed in his life time and also subsequently. His contemporaries did not notice his nationalism because they did not understand *nationalism*. But subsequently, in the 20th century, the distinctiveness of his nationalism went unnoticed because nationalism, by that time, had become the dominant norm. Every progressive political leader of the country was a nationalist. In such a climate, Tipu's nationalism could hardly have evoked any special admiration, which it certainly deserved. Tipu's USP, however, was that he was a nationalist at a time when there were no nationalists around. Tipu Sultan therefore needs to be remembered and reinstated as India's first proto-nationalist.

History writing is concerned with what happened and not so much with what *might have happened*. Counterfactual history writing is generally not treated with much respect. However the relevance of Tipu's story lies not in what he actually did but in what he might have done, had the constellation of various forces been different. The story of Tipu Sultan has been unjustly forgotten precisely because it belongs to the realm of what did not happen, but could well have happened.

Chavismo: Part VI

The sixth part of a seven part series of articles by Marco Teruggi on the ongoing socialist revolutionary project in Venezuela that the Venezuelans fondly call Chavismo, in memory of Hugo Chavez, the brilliant and charismatic leader of the Venezuelan revolution who died in 2013. Chavez himself called it Bolivarian Revolution, to commemorate Simon Bolivar.

Who Builds The Other Power?

Marco Teruggi

At the crossing in Caracas where the roads to the middle class neighbourhood of El Paraíso and the working class area of La Vega cross each other, the covered parking was full. They had installed a big tent, and there, on the oil stained asphalt, people sat there night and day, talking about the houses they were planning to construct for themselves. But it was not just apartments they were going to build, they were going to build more than that, a community. They were people from the hillsides, working class people, young men and women. It was April 2011 and it was my first visit to Caracas, and that image of young people, both men and women, working class people from the hillsides, engaged in intense discussions with each other, still remains etched in my memory. Today, seven years later, the apartment buildings have come up, around a central square with a bust of Chavez. The government gave them the land, and the people built the buildings through voluntary labour.

That year, in May, the Great Housing Mission of Venezuela was launched. In seven years, it has delivered two million homes. Of this total, one part was built by the state, another was built privately, and popular organisations—such as central communal councils and communes, and sometimes popular movements such as the Movement of Settlers that was fighting the owners of huge urban landed estates in Caracas—built the rest.

While a unified party was necessary, simultaneously, it was also important that various social and political movements retain their independence and do not come under the hegemony of the party. While outlining the need for building the PSUV as a unified party, Chavez explained the importance of maintaining the independence of social movements: "There exist very powerful social movements, which are independent of parties and have their own identity. They include movements of students, youth, women, and they have their own independent leadership. These social movements are important, and we must provide them all support. Rather than try and take them over, we must respect their independence, and we need to link up with them to build a great patriotic alliance." Chavez was thus very clear, the method of advancing the revolution was not by imposing a one-party rule over the country.

Multiplying Movements

Over the years, as the revolutionary process advanced, movements multiplied. Some were created through deliberate policy initiatives of the government, while others were created at the initiative of cadres who had gradually matured with the advance of Chavismo. Most of these movements did not exist before the revolution began; before the beginning of the revolution, there was massive mass mobilisation of the people at the grassroots, but there

was little organisation building. It is the revolution that initiated the flowering of several independent social movements. Most of the movements that have formed after 1999 are local movements, confined to certain localities or even certain regions, and are built around single issues. Since the state itself has promoted the development of these movements, it has also provided them financial support, without trying to bring them under its control. Thus, for Chavez, Chavismo was the unfolding of multiple currents, all broadly oriented towards the development of a new revolutionary society.

Just as Chavez pressed for the PSUV not to be confined to being an electoral party solely concerned with winning elections, but to be a party whose primary task is to lead the revolution, likewise, he wanted the social movements to expand their horizons from just fighting for isolated issues to becoming "a political force capable of promoting revolutionary transformation both in the base and the superstructure". All the organisations of the revolution, including the party, the communal councils, and the various social movements of the people—all needed to have as their objective the advance of the revolution.

Chavez devised an entire policy architecture to open the floodgates to popular participation. His basic scheme can be explained as follows: the state creates the conditions for promoting popular participation;

the party of the revolution does not confine itself to just participating in elections but also unites the vanguards, that is, the cadres, into a single organisation to advance the revolution; the social movements focus on increasing the popular participation of the people as a means of increasing their conscious involvement in the revolutionary process and ultimately increasing the involvement of people in decision making at the various levels of the government. The strategic objective is thus neither the building of the party, or the social movements, or just managing the state. It is the process of putting power back into the hands of the people, who were, as visualised by Chavez, organised in various communal organisations. This was how Chavez visualised the development of the communal state, as a transition towards its ultimate dissolution. How does the state evolve from being controlled by a party into a communal state? This transition was to be achieved by the development of social movements.

Importance of Social Movements

“The aim of the revolution is not to make some people as leaders and others as their followers, the aim is not to bring a party into power and make the others as their subjects. The revolution advances by the collective but autonomous action of innumerable social movements, indigenous movements, left parties, regional organisations, communal councils, communities . . . The advance of the revolution depends on the ability of these popular, people’s movements to create, build and sustain popular power, a power parallel to the state”, says Isabel Rauber.

The revolutionary process in Venezuela has thrown up many such popular movements. Thus, there are popular movements like the Bolivar and Zamora Revolutionary Current (CRBZ) and the Alexis

Vive Foundation, which have a long history of organising rural and urban communities, and because of their considerable experience, are considerably well organised. Then, there are the communal organisations spread across the country, from the ‘23 de Enero’ neighbourhood in Caracas to the border areas of Tachira and Apure, who have gained considerable experience in self-governance, which includes organising both democratic decision making structures at the communal level and communal production units. Many of these communal organisations came up spontaneously, at the initiative of grassroot activists with years of organising experience, once Chavez gave the call for building these organisations.

Organizational Expansion

However, not all movements have such mature leadership and capacity for mobilisation, and have not been able to expand their work and organisationally strengthen themselves. Many have leaderships with narrow / selfish visions, others have been plagued by bureaucratic methods of functioning rather than strengthening grassroots democracy, and have sought to take advantage of support by the state to further their vested interests. This has limited the scope of these social movements to build a parallel structure of power to strengthen the revolution by strengthening the popular participation of people.

Chavez's death has brought this limitation to the fore. Not because of weaknesses in the implementation of pro-people social programs, articulated through the missions. They have continued as before, the housing mission discussed above being one example. The economic crisis has of course weakened the capacity of the state to finance these social missions, as well as finance the initiatives taken by

the communal organisations to strengthen themselves economically by setting up local production units. The main weakness of the revolutionary process in Venezuela is that it is still very much dependent on the state, the grassroots social movements are not strong enough to challenge the state in case those in control of state power decide to reverse the revolutionary policies. The movements are still not strong enough to advance the revolution in case the state decides to reverse the pro-peasant policies or stop the fight against the owners of urban real estates or stop support to the communal organisations or does not implement policies furthering the empowerment of women.

Till today, the revolutionary advance has depended more on support from the state, the initiative of the party, the various ministries and by the President himself, rather than the capacity of the movements. The advance of Chavismo crucially depends on the capacity of the various social movements to strengthen themselves and reduce their dependency on the state for their advance. The revolutionary socialist perspective developed by Chavez clearly outlines that the revolutionary advance depends on the development of the various social and political organisations being built at the grassroots which help strengthen popular power.

For this to take place, Chavista culture must find ways of solving the problems of advancing the social-political consciousness of the people, developing their initiative, making them independent and not seek to curry favour with those holding positions of power. This is what Chavez tried to do through his various initiatives. We need to return to Chavez and invent new forms of building people’s capacities to think independently and strengthen popular power.



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