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Avoidable distraction

Sandeep Pandey

On 21 June, International Yoga Day was celebrated with much fanfare utilizing the popularity of Yoga which already existed worldwide before the present BJP government came to power. The Prime Minister may have just consolidated the self-motivated separate efforts and has been able to market it as of uniquely Indian origin. The United Nations has also acknowledged it by agreeing to dedicate June 21 for this cause since the last year. It definitely holds a great symbolic value. Its main attraction is its offer of mental and physical well being, which are increasingly becoming scarce in the modern society globally. Otherwise it is like any other stream of spiritualism which offer solace at an individual level. But what is the achievement beyond that? How is celebrating Yoga internationally going to solve any of our international or national problems? Does it even have a collective value? Most people take it up for purely individual health reasons.

India's Permanent Mission to the UN organised an event titled, 'Yoga

for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals' this time. SDGs were adopted by UN General Assembly on 19 July 2014 as a desirable set of 17 goals which the countries around the world would like to achieve by 2030. These goals mainly include ending of poverty and hunger, achievement of food security, promotion of sustainable agriculture, ensuring healthy lives, ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education, achievement of gender equality, ensuring availability of water and sanitation for all, promoting inclusive and sustainable economic development, ensuring work for all, reducing inequality, ensuring sustainable production and consumption, combating climate change, conserving oceans and forests and providing access to justice for all. It is not clear how Yoga is going to achieve this ambitious set of agenda. From among the above set of objectives it has a direct role in 'ensuring healthy lives' only and that too only for a very restricted section of population as we'll shortly see. The danger is Yoga can give us a sense of complacency. Most of the

Between The Lines

abovementioned problems require serious policy making exercise based on concrete research followed by strong political will for implementation of right kind of policies and programmes. In spite of best of our efforts we're going to fall ruefully short of the declared goals by the time 2030 arrives. Creating confusion that Yoga has any role in solving these problems will only be an avoidable distraction. This is a typically Narendra Modi programme - high on publicity, low in content.

90 percent of Indians and significant population around the world which is engaged in hard labour to earn its living doesn't need Yoga nor will you see them in any of the high profile collective organisation of Yoga sessions or any of the paid or unpaid Yoga classes. It is only the educated class, and only 10 percent of Indian students make it to college level education beyond their schooling, which constitutes the middle class still dominated by upper caste, which willingly or unwillingly becomes part of the ruling elite, who have been cut off from physical labour because of the nature of education that s(he) has received, who need Yoga to keep themselves fit. Most of the people belonging to this category have sedentary jobs or jobs involving little physical work. Or their nature of job is too mundane. Therefore they need to take time out to engage in physical activity or an activity which can be mentally refreshing. Some of them play some sports or do jogging in the morning or evening. Some prefer cycling or swimming. With increasing prices of fossil fuels now more bicycles can

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Quality of journalism

Kuldip Nayar

When I was studying in a journalism school abroad, I was told by my professor that a news story should be like a skirt: long enough to cover the subject and short enough to be attractive. Over the years, the story has assumed the shape of pontification and inevitably padded.

When senior journalists are kicking the bucket, the question that stares at us is what kind of journalism will be there in future. Of course this is not confined to India. All countries, whether in the West or the East – barring the totalitarian regimes – are asking the same question: which is the Lashman rekha that journalists should not cross? Or should there be any Lakshman rekha at all?

Individuals are increasingly posing the question why journalists are prying into their private affairs. Journalists in turn defend themselves on the grounds that if they were not to probe, the skeletons would not come out of the closet. The government has a standard reply: some things cannot be disclosed in the public interest. In this way even big scandals are covered up.

I recall that when I wrote against the supersession of three Supreme Court judges, Hegde, Grover and Shalat, I was criticized by the then prime minister, Indira Gandhi, who argued that journalism did not mean preaching about the "commitment" of judges. She did not elaborate what that "commitment" was. I can

understand the judges having commitment to the Constitution, but not to a person however high he or she might be.

What Indira Gandhi was demanding from the judges was a commitment to follow her way of thinking. That is the reason she appointed Justice Ray, a junior judge in the Supreme Court, as the Chief Justice, ignoring the seniority of three others. She did not show even the courtesy of informing them beforehand. They heard the news on All India Radio.

This kind of political manipulation runs contrary to the transparency that a democratic system cherishes. Indeed the structure of democracy stands on the pillars of both the division and limitation of power. For example, the army does not interfere in the affairs of government because it is a force under the civil administration. Some countries like Pakistan have gone under because the military, although it has recently gone back to the barracks, is still very much there. The same is true of Bangladesh, although in that country some journalists do dare to criticize the armed forces.

Democracy expects all its wings to function independently but still in a way that sovereignty stays with the people. It is another matter that rulers themselves become authoritarian and behave like the worst of the Mughal emperors.

Those who ensure that democracy functions in the interests of the people are the judges who even have power to go into the pronouncements of the legislature. The debate about whether the judiciary is supreme or the executive is an ongoing discussion.

If there is criticism of what judges do, or even the manner in which the legislature functions, that comes from journalists. It is the duty of journalists to do so. If they are afraid of carrying out what is expected from them, it is unfortunate for the system. I have experienced how during the Emergency, which completed forty-one years this week on June, 26, the entire Press caved in. Initially, there were protests and a large number of journalists – including editors – assembled at the Press Club in Delhi to pass a resolution that Press censorship, an integral part of the Emergency, was not acceptable to them. Yet, as days went by, fear gripped them and they became part of the system, even accepting the orders of Mrs Gandhi's son, Sanjay Gandhi, an extra-constitutional authority.

I recall that as a member of the Press Council of India, I went to its then chairman, Justice Iyer, to urge him to summon a meeting of the Press Council, an apex body. I did not know by then that fear had also made him subservient. He told me there was no use of summoning a meeting of the Press Council because there would be no publicity about its proceedings. My argument was that if there were no protests then many years later, when the archives would be opened of this shameful chapter, there wouldn't be any record about any protest by the Press Council, the journalists. After

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Negotiating with undeclared Emergency

Pushkar Raj

Last month, Hyderabad police registered a case against Prof. Kancha Ilaiah for writing an article in a Telugu daily, entitled 'Is God not a democrat'? The article questioned inequality in society and discussed concept of god. For doing so the professor was reproached for insulting sentiments of a community and charged for promoting enmity between different religious groups under section 153 (A) and 295 (A) of Indian Penal Code.

This is an example of hundreds of incidents that take place in different parts of the country revealing absurdity to which a law in India could be interpreted and applied to target an individual or civil society organization (CSO) holding a dissimilar view on an issue or advocating a different narrative of history and society.

Last week, Prof. Mahesh Chandra Guru of Mysore University was charged for insulting Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Human Resource Development Minister Smriti Irani and god Rama on two different occasions. The professor was arrested when he appeared before a Mysore district court in the second case when his bail application was rejected and he was sent to jail (Hindustan Times, 21 June, 2016).

Though the previous governments have not been admirers of civil liberties in any ways, the present administration seems to have

a condescending view of them. According to a US based democracy advocacy group, Freedom House's 2015 report, after the 2014 elections, at least 18 people were arrested and questioned for anti-Modi posts on online forums such as Twitter and Facebook.

Arundhati Roy has rightly said that one is unable to say things that Dr. Ambedkar could say in 1936 as one risks being put into jail (Janta ka reporter, 31 May 2016). It is apparent that there is an atmosphere of fear, where journalists, writers, artists, intellectuals feel defenseless and dispensable leading to engaging in what Human Rights Watch terms 'self-censorship' (Human Rights Watch Report release press statement, 24May, 2016).

At the same time, the government is not secretive about its resolve to suffocate and persecute the CSOs that oppose its ideology, policies or actions. The suspension and cancelation of license of Sabrang Trust and Lawyers Collective to receive foreign funding is in line with the series of actions against those CSOs that the government considers opposed to it. Earlier, organizations like INSAF, People's Watch and Green Peace have also experienced similar actions based on deliberate misinterpretation of vague terms such as 'political activity' and 'public interest' under the Foreign Contributions (Regulation) Act, 2010.

It is ironic that while the Prime Minister goes around the world soliciting foreign funding for country's economic development, his home ministry ensures that select civil society organizations are prevented from receiving foreign funding which is critical to assisting millions of Indians in pursuing their legal, cultural and social development. Besides, as the UN repertoire on human rights noted that the ability to access foreign funding is vital to human rights work and is an integral part of the right to freedom of association (The Wire, 17 June 2016).

Apart from a direct attack on individuals and organizations, a more sinister 'hunt' (social) movement of conformity by coercion is in operation under the broad banner of Hindutava with scores of its regional organizational varieties mushrooming in the country. The Hindu right organizations are using what the peace activist Scilla Elworthy describes political and physical violence to intimidate and emotional and mental violence to undermine. One of such organizations have allegedly killed writers and intellectuals such as Dr Dabholkar, Dr Panasare and Prof Kalburgi for holding views on religion that displeased certain Hindu fanatics (The Indian Express, 22 June 2016).

The present administration has forced withdrawal of some history books (Wendy Doniger's, The Hindus: An Alternative History) and is busy rewriting history in other parts where it can (Christophe Jaffrelot, The Indian Express, 7 June 2016). Meanwhile a process is on to saffronise education as indicated by

the union minister of education's veiled statement that saffronisation of education would take place as (if) it is good for the country (The Indian Express, 20 June, 2016). It is a blinkered understanding of contemporary history and politics as talibanisation and islamisation of education in Afghanistan and Pakistan has not done any good to those countries.

The challenge before the civil society today is to confront this saffron mindset replacing secular

values embedded in Indian history, culture and constitution. This might be easier when there are alliances across movements and groups and sharing of experiences of constructive and non-violent methods to assert democratic rights by engaging and organizing people through education. In the words of investigative journalist Will Potter, like sunlight education is an activist's best weapon. (Will Potter, Ted.com).

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be seen on road. Even the government is promoting cycle tracks.

Mahatma Gandhi used to spin a Charkha. While the important reason was the 'Swadeshi' ideology but another reason might have been to associate oneself with production activity in at least one of the three areas of primary economy - food, clothing, shelter - which fulfill basic needs of human being. Mahatma Gandhi's idea of education was to involve learning some useful production activity too along with reading, writing and mathematics. However, this idea could not become part of our education system and we adopted an essentially British model which was meant only to produce people who could help run the administrative system of the government. It is not surprising that Civil Services remains such an active proposal for educated youth, especially in north India, whereas a very small number of students go for higher education and research careers.

People who have figured out some method of keeping themselves physically engaged will not feel the need of doing Yoga. It is only a very small section of our and international society which doesn't do anything to keep themselves physically fit who need to do Yoga. Its importance must not be overemphasized and its role must not be exaggerated. People will do it voluntarily and at an individual level.

The PM and the government have more pressing problems to worry about, like price rise, rather than be part of some kind of international jamboree with only a symbolic value. The timing of announcement of opening up of civil aviation and defence sectors for 100 percent Foreign Direct Investment, on the eve of Yoga day, also raises certain doubts about government's intention. This move is definitely not in national interest and it is quite possible that the time was so chosen that any criticism would be drowned in the mood of jubilation on Yoga day.

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Ecological protection and justice cannot be postponed any longer

Bharat Dogra

The most critical question of our times is that our world, our planet is on the brink of a survival crisis - an unprecedented situation in the history of earth when human made factors threaten the life creating conditions on earth. All important decisions have to be taken against the background of this overwhelming reality.

If this appears like an exaggeration then consider this statement released by as many as 1575 of the world's most distinguished scientists way back in 1992: "We the undersigned, senior members of world's scientific community, hereby warn all humanity of what lies ahead. A great change in our stewardship of the Earth and the life on it is required if vast human misery is to be avoided and our global home on this planet is not to be irretrievably mutilated."

This statement signed by more than half of all living scientists who were awarded the noble prize further warned against "the irreversible loss of species, which by 2100 may reach one-third of all species now living."

The reason for quoting this very significant 24-year old statement is that the evidence of something approaching a survival crisis was available as early as 1990 or so. By this time enough evidence of the seriousness of climate change was available and it was also clear that any efforts for doing away with nuclear weapons were not

succeeding. Around the same time an MIT study titled 'Imperilled Planet' by Edward Goldsmith and others stated, "we are now disrupting the very processes that keep the Earth a fit place for higher forms of life."

However such warnings—and there were quite a few of these—were ignored and instead of urgent united action to tackle the emerging crisis the world got embroiled in such monumental follies as the invasion of Iraq. In fact following the accumulation of enough evidence regarding the emergence of a survival threat at least a quarter of a century has passed which can be called the wasted years as no actions coming even close to tackling the serious threats were taken. In fact in some contexts the situation was allowed to go from extremely bad to even worse. According to UN data, annual global carbon dioxide emissions from fuel combustion grew by about 38 per cent between 1990 and 2009, with the rate of growth faster after 2000 than in the 1990s.

The result of the inaction and follies of these wasted years is that the crisis has worsened during the last 25 years or so. In its recent report Global Outlook 5 the United Nations Environment Programme warned that urgent changes are needed "to avoid exceeding critical thresholds beyond which abrupt and generally irreversible changes to the life support functions of the planet could occur."

Several senior scientists have been concentrating on this work of critical importance at the Stockholm Resilience Centre (SRC). According to Johan Rockstrom, director of SRC, the human pressure on the Earth System has reached a scale where abrupt global environmental disaster can no longer be excluded".

The scientists at SRC first identified the Earth System processes and potential biophysical thresholds, which, if crossed, could generate unacceptable environmental change for humanity. They then proposed the boundaries that should be respected in order to reduce the risk of crossing these thresholds. The nine boundaries identified were: climate change, stratospheric ozone, land use change, freshwater use, biological diversity, ocean acidification, nitrogen and phosphorus inputs to the biosphere and oceans, aerosol loading and chemical pollution. The study suggests that "three of these boundaries (climate change, biological diversity and nitrogen input to the biosphere) may already have been transgressed". In addition, it emphasizes that "the boundaries are strongly connected — crossing one boundary may seriously threaten the ability to stay within safe levels of the others."

There is enough evidence regarding the emergence of a very serious environmental crisis which can be called a survival crisis. The world leadership has mounds of

evidence available to it regarding the reality of the emergence of such a very serious crisis and yet nothing very effective has been done about it. The general tendency has been to carry on with a business as usual approach. Of course very big conferences on issues like climate change and some international agreements have been reached but the total impact of all such efforts is still far from achieving success in checking this fast drift towards disaster.

This is not to say that solutions are not available. To make a very promising beginning world leadership can work overtime to minimise the possibility of war and to reduce the production of weapon by perhaps as much as 80 per cent or so.

The wider challenge is to link the required reduction in greenhouse gas emissions with the fulfillment of basic needs of all people. Working out this equation in all its details will reveal how curbing all wasteful consumption and production is not just desirable but even unavoidable in the new situation. Hence a much stronger case emerges for reducing inequalities in a big way.

The overall need emerging very strongly now is for a new development paradigm based on a balanced combination of environment protection, justice and peace. The need for such a basic change in the development paradigm has always been there but it was never so pressing as it is now in the times of climate change and a survival crisis.

On RSS

A few days ago, the Times of India reported that the Modi regime is all set to repeal 1966 law, reiterated subsequently in 1975 and 1980, requiring those joining government service, to declare that they are not affiliated to either Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) or Jamaat-e-Islami.

This design or model, implemented already in BJP-run states like Gujarat, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh subverts governance at the very basic level, affecting the neutrality of the civil services.

An RSS-ridden civil service cannot work, that is implement, a secular constitution.

The parliamentary system is based on a professional, politically neutral civil service. The RSS is embarked on a major exercise to subvert the present constitutional order.

The news report in The Times of India also stated that the department of personnel and training now plans to hold consultations with the home ministry on the need to do away with this "unreasonable and absurd" norm, with a senior government functionary pointing out how RSS had always maintained that "it is a cultural and non-political organisation". This will be part of the government's drive to repeal defunct and archaic laws. "The present government has not issued this circular (on debarring RSS members from taking up government jobs). It does not expect anybody joining government service

to declare whether or not he/she is a member of RSS," minister of state Jitendra Singh told TOI last Thursday, June 9.

This present move, it is reported, to withdraw the standing order issued in 1966 after Indira Gandhi assumed office as PM, and reiterated in 1980 and 1975, when RSS was banned comes after reports that a central government department had cited it to ask new recruits in Goa to declare they didn't belong to RSS. According to the 1966 order, anyone who holds membership of RSS or Jamaat-e-Islami would not qualify for any central government job. However, the order was not followed strictly and these facts came to light recently with the Goa episode. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and home minister Rajnath Singh and other Union ministers have always taken pride in their primary allegiance to RSS.

It may be reassuring for some to hear that Narendra Modi, a RSS pracharaks (full-time propagandists), first and foremost, recently said in his much-lauded speech to the US Congress that "the Indian Constitution is a holy book". Though he occupies a prime Constitutional position at present, his grooming was in an organisation, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) that views the Indian Constitution with ambivalence at best and antipathy at worst.

Rejecting the modern foundation of Bharat as laid down in Article 1 of the Indian Constitution, one of the foundational documents of the Sangh, Bunch of Thoughts by M S

Golwalkar (at Page 119), rejects and debunks 'the absurdity of the concept of territorial nationalism'. Golwalkar says, "They (we presume by this the RSS means the Leaders in the Constituent Assembly) forgot that here was already a full-fledged ancient nation of the Hindus and the various communities which were living in the country were here either as guests, the Jews and Paris, or as invaders, the Muslim and Christians. They never faced the question how all such heterogeneous groups could be called as children of the soil merely because, by an accident, they happened to reside in a common territory under the rule of a common enemy. "

The RSS is also unashamed about its aim :

"....We have been sufficiently fooled upto now by their exhortation that we Hindus, who are having a great philosophy of human brotherhood, catholicity of spirit and so on, should not narrow ourselves by the talk of Hindu Nationalism and all such 'communal', 'medieval' and 'reactionary' ideas! We must be able to see through the game and revert to the truth of our nationalism as an ancient fact and the Hindus being the national society of Bharat, so clearly restated by our revered founder when he decided the word 'Rashtriya' for our organisation. We must once again stand up in our true and full stature and boldly assert that we shall elevate the Hindu National Life in Bharat to the peak of glory and honour, which has been its birthright since hoary time. (Page 127, Bunch of Thoughts, MS Golwalkar)

Importantly, on April 27, 1948, Vallabhbhai Patel, India's first home minister, in a letter to Prime

Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, said: "I need hardly emphasise that an efficient, disciplined and contented service ... is a sine qua non of sound administration under a democratic regime even more than under an authoritarian rule. The service must be above party and we should ensure that political considerations either in its recruitment or in its discipline and control, are reduced to the minimum, if not eliminated altogether." "An RSS-ridden civil service cannot work a secular constitution. For, "it is perfectly possible to pervert the constitution,

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hearing me, he reluctantly convened a meeting of local Press Council members. To my horror I saw in the white paper issued after the lifting of the Emergency that he had written to the then information minister, V.C. Shukla, explaining how he (Justice Iyer) was able to stall the effort by Kuldip Nayar to convene a meeting of the Press Council.

The same question about the independence of journalists comes before us again and again in different situations. And I find that increasingly we, the journalists, are failing in the standards required from us. None of this has been helped by the new digital technology that promotes very short stories or sound bites. In fact things have deteriorated to such an extent today that news columns can be bought. It is an open secret that several stories are nothing more than paid news. Some leading newspapers feel no shame in selling the space to whoever wants to buy it. For them it is purely a question of revenue.

How low have we sunk from the

without changing its form, by merely changing the form of the administration and to [sic] make it inconsistent and opposed to the spirit of the constitution".

Given the overt moves to severely affect the neutrality of the civil service, a Platform for Constitutional Rights has been launched. We invite one and all to become part of the campaign.

–Ravi Nair, Tapan Bose,
Dr Sunilam, Teesta Setalvad

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heights that we once enjoyed? There was a time when we were able to bring before the public such scandals as the Mundhra insurance scam during the time of Finance Minister T.T. Krishnachari. Jawaharlal Nehru, then the prime minister, forced him to resign from the cabinet. But even when I subsequently met TTK, he did not seem to realize the harm he had done to the polity.

India is oblivious to the privations of individuals. In contrast the UK media has in the past been prepared to take up the cudgels on behalf of innocent victims from different walks of life. For example, the Sunday Times, for which I was a stringer, is still remembered with affection and gratitude for the work it did on behalf of those parents whose children were born handicapped because of the Thalidomide drug prescribed to the patient. Public pressure eventually forced the drug manufacturing company to pay out the needed compensation. Can we emulate those examples today when our very integrity as journalists is being questioned, not to speak of the high standards we once followed?

M.M. Thomas and Emergency

Varughese George

When M. M. Thomas returned from Geneva after completing his term as central committee chairman of WCC, national Emergency had been in existence in India. The national committee of Peoples Union for Civil Liberties chaired by V. M. Tharkunde invited M. M. to be the chairman of the Kerala state unit of PUCL. The former parliamentarian P. Visambharan was its secretary. M. M. also took initiative in forming the Detenues Family Distress Relief Fund to help the families of political prisoners. The committee used to meet at the Legislators' hostel at Trivandrum in the presence of EMS Namboothiripad. Rev. M. J. Joseph was its Secretary. M. M. was also careful in organizing a number of civil liberties groups in and around Tiruvalla, his hometown. It included Clergy for Human Rights led by Rev. V. T. Kurian and Rev. A. P. Jacob. The Students for Human Rights was led by this writer and Yesudas Athyal. A women's movement had already been working there to mobilise village women under the dynamic leadership of Annamma Joseph. A group of knowledge workers including M. P. Joseph, George M. Philip, Mammen Varkey, John M. Itty, V. C. John, K. M. Thomas and Roy Nellicala helped in the mobilisation of resources against Emergency and Ravi and Chandran helped in the distribution of literature. M. M. along with freedom fighter C. Narayana Pillai and Gandhian M. P. Manmadhan started a journey from Trivandrum speaking against Emergency in crowded halls

without amplifier for police refused to allow it. The government did not dare to arrest these elder statesmen fearing the national repercussions it might have created.

To give a philosophical and theological basis of his activism against national Emergency M. M. wrote regularly deploring Emergency in the weekly Guardian, despite the press censorship, from July 1975 to February 1977, from the very first month of declaration of Emergency till its relaxation. When the Guardian weekly was proscribed by the censors, M. M. started a regular cyclostyled newsletter and distributed it. I remember a policeman from the state intelligence to have been to M.M.'s house every week to collect a copy of it! These writings were later compiled by George Mathew and published as a book titled, 'Response to Tyranny'. The Head of the Mar Thoma Church, metropolitan Yuhanon Mar Thoma, who was close to M. M. had written a letter to Indira Gandhi requesting her to lift the Emergency and free the political prisoners, and an authenticated copy of this letter was handed over to M.M. by metropolitan. The CSI youth movement also in its annual general meeting held at Changanacherry affirmed its solidarity with the campaign to restore civil liberties taking a cue from M. M.

After the lifting of Emergency in March 1977, general elections were declared to the Lok Sabha. E. M. S. Namboodiripad came to Tiruvalla

and urged M. M. to contest from Mavelikara Parliamentary constituency, for M. M. had by then become a symbol of resistance to authoritarianism. M. M. politely refused. He continued his involvement with the civil liberties movement. By then PUCL was reorganized and M. M. was re-elected as President of the state unit. The naxalites had then assassinated a landlord, Madathil Mathai in Wayanadu. Since then police excesses were reported on CPI(ML) activists in Wayanadu and a fact finding team including M.M., M.J., V.G.K.M.T and Vincent Panikulanghara visited the area and police stations. Police excesses were exposed in a press conference to the utter embarrassment of the then left front government in Kerala. That was M. M. He was true to his cause and had the courage of conviction.

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By

B. Vivekanandan

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The idea of India - II

Irfan Habib

They were mostly poor. Unlike the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1921, Civil-Disobedience movement was the movement largely of the poor and that was the new thing. Once the movement took this form it became increasingly difficult for British rule to continue. I want here to bring to your attention something which appeared in the Dawn, the Muslim League organ from pre-1947 days which comes out daily from Karachi. There was an article abstracted from it in that article, the writer said that "we have a problem in Pakistan our movement for Pakistan as a nation has no martyr, no hero. Because it never opposed the British rulers, it only opposed our fellow subjects (the Hindus). What shall we look to"? Indeed those went to prison against British rule in what became Pakistan, they were Khudai Khidmatgars, Congressmen of the Punjab, nationalists of Sindh, and not the Pakistan leaders. Pakistan is, however, not alone in this problem. It shares it with those who are now in power in India. The Hindu Mahasabha, and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) have the same psychological problem. The RSS was founded in 1925 and if you ask them what did you do for twenty two years [till 1947]? Why didn't you join the National Movement and go to the prison? Why don't you do something against the British if you are such great patriots? You ask the Hindu Mahasabha the same question. Savarkar in the Andamans gave an apology thus washing away

his whole patriotic past saying he will not oppose British government. He never did so, he only opposed Muslims, propounding a two-nation theory even before Mohammad Ali Jinnah. What is RSS doing now? It is looking for other figures like Bhagat Singh to count among its heroes! What Bhagat Singh has to do with the RSS, the man who in the night before execution wrote Why I am An Atheist, the man who said that if there can be any leader from the Congress he supports, it is Jawahar Lal Nehru. The man who wrote that Hindu communalism is worse than any other opponent of the National Movement, how can he be your hero! As for Vallabh Bhai Patel, do not you know that he always said that he was a close follower of Mahatma Gandhi? Another hero—they claim—is Subhash Chandra Bose. Did Subhash Chandra Bose ever say that there should be Hindu Rashtra? He even made Iqbal's poem "Sare Jahan Se Achcha Hindostan Hamara" the National Anthem of the Indian National Army. He made Urdu and Hindi official languages of Azad Hind Fauj.

Look at the name—Azad Hind Fauj! He said—Jai Hind, he never said Hindu Rashtra! RSS men never say 'Jai Hind', nor 'Inquilab Zindabad', the slogan Bhagat Singh used to employ. Before 1947, I was present at many Congress meetings and I remember that the meetings always started with the audience shouting—Inquilab Zindabad in

homage to Bhagat Singh. So, it is wrong when our newspapers say that Bhagat Singh had been forgotten by the Congress or that Subhash Bose once praised the RSS. Serious biographies of Subhash Chandra Bose show that he never had any dealings with the RSS. RSS heroes like Shyama Prasad Mukherjee or Deen Dayal Upadhyay did nothing against British rule. Why are you exhibiting the latter's photographs in the JawaharLal Nehru Museum? What did he do in the national movement? Where was he? Nowhere! Shayama Prasad Mukherjee was a minister in Bengal along with the Muslim League at the time of the Quit India movement (1942). He remained a minister. He never lifted his finger against British rule but only against Muslims. So the Hindutva forces can claim no hero in the National Movement. Their entire theory and entire beliefs are totally opposed to those of the National Movement. Who in the National Movement ever said "Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan"? None, It was only Hindu Mahasabha! Who in the National Movement said "Hindu Raj Amar Rahe"? None, It was only RSS! So, you had those slogans, then you say that you actually opposed the British government! Or is it that you really supported the British government because you tried to divide the National Movement, you tried to separate the Hindus and Muslims and so weaken the National Movement. You always raised the issue of communalism! The RSS

men have not changed, they are the same! People say why does not the Prime Minister Modi issue a statement [on Akhlaq's lynching]? I say: what is the use that would be always hypocritical, so let him remain silent about Dadri!

I now turn to two things. Fight for Secular India and Fight for Prosperous India. These are the two objects for people of the nation. Since you are students of Aligarh Muslim University, I want you to remember August 1947. Aligarh had been described as the fortress of the Muslim League. We had insulted Abul Kalam Azad when he passed through the Aligarh railway station. What was to be our fate now? The first thing was that Nehru sent the Kumaon Regiment to protect the Aligarh Muslim University. But could it protect the whole district, when the whole of what is now Haryana was in flames?

In Tappal, there was a massacre of Muslims. Muslim corpses were coming, to the morgue in our neighborhood from somewhere. All the time the Kumaon Regiment was trying to protect the city and the university with huge flares by which they could see a crowd at a distance at night. Any time the crowd could come. Only one man seemed to stand forth to prevent the destruction of this University and massacres of Muslims in western Uttar Pradesh, and that was Mahatma Gandhi. He was insulted when he went to Muslim refugee camps at Jama Masjid and he was insulted when he went to Hindu refugee camps! Day in and day out, he suffered insults. He went to Panipat trying to protect Muslims. On 13th January 1948, he went on fast. And what were the

demands of the fast? One was that Muslims must be protected and those people who had been leading mobs against Muslims must sign that they would not do such thing again. And there were names of RSS and Hindu Mahasabha leaders in his list. And Muslims should be allowed as have not gone to Pakistan to return to their homes so that refugees from Pakistan were being asked to vacate for Muslims. This was the first demand and you can see what a huge demand it was in the circumstances. The second demand was that Rs. fifty five crores, an immense amount at that time, should be paid to Pakistan because Pakistan officials had not received salaries for a month and India had withheld that pledged amount. Can you imagine a man going against his own government in favour of a foreign government? And when he was asked, he said I am as much an Indian as I am Pakistani. I belong to both countries! When the fast began on 13 January all through Delhi the slogan was 'Gandhi Murdabad'. There was a procession marching with such slogans towards Gandhi Ji's prayer meetings. But on the third day of the fast JawaharLal Nehru addressed a meeting of ten thousand people in front of the Red Fort. I always ask who called that meeting? Did Patel call that meeting? Did Rajendra Prasad call it? Who had the courage to call it and face the crowd? And yet by the time Nehru had spoken the crowd was with him. And then within two further days there was a procession of a hundred thousand people in Delhi. Peasants of Aligarh, peasants of Meerut, peasants also from Muzaffar Nagar—perhaps fathers and grandfathers of some of those who participated the riots recently— were in that procession

along with sweeper unions, tongawalas and factory workers.

Thereafter crowds surrounded the houses of Hindu Mahasabha and RSS leaders forcing them to agree to sign pledges and bringing them practically by force to Gandhi Ji's site of fast until all of them had so submitted. And when Gandhi Ji ended his fast, and the government paid fifty five crores of rupees to Pakistan, violence was over, almost simultaneously in both countries. So, you are not speaking of an ordinary man when you speak of Gandhi. We are speaking of a man of immense courage who didn't care for his personal status or dignity for the larger cause. He was always walking barefoot in total dirt among the homeless victims but he never minded it. He would go again and again to both Hindu and Muslim refugee camps for giving his message that Hindu and Muslims should be brothers and sisters. So, it has been such people who have made us a nation. Things didn't fall of themselves from the heavens. What happened after independence, I would not go into in great details but shortly one must remember—to a Muslim audience it may not sound very great, but for India, it was an immense thing that the Hindu Code was legislated in 1955-56. Hindu women had no right to inheritance, they have now. They had now equal rights except in very few matters. It represented a total overthrow of Dharma Shastra and not through a coup but through a general election. The Congress went into that election saying that women should have equal rights with men. Jan Sangh and Ram Rajya Parishad stood up for the Dharmashastra, and surely need to be asked today, why did you

oppose the Hindu Code bill in 1950s? Don't you think men and women should have equal rights? But they were totally rejected by the electorate—Jan Sangh, the precursor of the BJP as well as Hindu Mahasabha and Ram Rajya Parishad. So, India became a democracy, it changed civil laws where men and women, at least 80 percent of population, were made equal though unfortunately unfavorable social customs, like dowry, continue. And simultaneously came the agrarian reforms. Millions of peasants throughout India got land. UP once had of the most radical Zamindari Abolition Acts besides Kashmir but every state had such Acts. Finally came the ceilings legislations of 1960s and the construction of the Indian public sector. The basis of new India, with all its weaknesses that still remain, was thus laid in the 1950s and 1960s. It's all the nation's gift! Well, the real thing is how the poor have fared? They haven't fared very well.

If you read an essay by Utsa Patnaik, *The Republic of Hunger*, you will see that until 1989 the per capita calorie intake continuously increased. Even in years of drought this was maintained by Food Corporation's operations, subsidies and so on. Do you know what has happened after 1991? Calorie intake per capita declined! By 2003, it reached the level that it was under British rule. When Mr. Modi and Co. speak of capital inflow, or go to various countries where, they can give away billion dollars, as in Mongolia, they are only supporting the corporations. The RSS and Hindu Mahasabha, very much like Muslim League, never had an

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BJP/RSS icon was a collaborator of British rulers and Muslim League

Shamsul Islam

Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee (1901-1953) is a prominent Hindutva icon for the RSS/BJP brigade. It was he who, on the advice of M.S. Golwalkar, the second chief of RSS and its most prominent ideologue, founded the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), precursor of present BJP, in 1951 and became the first president of the political arm of the RSS. He died in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, on 23 June 1953, when he was under arrest. His death is mourned every year as 'End Article 370 Day' and 'Save Kashmir Day'.

The Hindutva brigade is fond of declaring Dr. Mookerjee as great nationalist and patriot who laid down his life for the unity of the nation. Modi described him as "a statesman, thinker and a patriot who devoted his life towards strengthening national integration". The Hindutva rhetoric about patriotism of Dr. Mookerjee needs to be cross-checked with the contemporary documents available even in RSS and Hindu Mahasabha archives. Perusal of these documents clearly shows that the claim that Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee was a 'selfless patriot' and a great patriot right from his birth is a white lie. Dr Mookerjee never participated in the anti-colonial freedom struggle. If patriotism means being part of the freedom struggle and making sacrifices, Dr Mookerjee not only kept aloof from it but also betrayed it by collaborating with the British rulers and the Muslim League in order to crush and communally

polarize the anti-British liberation movement.

In pre-Independence times he was a prominent leader of the Hindu Mahasabha, which was led by V.D. Savarkar. When in 1942 Congress gave a call to the British rulers to leave India immediately by launching Quit India Movement, the rulers responded to this mass movement by unleashing a reign of terror. Congress was banned, its provincial governments were dismissed, whole of India was turned into a jail and thousands died in the repression unleashed by armed forces of the British and native rulers. The crime of many of those who were killed was that they were carrying a Tricolour. Hindu nationalist organizations namely, Hindu Mahasabha and RSS with Muslim nationalist organization, Muslim League not only boycotted Quit India Movement but also decided to support the British government in its repressive campaign.

The Hindu Mahasabha president 'Veer' Savarkar chronicled this ganging up of Hindu Mahasabha with the Muslim League in his presidential speech to the 24th session of the Hindu Mahasabha at Kanpur in 1942 in the following words:

"In practical politics also the Mahasabha knows that we must advance through reasonable compromises. Witness the fact that

only recently in Sind, the Sind-Hindu-Sabha on invitation had taken the responsibility of joining hands with the League itself in running coalition Government. The case of Bengal is well known. Wild Leaguers whom even the Congress with all its submissiveness could not placate grew quite reasonably compromising and sociable as soon as they came in contact with the Hindu Mahasabha and the Coalition Government, under the premiership of Mr. Fazlul Huq and the able lead of our esteemed Mahasabha leader Dr Syama Prasad Mookerji, functioned successfully for a year or so to the benefit of both the communities." [i]

Later this coalition arrangement was extended to NWFP also.

Following the Hindu Mahasabha directive to co-operate with the British, the Hindutva icon, Dr. Mookerjee assured the British masters through a letter dated July 26, 1942. Shockingly, it read:

"Let me now refer to the situation that may be created in the province as a result of any widespread movement launched by the Congress. Anybody, who during the war, plans to stir up mass feeling, resulting internal disturbances or insecurity, must be resisted by any Government that may function for the time being" [ii]

His letter to Bengal governor that the Fazlul Haq led Bengal Government, along with its alliance partner Hindu Mahasabha (Mookerjee being Deputy CM in this ministry) made concrete suggestions for crushing the QIM. He wrote:

"The question is how to combat this movement(Quit India) in Bengal? The administration of the province should be carried on in such a manner that in spite of the best efforts of the Congress, this movement will fail to take root in the province. It should be possible for us, especially responsible Ministers, to be able to tell the public that the freedom for which the Congress has started the movement, already belongs to the representatives of the people. In some spheres it might be limited during the emergency. Indian have to trust the British, not for the sake for Britain, not for any advantage that the British might gain, but for the maintenance of the defense and freedom of the province itself. You, as Governor, will function as the constitutional head of the province and will be guided entirely on the advice of your Minister.[iii]

A prominent historian R.C. Majumdar who is also regarded as a 'Hindu' historian by the Hindutva brigade commenting on this letter wrote:

"Shyam Prasad ended the letter with a discussion of the mass movement organised by the Congress. He expressed the apprehension that the movement would create internal disorder and will endanger internal security during the war by exciting popular feeling and he opined that any government in power has to suppress it, but that according to him could not be done only by persecution.... In that letter he mentioned item wise the steps to be taken for dealing with the situation..." [iv]

The Hindu Mahasabha decision to betray Quit India Movement

resonated with the RSS also. MS Golwalkar, the then chief of RSS admitted:

"In 1942 also there was a strong sentiment in the hearts of many. At that time too the routine work of Sangh continued. Sangh vowed not to do anything directly. However, upheaval (uthal-puthal) in the minds of Sangh volunteers continued. Sangh is an organization of inactive persons, their talks are useless, not only outsiders but also many of our volunteers did talk like this. They were greatly disgusted too." [v]

Nowhere in pre-Partition RSS literature have we found references to any work which RSS might have done 'indirectly' for Quit India Movement.

In a more shocking development, the Hindu Mahasabha of Dr Mookerjee decided to help the British rulers in World War II. It was the time when Subhash Chandra Bose, known as Netaji, was organizing the INA (Azad Hind Fauj) in a military campaign to force the British out. The extent to which the Hindu Mahasabha was willing to help the British masters is clear from the following directive issued by Savarkar as President of the Mahasabha:

"So far as India's defence is concerned, Hindudom must ally unhesitatingly, in a spirit of responsive co-operation, with the war effort of the Indian government in so far as it is consistent with the Hindu interests, by joining the Army, Navy and the Aerial forces in as large a number as possible and by securing an entry into all ordnance, ammunition and war craft factories.... Again it must be noted

that Japan's entry into the war has exposed us directly and immediately to the attack by Britain's enemies. Consequently, whether we like it or not, we shall have to defend our own hearth and home against the ravages of the war and this can only be done by intensifying the government's war effort to defend India. Hindu Mahasabhaites must, therefore, rouse Hindus especially in the provinces of Bengal and Assam as effectively as possible to enter the military forces of all arms without losing a single minute." [vi]

Despite all these shocking facts being available in the Hindutva archives, the Hindutva brigade continues to falsify history. The Hindutva juggernaut is in full steam demolishing the great, heroic and selfless sacrifices of thousands of Indian who laid down their lives for the freedom of India against the colonial masters and their stooges like Princes and Muslim League. The Hindutva gang is trying to replace the braves and heroes of anti-colonial history with stooges and collaborators. It makes one fact very clear that BJP/RSS do not have a single person to be presented as freedom fighter. However, it is terribly sad that those who love martyrs of the great anti-colonial struggle and respect glorious liberation struggle are not there to encircle places in protest where the Hindutva denigrates the real martyrs and freedom fighters and attempts to establish collaborators as patriots.

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Goa camp

A study camp for the activists of the Socialist Party(India) was held at Azad Bhavan, Parvari, Goa on 24th and 25th Jun 2016. 72 from Maharashtra, 4 from Goa and 10 from Kerala attended There were 26 women. Age-wise breakup was: below 30 yrs—24, between 30 and 60—50, above 60 yrs-22.

After Vinayak Naik, president of Goa state unit, welcomed the gathering, Baban D'Souza, senior leader inaugurated by lighting a lamp. Bharat Latkar and Baba Nadaf, RSD activists led two inspiring chorus songs, one of the conveners recalled long association of the socialists with Goa.

As news of the Brexit came in the morning, a short discussion was held on it. It was pointed out that formation of European Union (EU), after the end of the second world war, was welcomed by many countries. It was recalled that it was the imperialist rivalry of a few European countries like Britain and France on the one hand and Germany and Italy on the other that forced the people of many countries to face great loss of life and dislocation of normal lives of the millions. As all those countries, 28 in all, came under one umbrella, the world heaved a sigh of relief hoping that no more war would be thrust on them. Ordinary people can lead their life well only if there is peace. Formation of EU was welcomed with the expectation that one currency would come to be accepted by all countries sooner or later. All those hopes were dashed by the Brexit.

In the first session collective reading of the Policy Statement of

the Socialist Party(India) with every participant having its copy in hand, was conducted by Prof. Nutan Malavi (Wardha) and Santosh Thakur (Tara). Many questions were asked and discussed threadbare.

In the second session, discussion on gender equality was initiated by Kamal Parulekar, president of the statewide organization of Anganwadi sevikas. She said that in 1991, there were only 917 female to 1000 male. After the first World Women's Conference at Beijing in 1975, mass awakening campaign was conducted on the issue as a result of which the ratio improved to 992:1000 in 2011. A woman never cooks to satisfy her likes and dislikes but does so for others. Girls' education is generally neglected because people feel that only son will look after them in old age. Due to spread of education and women getting gainful employment, daughters are increasingly shouldering that responsibility. So people should stop discriminating as between sons and daughters. Women should be treated on equality basis in all walks of life. Anita Nawale of Asu, explained the problems and hardships faced by single women like widows, deserted and spinsters and gave information about the movement carried by those women. Prod. Benzir Tamboli (Pune) discussed problems of Muslim women and narrated how nationwide movement is being carried on for abolition of oral talaq for which first morcha was organized by the great reformer Hamid Dalwai long back in 1967. Yashodhara Potanwar gave information about gender equality movement in Vidarbha.

In the next session, Prof. Shamsuddin Tamboli, president of the Muslim Satyashodhak Mandal, discussed how fundamentalism of the Hindus and Muslims are mutually encouraged by each other. Communal riots were started under the British Rule and are increasingly indulged into by the Hindu fanatics while a handful of Muslim youths are resorting to terrorist activities. Sober elements in both the communities should join hands to negate the atmosphere of mutual suspicion and hatred and concentrate on promoting programs for the betterment of all the countrymen. The Prophet had specifically stated that his commands that there is only one Allah and the believers should pray for him are mandatory. In regard to worldly matters, decisions be arrived at by mutual discussion and dictates of the conscience. Shri Tamboli informed that Muslim Satyashodhak Mandal has started organizing blood donation camps to observe Eid.

Next, Dr. T.S. Patil (Kolhapur) who has done his Ph.D. on the history of Socialist Party in Maharashtra (1934 to 1977), focused on main achievements like participation in freedom struggle, struggles of peasants and workers in many industrial centres. In the realm of ideology, socialists emphasized the importance of avoiding violence and carry on mass movements peacefully and uphold sanctity of fundamental rights of the citizens and how the socialists participated in Sanyukta Maharashtra movement and anti-Emergency struggle 1975 to 1977. In Parliament, the performance of socialist MPs like Nath Pai, Madhu Limaye, S.M.Joshi., N.G. Goray, Madhu Dandavate and George Fernandes used to be quite effective. Konkan

Railway is a standing tribute to the socialists' exemplary work. Socialist MLAs had also raised many important issues related to the common people. Pannalal Surana added that socialists should feel proud about the fact that the Indian polity accepted (1) use of regional languages in the administration of all the States, (2) appointment of Mandal Commission for the OBCs and implementation of its recommendations and (3) need for abolition of caste system along with pursuit of economic rights of the toiling masses.

In the final session, Shri Surana spoke on capitalism, globalization and Socialism. He observed that as the capitalists are interested only in maximizing their profits, they exploit both the labourers and the consumers at large. They cause heavy pollution of air and water thereby enhancing the menace of global warming. Establishment of World Trade Organisation ushered in the globalisation which asks for free flow of capital and goods from rich countries to the poor ones but debar that of labour from the poor to the rich countries. It is a fact that globalization process has achieved only jobless growth thereby aggravating unemployment problem in many countries besides enhancing inequality as between classes as also between nations. Insistence of WTO on a particular kind of Patent Act, increased prices of seeds and insecticides, and declining prices of agricultural produce like cotton due to throwing open the markets of the underdeveloped countries to the imports from the advanced ones were responsible for large number suicides by the farmers. The rich countries refuse to lower the rates of subsidy which they pay to their farmers but force the poor countries

not to increase subsidy to local farmers. The large corporates are trying to grab natural resources like land, water, forests and minerals by denying the traditional commons rights of the local communities.

Shri Surana asserted that the Socialist Party is totally opposed to capitalism and globalization. It asserts that the American model of development must be discarded and indigenous one, with primary objective of full employment be evolved. Primacy must be accorded to agriculture, dairy, fishery and forestry which can generate employment at a much faster pace besides producing goods that can upgrade standard of living of the common people. Consumers' goods be produced through diffused small scale industries. Capital goods be produced only in public sector units. No foreign capital be allowed in Defence production, insurance, and banking. India can finance its development projects because its rate of saving is 34 per cent which is quite good. We should strive to be self-reliant.

In the last session devoted to organizational matters, it was decided to undertake the following programs to be completed by 30 November, 2016: Enrolment of 10,000 party members; Organising study camp one each in Marathwada and Vidarbha; Organising debates on Electoral Reforms in 44 colleges; To dispel the sense of insecurity amongst the fellow-brethren belonging to minority communities and strengthen the bonds of solidarity organize Hindu-Muslim Bhaichara Meets at 34 places.

—Kamalakar Subhadar
Hasan Desai

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economic programme. The poor mean nothing to them; only the rich fund-givers are important. Therefore, in order to rule they must continue to raise the communal issues, which is the only way in which they can continue to get votes. They are not the first to do so, the Nazis did it by raising the racial question in Germany. Golwalkar, the RSS guru, actually praised Hitler for his policy towards the Jews saying that same policy should be resorted to in India against Muslims. So, to keep up the anti-Muslim fervor is now the RSS watchword. No

opposition to religious fanaticism i.e. Hindutva can be tolerated. Even an ordinary history text book which says that the Rigveda was compiled in 1500 BC—and by implication not in 8000 BC—is unacceptable. Therefore, what is happening today—the murders of Dabholkar, Pansare, and Kalburgi—is part of a pre-determined pattern: by threats they want to silence people. The Congress didn't much care who served in the ICHR, ICSSR, JawaharLal Nehru Museum but RSS cares! Everywhere they are filling places with fanatics. Everywhere they are giving a totally wrong

picture of Indian history and of Indian Constitution. Therefore, on the shoulders of the educated people in India or those who can answer them in print, on paper, in speech, a great responsibility rests today. A massacre of Muslims is not just an attack on Muslim community, it is an attack on India and large number of people are realizing it. Read newspapers, the realization is amply there on their pages every day. This is the time for us to forget our small grouses and grievances and stand up against the conspiracy of the BJP and RSS against the very "Idea of India".

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—countercurrents

Country's borders in jeopardy

By allowing a 100 percent foreign direct investment in many key sectors, including the defence, the BJP government at the center has put the borders of the country in danger. According to this decision, the responsibility of the security of the country's borders has been snatched away from the Indian government and the forces and given to the American-NATO network. Now even the defence sector has become the profit-making business of the national and international corporate houses. With this decision of the government, the truth of swadeshi ideology of the RSS has completely unravelled in front of the people of the country. On the one hand, RSS breaks the internal integrity and strength of the nation through communal

discord and on the other, it has decided to break the security system around the country's borders. Decision has proved that the RSS, who was not concerned for the independence of the country during the freedom struggle, does not care for it even today.

The Socialist Party believes that our constitutional pledge is to make the nation independent and self-reliant and not the 'the biggest open economy for the foreign direct investment in the world' to be looted by the corporate houses.

The Socialist Party calls for a countrywide resistance on this serious matter.

—Abhijit Vaidya
General Secretary Socialist Party (India)

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