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## Let's Await Court's Ruling

**Kuldip Nayar**

There is a vast difference between perception and evidence. When Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi says that the RSS is responsible for the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, he is conveying the general perception. In fact, the then Home Minister Sardar Patel imposed a ban on the RSS which he withdrew when the organization gave in writing that it was only a cultural outfit. However, the perception has remained till today. The BJP, which is said to be a political wing of the RSS, has always denied the charge. But there is no clinching evidence either with the BJP elements or those opposed to it..

When the party was in power at the Centre—they ruled for more than 50 years—it could have published the intelligence reports or some other documents to suggest that the assassination was the doing of the RSS. Nor did the BJP, when it was in power, could release anything which would remove the charge once and for all.

What Rahul Gandhi has said was the perception prevailing throughout

the country and abroad even today. At that time the RSS elements were on the defensive and generally preferred to keep quiet. This only confirmed the perception that the Mahatma was killed by Nathuram Godse, a fanatic Hindu.

I was working with an Urdu newspaper, *Anjaam*, then. We were all sitting at the office when the PTI teleprinter machine's bell alerted for a flash. We rushed to the machine and the cryptic message was: Gandhi shot at! I wasted no time and went straight to the Birla House on my scooter. My office was situated near Jamma Masjid and I rode through Darya Ganj area. The locality was calm and oblivious to the great tragedy.

There was a wooden gate at Birla House and there was no security to stop any visitor. I went to the raised platform where Gandhi's body, swathed in white khadi, was lying. Lord Mountbatten, the last British Viceroy, came after I had reached the venue. He saluted the body; both Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Home Minister Patel, who followed him in the queue, were

openly crying. The crowd had started swelling by then.

The assassin, Godse, who did not escape was still there and surprisingly without any remorse. The Raj Path through which the cartage was carried, with Nehru and Patel sitting on either side, to what is today called the Rajghat. Ironically, Gandhi who had spread the new philosophy of non-violence to the world was taken for his last rites in a military vehicle which the Mahatma would not have liked.

Rahul Gandhi was not even born then. But he had the privilege of being a scion of the family which gave its all to the national struggle. He has every right to find fault with the RSS and he is not a third party to the entire episode of courage and sacrifice. The entire conspiracy to kill the Mahatma has been placed before the public, though bit by bit. And there is no doubt that the RSS elements were behind it.

In a letter addressed to jailor Arjun Das at Ambala, where he was detained, Godse confessed his hand and had argued that the Congress leaders at that time were weakening the country, making it an easy prey for Pakistan. This was a flimsy argument which did not go down well with the public when the letter was ultimately released.

The dust of time has covered many a footstep and it is very difficult to find out today who else at the Nagpur headquarters of the RSS had blessed the heinous crime. This was probably the first crime committed in the name of ideology. Things have, however,

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## Land Reforms Should be Integral Part of Agricultural Development

**Bharat Dogra**

One of the most unfortunate aspects of agricultural policy in recent times has been that land reforms have been almost entirely ignored and marginalized. Although no formal announcement has been made to this effect but for all practical purposes it is clear that the largely unfinished agenda of land reforms is now being given up almost entirely. This is highly regrettable as land reforms are not only an essential component of any agricultural development agenda based on justice and equality but in addition land reforms are also necessary for creating conditions in which the full productive potential of the most hard working sections of the peasantry can be properly realized.

Summarising the experience of the most important component of land reforms in India a former distinguished Secretary of Rural Development in the Government of India S. R. Sankaran wrote, " ... the efforts of the central and state governments to enact, revise and implement the ceiling laws, spread over 35 years, resulted in the redistribution of only 1.25 per cent of the operational area."

This seniormost official of rural development then went on to make a comparison with some other countries which had achieved good progress in agriculture. He wrote, " ... the extent of land redistributed was 43 per cent of agricultural land in China, 37 per cent in Taiwan, 32

per cent in South Korea and 33 per cent in Japan."

Thus it is clear that many countries which recorded very significant increase in agricultural production and productivity had first implemented land reforms on a significant scale and secondly, it is equally clear that the land reform efforts in India have been very inadequate. It follows that more and stronger efforts in this direction would have been good not just for justice but also for increasing production and productivity; but this has been ignored.

Instead it has been propagated falsely that when landless poor have been given land they have not used it productively. On the contrary this writer has met several beneficiaries of land distribution efforts who worked very hard and with great creativity to obtain good harvests even from the low quality land they were reluctantly given in some villages. In other villages more powerful landowners put several obstacles in their ability to cultivate the allotted land and spread the canard that these people just don't want to work. The more general experience has been that wherever supportive conditions have been provided including some support to improve almost uncultivable land and to provide some protective irrigation new land allottees have given very good results.

The International Labour Organisation estimated in a series of studies that equal distribution of land has the potential of increasing food output by 10 per cent in Pakistan, 28 per cent in Colombia and 80 per cent in north-eastern Brazil. The fact that small farms are more productive than large farms has been confirmed by even the World Bank for Argentina, Brazil, Thailand and some other countries. The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations said more specifically in the context of India, "Redistribution of only 5% of farmland in India, coupled with improved access to water, could reduce rural poverty levels by 30% under what they would be, so that in Indian conditions land and water reform would be a key approach. "

Thus several studies confirm the positive contribution that land reforms can make to both increasing farm production and reducing rural poverty. When food production increases on the fields of the poorest sections then clearly there are higher chances of reducing hunger and malnutrition while improving food security. The chances of organic and eco-friendly agriculture also improve with land reforms as poorer farmers keen to use low cost methods and at the same time willing to contribute more manual labour make important improvements in composting and other related technologies based on making more productive use of local natural resources. Enthusiastic first generation farmers who are cultivating their own land for the first time are likely to contribute with a lot of vigour to repair and improvement of existing irrigation sources as well to the emergence of new sources near

their fields. The new land allottees can be the front rank contributors to a programme of environment regeneration which also enhances the productivity of their newly acquired land and includes better soil and water conservation as well improved irrigation and drainage.

In addition more equal land distribution has the potential of creating more stable rural communities compared to a situation where a large number of people

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*(Continued from Page 2)*

changed now because the atmosphere has been politicized and there are very few voices left, whose credibility is beyond reproach. The RSS is still riding the high horse and refusing to join issue.

The fact that the matter has been given to the party spokesman to handle shows that the Congress is already making preparations for diluting its stand. If it does so, the party would lose the face, more so Rahul Gandhi, who is being projected to lead the party in the next Lok Sabha elections. This is a tough case before the Supreme Court because it is going to be damned if its verdict goes either in favour of the Congress or the RSS.

What saddens one is that the secular forces in the country are not marshalling their strength to face the biggest challenge to the idea of India, democratic and anti-communal. The struggle for independence was for the ethos of pluralism and egalitarianism. Once Gandhi was portrayed as a non-violent communist and he did not take any offence to the comment, although the communists had

remain without any land. Communities based on equality and justice are inherently more sustainable in the longer term although there may be some disruption for some time which can be handled with proper governance skills. Communities based on equality and justice are also inherently more capable of working together for protection of environment, regeneration of pastures and forests and other important constructive tasks beneficial to the entire community.

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described him as a running dog of imperialism. The communists should make amends for their mistakes and hang the picture the Mahatma at their headquarters in Kolkata.

My advice to the RSS and BJP is the same. Gandhi is an apostle of the marginalized and the backward. He represented the national struggle and India's emancipation from the British. This is the point on which all the political parties meet and they should have no hesitation in collectively recognizing the fact that Gandhi rolled up the 150 years of foreign rule.

As for the allegations of Rahul Gandhi, the Supreme Court has taken note of them. In the wake of the court hearing, many skeletons may tumble out of the closet. Now that the Congress vice-president has refused to apologize—one can only hope that he will stick to his statement—the fat is on fire and the public may see an ideological warfare in the court itself. Rahul Gandhi is either made or marred.

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# Is Superstition Limited to Hindus?

**K. S. Chalam**

Karnataka state is in the news once again for all the wrong reasons - this time for differing on the proposed anti-superstition bill. Karnataka is perhaps one of the few states in the country, may be a lone region that has been championing the cause of reason and rationality not only during the modern period, but also for the last more than a millennium in this part of the country. The revolt initiated by Basava, a traditional Brahmin, against the inhuman and barbarous practices, particularly in relation to caste and the solution provided by him against the caste prejudices had eventually ended with him to vanish in oblivion or might have been butchered by the sanatana dharma purveyors. Therefore, one need not be surprised to learn that the conflict between orthodox barbarians and followers of reason in the present Karnataka in the episodes of Kalburgi, Dabolkar, Pansare are not new. In fact the intellectual influence of the present state of Karnataka was not confined to its present boundaries, it had a wide spectrum of whole of the South including the Deccan (Maharashtra). Therefore, the entire country is looking for a solution to come out of superstitions through the proposed bill, though there are states that passed acts against superstition to show off that they are modern, but encourage myths in practice. Dr Narasimhaiah and several others in Karnataka have laid the foundation for the present bill.

The Siddaramaiah Cabinet discussed, “Karnataka Prevention and Eradication of Human Sacrifices and other Inhuman Evil and Aghori

Practices and Black Magic Bill, 2016”, in detail and it seems no consensus was reached due to difference of opinion on certain practices. The discussion in the cabinet should have been made public to initiate a debate in the country on an important national issue that involves the prospects of our ethos and the constitutional provision to promote scientific temper. I am told that there are several reasonable individuals even in the Hindu Parivar who could support this if a public debate is organised. In fact, the issue is so porous that the debate within the cabinet and in informal circles was perhaps confined to the practices that are by tradition related to the lower castes while the practices of the upper castes, sanskritised sudras, the converted elite are not touched at all. I think this is the crux of the problem of not being able to arrive at a consensus on defining what is superstition?

The Western or occidental reasoning is different from Oriental orientation. I have come across a recent study on the differences between these two systems of reasoning in mathematics, the simple approach for scientific reasoning, and the authors classified the two systems briefly as follows:

## **Occidental Reasoning**

1. 1200 algebra: no formalisation
2. Paradigm of geometry, Equations
3. Aprioristic formulas that hide the processes, favouring, with the result, determinism

- 4 Reductio ad absurdum in a potential infinite

## **Oriental Reasoning**

1. 200 B.C. algebra: no formalisation
2. Positional system, matrices (system of the rods)
3. Solving equations by means of algebraic manipulations with the strategies: i) making equals, ii) making homogeneous, iii) research for fundamental algorithms.
4. Existing infinity of operations

The basic point is that “the aspirations of ancient Greek tradition represented by Euclid, which proposed deducing all mathematics from a single set of indemonstrable but evident axioms, were not shared by the Chinese at least until the modern age. In China, as a matter of fact, the goal was not axiomatic-deductive demonstration, but gathering unifying principles from all of mathematics.” Though the article is related to comparison of Greek and Chinese traditions to represent Occidental or Western, and Oriental or Asian, the Chinese example is to a large extent true in the case of India. We had a tradition of materialism not only in the so-called Lokayata or Charvaka schools of Brahminical thought, but the doctrines of Ajivikas who were the pre-Jain-Buddhist sects (see A. L. Basham) that had deep roots in the native Indian epistemology. The native Indian episteme was different from the alien or Aryan. In fact the

alien practices were rooted in the Sumerian soil and had a direct influence on the pre-Abrahamic and Brahmic (Vedic) religious pantheon that carry some remote memories in the epics. That is why it is said that Christianity had a hidden Vedanta and Hindu and Islamic faiths had in common several heretical practices. The Hindu bug on the net in recent times produces blogs to show that Islam and Christianity had derived their theology from Vedas. In a way they are arriving at the idea of Vasudhaivakutumbakam to justify their hegemony. This is fabulous. Then why is it that the practices of the lower castes alone are subjected to scrutiny and the beliefs, traditions and customs, while old callous dogmas of the elite are either respected or preserved?

Interestingly, very few of the modern rationalist or western (including Christian rationalists) new atheist thinkers including a section of the dialectical materialists never looked at the literature produced by great scholars like D. P. Chattopadhyay, N. N. Bhattacharya, A. L. Basham - to name few. Nevertheless, the literary interpretations of D. D. Kosambi did not enhance our understanding of the continuous existence of cults of lower classes. In a way the present trend demonstrates the alleged presence of the kind of discrimination and deceit against the native traditions even in the intellectual exercises of modern India. All of us who are trained in the traditions of "rational man" are guilty of neglecting this very important and foundational tradition of India. Now, the debate on the Karnataka superstition bill has opened a new vista into the cosmos of life and living conditions of the poor and the wretched of India.

It is very easy to dismiss the cult practices of the lower castes as "sigh of the oppressed". But, they have been in existence since much before the emergence of pre-class society and are being used as identity, though the core of it was appropriated by the Brahminical or Sanskritised Hinduism and are being treated with respect. Similarly the Abrahamic and Brahmic (Vedic) faiths have several beliefs that are common and touted as spiritual as long as they are practiced by the elite. The Christian missionaries in their strategy to attract the lower castes deliberated and found that the lower castes have certain strong beliefs that should be made blasphemous and superstitious so that the space created can be filled with Jesus (see Henry Whitehead). They have started belittling the traditional practices of the untouchables as superstition and persuaded some of them to convert. The Hindu, Muslim and other alien faiths have never resisted the treachery. In fact they are together in denouncing the Native Indian traditions. The practice, it is reported is still prevalent in Andhra Pradesh and it is alleged that majority of the SCs and some artisans are converted and the dalit leadership lament that the masses are not available for any social movement, except their leaders. In the Muslim dominated Kerala districts, the belief/propaganda that vaccines are essentially *haram* took away the life of Mohammad Afzaz (14) who was not allowed the administration of vaccine for diphtheria, is being reported in the media as victim of superstition today. The so-called godless Dravidian movement seems to be in distress in this respect.

Interestingly, the so-called rational missionaries including those

intellectuals who are critical about other faiths do not look at the superstitions like no. 13, wine as blood of Jesus, faith healing, remarriage, contraceptives, beliefs in devils, Satan, etc. The Muslims do also believe in the same practices as that of Christians and have their superstitions about certain numbers, black cat, biting nails, glass breaking as good omen, owl as bad (some may be typical to India) etc. We may also find comparable beliefs among the Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs and others. In fact all the faiths including Brahminical Hinduism believe in horoscopes, date of birth, paying huge money as zakat/donation to places of worship, etc. Not all customs of the alien faiths are unscrupulous and superstitious; some are institutionalised for the betterment of the society. The point is that there are several such practices among the lower castes that were used in the past as norms and practices of a traditional society at its primitive stage or proto-scientific stage have remained with them as residuals as the believers were considered as untouchables. The Pambalas of Telangana is a classic example: how their attire, living conditions, etc, have remained the same from the time of Tantrism till to date.

The mainstream society never looked at the customs of the locals with understanding except smuggling some that are used for therapeutic practices in the name of Ayurveda, Yunani, etc. A few years ago there was huge hue and cry reportedly by the so-called Brahminical professors against the method used by a lower caste person called Ramar Pillai in Tamil Nadu, who claimed to have produced petrol from leaves. As he was subjected to several elite tests which he never knew, it was alleged

that the gentleman resorted to all kinds of tricks to prove it and we all have forgotten about it by now. But, the mainstream scientists have drawn massive grants to experiment with *Jatropha* plant as an alternative source of petrol. The point here is that the kind of traditional practices including some of the belief systems based on the living conditions of the lower castes were never studied scientifically and rationally to weed the grass from grain. Now after the advent of the ICT and media, we are now watching in almost all the channels whether religious or secular, telling us about the rationale behind the so-called upper caste or elite beliefs. A separate social class and huge infrastructure and trillions of rupees are behind such arrangements. It does not mean that we should use the so-called post-modernist, instrumental rationality to justify all nonsense. Instrumental rationality is often seen as a specific form of rationality using reason as a tool, focusing on the most efficient or cost-effective means to achieve a specific end, but not in itself reflecting on the value of that end. Horkheimer argues that instrumental rationality plays a key role in the oppressive industrial culture of capitalism as it doesn't bother about the evil effects or negative impact on society. I am not saying here that some of those who are critical about the superstitions are subjecting the practices of the lower castes with instrumental rationality, but I feel that we should look at the practices pragmatically within the social and historical background of India. Otherwise, it would amount to another kind of discrimination and disgrace meted out to the socially disadvantaged, if only the Aghori and other practices of the lower castes are critiqued while astrology, palmistry, numerology, etc practiced

by the Brahmin or elite in the places of worship are touted as rational or core of the faith. This is simply double standard or mockery. (*This is only*

*to open a debate on the topic, the note is sent despite some infirmities on references.*)

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## A World Gripped by the Cancer of Terror

Ram Puniyani

The current times are very disturbing as so many innocent lives are being lost and social resources being destroyed due to the dastardly phenomenon of terror. To cap it all, this phenomenon has been linked to religion in the popular perception. Just during last two weeks (July 2016) we witnessed with horror the massacre of 49 people at the Pulse club in Orlando, US. This deadly incident had two interpretations, one that it is an act of Jihadi terror and two it was prompted by a man gripped by homophobia. One of the commentators pointed out, "It turns out that he may have been motivated by both homophobia and Islamic radicalism... Terrorism or homophobia? The answer is yes. Both."

In another incident 119 people were killed in Baghdad blast by Islamic State.

In Bangladesh on 1<sup>st</sup> July 28 people were killed. Those who lost their lives were identified as foreigners. There are some reports that the terrorists belonged to Jamaat UI Mujahideen and were not affiliated with Islamic State. One commentator points out that ISIS and the Al Qaeda are currently engaged in a fierce competition across our sub-continent aiming to outdo each other in spreading their terror tentacles. But the malignant

growth of Islamist extremism in Bangladesh can be easily traced back to the Jamaat-e-Islami (JEB) and its militant student wing, Islami Chhatra Shibir.

What connects these diverse destructive phenomena? At the surface it seems these are the manifestations of Islamic terrorism, as the phrase has become popular since 2001 after the 9/11 tragedy. If we go slightly deeper we can discern some clear strands of very different underlying pathologies operating in each of these. The one in Orlando has a lot to do with the prevalent gun culture in US. and has woken up the law makers to the prevalent norms of possession of the gun. While this may be most horrific of such cases, similar ones at lesser intensity have been occurring in US off and on unrelated to the Islamic terrorism so to say. In case of Baghdad mostly it is the one related to the Islamic State.

As far as the case of Bangladesh terror is concerned this seems to be a continuation of the terrorism which has roots in the fundamentalist streaks in Bangladesh politics. Such terror acts have been stalking Bangladesh since quite some time, manifested in the murders of progressive-secular liberal bloggers and Hindus. This has indigenous origin to which the present regime had turned a blind eye and violence

came to the fore in this dastardly way due to the failure of the state and society to curb the rising fundamentalist trends in politics. Currently in many countries of South Asia the militancy has origins in fundamentalism-communalism as seen prominently in Pakistan, Bangladesh and India among others.

In Pakistan fundamentalist doctrine was given the official status during Zia Ul Haq's regime. To get the cover for his dictatorial ambitions he resorted to alliance with feudal forces and Mullahs and brought in the doctrines of Maulana Maududi (Deoband Islam). This is what is referred to as Islamization of Pakistan. The focus of this was to push back the civic social norms around the Sharia as interpreted by Maududi; the focus was to bring in feudal conservative values, suppression of women and of civil liberties. In India the politics in the name of religion manifested more in the form of communalism, communal violence, where the religious minorities have been the victim. The extreme form of this ideology manifested in organizations upholding Hindutva ideology which have been alleged to be responsible for the acts of terror in Malegaon, Makka Masjid (Hyderabad), Ajmer and Samjhauta Express. The communal-fundamentalist ideology is an attempt to restore pre-modern, feudal values of birth based hierarchy of caste/class and gender in the garb of Sharia law or glorious traditions of the past, presented as religion.

Terrorism related to Al Qaeda-Islamic state variety has its roots in the politics of oil control in which the policies of United State has played a major role. It is the policy of US which funded the Madrassas based

in Pakistan and brought in the Maulana Wahab's version of Islam. Here the major focus is killing the infidel (kafir) as a part of jihad. In this variety the central focus is on violence against those differing with the dominant groups. It had a reason; as they wanted to fight communism, Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and so the killing of infidel. If we see the case of Pakistan one can see the Islamization of Pakistan during Zia's regime getting a continuum through the Al Qaeda variety taking over later, and Al Qaeda in turn laid the ideological foundations of Islamic State. Hillary Clinton clarified the US role very succinctly. There is adequate reference to show that US has been supporting the terrorist groups in more ways than one.

So two strands of terrorist actions are creating havoc in contemporary times. One has the motive of restoring the pre-modern values as seen in the case of Pakistan (inspired by Maulana Maududi), Bangladesh (similar variety), India (Hindutva) and in Myanmar and Srilanka as well. The latter have used particular interpretation of Buddhism. The other has its support system derived from the global politics of oil control. The tragedy is that both these varieties draw their foundation and legitimacy in the name of religion, particularly Islam. Religion has many streams, like Islam has Sufi as well as Wahabi tendencies and Hinduism has Bhakti and Brahmanism. US picked up Wahabi version for political goals in West Asia, Zia had picked up Maududi for strengthening dictatorship, Hindu nationalism-Hindutva has picked up neo-Brahmanism, for its own political agenda. Various streams of religion do prevail as such but become dominant only when propped up by political forces which can use that

cover to enhance their political goals. Recognizing this may be a major step in combating terrorism, and make it clear that it is political agenda masquerading as religion.

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## Chau khamba Raj

Prominent intellectuals and leaders from Delhi and all over Punjab participated in a state level function on July 14, on Chau-khamba raj, a concept propounded by Dr. Rammanmohar Lohia, at Hoshiarpur organised under the stewardship of Balwant Singh Khera, vice president Socialist Party(India).

While addressing the function prominent sociologist Prof. Anand Kumar said that the concept of four pillars governance ushering in village level government found its echo in late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments for empowering PR

—B.S. Balli

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# How Exactly Does the Indian Media Define a Terrorist?

Shoaib Daniyal

On July 10, India woke up to startling pictures of massive crowds at the funeral of Hizb-ul-Mujahideen commander Burhan Wani in Tral, Kashmir.

The disconnect between Kashmir and the rest of India was captured by the fact that even as Wani was a figure of mass adulation in the Valley, large sections of the Indian media had described him as a “terrorist” as it had reported on his killing by Indian security forces on July 8.

This included the *Times of India*, Times Now as well as NDTV—even as the *Telegraph*, *Indian Express* and *Business Standard* stuck to the plain vanilla “militant”.

How these respective organisations differentiated between a “terrorist” and a “militant” was unclear and undefined.

This might seem like hair splitting around semantics but it’s actually far deeper than that – even if this is a discussion that’s not been had in India.

“Terrorism” and “terrorist” are words laden with value judgment, used often by political players as a means of getting their own message and viewpoint across. In reality, there are few definitions of the word “terrorist” accepted across the board. Indeed, it is for this reason that a number of global publications have strict guidelines on how to use the term. In India, however, few press outlets seem to have rules about the T-word and much of its use in the country, it seems, is driven

either by Arnab Goswami-esque jingoism and/or India’s highly troubled relationship with Kashmir.

## History of the word “terrorism”

There are few words in the English-language which have had as tumultuous a life as “terrorism”. In fact, the word didn’t even start its life in English but in French where the *regime de la terreur* was a label adopted by the new French state to establish order after the first uprisings of the French Revolution in 1789. The first avatar of the word “terrorism” was therefore almost completely different from its modern meaning.

Firstly, it was applied to the functioning of a state, whereas today it is used to almost always describe non-state actors. Even more strikingly, at the time, it had decidedly positive connotations. The “terrorism” of the French state was pressed into ideals that many would today consider the foundations of the modern world: Liberté, égalité and fraternité. Given this connotation, the state used it as a badge of honour with revolutionary leader Maximilien de Robespierre proclaiming that, “terror is nothing but justice, prompt, severe and inflexible; it is therefore an emanation of virtue.”

In its more modern form, as a tool used by people against the state, terrorism traces itself to an Italian revolutionary called Carlo Pisacane who in 1857 theorised the “propaganda of the deed”. Holding actions, and not ideas, to be the driving force of human civilisation,

Pisacane was clear that as a tool of revolutionary instruction, violence was a far better teacher for the masses than a book or a speech.

The first group to take up Pisacane’s ideas were the Russian revolutionaries, Narodnaya Volya (literally, “people’s will”). Using the doctrine of the “propaganda of the deed”, the organisation assassinated prominent people – including the Tsar himself in 1881 – in order to spur a mass revolt against the Russian monarchy. Between 1881 and 1914 other assassinations inspired by Pisacane’s ideas, often undertaken by libertarian anarchists, were King Umberto I of Italy, King Carlos I of Portugal and King George I of Greece.

Note that while the terrorists till today subscribe to the “propaganda of the deed” – using violence as a way to shock – they differed starkly with most anarchists of that period in their goals. Like the French Revolution, the anarchists of the time subscribed to ideas such as democracy or human rights, which would generally be viewed as positive today, and used “terrorism” to combat autocratic regimes. Consequently, “terrorism” was mostly a value-neutral term describing a type of action rather than something pejorative. It is in this context that Indian revolutionaries such as Bhagat Singh are called “terrorists”. In fact, in its 1929 manifesto, Bhagat Singh’s party the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association was quite open to admitting that “terrorism”

was a part of its policy to pull down the British Raj.

### Civilians in the firing line

Post World War II, revolutionary nationalists such as the Irish Republican Army, Jewish Zionist, Palestinians and Sri Lankan Tamils would use techniques similar to the Anarchists but with one crucial difference — now mass civilian casualties were also involved. This is, of course, how modern terrorism is defined. This change also made the word a pejorative one. Post World War II, there are few *self-described* terrorists.

In the modern-age, “terrorism” as a term has famously avoided a common definition – Saudi Arabia even defines atheists as “terrorists”. The US State Department goes by this: “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents”. The academic and terrorism expert Bruce Hoffman has a five-part test: violence for political goals, aims to influence a broader audience, involves an organised group, targets civilians and carried out by a non-state actor.

No matter the definition, “terrorism” as a term is a highly pejorative one today and used by political players to tar their opponents. “The decision to call someone or label some organisation “terrorist” becomes almost unavoidably subjective, depending largely on whether one sympathises with or opposes the person/group/cause concerned,” explains Bruce Hoffman. “If one identifies with the victim of the violence, for example, then the act is terrorism. If, however, one identifies with the perpetrator,

the violent act is regarded in a more sympathetic, if not positive (or, at the worst, an ambivalent) light; and it is not terrorism”.

### Global media

Given this vagueness, many global media outlets are reluctant to use the term “terrorist”, preferring more banal — and unambiguous — words such as “gunman”, “bomber” or “militant”. “There is no agreed consensus on what constitutes a terrorist or terrorist act,” the BBC lays out in a guide for its reports. “The use of the word will frequently involve a value judgement.” It goes on to add:

The word “terrorist” itself can be a barrier rather than an aid to understanding. We should convey to our audience the full consequences of the act by describing what happened. We should use words which specifically describe the perpetrator such as “bomber”, “attacker”, “gunman”, “kidnapper”, “insurgent”, and “militant”. We should not adopt other people’s language as our own; our responsibility is to remain objective and report in ways that enable our audiences to make their own assessments about who is doing what to whom.

Many other organisations agree with the BCC. Reuters calls the word “terrorism” and “terrorist” “emotive words” and advises reporters to not use them unless quoting someone in direct speech.

### Indian media’s use of the term

The Indian media, though, seems to have no fixed guidelines on the issue and the word “terrorism” is used without any consistency. Most

definitions of the act involve attacks on civilian targets but sections of the Indian media consistently use the term “terrorism”/“terrorists” to also describe cases of military targets being attacked.

In Kashmir, for example, sections of the Indian media have consistently described attacks on military installations as “terrorism”. For a November, 2015 attack on an Indian Army base in Kashmir, while NDTV, Times Now and the *Times of India* described the attackers as “terrorists”, Reuters and *The Telegraph* in contrast, stuck to “gunmen” and “militants”.

Yet, even with respect to attacks on Indian security forces, there seems to be no consistency. In Manipur, for example, attacks on Indian forces have been reported by NDTV, Times Now and the *Times of India* using the word “militant”. The value-laden term “terrorist”, it seems, is easier to abjure when the location isn’t Kashmir.

### Meaningless words

In his sparkling 1946 essay *Politics and the English Language*, British writer George Orwell criticises the use of what he calls “meaningless words”:

The word Fascism has now no meaning except in so far as it signifies ‘something not desirable’. The words *democracy*, *socialism*, *freedom*, *patriotic*, *realistic*, *justice* have each of them several different meanings which cannot be reconciled with one another. In the case of a word like *democracy*, not only is there no agreed definition, but the attempt to make one is resisted from all sides. It is almost universally felt that when we call a country

democratic we are praising it: consequently the defenders of every kind of regime claim that it is a democracy, and fear that they might have to stop using that word if it were tied down to any one meaning. Words of this kind are often used in a consciously dishonest way. That is, the person who uses them has his own private definition, but allows his hearer to think he means something quite different.

“Terrorism” is, of course, exactly the sort of “meaningless word” that Orwell railed against, used not for its lexical meaning but to serve various political agendas.

In most cases, the Indian media uses it either to suit the purposes of the state or various nationalist narratives. The sharp difference between the way it is used when Muslims/Kashmir are involved versus other instances such as the North-East also points to a subtle anti-Muslim bias.

The nationalist pressure on the Indian media is, of course, apparent and, in the case of Burhan Wani’s death, has even been written about by journalist Rajdeep Sardesai. As Sardesai explains, even in Britain during the 1983 UK-Argentina Falklands War, the BBC came under intense pressure to appear more patriotic. However, at the time, the organisation resisted, with director general John Birt reaffirming that the BBC was not an “extension of the political authority”. Its first journalistic commitment was to the truth, not to the nation state – a principle that the Indian media has unfortunately not stuck to when using the terms “terrorism” and “terrorist”.

–*Scroll.in*

## Bhumi Adhikar Andolan

Three-day long national convention of the Bhumi Adhikar Andolan was held at Gujarat Vidyapeeth, Ahmedabad on July 16-18, 2016 in the wake of the increased attack of the global capital unleashed by brazen corporatisation and unbridled FDI in key sectors resulting into high price rise, inflation, and naked loot of the natural resources by corporates, all facilitated by the policies of the Union government and certain state governments. The convention was attended by more than 500 activists of 15 states who dwelled on the on-going struggles in their regions; ground situation of the alliance building processes; centre and state governments attempt at subverting democratic processes by changing laws and issuing notifications and obsession of the political elite with the current GDP based growth model. It discussed the unfolding situation at various levels where the precariousness of the nature resource based communities was increasing and life of toiling workers and masses was becoming harder everyday, as the impact of 25 years of the reforms becomes visible everywhere and inequality in the society reaches its zenith.

The Convention also took note of the massive unrest in the society caused by the economic hardships faced by the society and in particular dalits, adivasis and marginal communities. It also discussed the growing attack on the minorities and sense of insecurity; massive political unrest in certain parts of the country demanding reservation for certain caste groups; and rights violations of the people in conflict areas due to heavy militarisation and failure of the

State to find political solution, promote democratic processes and undertake peace initiatives in wake of provocations by the non-state actors.

The convention agreed that it was after a long drawn struggle and sacrifice that the Land Acquisition Act 1894 was repealed and new Land Acquisition Act was legislated in 2013 by the Parliament. Although there were inadequacies in it, it had some progressive elements like the principle of prior informed consent, Social Impact Assessment, safeguards for food security, enhanced compensation etc that gave some protection to land losers and dependents on land. However, after the Narendra Modi-led BJP government came to power it brought a draconian Land Acquisition Amendment Ordinance that tried to do away with the need to seek consent, have SIA or safeguard food security and allowed for unbridled forcible land acquisition.

The united issue-based opposition built against the BJP Government’s move to impose the draconian Ordinance (promulgated thrice) had forced the Government to withdraw the move at least temporarily. Bhoomi Adhikar Andolan played a significant role in building up a momentum and public opinion against the Ordinances. The Government had to concede its first defeat by not issuing the Ordinance for the fourth time. The withdrawal of the Bill from the Parliament is still pending and we must remain vigilant about it.

Building on this political victory,

the convention deliberated upon plethora of issues facing the country and made these observations, assertions, and put forth demands upon the government and also for its own constituency:

### 1. No forced acquisition and displacement:

Keeping in view the nation-wide build-up against its attempts to dilute the 2013 Act and withdraw whatever little progressive content and safeguards the Act offered, the BJP Government has changed its strategy. It has come up with a move to try and sidestep such united opposition by calling upon States to come up with land acquisition legislations facilitating easy land grab. Already Gujarat have legislated laws like SIR Act and other to dilute the Land Reforms legislations and facilitate land grab. In Odisha, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and other States also such moves are afoot. Odisha also is now planning to allow purchase of Tribal land. On the other hand it is declaring traditional forest cultivators and tribals as land grabbers.

The interim period from December 2014 to August 2015 when the Land Acquisition Ordinance was in place Andhra Pradesh government managed to acquire thousands of acres of land in the name of the State Capital and several other Projects through land pooling. Rights of peasantry and dependents on land have been disregarded across the country. In all these legislations the rights of Dalits and Adivasis are being undermined. The rights of the Narmada Dam oustees as well as hundreds of other Projects are being denied and there have not been any effective rehabilitation and resettlement.

Large tracts of land are being forcibly acquired in the name of industrial corridors, economic corridors, smart cities, National Investment and Manufacturing Zones, (NIMZ), SEZs, industries and infrastructure development. Lakhs of acres are under the potential threat of acquisition under the DMIC, BMIC Economic Corridor, Bangalore-Chennai Economic Corridor, Vishakapatam-Chennai Coastal Corridor and such Projects. Loot of land, mineral and forest resources as well as common property resources have been rampant as the corporates and land mafia have been given a free hand.

We envisage protecting land from acquisition without people's prior informed consent and democratic Social Impact Assessment. Plunder of forest and mineral resources will be resisted. We also envisage occupation of lands remaining unutilised and demand re-distribution to landless with the slogan of 'Zameen Wapsi'.

### 2. Empower local self government institutions and their role in Development Planning, implement Forest Rights Act, PESA and ensure protection of constitutional rights as per the Fifth and Sixth Schedules:

We believe effective implementation of the provisions for the FRA and PESA would empower the Gram Sabhas and Panchayats to play their constitutionally mandated role, as per 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendment, in the development planning and communities would get control over natural resources and secure their livelihoods. Any attempt at the subversion of these acts will only undermine the democratic processes and people's movements will resist

them by all means. 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2016 will mark tenth anniversary of the FRA and Bhumi Adhikar Andolan will organise massive rally at Jantar Mantar with clear demand of effective implementation of the Act and challenge any attempts at amending the Act.

### 3. Bring a national Land Use Policy to protect farm land from large scale diversion to non-agricultural purpose like industry and infrastructure, prioritise housing rights for poor in the urban land-use and not promote evictions and displacement in name of Smart Cities:

A comprehensive Land Use policy should be made which protects farm land from large scale conversion for non-agricultural purpose, with clear regulation and public participation. Priority should be given to food security and livelihood security, focusing not only on irrigated multiple-crop land but also single-crop land in rainfed areas which form 60% of cultivated area. Gram Sabha and Panchayat should have control over the utilization of public lands which serve common purpose such as grazing, with clear provisions to ensure access and use by the most needy communities such as Dalits and tribals. In some cities, agricultural and livestock rearing has been banned, facilitating easy conversion of land use, this needs to be changed.

No common land including wasteland be diverted for industrial purposes without the consent of the Gram and Basti Sabha. Most often these are being encroached upon by the powerful caste and capital interests and State has turned blind eye to them, often acting only against the poor, dalits and adivasis.

Clear provisions should be made for reclamation of wasteland into agricultural land, protection of green cover to prevent soil erosion, degradation and groundwater depletion, and improving agricultural land to make it more suitable for effective production. Coastal land and fragile areas such as Western Ghats should be protected applying the environmental laws and regulations.

Urban land-use should be planned with priority to housing, amenities and livelihood for the poor with in-situ housing projects for poor localities. There should be no cut-off date for Right to Shelter, whereas appropriate cut-off dates can be designated for government allotted subsidized housing including middle class. Urban Land Ceiling Acts should be revived. Land-use planning should be participatory with public hearings in communities above 3000 families.

In the name of Smart Cities, poor and working class is being evicted from the cities and that needs to be stopped. The whole concept of smart cities like its predecessor JNURM is anti-poor and pro-corporate. Any planning has to be done keeping in mind the needs of the most marginalised and working classes in the cities.

**4. Changes to Environment Laws not acceptable:** Based on the recommendations of the T S R Subramanian Committee, environment laws are also being changed to suit the demands of corporate sector and take away the rights of the people and local self-government institutions. Slums are being forcibly cleared and even coastal land is being encroached upon for ports, big infra projects,

PCPIR and so on trampling upon the rights of the traditional fishworkers. All this would lead to massive displacement and permanent denial of land rights of the landless. Lakhs of acres of land acquired in the name of industrialisation, SEZs etc is remaining unutilised.

**5. Ban illegal mining, ensure inter generational parity in resource utilisation, and implement SC guidelines in Goa Foundation case:** The scourge of illegal mining is haunting the hinterland as well as the river beds and sea coasts, polluting water sources, running streams, and causing massive damage to ecology and economy both. The rampant mining and extractives based economic growth model is leading to destruction of the nature and mother earth and contributing to the large scale climate change. Hence, the need for no mining in 'No-Go' areas (and build upon this criteria), dense forests and climate sensitive forests areas.

**6. Address agrarian crisis, implement SC judgement on tackling draught, ensure income security for every agricultural household, and establish a permanent Farmers' Income Commission:** Over 3.2 lakh farmers have committed suicide since 1995 at the rate of one farmer committing suicide every half an hour according to conservative estimates put forward by the National Crime Records Bureau. In reality the human tragedy is of a magnitude unheard of in the entire history of humanity. The Government is cutting down public investment for agriculture and rural development, rural credit is increasingly inaccessible to poor and marginal farmers, indebtedness and

landlessness is rising, allocation for MGNREGA is being drastically cut, farmers are not getting remunerative prices for their products despite ever increasing costs of production. sugarcane farmers are to get thousands of crores of arrears from the corporate sugar lobby. Trade liberalisation and indiscriminate entry into Free Trade Agreements is leading to dumping of cheap agricultural products including dairy products thereby pushing our farmers into distress. Procurement facilities are being curtailed, extension services systematically dismantled and farmers are getting prices far below the actual cost of production.

**7. MSPs should be declared at 50% above cost of cultivation. Ensure that farmers get MSP in all 25 crops through procurement, market intervention and price guarantee:** The BJP Government has gone back on its election promise of providing Minimum Support Prices according to Swaminathan Commission Recommendation of C2+50% i.e at least 50 percent above Cost of Production and had filed an affidavit to that effect in Supreme Court. It has also banned procurement from States which provide bonus over and above the MSP. The Government is kowtowing to diktats of the USA, EU and other countries in the WTO and cutting down food and agricultural subsidies. The entire agricultural policy is to aid profiteering by seed monopolies and agribusinesses at the expense of the people. The Bhoomi Adhikar Andolan stands opposed to all such policies and will strive for alternative policies that will ensure food and livelihood security to all as well as decent standard of living including

housing, health and education. Bhoomi Adhikar Andolan stands resolutely against unequal Free Trade Agreements, WTO diktats, trade liberalisation and against any such monopolistic deals with other countries.

**8. Implement Land Reforms—Give land to landless agricultural workers not corporates:** There should be renewed focus on land reforms to give ownership of land to deprived sections, especially Dalits, adivasis, women, project-displaced families, and so on. Ceiling limits should be properly enforced stopping the exemptions and loopholes allowing thousands of acres to be taken over by a few individuals and corporates, and making surplus land available for distribution.

**Ensure Food Sovereignty and Food Security and sort out the massive corruption within the Food Distribution System:** Food security doesn't mean giving subsidised food alone but empowering communities to produce their own food and securing land rights which will make them self-reliant. In that regard it is also important that farmers have complete control over the seeds and the systems of production and not be made slaves to the big multinationals claiming their IPRs. No company should be allowed exclusive intellectual property rights over seed in any crop.

However, there is also the need for effective implementation of the National Food Security Act, given many state governments have failed to do so. In the name of rooting out corruption linking of ration delivery with the Aadhar and other electronic identification programmes is resulting

in leaving out a big chunk of population, which is often due to systems inefficiency and denies a large number of poor and vulnerable population access to their entitlements.

**9. Rights of Tenant farmers, Sharecroppers and Women farmers should be upheld. The real cultivators should get full recognition and benefit of all support systems:** Tenant farmers, sharecroppers and women farmers are the worst-affected in the agrarian distress in many parts of the country, because they get left out of all government support systems including low-interest bank loans, disaster compensation, crop insurance, subsidies, etc. They are the real cultivators not only working hard but also taking the risks of production – tenant farmers and sharecroppers cultivate more than 30% of the area, and women perform 70% of tasks in agriculture. Their rights should be upheld. There should be a comprehensive system of recording and recognizing the real cultivators including tenant farmers, sharecroppers and women farmers, so that they get the benefit of all government support systems and eligibility for all provisions in case of land acquisition. The Model Tenancy Act by Niti Ayog must be withdrawn.

**10. Rights of the Agrarian Workers, unorganised sector workers to be protected and minimum wages and social security measures implemented:** Today 93% of the labour force is in the unorganised sector and a majority of them is dependent on agriculture and other related activities. This section is under tremendous attack due to farm crisis and decreasing

support from the government. We demand that the allocation to the MGNREGA be increased to ensure 300 days work and 300 Rs wages daily. In addition, to deal with the farm labour crisis due to high migration recognise agriculture, as a work should be brought within the MGNREGA, that way the workers and farmers both would benefit. In addition, a number of suggestions and guidelines have been issued by the Supreme Court of India to effectively deal with the draught situation in the country. Unfortunately, the implementation by this by the Union and State governments has been extremely poor and tardy.

With the growing precariousness and distress time has come that the Minimum Wages Act be mandatorily applicable to the agricultural labourers as well. In addition, on lines of the Social Security Act for the construction workers should also be implemented for the agrarian workers.

**11. Comprehensive support for shift from high-input chemical agriculture to low-external-input ecologically sustainable agriculture:** One of the biggest causes of the crisis is the model of high-input chemical agriculture promoted in the past few decades – leading to indebtedness, damage to soil fertility, declining productivity, depletion of water, and poisoning of food and water system. While accepting the importance of increasing production and productivity, the emphasis should be on *sustainable* productivity. The policies and support systems should be fully reoriented to ensure a time-bound shift to low-input ecologically sustainable agriculture, using many viable models demonstrated and

established across India in the past two decades.

**12. Reverse the injustice done to rainfed agriculture :** Though 60% of Indian agriculture is rainfed, it is highly neglected compared to irrigated agriculture; consequently much of the distress and farmer suicides is in rainfed areas. We demand a comprehensive mission to revive rainfed agriculture by promoting dryland crops, animal husbandry and fodder, revival of minor irrigation, and targeted support. Providing protective irrigation to the first crop in rainfed areas should be the first priority rather than irrigation for second and third crops.

**13. No privatization of water resources and services; Priority to drinking, domestic use and agriculture:** Water should be respected as a natural resource essential to human life and food production, and attempts to privatize water bodies and services, and give control to corporates should be completely stopped. Water for drinking, domestic use and agriculture should receive priority over other uses, with further prioritization for food crops and one-crop protection in dry regions. Landless families should also be given rights over water to ensure more equitable use and to redress the inequity in land ownership.

**14. Resist attempts to dilute labour laws and express solidarity and active support to workers' strike of 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2016:** Workers' rights are being curtailed and the Narendra Modi-led BJP Government has been tampering with labour laws in the name of "ease of doing business". Against such attacks an

unprecedented strike was witnessed on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2015 in which the Bhoomi Adhikar Andolan extended solidarity. The Central Trade Unions also took up some of our demands and spoke against the Land Acquisition Ordinance. We extend solidarity to the united working class strike called on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2016 and will work actively to make it a success.

**15. Resistance to divisive and fascist politics:** Faced with growing protests and unprecedented unity of people against the policies of the BJP Government at the Centre and States the BJP-RSS and their affiliates are resorting to divisive politics and deliberate communalisation. Rationalists and cultural personalities are being physically attacked and killed, dissent is brutally being suppressed. In the name of protection of the cow, systematic attacks are being launched on minorities and Dalits. Deliberate communal and casteist violence is being resorted to in different parts of the country. A spontaneous response against such efforts is developing. Bhoomi Adhikar Andolan will resist such divisive efforts and work for building communal harmony and strengthen the unity of toiling masses.

**16. Curb attack on the autonomous functioning of the universities, corporatisation of education, and suppressing of dissent within the universities and enact Rohith Act:** University campuses across the country are in turmoil and there has been a growing attack on the students and attempts are being made to suppress any dissent, free thinking and free flow of exchange of ideas. The corporate

agenda of the education and their pandering to the market needs is solely driving the education policy today leading to complete erosion of the values and democratic principles necessary for functioning of a vibrant democracy.

Access to education by all remains a cause of concern. The demand for a common school system has been there for long and is responsible for the continued inequality and the perpetuation of the discrimination within the universities. SC/ST communities face discrimination at every level in the education system from admission, recruitments, promotions or opportunities for growth. The fact that a brilliant student like Rohith Vemula had to commit suicide due to continued harassment and caste based discrimination indicates towards systemic crisis within the education system today. The demand for Rohith Act by the student community needs support from all the organisations and Bhumi Adhikar Andolan express its solidarity with the movement and demand.

**17. End Caste based Discrimination and Ensure Effective Implementation of the SC/ST Act:** The resource struggle is also inherently a caste and class struggle and Dalits and Adivasis have been at the receiving end. The caste based violence and systematic elimination of the rights and dignity of the community is being done in collaboration with the political and caste elite leading to their further impoverishment and disempowerment. The inability of the system to ensure justice to victims of the caste-based violence on every count has ensured its continuation

without fear of any impunity. This is condemnable and unacceptable. Supreme Court and Higher Court must take suo-moto cognizance of these offences and ensure fast tracking of the cases on line of the violence against women cases. This will not only ensure justice but also prevent future attacks on the community.

Bhumi Adhikar Andolan reasserts and reaffirms its faith in the reservations provided for the SC/ST communities by the Indian Constitution as a way to address the historical injustice. The ongoing attempts to subvert that by some political forces and caste groups in the name of economic justice is not acceptable and any heed to that by the governments and political parties is primarily based on vote bank calculations.

**18. Withdraw all fabricated cases from the social and cultural activists, tribals, dalits, farmers and students:** a number of activists have been framed on numerous false charges and incarcerated. In the current political climate, the targeting of activists has increased manifold and thus their victimisation as well. As Bhumi Adhikaar Andolan, we extend support and solidarity to the activists and movements facing police oppression and support the effort to establish a people's commission to defend the rights of the activists.

**19. Repeal AFSPA and Stop increased militarisation in conflict regions:** Recent judgement of the Supreme Court has validated the long term demand of the movements for withdrawal of the AFSPA from J&K, and many of the North East states. Under AFSPA, many heinous crimes have been committed without any prosecution

often feeding in to the vicious circle of continuing violence. The continued unrest is also due to heavy militarisation within these areas, which often leads to hardships for the citizens of those areas.

**20. Assert democratic rights of association, freedom of expression and raise voice against any incursion:** A climate of fear and intimidation is being promoted specifically targeted at

muzzling dissent, restricting freedom of association, assembly of citizens to criticise anti people policies of the government and control or close down any democratic spaces available for free speech and gathering. These attempts by the State and vigilante groups are not acceptable in the largest democracy of the world, and are completely violates the ideas and principles enshrined in the Indian constitution.



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