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*Between The Lines*

## Back to Square One

**Kuldip Nayar**

We are back to square one. The Supreme Court has advised the two parties, those who want the Babri Masjid to be reconstructed and those who claim that the site is that of Lord Rama's. In its judgment, the court has advised the different parties to sit together and sort out the problems through negotiations.

One surprising part of the advice is that the Chief Justice of India is willing to mediate for an out-of-court settlement. He has said "give a bit and take a bit. Make an effort to sort it out." He points out that these are issues of sentiments and he can even step aside and let his brother judges to decide. How can the chief justice or, for that matter, his brother judges mediate because their very office is supposed to be above controversies?

Yogi Adityanath, a Hindu icon, has been elected as the leader of the Uttar Pradesh legislative party with a huge margin and installed as chief minister. Whether the credit for securing this majority in UP goes to Prime Minister Narendra

Modi or to the Yogi, who has the reputation of being a hardcore Hindu leader, it shows that Hindutva is sweeping the country. Obviously, the RSS is behind the move.

In the past, the RSS always stayed distant although it was the final arbiter. But now it is so confident of the Hindu majority, particularly after the BJP swept elections in UP, that it doesn't mind coming out in the open. It is already preparing for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Its chief Mohan Bhagwat minces no words when he tells the swayamsewaks to be prepared to meet the increasing attacks on the RSS and get ready for the next Lok Sabha polls.

In the face of what has happened in recent assembly elections, the RSS fears that the opposition parties might join hands together to fight it out. In such a scenario, the BJP-led NDA may lose ground. The RSS, or for that matter, the BJP knows that despite getting 42 percent of vote share in UP, the combined efforts of the other parties fetched 55 percent

## Communalism Trumps Social Justice for Now

Sandeep Pandey

of vote share. It means that the non-BJP parties would have to come together. This doesn't seem possible at present.

The bigger danger may force them to sink their differences and fight the saffron brigade. As Nani Palkhiwala, the late eminent jurist said, when the house is on fire you don't not think whether to save the drawing room or dining room. You want to save the entire house. He was referring to the looming threat of the erstwhile Jan Sangh getting a majority in parliament. It is another matter that Janata Party, comprising most Jan Sanghis, came to power at the centre in 1977. But the sticking point was to sever relations with the RSS.

However, the Jan Sangh elements which are now a part of the ruling BJP, refused to snap ties with the RSS. Subsequently, L.K. Advani walked out and founded a separate party, the BJP. Liberal elements in the party like Atal Behari Vajpayee, too, left the Janata Party. It turned out to be a blessing in disguise that his sobering influence did not allow the hardcore elements to take over when the party came to power.

It, however, shows that secularism has not taken roots in the country. It is unfortunate that the independence struggle, aimed at a secular democratic country that included this noble thought in the preamble of the constitution, seems to have gone awry. The Hindutva elements, slowly and gradually, swept the country. Today, you can see that soft-Hindutva has spread even in Kerala where the BJP, for the first time, has made inroads.

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After the implementation of Mandal Commission recommendations by the Vishwanath Pratap Singh government at the centre in 1989 it has been only an Other Backward Class or Scheduled Caste leader in Uttar Pradesh at the helm, except for a five year period from 1997 to 2002 when the only Bhartiya Janata Party government formed after the Babri Masjid demolition had two upper caste chief ministers, Ram Prakash Gupta and Rajnath Singh. Post-1989 period was called the era of Social Justice indicating that communities which were not politically well represented or at least not in proportion to their presence in population got a chance to be in power. A popular slogan of Bahujan Samaj Party was 'numerically higher should have proportionate participation.' Before 1989 it was mainly the upper caste, a Brahmin or a Thakur, who headed the governments. The social justice politics was seen as a successful example of empowerment of the marginalised sections of society and Mayawati's ascension to chief ministership was nothing short of a miracle, probably the rarest example in a democracy where a person hailing from the lowest rungs of society, that too a woman, rose to power based on Constitutionally backed electoral process. UP's example was quoted as a successful model to fight the politics of communalism, for example, in the state of Gujarat. But the reverse has happened. The politics of communalism has defeated that of

social justice. With this is back the upper caste dominance in UP politics. It is an irony but had Yogi Adityanath been declared a chief ministerial candidate before the elections it is not sure whether BJP would have won in an OBC dominated state. To garner the non Yadav OBS votes Keshav Prasad Maurya was made the BJP President in UP. After the voters were tricked into voting for the BJP an upper caste chief minister has been imposed because that is where the BJP's core ideology and hence the vote bank lies. However, this vote bank is insufficient to win elections. BJP also went all out to secure the non-Chamar-Jatav votes from among the dalits this time.

The elite BJP supporter is under the illusion that merit will now take precedence over caste, law and order will be better and corruption will come to an end. It is abundantly clear that BJP could not have won without caste machinations and has replaced social justice politics by a retrogressive combination of entrenchment of the pernicious caste system and explosive communalism. The chief minister faces many cases including seven under seven serious Indian Penal Code sections. He has two charges of promoting enmity between different groups, two charges of injuring or defiling place of worship, one charge of criminal intimidation and more. Once when he was arrested by the District Magistrate of Gorakhpur he wept in the

Parliament alleging threat to his life. It did not probably occur to him that victims of violence, inflicted by his followers, or their families similarly may have felt threatened. Deputy chief minister Keshav Prasad Maurya has eleven cases against him including 15 serious IPC sections. 20 out of 44 ministers have cases pending against them with 17 of them facing serious IPC sections. 35 ministers in the newly appointed cabinet are crorepatas. Is it all hard earned money? Did the candidates spend within the limits prescribed by Election Commission to contest their elections? One can only pity the gullible BJP supporter.

BJP secured 39.7 % votes. With its allies Apna Dal and Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party the vote share of alliance went upto 41.4%. Samajwadi Party and BahujanSamaj Party together polled 44% votes. Along with Congress party, the share of secular alliance becomes 50.2% of votes. Hence the politics of social justice still has an upper hand in UP.

In terms of seat share if SP and BSP had formed an alliance, as the then chief minister AkhileshYadav of SP had suggested after the Bihar election results, they would have won 239 seats out of 403 and hence would have defeated BJP convincingly. If we add the Congress party votes to this alliance, number of seats would have gone up to 282 and with the inclusion of other like-minded parties such as the Rashtriya Lok Dal and Communist Party of India, the secular alliance would have won 296 seats. This would have helped realize AkhileshYadav's aspiration of securing 300 seats with the help of alliance partners.

The abovementioned numbers indicate that the game is still not over for SP and BSP if they open up to each other and revive the Mulayam Singh-Kanshiram era alliance. Mayawati, for whom political oblivion looms large, will have to overcome her antipathy towards the SP and contemplate an alliance. In any case she will not have to deal with Mulayam Singh and Shivpal, of whom she may not have very good memories. Akhilesh is a fresh face and she may not have a problem with him. But Akhilesh will probably have to cede

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As it is, the party has captured the imagination of people which has brought it to power in over dozen states. This also means that the secular party like the Congress has been losing its grip in the states which it ruled once. Even the regional parties are losing their relevance as it happened in UP. Obviously, the BJP has been able to influence the minds of most people. The Rajya Sabha elections look like strengthening the BJP's hands

The assembly elections in states of Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh will really show whether the Lok Sabha would be captured by the BJP or not. However, the future is ominous. The revival of Ram mandir issue could shape the future of the country and would polarize the nation further. Yogi Adityanath has repeated the Modi words of 'sabka saath, sabka vikas.'

But the content of the party cannot change overnight. Though the UP chief minister may not be saying it in as many words, he will have to follow the RSS and the BJP agenda of the Ram temple at

the leadership of alliance to her as she comes from a more depressed background and is a senior leader. This is the sacrifice Akhilesh will have to make if at all he is serious about displacing BJP from power.

The BJP is trying to subvert the Constitutional values of socialism, secularism, sovereignty and even democracy. There is a need for parties and people with belief in such values to come together and defeat the mischievous designs of Hindutva politics.

Ayodhya, sooner or later. If the all-powerful Yogi has been installed as chief minister by the BJP high command, it must be with a clear-cut intention.

Whatever may the outcome, the court cannot decide on what is apparently a matter of faith. That is perhaps why the CJI has offered to mediate for an out-of-court settlement. But then there have been several attempts since 1986, involving five governments of different colours. It was mainly because both parties seem to be adamant since they don't want to make any compromises. Under the circumstances, another attempt by the CJI may not help.

Except for the BJP, none of the other parties is enthused over the offer by the Supreme Court bench. It looks as if the apex court also is not clear in its mind how to settle the dispute. This long-ranging issue needs a quick solution for the comforts of all parties concerned. But, unfortunately, it doesn't seem to coming, at least in the near future.

## Notebook

# Defeat in UP

I should make it clear that this piece is not a comment on the recent assembly elections, but is an effort to take note of the defeat of the Samajwadi Party in UP, and draw some lessons.

The Samajwadi Party has been defeated, and defeated decisively. It was in power for a full term and has met this ignominious fate. While there will be many analyses, from simple to more multi-dimensional and complex to explain the defeat, but with an objective of deducing some lessons for the socialists from the fall out, I have relied on common sense rather than highly sophisticated analyses.

There will be people who will blame the war in the Yadavpariwar or the alliance with the Congress for defeat, but those who do this will only be fooling themselves. Such explanations do not yield an effective response to such an overwhelming defeat. The first thing that is to be realized is that this defeat is not just the defeat of the Samajwadi Party, but is the defeat of all socialists and also of those who call themselves secularists. For those socialists who are not with the Samajwadi Party, to point out that the Samajwadi Party was not fully socialist or something similar will be creating an illusion that if the party were a little more socialist, it could have done better. Let's realize that in the public mind the Samajwadi Party was identified as a Socialist Party and hence all socialists will have to accept that the defeat of the Samajwadi Party is their defeat too, at least, in the public mind. Once this is accepted, socialists will be able to draw appropriate lessons.

As a first step, socialists should accept that the victory of the BJP is the victory of the Gujarat model. In 2014, on the basis of this model, the BJP won the Lok Sabha elections and now in 2017, it has won again at the assembly level. Once this is accepted, socialists have to develop a feasible road map to counter this model. The Gujarat model is essentially based on Hindu-Muslim polarization. The task therefore gets defined as how to prevent such polarization from happening. It should also be realized that the term secularism has taken on a new meaning in this country, thanks to the BJP and the RSS. The masses – an overwhelming number of them – have come to understand this term as little else but anti-Hindu and pro-Muslim. And therefore it will be good for the socialists not to fight their battle against Hindu-Muslim polarization under the banner of secularism. The moment they talk of secularism and posit it against the Gujarat model, they walk into a trap laid by the RSS-BJP.

The socialists should define a new, different ground for their battle and that can be the bread and butter issues for the masses, both Hindu and Muslim. Socialists will have to identify these issues and concentrate on them and fight till the end to solve them. One of these could be to fight for free, compulsory and equal education of quality for all – the rich as well as the poor. When the children of the rich and the poor study together, there is a certainty that the quality of education will not deteriorate. They can demand affordable health care and oppose its being handed

over to private sector. These two issues, education and health care, can be defined by socialists as essential infrastructure for development.

Another issue that socialists could take up is decent work for all. Almost all agree that the current model of development does not generate jobs. There is growth but it is a jobless growth, and given the demographic bulge, this can create an explosive situation. Socialists will have to identify and popularize an alternate development model which generates jobs, jobs for the children of the common man, and not just for those of the elite. Socialists are in a better position to do this because their thinking and upbringing has been sensitized by the thinking of the freedom movement. That movement had thrown up a large number of ideas for eradication of poverty and for full employment. Unfortunately, the country did not pursue these ideas after independence and started mimicking the West and forced a model on us of development, which is capital intensive. This needs correcting and socialists can do this, should do this.

The masses are aware of the obscene inequality that the current development model has thrown up and they will welcome any steps that would reduce it. The stoic acceptance of the pain due to demonetization should be read not merely as welcoming an attack on the black money but also as a step towards less inequality. While demonetization will not achieve more equality, socialists should work out strategies for reducing inequality and

press for these. During the freedom movement people were told that the rich can only have ten times more income than that of the poor. Socialists will have to popularize this once again. The masses will readily accept this and support any step that reduces inequality. This will require planned economy and socialists can demand the restoration of the Planning Commission.

And they should demand public housing. Despite all the noises by the ruling parties to provide housing for the poor, little gets done. The masses should be made to realize that only the state can provide housing to them, not the private sector. The latter will only invest in housing for the rich and this is precisely what is happening.

Socialists should also turn their gaze to rural India and the farmers' suicides. They need to sensitize the fast growing middle class to the fact that the country's economic policies are yielding agricultural distress and suicides. Not to be conscious and affected by these daily suicides is to be highly self-absorbed. The middle class, despite all that those who are for the current model, is sensitive to pain, to deprivation and it will be easy to arouse them to do something for the neglected hinterland. But if socialists wish to succeed in this, they will have to spend at least a few days in a year to go to the villages and participate in the pain of the small and marginal farmers and landless. This is what the freedom fighters did during the freedom movement. They went to rural countryside and settled down there, and it is this that mobilized the masses for freedom. Socialists have a task cut out for them. Are they up to it?

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## Musings of a Secular and Liberal Indian

**Uday Dandavate**

The victory of BJP in recent elections and installation of Adityanath, an unabashed proponent of Hindu Rashtra as the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh by Narendra Modi and Amit Shah has generated three types of reactions. Liberal and secular sections of India are feeling a combination of dejection, rejection and anger. In the streets of Uttar Pradesh and in many other states of India there is outpouring of celebration that shows an exactly opposite set of emotions - sense of victory over the traitors of Indian nationalism, unabashed joy at assertion of Hindu identity and a hope for better times generated by a Prime Minister who is demonstrating the will and a ruthless resolve to dismantle the old power structure and replace it with his own. I also see a third category of Indians, who is feeling victorious with a sense of having reached the finish line in a race to capturing the imagination of Indian masses in competition with secular and liberal elite of India.

I have been trying to make sense of what I see.

I see that the problem begins with the post-independence era. The leadership of the Congress party under Nehru was essentially the leadership of elite intellectuals disinclined to follow the path of Gandhi, who had a more grounded understanding of the realities of poor and underprivileged India. Had the Congress party followed the egalitarian vision of Gandhi, it would have succeeded in uniting India and offering its own framework of

governance - what Gandhi called Swaraj. It is important to note that Gandhi did not call his vision socialism; the terms and symbols he used in his political discourse were home grown. He also was a spiritual person and made a prayer a part of his political activism - though the core message of his prayer was unity of all sects.

The socialists were more drawn to Gandhi's vision of Swaraj. I truly believe that had Gandhi survived, the socialists who split from the Congress party would have aligned with him. Socialists chose their own course to follow on the path of a more egalitarian grass root level democracy championed by Gandhi. While socialists had their heart in the right place and led several mass movements, they could never keep their flock together and split like an amoeba. Also socialists did not recognize the spiritual ethos of India. They could also not translate the western ideas of democracy, secularism and liberalism into locally relevant lexicon as Gandhi could. Socialists could not even cultivate strong leadership from within the underprivileged masses of India, in effect turning themselves into an isolated group.

The Sangh Parivar, on the other hand, remained clear about its objective of achieving the dream of Hindu Rashtra. As much as Gandhi was a devout spiritual person he became an enemy of the Sangh Parivar for one simple reason - Gandhi was inclusive. Gandhi's politics struck creatively at the root of Sangh Parivar's core source of

power - hatred of Muslims. Masses were drawn to him because he was perceived as a home grown, spiritual person who could unite India. People of all faiths looked up to him. He would have been successful in nurturing the true spirit of Sarva Dharma Parivar. Sangh Parivar never lost sight of its objectives, kept consolidating and cultivating new people, while the socialists kept fragmenting and alienating people with a rhetoric that seemed to challenge the spiritual identity of an average Indian.

Though the Congress party were able to get the word secularism enshrined in the Constitution, albeit during the Emergency, they failed, and the Socialists too, in getting people to understand and embrace the true meaning of secularism - separation of religion and politics and freedom to practice every faith (and the freedom to be an atheist). The Sangh Parivar was able to twist the meaning to their advantage by branding secularism anti-Hindu, liberalism anti-national and environmentalism anti-development. The Indian ethos of Sarv Dharm Samabhav was sacrificed.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee's contribution to the rise of BJP as the mainstream party cannot be undermined. He made the BJP appealing to the masses and created a space for increasing the presence of the BJP by gaining respectability in the company of other political stalwarts. From being branded the ideology that killed Gandhi to becoming a party of contemporary Hindu nationalism, the BJP usurped the place of home grown spiritual transformation that Gandhi created but pursued the path that he wanted India to avoid.

Lal Krishna Advani pulled the BJP out of the clandestine phase of warfare by openly leading the Ram Janma Bhoomi movement. It was time to symbolically strike at the real enemy - diversity of India and replace it with supremacy of Hindu identity.

Narendra Modi in the meanwhile was fast emerging as the ultimate weapon in the armory of the Sangh Parivar. He was able to harness anti-Muslim sentiment and convert it into a Hindu force. There is no doubt that Narendra Modi knows how to tap into modern technology and hire professionals to provide results. Though Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh initiated policies of liberalization and globalization of Indian economy, Narendra Modi was able to quickly assume the mantle of champion of capitalism and convince his followers that he will speed up the development agenda and give Hindus a central place in the new order.

The ethnic cleansing of Muslims in Gujarat, in fact, gave the BJP and Modi a political advantage. While his role in the riots was not proved, in the minds of masses he was seen as the one responsible for creating a psychological environment in which minorities would have to fall in line or perish. The much touted Gujarat model of governance acquired a new meaning and acceptance - a polity in which Hindus would live with dignity and reap the benefits of development, while others could expect a share in the benefits as long as they accepted secondary citizenship. Modi conducted the pilot study in Gujarati and scaled it up nationwide with support from his friends in big business who opened their purse strings to provide unlimited cash flow to build the new edifice.

Looking back at the developments, I remain unshaken in my beliefs. I believe in our primary role as responsible elements of nature's ecosystem. Ecological considerations must primarily drive our sense of identity. We must respect that diversity is the foundation of nature's design. We must respect the fact that every living being (that includes every element of nature) has the right to survive and we hold a responsibility to contribute to the beauty and harmony of our environment by constructively participating in the evolutionary process. In this process there will be conflicts there will be discomfort but a sense of accommodation and appreciation for the need to preserve the larger harmony would help us live life sustainably.

I believe anyone who espouses supremacy of one section of the society over another, of one species over the other, regardless of who enjoys numerical majority is hurting the cause of sustainable evolution. I also believe spirituality (not religiosity) gives strength and purpose to people as they go about resolving conflicts and finding a meaningful path in life. I believe consideration to local culture and language is important when building a participatory democracy.

Turning back to the challenges of responding creatively and positively to the success of Hindu Nationalism in India, I believe the solution is to nurture in people a sense of inevitability in developing a society that is glued with love and spirituality as opposed to hatred, one that is driven to prosper with frugal and responsible consumption of resources and is committed to preserve the diversity around us. It's a long path but worth taking.

# Tribute to Rabi Ray

**Chandrabhal Tripathi**

On March 15, 2017 a condolence meeting was held at India International Centre, New Delhi, to honour the memory of the great unassuming socialist leader, Rabi Ray, former Speaker of Lok Sabha. A large impressive portrait of Rabi Babu was projected on the screen on the stage. No formalities, no chairs on the dais. In consonance with the legendary simplicity of the departed leader even the practice of offering garlands and flowers at the portrait of the leader, involving waste of time and money, was done away with. The speakers spoke from the floor.

Many speakers who paid rich tributes to the socialist leader bringing out his human qualities included eminent people from diverse fields like Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, Kuldip Nayar, Muchkund Dubey, Prof. Manoranjan Mohanty, Prof. Anand Kumar, Suhas Borkar, Sumit Chakravartty, Dr. Sunilam, Dr. Prem Singh. I too was asked to speak perhaps because among those who attended the meeting I had the longest association with him. In 1953 we were among the delegates to the Foundation Conference of the All India Samajwadi Yuwak Sabha. Though I had to join Government service in the very beginning of 1959 in the Constitutional organisation of Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, I continued to have regular and cordial relations with several old socialist friends of mine. It is a coincidence that some of my prominent friends were born four years earlier than me in 1926: Rabi Ray, Ramakrishna Hegde

(thrice Chief Minister of Karnataka) and Surendra Mohan (socialist ideologue). Chandra Shekhar, a friend since 1947, who became Prime Minister in 1990-91, was born in 1927.

Rabi Ray was a symbol of Odisha's culture. The Odiya people are the most peace loving people in the country, may be since the days of Asoka and having developed abhorrence for war like the Japanese and the Germans after World War II. Modern ideas of justice and equality and fight against exploitation reflected in political, social, literary and cultural movements of Odisha have contributed towards establishment of an egalitarian non-violent democratic society in this cultural region. It produced stalwart socialist leaders like Sarangdhar Das, Nabakrushna Choudhury and Surendranath Dwivedi. Following in their footsteps Rabi Ray never used strong or derogatory words for anyone and in this respect he was a follower of Acharya Narendra Deva, the great Marxist and Indian socialist leader, who impressed anyone and everyone with his 'shaaleenataa' and for whom Rabi Babu had great personal regard.

The political class is well aware of the rich contribution of Rabi Ray as a socialist leader and a parliamentarian culminating in his elevation to the high office of Speaker of Lok Sabha where he distinguished himself as a non-partisan but firm presiding officer of the Parliament (Lok Sabha) of the biggest democracy in the world.

Here I would like to mention a couple of institutions seemingly non-political in character but intrinsically committed to high ideals of non-violence, democracy, social justice, equality, peace and communal harmony with which Rabi Babu was inseparably connected. The first of these two organisations was Lok Shakti Abhiyan which was set up by Rabi Babu in 1997 against corruption in high places, excessive centralisation and a decadent consumerist culture.

The other organisation I wish to mention is the Society for Communal Harmony that was set up by Dr. Bishambhar Nath Pande and Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi aka Maulana Ali Miyan. Before Rabi Babu became its President in 2001 its past Presidents had been Dr. BN Pande, PN Haksar and Sadiq Ali. After the demise of Sadiq Ali my old and close friend, Surendra Mohanji, myself and Abdul Mannan approached Rabi Babu at his Canning Lane residence to request him to accept presidentship of our Society. He was a heart patient and not in good shape. Yet he agreed to shoulder this responsibility and despite his not-so-good health continued to head this organisation for fourteen years. (Rabi Babu was succeeded by Somnath Chatterjee as President of SCH and our present President is Kuldip Nayar.)

On a personal note, I will never forget Rabi Babu invariably introducing me to anyone, big or small, as a person about whom Dr.

Rammanohar Lohia, had written. With reference to our historic non-violent democratic student movement in 1953 over the issue of autonomy of students' unions in Universities, in which about 14,000 students went to jail, three persons were killed in police firing and ultimately the powerful State Government under the leadership of the towering personality of Pt. GB Pant had to accept our genuine demands, Dr. Lohia wrote a long article captioned 'The Lucknow Revolt' in *The National Herald* (Lucknow) and, *inter alia*, wrote a laudatory para about me. It was later included in one of his books. The prolific and serious writer that Dr. Lohia was, he seldom wrote about individuals. I am aware of the case of a leading kisan leader of Ghazipur, Dalsingar Dube, whom the police had beaten so badly that they left him thinking him to be dead. Dr. Lohia wrote on him with the caption 'The Hero of Ghazipur'.

It was very embarrassing. Rabi Babu would always say to me: "Chandrabhal, you are very lucky. You were a bright leader but you left politics and joined Government service. Dr. Sahab made you famous. We laboriously worked with and for him for decades but he has not written anything about us anywhere." In my tributes to this senior socialist comrade, who always treated me like his younger brother and always used to address me with 'tum', I mention this episode with some hesitation.

During my posting at Bhubaneswar (September 1980-March 1985) I regularly met him and his devoted wife, Dr. Saraswati Swain, Professor at Cuttack Medical College, and our common friend, Kulamani Mahapatra, at Cuttack. Kulmani and Rabi Ray were the two most prominent student leaders at

Ravenshaw College, Cuttack, where they unfurled the national flag in 1946-47 at this institution till then considered to be a bastion of the British Raj.

There are many good memories of this simple, honest, strong, unassuming Gandhian socialist leader which I shall cherish. The likes of him are rare.

## **Democratise the Universities and Stop Deaths of Dalit Scholars Like Rohit Vemuala (UoH) and J. Muthukrishnan (JNU)**

The death of J. Muthukrishnan, allegedly a suicide by hanging, is a shocking addition to a growing list of young Dalit scholars who have been pushed towards taking the extreme step of ending their young and promising lives because of the hostile environment they are faced with even in India's premier institutions of higher education. Twenty-eight-year-old Muthukrishnan, who was from Tamil Nadu's Salem district, had completed his MPhil from the University of Hyderabad (UoH) in 2015 before joining JNU for his PhD. He had reportedly been active in the protest movement following Rohith Velmula's death. This can no longer be pushed aside as an issue of the individual psychology of the scholars, of their being in depression, or of their psychological ability to face 'tough' circumstances. For these scholars have faced and overcome almost insurmountable conditions of poverty, oppression and social injustice throughout their lives to arrive at a point where only about 8% of them are even able to reach. So we really do not need the patronizing platitudes and crocodile tears shed by upper caste ministers, officials and even sections of the academic community obsessed with ideas of their own prosperous and thriving lives of 'meritorious' achievement. The causes have to be sought far deeper in the disgraceful but persisting caste discrimination and oppression in Hindu society, and the continuing endorsement, encouragement and acceptance of this shameful and appalling practice. The devastating

consequences of this even at institutions of the highest levels of education located in modern metropolis's can no longer be ignored. Claims that modernization and development will themselves lead to solutions to these social prejudices and hatred only reinforce the arrogance of the privileged and weaken any social resolve to fight against such religiously sanctioned intolerance. The causes have also to be sought in the abject failure to punish the perpetrators of such hate-crimes, particularly when they are occupying positions of political and governmental power and responsibility. Had the previous Minister of HRD and the MOS of the Labour Ministry in the Central Government, not been let off by the deceitful ploy of denying the Dalit status of Rohith Vemula who was driven to suicide by their blatant interference and pressure on the university administration, a strong enough message would have gone out that would have intensified the struggle for social justice and made its crusaders more resolute. The recommendations of the Sukhadeo Thorat Committee's report on discrimination against Dalits in educational institutions have not been implemented. Nor has any action been taken to move on the formulation of the Rohith Vemula Act which students from SC, ST, OBC and other marginalized sections have been demanding. The Sukhadeo Thorat Committee's significantly

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## Lohia's Immanent Critique of Caste – II

Arun Kumar Patnaik

### Split personality among Hindus

Caste induces Hindus to commit biggest hypocrisies. Hindus like all other religious people tell lies to others. What is however unique about Hindus is that they lie to themselves. A Hindu tells lie to oneself as well as to others and feels most comfortable with its success. A Hindu mind, due to caste, is a bundle of contradictions. Unless caste is destroyed in belief and practice, a Hindu mind will no way seek to develop in him/her self a consistent character and sincere moral personality.

There is a very interesting discussion between Lohia and Gandhi. After Lohia returned from Germany, he met Gandhi. Gandhi called him a very brave man. Lohia responded by saying that the tiger is also brave. Gandhi called him a learned man. Lohia laughed it away, by saying that a lawyer who enjoys financial benefits as a result of people's growing conflicts is also learned man. Then, Gandhi concluded that Lohia had "sheel", which can best be translated as "continuity in character". Lohia kept silence.<sup>10</sup>

Lohia assumes that once we believe in caste moralities, our personalities will remain retarded and under grown. Thus, on my interpretation of his writings, Lohia thinks that an average Hindu mind (I would extend this idea to average caste conscious Muslims and Christians) may be brave or may be learned. But in

order to have continuity in character, he must believe in a caste free society, must prove that s/he is committed to the destruction of caste in practice. That means s/he must have social networks (friendship, trusts) across caste order. Any restriction of this will be hypocritical. Lohia gives two more examples from public life. He gives the cases of the PM and the President. The PM once over a week told the press that he would resign as nobody listened to him, even though people respected him. Next day, he would continue to hold the post. Next day, again, he would threaten to resign and next moment, he would withdraw. Thus, the PM would indicate how he lacked "sheel". The President was still worse. He was part of the constitutional post which believed in prohibition but he was also the President of the Calcutta Club, founded by Indian bourgeoisie, where wines flowed every evening. A rich Tanti (a weaver caste) wanted to join as member but was refused as he was not from the families of "the Tatas and Birlas".<sup>11</sup> And the President was still the chief patron of the Club, even after a weaver from upper class was refused its membership. Neither the President nor the Prime Minister did even blink that whatever they were doing was full of contradictions. Such imbecility of mind occurs because of the lack of commitment to a caste free society. Lohia somehow believed that continuity in character can

arise only if we the Hindus (or even non Hindus) are committed to the destruction of caste order in belief and social practice.

This theme remained dear to his writings and personality throughout his life. Let us devote time to this issue which was closer to his heart. He comes back to this theme in several of his writings. Lohia's argument about an average Hindu personality believing in caste order as a bundle of contradictions was anticipated by D D Kosambi, the Marxist historian. Kosambi argues that the average Hindu is like a python which assimilates contradictions, without attempting to resolve them. Caste order is indeed based on this kind of assimilation, without any attempt to resolve their contradictions. Contradictions surface and resurface, without any attempt to resolve them. Contradictions between Vedic Brahmin and non Vedic Brahmin, contradiction between Brahmin male and Brahmin female, contradiction between each Sudra caste trying to claim purity against pollution of other Sudra castes, contradiction within Dalit castes and contradiction between Dalits and non Dalits. If we take the case of the Lord Shiva's entourage, it will be very clear what Kosambi means. Let us examine closely what constitutes Shiva's entourage. In this entourage, we have different elements who are mutually opposed to each other. We have a bull, a cobra, an

elephant god with a rat in his convoy. We have Parvathi with a lion in her convoy. Quite a few of these characters induce us to believe in set of contradictions that our caste minds assimilate, without any attempt to resolve them. If we go deeper, you may find that caste order evolved by subjugating and assimilating different tribes with their different cults like snake cult, Basava (bull) cult, elephant cult and so on, thus produced an entourage of Shiva. In the process of preserving their cults, the tribes got assimilated into caste based occupations and a Hindu pantheon was established.<sup>12</sup> Sastras and Puranas began justifying this caste order and prescribed rules of precedence for different people differently, a point we have already seen from Ambedkar. Caste and Hinduism are essentially about assimilating contradictions without any attempt to resolve them. I do not wish to equate Hinduism with caste order. But there is a caste core of the Hindu social order which is also a core of the converts from Hinduism to Islam and also to Christianity in post Independent India.<sup>13</sup>

Lohia argues that an average Hindu personality is hypocritical. Like any other foreigner, he tells lies to others. But he is more than this. He also lies to himself.<sup>14</sup> Lohia believes that this personality trait is the product of caste order. If I take this as a working hypothesis, I find his argument very interesting. Lohia gives some more examples from marriage. For example, a Telugu Brahmin boy may marry a Kannada Brahmin girl and may claim that their marriage is “pan Indian”. According to Lohia, such a marriage is actually a pan Brahmin

marriage rather than pan Indian marriage. This is a hypocritical claim. Such hypocrisies are rampant in caste society. Similarly an Oriya Kandayata gets married with an Oriya Chasa and calls this inter caste marriage. This is marriage within “touchable” castes and can hardly be called as inter caste. We can probably think of our contemporary examples. Politically, a Mala may claim that he is a Dalit but does not hesitate to excommunicate Madigas and their assertions for self identity, thus debunking his entire claim for a Dalit identity. Similarly Madigas may perpetrate discrimination against Erukulas and Erukulas against Chenchus. Such hypocrisy - from social or political life is plenty in caste order spreading from its top to bottom. These are all cases of a split personality of a person or a group owing to the peculiarity of caste contradictions whose resolution is not sought by them.

### **Classes oscillate as castes**

In a way reminiscent of Gramsci’s model of reverse appropriation, Lohia suggests that Western classes also oscillate towards caste order, even though caste order is uniquely Indian. Gramsci argues that European ruling classes, after colonial experiences, readopt caste’s segregated forms to counter working class aspirations for equality. Gramsci hints that the Western ruling classes reinvent even caste-like language against class struggle. Caste like rigidities, privileges, imbecilities and excommunication exist in German, American and Soviet societies.<sup>15</sup> Similarities exist between castes and classes in certain matters. Faced with class struggle since 1848 till

1990 (the period of ‘transformism’), classes shut the door against the lower order and develop rigid and exclusive forms. After 1848, the moment of the spectre of communism, the ruling classes were afraid of assimilating ‘new elements’, so argues Gramsci. (Dainotto, 2013: 84) Gramsci argues that the concept of class alone cannot explain this history. Marxists need to use caste in relation to class in those periods of crisis of hegemony. (Dainotto, Ibid: 85)

Caste is ‘immobile’ class as Lohia suggests. His formulation is akin to what Ambedkar calls caste as ‘enclosed’ class system. Lohia continues, when Western ruling classes develop enclosures against the initiatives of subaltern strata for equality in market, production, language, culture and politics, caste-like structures re-appear in all these spheres. Lohia recounts a form of enclosure (racial) in the market place in the USA. For example, like India’s untouchable castes, the American black people live in ghettos and cannot visit hotels marked for white population which he himself experienced in the USA when he visited an “all-white” cafeteria in Jackson in the Mississippi state in 1964. He was blocked at the entrance by the owner, ably assisted by the police, under “the rules of privacy”. By merely having purchasing power is not enough in such situations. A culture of segregation, practised by one’s colour or birth, exists everywhere.<sup>16</sup> Caste like barriers are created by people in liberal democratic class societies, even though people may believe in equality for everybody. In such situations, classes oscillate towards castes. So a struggle against caste barriers is simultaneously a struggle

against class inequalities. There is however a subtle difference. In class struggle, socialism is concerned with equality or distribution of resources, whereas socialism is concerned with justice or dignity of each human being in all anti caste resistance.<sup>17</sup> But class struggle must oscillate towards caste struggle as classes veer towards caste system. Otherwise, we may end up in socialism as existed in the then Soviet Union, without any concern for justice, so argues Lohia. Thus anti caste movements concerned with justice issues are basically international by nature, and are not just India centered.

If we recall, there was a huge debate on this issue in India in 2001. The World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Tolerance (WCAR), was being organized by the United Nations in Durban in 2001, when the NDA government was in power. Both the national government and the Sarkari intellectuals did not want to internationalise the caste question, and refused to participate in the WCAR in 2001.<sup>18</sup> They claimed that caste is not same as race and tried to argue that caste is uniquely an Indian phenomenon and thereby should be delinked from the concerns of international black people's movements.<sup>19</sup> Even if the history of caste is not the same as that of race, a point made by Ambedkar against Tamil Dalit intellectuals, Lohia would have argued that the Sarkari intellectuals tried to prevent India's anti caste movements to learn concerns of justice raised by Black movements.

If they have similar concerns of justice – opposing forms of segregation on the grounds of

human dignity, then such issues are international rather than national. They have ample scope to learn about moral, political, ideological doctrines of justice from each other. Lohia argues that caste question is concerned with justice, whereas class question is concerned with equality. So a struggle for equality must be interlinked with a struggle for justice, if democratic socialism must avoid the disastrous path of Soviet socialism under the Bolshevik party which was singularly concerned with "class". Incidentally, Ambedkar raises a similar concern against Marxism, for the latter is singularly concerned with equality by ignoring liberty and justice. Movements for justice must be internationalized along with movements for equality. Internal oscillation must take place in between these two social movements and must provide feedback to each other.

### **Reconstructing fables**

It is indeed Lohia's creative imagination to have read internal caste contradiction in fables or myths. After discussing a 'history' or philosophy of caste, let us now pay attention to Lohia's engagement with fables of Brahminism/Jativad.

### **Three forms of opposition**

Lohia argues that there are three kinds of opposition to caste order. First, there are ones who believe in the wordy opposition to caste like Nehruvian liberals, the communists and the Praja Socialist Party. Second, there are those who believe in partial opposition to caste by the Sudras like the DK politics in South during his time or Yadava politics of the North during our time. Third, there are those who believe in a

wholesale opposition to caste order. Lohia prefers the third alternative as the first two groups are basically hypocrites. True to his character (Sheel), he prefers a broad based opposition to caste involving Dalits, Sudras, Muslims and women who are all victims of caste based hypocritical politics. Here, he disagrees with Ambedkar's strategy of relying on Dalits only. Let me elaborate this aspect now.

First, Lohia argues, "The wordy opposition to caste is the loudest in respect of such generalized condemnation of caste as it leaves the existing structure almost intact".<sup>20</sup> Raise everybody economically, this thesis claims. It also argues, the caste denies equality of opportunities. So to solve this problem of denial, we must ensure equality of opportunity to everybody irrespective of caste. Communists, the PSP and Nehruvian Congress stand for this thesis. Any other social and political attempt to do away the caste inequalities is condemned as "casteist". As a result, economic equality for Dalits and Sudras are seen as the most important. But this thesis forgets that the policy of equal opportunity in economic sphere has helped the upper caste people entrenched into higher positions. Only the most talented one from among the Sudras and Dalits could be absorbed in the economic sector.

This economic strategy also leaves behind caste traditions in marriage and other aspects of life intact. By condemning anti caste efforts of all other forces by non economic means it fails to see how its economic strategy does not help elevate lower castes into economically equal to upper castes. It has fostered caste based

inequalities in job sector. As a result, 80% of jobs are still cornered by the upper castes who account for 20% of population in India. To quote him, “when more than 4/5th of nation’s vital leadership is traditionally selected from among 1/5th of its population, a state of atrophy is bound to ensue”.<sup>21</sup>

Secondly, the wordy war on caste is evenly matched by the second empty struggle against caste led by select Sudra groups. Among Sudras, certain castes are numerically powerful. The age of adult franchise has placed power in their hands. The Reddys, Mudaliars, Marathas, Yadavas or Ahirs, along with Brahmins and Khatriyas, are nearly 25% of population. They still leave out 3/4th of population. So sectional elevation brings about some changes within the caste system, but leaves the basis of castes unaltered. Still worse, sectional elevation is dangerous in another way. Those among the lower castes who rise to high positions tend to assimilate themselves to the existing high castes. In this process, they appropriate baser qualities of the high castes. It also generates bitter caste jealousies and intrigues. Caste divisions do not vanish at all. Caste distinctions reappear. Women are segregated and sacred threads reappear among the non Dwijas.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, a true struggle against caste is concerned with elevation of all rather than one or the other section of lower castes. This struggle aims to pitchfork the five downgraded groups such as women, Sudras, Dalits, backward caste Muslims and Adivasis, into positions of leadership, irrespective of their merit as it

stands today. A doctrine of preferential opportunity in employment must be followed up along with a social and political programme against caste system. Eighty percent of jobs in the leadership of political parties, national economy and government service should be reserved for 3/4th of our population. However, Lohia thinks that there should be a distinction between equal opportunity in education and preferential opportunity in employment. No child must be preferred or prevented by a policy while pursuing education. Discrimination should be exercised only in the case of government jobs. Educated Dwijas should try their luck in other fields. To end caste, social measures like mixed dinners, and inter caste marriages and economic measures like “land to the tiller” from among the lower castes must be encouraged. Women’s issues like fetching drinking water from distant areas or building of lavatories for women in rural areas must be resolved, apart from the distribution of property to press for women’s rights. Discussions, plays, and fairs should be organized.<sup>23</sup> Even, in government jobs there should be reservation for those who marry outside their caste. This is a sure way of breaking caste barriers. The socialists must make all efforts towards the destruction of caste order among Hindus and non Hindus.

In retrospect, we must distinguish Lohia’s critique from those followers of Lohia who surrendered his manifold criticism of caste into the sectional politics of Sudras in North India through the Samajwadi Party of Mulyam

Singh Yadav and the Rashtriya Janata Dal of Laloo Prasad Yadav. Lohia’s attempts in characterising such partial elevation of Sudras in South India should not be forgotten. He criticizes the Sudra politics in South for being concerned with “partial elevation” of Sudras, for alienating itself from Dalits, women, backward Muslims and Adivasis and for not showing interest in carrying out the agenda of destruction of caste system. While Lohia’s critique of caste must be distinguished from his followers in electoral field today, his alternative model merely relies on state action for equality and justice.

There are two major difficulties in accepting Lohia’s model of socialism. First, there could be an anomaly in his claim that equal opportunity in education must be followed, whereas preferential treatment in employment is to be adopted. As Ambedkar argues, caste has denied education to many social groups: women, Sudras, Dalits and Adivasis. If there is no preferential policy protecting education for these groups, it would not be possible for spreading education among common people. So any anti caste measure must aim at affirmative policy on education, for education alone can develop initial capacities of subaltern strata that were historically denied education by caste system. Lohia’s argument for equal opportunity in modern education may reproduce educational inequalities caste wise.

Second, he believes in putting pressure on the state for public egalitarian policies through civil liberties movements. So his model of socialism could be called as state socialism which ultimately gets one

sided in its emphasis for neglecting a community organisation of resources that may also weaken caste communities and help in the emergence of territorial communities with sharing of specific resources at each territorial level. By sharing resources at each territory from below to a summit of pyramid, one can simultaneously retain powers of communities and also push them beyond caste order,

without exclusively relying on state action as Lohia proposes. In Lohia's state socialism, the state is all powerful and communities have no role to play in breaking barriers of caste order. Though his model state is a democratic state, the state is still the motor of social change. This is a theme of Jayaprakash's critique of state centered socialism through his concept of Lokniti, which socialists may have to pay attention

in order to explore if these thinkers may complement each other in the withering away of caste order in future India.<sup>2424</sup> I would like to propose an eclectic approach to socialism rather than take side of state socialism of Lohia and Ambedkar or communitarian socialism of Jayaprakash and others. An alternative construction, however, may need to be worked out later.

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## NOTES

<sup>10</sup> Harris Wofford Jr., "About Lohia", Lohia and American Meet 1951 & 1964, B R Pub, Delhi, 2002, p. V

<sup>11</sup> R M Lohia, op. cit., n.5, pp. 132-134.

<sup>12</sup> D D Kosambi, The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline, Vikas Pub., Delhi, 1990, pp. 169-171.

<sup>13</sup> Thus it is possible for all non-Hindus (including atheists) to believe in caste just as it is possible for a reformist Hindu to reject caste order. For a long time, Ambedkar thought that as a Hindu it should be possible for him to rejuvenate Hinduism by abolishing caste order internally. Cf. Ambedkar, op. cit. n. 4. Gandhi probably did not understand caste order in details and yet he did not believe in casteism. Ambedkar rightly calls Gandhism or Marxism as an egalitarian ideology against caste order, even though, according to him, there are serious inadequacies in these ideologies.

<sup>14</sup> See R M Lohia, "Hinduism", in his Fragments of a World Mind, Maitrayani, Calcutta, (n.d.), pp. 112-125.

<sup>15</sup> R M Lohia, Wheel of History, B R Pub., Delhi, 1955, pp. 33-34.

<sup>16</sup> R M Lohia: "I make it perfectly clear. I am not trying something foul in American life. ... Such foul spots exist everywhere – also in India." (op. cit., n. 10, p. 204)

<sup>17</sup> R M Lohia, Wheel of History, op. cit., p. 37

<sup>18</sup> A Pinto, "UN Conference against Racism: Is Caste Race?", Economic and Political Weekly, July 28, 2001.

<sup>19</sup> A Betteile, "Race and Caste", Opinion Page, The Hindu, 10 March 2001.

<sup>20</sup> R M Lohia, op. cit., n. 5, p. 95.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p. 97.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 101.

<sup>23</sup> R M Lohia, op. cit., n. 5, pp. 136-137. July 28, 2001. A Betteile, "Race and Caste", Opinion Page, The Hindu, 10 March 2001. Hans Blomkvist, "Traditional communities, Caste and Democracy: The Indian Mystery", Paul Dekker and Eric M Uslaner (eds.), Social Capital and Participation in Everyday Life, Routledge, London, 2001. R. Dainotto, "Notes on Q6&32: Gramsci and the Dalits", in Cosimo Zene (ed.), The Political Philosophies of Antonio Gramsci and B R Ambedkar, Routledge, Oxon & New York, 2013: 75-86.

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## The Idea that Pesticides are Essential to Feed a Fast-Growing Global Population is a Myth, According to UN Food and Pollution Experts

A new report, being presented to the UN human rights council, is severely critical of the global corporations that manufacture pesticides, accusing them of the “systematic denial of harms”, “aggressive, unethical marketing tactics” and heavy lobbying of governments which has “obstructed reforms and paralysed global pesticide restrictions”.

The report says pesticides have “catastrophic impacts on the environment, human health and society as a whole”, including an estimated 200,000 deaths a year from acute poisoning. Its authors said: “It is time to create a global process to transition toward safer and healthier food and agricultural production.”

The world’s population is set to grow from 7 billion today to 9 billion in 2050. The pesticide industry argues that its products – a market worth about \$50bn (£41bn) a year and growing – are vital in protecting crops and ensuring sufficient food supplies.

“It is a myth,” said Hilal Elver, the UN’s special rapporteur on the right to food. “Using more pesticides is nothing to do with getting rid of hunger. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), we are able to feed 9 billion people today. Production is definitely increasing, but the problem is poverty, inequality and distribution.”

Elver said many of the pesticides are used on commodity crops, such as palm oil and soy, not the food needed by the world’s hungry people: “The corporations are not dealing with world hunger, they are dealing with

more agricultural activity on large scales.”

The new report, which is co-authored by Baskut Tuncak, the UN’s special rapporteur on toxics, said: “While scientific research confirms the adverse effects of pesticides, proving a definitive link between exposure and human diseases or conditions or harm to the ecosystem presents a considerable challenge. This challenge has been exacerbated by a systematic denial, fuelled by the pesticide and agro-industry, of the magnitude of the damage inflicted by these chemicals, and aggressive, unethical marketing tactics.”

Elver, who visited the Philippines, Paraguay, Morocco and Poland as part of producing the report, said: “The power of the corporations over governments and over the scientific community is extremely important. If you want to deal with pesticides, you have to deal with the companies – that is why [we use] these harsh words. They will say, of course, it is not true, but also out there is the testimony of the people.”

She said some developed countries did have “very strong” regulations for pesticides, such as the EU, which she said based their rules on the “precautionary principle”. The EU banned the use of neonicotinoid pesticides, which harm bees, on flowering crops in 2013, a move strongly opposed by the industry. But she noted that others, such as the US, did not use the precautionary principle.

Elver also said that while consumers in developed countries

are usually better protected from pesticides, farm workers often are not. In the US, she said, 90% of farm workers were undocumented and their consequent lack of legal protections and health insurance put them at risk from pesticide use.

“The claim that it is a myth that farmers need pesticides to meet the challenge of feeding 7 billion people simply doesn’t stand up to scrutiny,” said a spokesman for the Crop Protection Association, which represents pesticide manufacturers in the UK. “The UN FAO is clear on this – without crop protection tools, farmers could lose as much as 80% of their harvests to damaging insects, weeds and plant disease.”

“The plant science industry strongly agrees with the UN special rapporteurs that the right to food must extend to every global citizen, and that all citizens have a right to food that has been produced in a way that is safe for human health and for the environment,” said the spokesman. “Pesticides play a key role in ensuring we have access to a healthy, safe, affordable and reliable food supply.”

The report found that just 35% of developing countries had a regulatory regime for pesticides and even then enforcement was problematic. It also found examples of pesticides banned from use in one country still being produced there for export.

It recommended a move towards a global treaty to govern the use of pesticides and a move to sustainable practices including natural methods of suppressing pests and crop

rotation, as well as incentivising organically produced food.

The report said: “Chronic exposure to pesticides has been linked to cancer, Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s diseases, hormone disruption, developmental disorders and sterility.” It also highlighted the

risk to children from pesticide contamination of food, citing 23 deaths in India in 2013 and 39 in China in 2014. Furthermore, the report said, recent Chinese government studies indicated that pesticide contamination meant farming could not continue on about 20% of arable land.

“The industry frequently uses the term ‘intentional misuse’ to shift the blame on to the user for the avoidable impacts of hazardous pesticides,” the report said. “Yet clearly, the responsibility for protecting users and others throughout the pesticide life cycle and throughout the retail chain lies with the pesticide manufacturer.”

–*Transcend Media Service*

*(Continued from Page 5)*

But their task does not end here. While doing all this, they should work; work with zeal and dispatch, for their coming together. They should realize that they lost their glory because of splits and they can regain it only if they unite. The cadres are all for it, but the leaders will have to be made to accept it. It is difficult, but will have to be done. United socialists will easily inspire many other non-BJP splinter groups to come together and if that

happens, the country will see a powerful force against the BJP. However, it should be remembered that mere numbers do not become a force. Those who are ruling us have never had to go through the ends and means debate. For them any means is acceptable to achieve a goal. In contrast, those who wish to oppose the BJP will have to be of sterling character. Each group will have to reflect on its past and make amends. As for example, the

Congress lost not merely because of corruption but also because they gave up their ideology honed during the freedom movement; or the Samajwadi Party leaders could not resist the temptation to reward their kith and kin. If the socialists and other like minded groups are able to do this, the country will benefit and the masses, irrespective of their caste or religion, may get Achhe Din.

–**GGP**

*(Continued from Page 8)*

recommended an equal-opportunity cell in all educational institutions to facilitate necessary coaching for students from marginalized communities as well as affordable hostels, free tuition, research grants and additional capacity development for SC scholars. The Central Government’s approach runs counter to this. The latest UGC circular being imposed in the JNU makes it clear that the restriction on the number of students that faculty can take on for research will not only affect the intake of research scholars, but also the changes in admissions policy doing away with deprivation weightages and examinations except for determining ‘eligibility’ while full powers for admission will lie with the interview committee, will gravely reduce opportunities for the marginalized and affect any program for social justice. Further, the central government is stopping the funding of centers for the study of exclusion

of Dalits and for the gender studies. At a protest meet, Dalit teachers and students from Delhi University, Jamia and JNU rejected police claims that absence of a suicide note meant that charges of discrimination could be discounted.” Prior to Rohith Vemula, were there any suicide notes in other deaths? Does that mean there was no discrimination?” A Facebook post by Muthukrishnan dated 10<sup>th</sup> March 2017 criticized “discriminatory” admission policies in JNU:” There is no Equality in M.phil/phd Admission, there is no equality in Viva- Voce, there is only denial of equality, denying Prof Sukhadeo Thorat recommendation, denying students protest places in Ad- block, denying the education of the Marginal’s.” When Equality is denied everything is denied,” he wrote.

#### **AIFRTE demands**

- Immediate action to implement

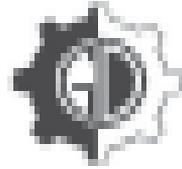
recommendations of Thorat Committee;

- Immediate negotiations with Dalit students and faculty including their organizations on steps to meet the demands for equality and an end to discrimination;
  - Immediate withdrawal of the UGC policies reducing scholarships and intake for research scholars and undemocratically altering admissions policy;
  - Immediate withdrawal of administrative strategies to restrain student protest by withholding scholarships, suspending and rustivating students; expelling them from hostels and university campuses;
  - Stop withdrawal of funding to centers of Dalit Studies and Gender Studies
- Dr. Meher Engineer** and othes

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