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## A Jalianwala Bagh-like Situation

**Kuldip Nayar**

Hashimpura is as deep a tragedy as the anti-Sikh riots in 1984. Both minorities have not allowed the wounds to heal because they go on reminding them of the killings at that time. The perpetrators, the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) from the UP Police, are hoping that the dust would settle down sooner or later and the nation would consider the tragedy as part of ugly history to move on.

I remember the whole thing vividly. It was some towards the end of May when I went to Meerut in 1987 because of the killings. On the outskirts of the city on my return, some people stopped me and pointed towards Hashimpura mohalla which they said was the scene of deliberate, blatant killing of 42 Muslims by the PAC. To my horror, I found some bodies floating in canals, including in River Hindon. This, I was told, was a premeditated murder.

The story goes that a group of men were rounded up by the Army and the police from the largely Muslim Hashimpura mohalla in Meerut and handed over to the PAC. One such truck of men was taken to

the banks of a canal, and shot at close range. Forty-two died, in perhaps the single largest custodial killing in the history of independent India. But a closer look at the events led to that tense afternoon in Meerut 30 years ago offers a glimpse into a largely unreported dimension of the motives behind the massacre.

The most commonly accepted motive, mentioned in the charge-sheet filed by the CID of the UP police, is the alleged assault on the PAC the same day and loot of two rifles belonging to the force. "Upon that, on 22.05.1987, a search for illegal arms in Mohalla Hashim Pura, Meerut was launched," the charge-sheet said. But a less explored dimension, also mentioned in the charge-sheet, was the death of a young man named Prabhat Kaushik, who was killed by a stray bullet as he stood on the terrace of a building abutting Hashimpura.

Experts, including some police personnel, described the killings as among India's worst incidents of custodian violence. The trial began only in 1996 and a couple of years ago all accused were cleared of all

charges by a trial court in what activists have called a grave miscarriage of justice.

Naturally, the reaction from the survivors or, for that matter, the relatives of those killed was along the expected lines because it had taken 28 years for a judgment with all the accused going scot-free. Many families are not hopeful of a breakthrough and say that the investigation was shoddy.

In fact, the then Meerut Superintendent of Police, Vibhuti Narain Raio, who has written a book on the incident says: "It took me nearly five to six years to realise that my belief that the killers would receive exemplary punishment for such a heinous act would remain just that – a mere belief. As time flew by, it became evident that the Indian state was just not interested in penalizing the guilty. All the stakeholders of the state kept playing hide but not seek with their responsibilities and many shielded themselves behind criminal negligence. And it worked for them."

Even today, according to reports, the Hashimpura locals are traumatized by that day's incident and say that the PAC was organized and planned. The locality is almost-U-shaped, making it difficult for people to flee, and the constant hum of handloom machines is the daily companion. Most houses are rundown with flaking paint, as if locals have given up hope of a better life.

This should remind us of the Jalianwala Bagh tragedy where over 1,500 innocents were killed in walled boundary. (Prince Phillip accompanying his wife, the Queen,

to Jalianwala Bagh after the tragedy remarked that the number was exaggerated!). Subsequently when I met General O'Dyer and mentioned about the killings, he did not show even an iota of remorse.

The description of events by the survivors at Hashimpura is heart rending. According to one account, hundreds of men were sent to prison for weeks where they were interrogated and beaten up because they were Muslims. Some people were dragged out of their houses and taken to the police station. According to eye-witness accounts, the killings happened in two phases—the first at Gang Canal of Muradnagar and the second at Hindon.

During the anti-Sikh riots in 1984 in the wake of Mrs Indira Gandhi's assassination, Delhi witnessed killings over 3,000 Sikhs as officially announced. The number could be more. The perpetrators included the top Congress bigwigs. Even a finger was pointed out at Rajiv Gandhi at whose behest the deployment of the Army was delayed to allow the rioters a free-hand. The cases which were closed are being reopened. But no one has been punished so far. The connivance of authorities at time has allowed the evidence to be rubbed off.

Many victims of the 1984 riots are still seeking rehabilitation. There is no difference in the case of Hashimpura either. The survivors are still struggling for normalisation, hoping against hope that the Delhi High Court, where an appeal is pending, would get them justice sooner than later.

My experience is that the tragedy

is before the public for some time but then it recedes into the background. The past gets revived when another tragedy takes place. There doesn't seem to be any permanent solution. I have been a mute witness to innumerable riots where the complicity of police is apparent.

Hashimpuras can be stopped only when the two communities come to realize that their animosity led to the partition of the country. This cannot be repeated but continued enmity will lead from one thing to another and put in peril the ethos of the country: democracy and secularism. Efforts should be made whereby the minority communities in the country feel as equal partners and enjoy what the constitution guarantees to all citizens of the country.

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# Can China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Lead To A Solution Of Kashmir Crisis?

Sandeep Pandey

A good part of Narendra Modi's energy during his whirlwind international tours in the first two years after he became Prime Minister were spent in trying to convince the world leaders that Pakistan was a terrorist state and wanted the world to isolate it. When China called the One Belt One Road summit about one third of the countries of the world were represented and it was India which isolated itself by not participating. Pakistan was the centre of attraction as China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is an important initiative of OBOR, an effort to link economies of Asia and Europe.

Before the OBOR summit Narendra Modi made a visit to Sri Lanka in an effort to keep the island country on India's side. Shared Buddhist heritage was highlighted as the occasion was a big Buddhist festival. Modi invoked Buddha's message of peace as an answer to growing violence. However, this didn't prevent Sri Lanka or for that matter Bangladesh or Nepal, from participating in the OBOR summit indicating the influence China has on these nations. China, in fact, used the concept of Buddhist globalisation to gain support for its economic project OBOR. It can be anybody's guess as to who'll be more successful in mobilisation using the Buddhist identity - Narendra Modi or Xi Jinping?

India boycotted the summit because it has objection to CPEC being built through Pakistan occupied

Kashmir, which it considers as its territory. It is not clear though, how by not participating in the OBOR summit, it is going to stop the joint China-Pakistan project? If anything, it should have used the opportunity to put forth its point of view in front of the assembly.

A Line of Control (LoC) which separates Indian and Pakistani controlled regions of Kashmir was designated in 1972. Given the balance of power it is unlikely that Indian or Pakistani ambition of controlling the whole of Kashmir is going to be realized anytime soon. A solution proposed is to freeze the LoC as the international border. As PM, Manmohan Singh proposed the idea of a borderless Kashmir. This implied a unified Kashmir under joint administration of India and Pakistan.

Considering the strong aspiration for Azadi among the Kashmiris probably the best solution would be respectable degree of autonomy to Kashmir in a mutually agreed framework between the Indian and Pakistani governments. The building of CPEC may not be a bad idea at all because it will expand the number of countries which will now have interest in a peaceful Kashmir. China can play the role of a mediator between India and Pakistan to resolve the Kashmir dispute and work out the joint arrangement under which Kashmir will participate in the joint economic project as an equal partner. The approval of the Kashmiris is necessary before any

project is built in their area.

This should not be seen as India giving up its claim on whole of Kashmir. For one thing Pakistan will also have to give up its similar claim. Moreover, in the increasing sensitivity towards human rights globally, the rights of Kashmiris cannot be subsumed under Indian or Pakistani ambition. India or Pakistan cannot hope to govern Kashmir with the help of their respective armies forever. The deadlock which continues to persist for 70 years must end so that Kashmiris get a chance to live a normal life. An entire generation has grown up in Kashmir now who don't know what life is like without the presence of security forces. Certainly Kashmiris deserve a better deal.

In fact, the CPEC can help create an atmosphere in which the animosities between India and China and between India and Pakistan can be ended when these countries will have better economic cooperation. All the governments since the time economic policies of globalisation, privatisation and liberalisation were implemented have been trying to attract investment. Additionally, Narendra Modi has been trying to boost manufacturing as part of his Make in India programme. Now India has an opportunity to be part of a regional but big enough economic forum but it is trying to shut itself out from it.

If China takes the initiative, supported by Russia, then a Europe

like model can be created in Asia where the economic union will make the requirement of passport and visa across the border between countries redundant. Needless to say it'll ease the pressure on defence budgets and loss of life in low intensity warfare between India and Pakistan will end. Most importantly Kashmiris will have a sigh of relief.

Once the issue of Kashmir is resolved then other disputes between India and China would have to be resolved. China has been claiming Tibet to be its integral part, like the

Indian or Pakistani claim about Kashmir. However Tibetans consider themselves to be an independent country and have a government in exile in India. India being a democracy, human rights violations in Kashmir are easily reported but that is not the case with Tibet. The non-democratic government of China has been involved in brutal suppression of people's aspirations in Tibet. How can this go on in a modern globalised world? China would have to be ready to give up its claim on Tibet if India and Pakistan do the same for Kashmir.

Autonomous Tibet and Kashmir will bring happiness for its people. China will also have to give up its claim on Arunachal Pradesh as there is no aspiration for autonomy or independence in this region unlike Kashmir and Tibet.

In a similar vein Pakistan will have to grant autonomy to Baluchistan, an issue which Narendra Modi raised briefly but dropped due to some inexplicable reason. With the regional aspirations duly addressed it is hoped the peace will return to South Asia.

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## Role Of Government Officials

In the May 4, 2017 judgement of the Bombay High Court related to BilkisBano gang rape and rape and murder of 14 other family members including her three and half years old daughter Saleha in her presence during the 2002 infamous Gujarat communal violence, 19 accused were convicted. These included five police officers and two doctors who were acquitted by the Sessions Court in 2008. The role of these officials was attempt to cover up the crime. This is the first time that in a case related to 2002 Gujarat violence government officials have been convicted. This raises the question - on whose directions were these officers acting? Does it not point to the complicity of the state, which is slowly being accepted as the unspoken truth about 2002 communal violence.

It is quite common in our country that government officials, specially police officials, are used by the government of the day or people in positions of power to serve their

interests. Hence, on one hand we have cases of innocent people who are made accused by the administration and then police tries to shore up false evidence so that the accused can be convicted.

On April 26, 2017 Supreme Court bench of Chief Justice JS Khehar and Justice DY Chandrachud asked the Uttar Pradesh state counsel for how many more years did the government intend to keep Gulzar Ahmed Wani in jail? Wani has spent 16 years in jail and has been acquitted in 10 out of 11 terror cases filed against him. He is presently undergoing trial in the 2000 Sabarmati train blast case. The prosecution has examined only 20 out of 96 witnesses in the last decade and a half. Justice Khehar asked why Wani should suffer in jail merely because police cannot come up with any evidence. The Bench gave the trial court time until October 31, 2017 to complete the trial, failing which Wani would be released on bail on 1st November, 2017 irrespective of whether the trial

is completed or not. Gulzar Ahmed Wani was a PhD scholar before the police decided to make him a terrorist 16 years ago. This is a classic example of how innocent suffer at the hands of police.

On the other hand we have cases like that of BilkisBano in which initially police refused to name the accused in the First Information Report. In about a year's time a Judicial Magistrate decided to close the case as police report pointed to inconsistencies in the charges. Even the state Crime Investigation Department was harrasing Bilkis in the name of investigation. SC had to ask Central Bureau of Investigation to take up the case. Had it not been for some meticulous investigation and uprightness of some CBI officials and a public prosecutor the culprits would have gone scot free.

How difficult it may be for a government official to take a stand is clear from the case of dalit jail official from Chhattisgarh

Varsha Dongre who was suspended following revelations by her of the sexual abuse that tribal girls are subjected to at police stations there. She reported how these young tribal girls are stripped and given electric shocks.

She has taken a position that as civil servant she is accountable to both, the government as well as the people and if she feels something is unconstitutional she considers it her duty to point that out. She feels sad that it is her compatriots that are dying on both sides in the struggle of the state against Maoism. She is not only raising the issue of human rights violations at individual levels but also the larger issue of how rights of tribals over their natural resources are being violated in Schedule V (of the Constitution) areas in order to benefit private corporations.

She considers it her right to freedom of expression to air such opinion and doesn't think that by becoming a civil servant this right is compromised in any way. This is indeed an exemplary stand taken by her because most government officials simply choose to keep mum on any irregularities taking place inside the system under the notion that as servants of the government they are supposed to protect all its legal or illegal doings.

This is not the first act of bravery of Varsha Dongre. After being snubbed by the Chief Minister Raman Singh in 2006 when she went to him with a complaint about irregularities in recruitment for 147 civil services posts in 2003 by the Chhattisgarh Public Services Commission, she filed a petition in court. It took ten years but she won

the case. The court remarked that it was because of her persistence and tenacity that irregularities in recruitment were exposed. A fresh merit list was ordered to be prepared.

An officer like Varsha Dongre needs to be awarded and promoted so that she can be in some responsible position and take decisions to free the system of the rot by which it is infested. The government must realise that corrupt, arrogant officers cannot solve the problem of Maoism. If anything, they will probably complicate the situation

further as they have done all these years. By sidelining an extremely competent and brave officer like Varsha Dongre the government is denying itself of her services which could have been beneficial for it.

The propensity of governments to rely on corrupt and arrogant officials is self-defeating in addition to such officials becoming an anathema for the people. Officials like Varsha Dongre will always enjoy the confidence of the people and will remain extremely popular. This will also be their ultimate reward.

—Sandeep Pandey

### **Book Release**

Rajmohan Gandhi, *Why Gandhi Still Matters: An Appraisal of the Mahatma's Legacy*, Aleph Book Company, May 2017

Close to 150 years after he was born, how relevant is Mahatma Gandhi? In our country, he is revered as the Father of the Nation; his face still adorns currency notes, postage stamps and government offices; streets and welfare schemes continue to be named after him but has he been reduced to a mere symbol? Do his values, message and sacrifice have any meaning for us in the twenty-first century? In *Why Gandhi Still Matters*, Rajmohan Gandhi, the Mahatma's grandson appraises Gandhi and his legacy by examining some of his most famous (and often most controversial) ideas, beliefs, actions, successes and failures. He analyses Gandhi's commitment to democracy, secularism, pluralism, equality and non-violence, his gift to the world of satyagraha, the key strategies in his fight for India's freedom, his opposition to caste discrimination and

his equations with Churchill, Jinnah and Ambedkar, as also his failings as a human being and family man. Taken together, the author's insights present an unsentimental view of aspects of Gandhi's legacy that have endured and those that have been cast aside by power-hungry politicians, hate groups, casteist organizations, venal industrialists, terrorists and other enemies of India's promise.

### **About the Author :**

Rajmohan Gandhi's last two books are *Understanding the Founding Fathers: An Enquiry into the Indian Republic's Beginnings* and *Prince of Gujarat: The Extraordinary Story of Prince Gopaldas Desai, 1887-1951*. Until end-December 2012 he taught political science and history at the University of Illinois. Since then he has served as visiting professor at the Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar and Michigan State University.

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# Mongolia hosts Social Justice & Sustainability Conference

**D K Giri**

The progressives of the world - socialists, social democrats and centre-left groups gathered in Ulaanbaatar, the capital city of Mongolia from May 24 -26, to discuss how to shape the world by ensuring justice in societies and the sustainability of the resources. The discussion is taking place in reference to the SDGs - the sustainable development goals to be secured by 2030. To shape the future where everyone has a right and the opportunity to a decent life is a huge challenge. The challenge consists of food security, social inclusion, decent work, equitable health care, migration and gender equality, and infrastructure changes, environmental, marine and climate protection, regulation of the financial markets and international trade and investment, establishment of efficient and transparent local and national institutions and of regional and global governance and security structures and so on. The priorities will vary from one country to the other, depending on the degree of development and the political context obtaining in a particular country. But what is of universal importance is the initiation and consolidation of democracy, ensuring social justice, and sustainability. These three are the focus of the discussion at Ulaanbaatar progressive alliance conference. Social justice, sustainability and democracy, one way or the other form parts of the six fundamental principles of social democracy; liberty (basis of democracy), equality, justice, identity,

pluralism, solidarity and security (part of sustainability). Let us discuss the three principles in some detail.

## **Democracy**

Democracy despite its conceptual infirmities and deficits in practice has become the universal aspiration. Kofi Annan, the former Secretary General of United Nations, said in 2014, on Democracy Day, September 15, "Democracy is a universal aspiration not bound by religion, ethnicity, culture or religion". So, in the 70 years or so, after the Second World War, the growth of democracy in the world has been fairly impressive. In 1950, there were only 22 electoral democracies, accounting for 31 per cent and 21 countries with 'restricted democracies' accounting for 12 per cent of the world population. By the turn of the century, in 2000, out of 193 member states of the United Nations, 120 accounting for 58 per cent of the world's population had electoral democracy. However, of these, countries which practiced basic human rights and rule of law were only 85 accounting for 38 per cent of the world population. We see in Mongolia, an inspiring example of a peaceful and enduring transformation to democracy. However, there is nowadays talk of 'crisis of democracy' and the concern is no totally unfounded. The progress of democracy is stalled in many countries and worse, democracy faces reversal in many a country. If we look at Asia, after

encouraging growth of democracies in Malaysia - the opposition is making electoral gains, in Myanmar - the junta ceding power to elected civilian leadership, in Indonesia - a grassroots-based person getting elected as the president, there is revival of authoritarianism in countries like Philippines and right-wing populism in India.

There are several reasons for slow and halted growth or reversal of democracy. One is social insecurity or uncertainty. Many feel betrayed that the promise of good life based on provision of basic necessities and scope for upward mobility has not been met. There has been an unhealthy compromise between democracy and capitalism. Again, taking the example of Asia, many countries have registered impressive economic growth, but it has not been accompanied with progressive principles of governance like equality, sustainability, justice and security. In Mongolia, the extractive industries have created uneven and unsustainable growth with corruption and cronyism undermining the confidence in political leadership. At the same time, the emerging markets in Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand are facing huge income divide and lack of well paid jobs.

The second reason is growing inequality. Asian societies are quite unequal. But even beyond Asia, in the world, inequality has increased in many societies. Only one per cent of the world owns more than what

ninety-nine per cent hold together. Surely, the trend towards inequality and the structures that support it is growing. Inequality makes it harder to combat poverty and often prevents the neutral functioning of the institutions. It cements unequal power relations, undermines democracy, creates political instability, and intensifies alienation within the societies. Today, many people consider the huge inequality unacceptable and unjust, and resent it, at times violently. Thirdly, the growth of elitism in politics is detrimental to democracy. Due to elitism, popular participation in politics is marginal and ineffective. Consequently, more and more people feel that they are excluded from the social progress and state institutions. To add to the problem, the progressive parties neither include them successfully, nor assuage their fears and address their needs.

The consequence is that the internal contradictions in economy and politics of mainly the Asian countries have let the out-of-box political actors tap into the grievances and frustrations of the people. Just look at the bloody anti-drug crack down in the Philippines, resurfacing of the sectarian fissures in Indonesia, right-wing revisionism in Japan, unstable politics in Mongolia, and revival of ethno-nationalism in India. Besides, authoritative regimes in Malaysia and Thailand have managed to marginalize the opposition and reconsolidate their positions with brute force. Thus, in promoting and preserving democracy, the progressives face the twin-challenge of authoritarianism and right-wing populism.

## **Social Justice**

In order to strengthen democracy, it must be combined with the concept and implementation of social justice. The principle of justice is the method to make real the freedom of every individual. It opens the door to equal rights and equal life-opportunities in society. It means preferential opportunity for the traditionally oppressed. As a social right, justice makes sure that the jointly achieved social product is shared equally bringing about a dynamic social equilibrium among the different groups in society. It is an intermediate and supplementary value. The concept of justice differs in every culture. It is a legal as well as philosophical instrument by which fairness is administered when there is gross or obscene inequality in a society, or the rights ensuring equality are violated.

However, apart from redistribution, leveling out, ensuring fairness which constitute justice, in many countries, justice is denied in other forms too. Take for instance, the environmental crisis caused by climate change; the pollution of the large parts of the bio-sphere, reckless, unplanned urbanization etc. Those who are affected by the environmental degradation are not the offenders. The industrialized countries pass on the environmental cost to the developing countries. The raw material supplies from the developing countries continue to cause pollution by extraction and on-site processing of minerals. In Mongolia, climate change recently exacerbated a phenomenon of extremes in weather conditions. Millions of livestock were killed;

thousands of herders lost their livelihoods, and were forced to migrate to urban areas causing social and infrastructural pressure. The rapid growth of Mongolian cities is causing severe air pollution endangering the health of citizens. Such environmental crises created by the capitalist industries deny justice to the poor and the weak by robbing them off a healthy and secure life.

## **Sustainability**

The concept and practice of sustainability are used here in the context of globalization. A word on globalization; it is the increased interdependence of countries through rising flow of goods, capital, labor, ideas and knowledge which has been spurred by trade liberalization, deregulation, and technological progress. The growth model followed in the wake of globalization is unsustainable in social, economic, and ecological terms. In social terms, without ideological underpinnings, globalization meant to create prosperity for one and all, benefits a few and leaves many poorly off. Thus, it has created winners and losers, the latter suffering from increased inequality and poverty. It has made people migrate for better and safer livelihoods. Immigration is not always good for people, as they migrate to alien lands and suffer more; they face the resentment from locals often leading to conflict and violence. The economic consequences are equally bad; the number of unemployed increased to 197 million (2015) which 27 million more than before the financial crisis in 2008. Worldwide, 45 per cent of young people who are fit to work are

unemployed or live in poverty despite having a job; 21 million are subjected to forced labour, 830 million are 'working poor' who have less than 2 dollars a day. Women get less; a lot of people are stuck in the informal economy where productivity is less and working conditions are poor. Workers in formal sector do not have rights and the scope for participation at the work place. In ecological terms, the big industries are squandering away the natural resources; emitting intolerable amount of carbon into the atmosphere causing climate insecurity and irresponsible consumerism is disturbing the ecological balance.

The progressives must recognize the negative fallouts of globalization while building on the positive gains. The populists and the right-wing nationalists on the other hand, are cashing in on the frustration of the people and keeping them under the illusion of a better life by demonizing progressive forces. The progressives have to shape the future of the world by addressing the emergent problems of the people and re-emphasizing the perennial values of social democracy that secure a win-win position for all. Fighting policies that are ecologically destructive, morally negative, socially divisive and economically unviable is one thing, but creating goods services, sound living conditions and adequate prosperity for all is another. Progressives have to play both reactive and pro-active roles, adopt distributionist as well as productionist policies, oppose as well as govern. There is hardly any other choice.

## GM Crops - Modi needs to listen to the criticism of his Ministers and Allies

**Bharat Dogra**

As the debate on genetically modified (GM) crops heats up once again, with the recommendation of the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) for approving a GM variety of mustard as possibly the first GM food crop to be introduced in India, it is likely that we will be hearing a lot on both sides of the debate in the days to come.

However one interesting aspect which has received relatively less attention is that there are important critics of the Union government's pro GM crop policies within the government and its close allies. Will the government ignore the views of even its own Cabinet minister and close allies?

One of these critics is the Minister of Women and Child Development in the Union Cabinet Maneka Gandhi. She is a prominent animal rights activist and is known to be well informed about biodiversity. Her column on these issues in *The Sunday Statesman* is widely read. On April 30 she took up the issue of badly threatened bees in an article, *On the brink of a Crisis*, which was splashed prominently on the last page of the newspaper.

While explaining why bees are threatened Maneka Gandhi has written, "The bees are disappearing for one major reason -the use of neonicotinoid pesticides. I have repeatedly asked the government to ban these, but they refuse because they need these terrible pesticides for the GM Cotton crops which Monsanto forced on India by

promising that these cotton crops would not need any pesticides at all. This turned out to be a lie - in fact, GM cotton needs many more vicious pesticides which are now killing off pollinators and people."

This statement can be broken into a number of important assertions -

- \* Monsanto forced GM cotton crops on India.
- \* To facilitate this the company claimed that its varieties would not require any pesticides.
- \* This claim was a lie, as is proved by the continuing use of vicious pesticides to grow them.
- \* These vicious pesticides are now killing pollinators and people.
- \* Maneka Gandhi repeatedly warned the government about this and she has also asked the government in particular to ban neonicotinoid pesticides.
- \* These warnings were ignored by the government, as it was keen to continue with GM cotton and hence accepted the accompanying serious health hazards.

The special significance of her statement is that she is a senior member of the Union Council of Ministers and also, it can be easily said that she is one of the most well-informed ministers on this issue.

So when a senior minister with

recognized expertise on the subject says that her warnings have been repeatedly ignored by the government and as a result people and pollinators have been dying then surely this is important. When in addition she says that a powerful multinational company has forced these crops on India while also providing false information on them then the issue raised becomes even more important.

Another strong critic of GM crops is the Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM). This organization is very much a part of the wider Sangh Parivar and so should normally be seen as a close ally of the Modi government. However from time to time the SJM has embarrassed the Modi government by its criticism of government policy, particularly on issues where the government policy is seen by SJM to be favourable to multinational companies at the cost of national interests.

This criticism has been damaging for the Modi government as this government has sought to gain support on the basis of nationalist rhetoric and when this balloon is being "punctured" by someone within the family. This criticism by the SJM has been the strongest in the context of the GM crops policy and it is precisely this aspect of the critical stand taken by the SJM which has attracted the most attention. So it is interesting to see what exactly the SJM has to say on this issue.

In a letter written last year to the Prime Minister by the SJM they voiced their unhappiness of the Governments policies, "Now that it is established that Prof Pental's GM Mustard is neither swadeshi, nor

high-yielding as compared to indigenous hybrids nor even good for our health, environment and biodiversity, the undue hurry being demonstrated by the authorities is beyond comprehension and raises serious questions."

This letter goes on to praise the transparent processes initiated by Jairam Ramesh, Environment Minister in the UPA government, which had helped to prevent the

introduction of Bt brinjal. Then this letter compares this to what has been going on under the NDA government led by Modi in the context of GM Mustard – "By hurrying up the process of approval for GM Mustard, all decency, transparency, scientific rigour and previous practices have been kept at bay."

One hopes that the Modi government will listen at least to this important criticism of close friends.



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# Kashmiri Leadership & Paths to Resistance

**Ghulam Nabi Fai**

"The history of liberty is a history of resistance." President Woodrow Wilson

Nel Noddings, eminent American educationalist wrote in *Peace Education: How We Come to Love and Hate War* that "Gandhi, convinced of the power of Satyagraha, suggested that it be used by the Jews against the Nazis. In response, Martin Buber - who had earlier (1930) written that much could be learned from Gandhi - said that this method could not be used against the Nazis. It is one thing to use nonviolent methods against those who would deprive you of some material benefit, but if their basic aim is to deprive you of life itself, how can you resist nonviolently?"

Occupiers are not all alike, of course. After all, Britishers were very sensitive to human rights and felt that bloodshed and killing of innocent lives is not an option and they withdrew from British India.

What does this mean in the context of the Kashmir dispute? We have a different problem with India. Constant and consistent non-violent protests in Kashmir obviously has had little visible effect in moving the discussion toward the hope of Kashmiris, which is self-determination. The fundamental issues involved in the conflict remain just as they were 70 years ago. To whom does Kashmir belong? Who has a right to rule Kashmir? Why has India become a colonist just as the British were more than 70 years

ago? And why is the Indian army so brutal with Kashmiris in their repression?

It has become rather clear that India has little regard for the lives of Kashmiris. In Kashmir, India has legalized methods of torture and killing to give total immunity to its occupational forces. When those who protest are simply shot down or maimed for life, this is a clear message that Kashmir is to India a land occupied not by its own, or those for whom it has affection and wishes to include in its family, but rather by a hostile people who perhaps do not or should not belong there. To India, Kashmiris are simply terrorists, the whole lot of them. Kashmir is to India, an integral part of it, it is often stated. Those who do not see themselves as Indians need to go somewhere else or they will be killed. Such is the overall effect that such a policy has. The failure to include "the people" of Kashmir in the meaning of "Kashmir" runs completely counter to the need to achieve peace and sends a very clear message that India's presence is meant to crush, subdue, and tame, if not obliterate any opposition. It is apparent that they are greedy for the land, for the status of possessing this 'Jewel of the Himalayas,' 'Paradise on Earth' 'Switzerland of Asia' and have no concern for its people. To me this is an apparent example of the height of abhorrence of Indian leadership towards the people of Kashmir. When a 26-year old Kashmiri youth, Farooq Ahmed Dar was tied (April 15, 2017) in front of

the army jeep to be used as a human shield, Ram Madhav, Secretary General of BJP (the ruling party of India) did not hesitate to justify it by saying, "In war and love, everything is fair."

"If man were infinitely malleable," Eric Fromm, German Psychologist wrote, "there would have been no revolutions; there would have been no change because a culture would have succeeded in making man submit to its patterns without resistance. But man, being only relatively malleable, has always reacted with protest against conditions which made the disequilibrium between the social order and his human needs too drastic or unbearable. The attempt to reduce this disequilibrium and the need to establish a more acceptable and desirable solution is at the very core of the dynamism of the evolution of man in history. Man's protest arose not only because of material suffering; specifically human needs...are an equally strong motivation for revolution and the dynamics of change."

Obviously, when the people want to seek freedom from an occupation, they have to resist. Resistance takes different forms and shapes according to the circumstances. Some do resist openly while others prefer tacit support of the resistance movement though their ultimate objective is the same.

Certainly peaceful resistance, wherever possible and whenever

viewed as effective, has always been preferred. Other methods of resistance have succeeded in various countries. Gandhi's Satyagraha against the British, civil resistance in Tunisia, non-violent mass street protests in Egypt, the Green revolution of Georgia, etc, have all led to historic and revolutionary changes in the politics of their time and place.

Resistance to conditions viewed as unacceptable by a group or segment of a population is no doubt as old as man himself. Stone pelting (Kani Jang), a practice in Kashmir that might be considered an amalgamation or cross between armed resistance and peaceful protest, can certainly be traced back to the time when David slew Goliath with a stone. Alexander the Great was injured seriously and suffered blindness by a stone while laying siege to Cyropolis in 329 BC. Kashmiris have used stone pelting at various times since Dogra rule. I personally do not subscribe to it, nor do I advocate this phenomenon. The message of stone pelting is clear, however, that those who throw stones are unhappy with present conditions and the rule of an occupying force of armed men. The point of this type of resistance, as with many other forms, is often not to propose specific changes but to simply point out that the current occupation by India is unacceptable. The slogans raised by these stone pelters are shared by majority of the population, "We want freedom" and "Go India. Go back."

Mass street demonstrations have also been very popular in history. The people of Czechoslovakia used political mass demonstration as a

weapon of resistance against Germany in early 1930's. It is reported that there were 25 mass demonstrations in 1931 alone. In France, an agitation began on November 11, 1940 by staging a public protest wherein thousands of people, mostly students, participated. The following year, in May 1940, over 100,000 miners participated in the public protest. Other mass public protests were held in Albania against the Italian army in April 1939. Belgium witnessed tens of thousands of people participating in protests against Germany in May 1940. The recent Women's March on January 21, 2017, protesting the policies of President Donald Trump in which millions participated reportedly involved 673 marches and took place worldwide on all seven continents, including 29 in Canada, 20 in Mexico and one in Antarctica. It was the largest ever in U.S. history.

And during the latest phase of the freedom struggle, virtually all the citizenry of Srinagar (Capital city of Kashmir) - men, women and children - came out multiple times on the streets to lodge a non-violent protest against the continuance of Indian occupation. At times more than a million people poured into the streets to express their anguish and dissatisfaction against occupation authority. Certainly, terrorists cannot compose the entire populations of the major towns of Kashmir. And one million people cannot be instigated and provoked by a remote control. One million people reflect the true nature of the peaceful Kashmiri resistance and not a movement of terrorism.

Hartal, or the practice of stopping

all commercial activity as a means of protest, and similar to a labor strike is a centuries-old form of resistance. It was used during the colonial period as well as during the days of India's fight for independence against Britishers. The practice was institutionalized by the founding father of India - Gandhi. It has perhaps become the preferred and primary form of resistance in Kashmir. During Hartal, every business, be it shops, colleges, schools, transport, or offices, shuts down. It is believed to be one of the best ways to force an occupier to accept the fact that there is a problem. It is also believed that it can help in raising awareness about suffering and force the occupier to negotiate a dispute.

Hartal can shake the conscience of the world powers if done wisely and properly. However, those countries that believe in democratic rights and universal values remain often times silent when the occupier has significant economic strength. India's money and buying power invariably rules and corrupts values that support human rights. These large economies can become an instrument of investments of tens of billions of dollars. The silence of these Western countries effectively crushes the souls of those who are oppressed, voiceless and have no means to sign contracts for billions of dollars.

Hartal and other non-violent techniques will prove instrumental to achieve one's objective only if the oppressive regime is moved by compassion. Stokely Carmichael, American civil rights leader, summed it up well, "In order for nonviolence to work, your opponent must have a

conscience."

The strategy for various paths of resistance has to include long-term and short term planning. It is the responsibility of a leader to plan these tactics and techniques and make decisions which are important for the movement no matter how unpopular. The leader has to define every step of every kind of resistance. Ultimately, it is the support of the people that matters and will ultimately bring one closer to achieve one's goal. President John Quincy Adams once said, "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."

Before announcing a plan (in Kashmir's case, the Calendar for the week), a leader must have a clear vision and understanding of the plan and its possible consequences on the masses. The leader must involve all stakeholders in the planning, be it sit ins, mass demonstrations, Hartals, performing national songs, holding of seminars, meeting with foreign diplomats, including Indian intelligential, press briefings, etc. A leader must gain the confidence of the people and should be perceived by the people to be authentic before announcing a plan. As President Dwight Eisenhower said, "The supreme quality for leadership is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible."

A leader has to be always open to fresh ideas and new methodologies. George Washington Carver said, "Where there is no vision, there is no hope." Tactics, techniques and methodologies can change on a weekly or monthly basis. That is not only desirable but

advisable as well. What cannot change is the ultimate objective, which is the right of self-determination of the people in Kashmir.

There is no doubt that the people are willing to make sacrifices when they see in their leader the qualities

of persistence, insightfulness, optimism and accountability. A leader must always lead by his example. In other words, he cannot call people to go to Hartal in LalChowk or to the United Nations office while he himself sits behind to escape the hardships of such an activity.

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## Love and Loyalty: Voluntary Versus Forced

**Prabhakar Sinha**

Whenever, someone is asked to say Barat Mata ki Jai or sing VandeMataram to prove his patriotism under threat, I am reminded of our own experience in jail during the Emergency. There appeared no sign of Indira Gandhi being dethroned nor an end to Emergency and our incarceration.

We often discussed how far we would go if Indira Gandhi's rule continued indefinitely. We were sure we would not apologise/surrender to secure our personal liberty even if we had to remain in jail for an indefinite period. Then, a question used to crop up. What shall we do if we are asked to say, 'Indira Gandhi ki Jai. Indira Gandhi Zindabad on the point of gun? Our honest answer used to be, 'We think we would refuse, but we can't be sure of what we would do when we are before a firing squad. But suppose we would said Indira Gandhi ki Jai in the face of death while in our hearts hating her and wishing to kill her, what would have been her gain? More hatred and stronger desire to see her dead? When she was assassinated in 1984, we were outraged because an elected leader, the PM of our country, was assassinated (though

we still hated the tyrant). But if she had been assassinated during the emergency, we would have rejoiced at the death of a tyrant, who had spelled the death of innocent citizens and turned the whole country into a prison.

So, whenever one is ordered to say Bharat Mata ki Jai or something else to prove /show his love and loyalty to India under threat, I identify with him and wish he refuses and sympathise with him when he is made to suffer. I know that from that moment on his love for the country has begun to dry up. Love and loyalty to a person or nation grows naturally and cannot be created under threat for threat may destroy it or replace it with hatred.

P.S. This post is addressed to those who believe in an open society where the people are free from fear. It is against oppression regardless of who is the oppressor. So, it should not be seen as party issue. I have never been in any political party. People like me, who are committed to democracy raised their voice against Indira and will do it again against any other person or party.

## The Modification of India - the impact on development and gender\* - II

**Nandana Reddy**

As for Modi's promise of education and job opportunities for youth, dissent, especially in universities is being repressed, students are intimidated with threats of sedition, the police are used to silence them and free thinking is clamped down. How can true learning take place in an atmosphere of oppression and fear?

As for those young persons who have struggled through formal education, there are no jobs matching their academic qualifications. However, the expanding service sector requires compliant, unskilled workers without strong roots. So our youth, educated or not, are forced to take up low paid, high risk, insecure jobs in the service sector, such as delivery boys for enterprises such as Amazon, Pizza Hut and Big Basket. This accomplishes the mission of 'Skilling India', to provide cheap labour to the multinationals. The dreams of our young people are crushed, but according to the our economic gurus, new aspirations have been created - the need for consumer goods to define ones identity and feel that one has arrived!

The combination of threat to livelihood, insecurity and fear with the promise of lucrative jobs - but only if you comply with the Modi code - has dramatically polarised our society: Muslim versus Hindu; Right versus Left; liberals versus extremists; nationalists versus anti-nationalists; men versus women; them versus us. There is depersonalisation

of neighbourhoods, villages, educational institutions and work environments. People are beginning to feel disengaged, disenchanting, and uninvolved, even when surrounded by family and friends. We have begun to view our jobs as draining and unrewarding, and for many, especially the middle class youth; life seems to have lost its meaning.

### **Gender**

We also live in times when women's rights are in the line of fire.

On the subject of gender, during the Emergency many were jailed, including my mother and several other women. Now all women are in one large concentration camp! Never since independence has the situation of women been so vulnerable and endangered. Our freedom has been curtailed and we have been reduced to commodities that have to model themselves on a set of Hindutva criteria to fit the label of Sati Savitris. Our immorality is defined by the depth of our neckline, how confident we are and our degree of emancipation. Today, being sociable, assertive and even looking attractive is a sin.

In Udupi the moral policing brigades beat up a girl for visiting her sick Muslim girlfriend. Another was thrashed for using an auto with a Muslim driver. A boy was manhandled and thrown off a bus because he offered to hold the books of a girl. A married couple was

heckled and chased for holding hands on the beach. And this in a Congress ruled State!

In Chhattisgarh, part of the development goals, the state government seems to have set targets that doctors and their staff have to fulfil to help reduce the population and raise the standards of living especially in rural and semi-urban areas. A government doctor, Dr. R. K. Gupta, was arrested and charged with the death of at least 11 women who underwent a tubectomy to limit their families. A reflection of Sanjay Gandhi's nasbandi [sterilization] drives and Turkman Gate.

Contrary to the Prime Minister's women-friendly public rhetoric, his government has failed to allocate any significant portion of the budget to change living and working conditions for women. There is no substantial investment in girls' education in the latest budget. A mere Rs 200 crores has been allocated for two schemes introduced for girls and women - one to increase public safety in big and small cities and the other is the savings scheme for girls: Beti Bachao Beti Padhao program. A closer look at the figures, however, shows that these schemes are grossly inadequate to counter the deep-rooted structural inequality that girls and women face. And on the front of women's rights we are slipping back to the days of 'sati'.

The incidents of rape and murder

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\* This article was based on the Annual Endowment Lecture on Gender and Development in Memory of Dr Poornima Vyasulu on May 5, 2017

of women and girls has risen phenomenally. Even if this is due to increased reporting of the subject as some claim, this could only be partly so. Because, it is also true that a signal has gone out from members of the Union Government and several BJP MPs and their right wing outfits, that women are up for grabs, especially those they term 'immoral', because we are asking for it.

BJP politicians accuse Muslim men of 'love jihad'. Yogi Adityanath, now the Chief Minister of UP announced that forced conversion of Hindu girls to Islam can only be prevented by a BJP-led government in the state. Such archaic patriarchal and regressive views of women propagate the notion that women's bodies are understood as the property of men to be used by them for their pleasure and to avenge each other.

The notion of 'love jihad' reinforces the idea that women have no caste or religious identities of their own and positions women as the bearers of their husband's culture and religion, sanctioning the moral policing of women and justifying 'honour killings' and all kinds of violence against women if they violate the code of conduct laid down by men. This reduces women to mere objects and erases their right to agency.

Two faced Modi now talks of giving Muslim women their rights urging reformers from the Muslim community to "not politicise the issue of triple talaq" and "protect women from the effects" of the practice of oral divorce. But when it came to the rape of Bilkis Bano and the murder of her family members including her two year old daughter, one of the most horrifying incidents that took place during the 2002 post-

Godhra riots in Gujarat, Modi was complicit by his silence and inactivity.

Modi is still silent on the number of women who have lost their husbands to the violence and lynching by the Goraksha Sena, or the effect this has had on women managing small dairies with one or two cows. He turns a blind eye to the 'moral policing' of women, including Hindu women and girls, and permits the Hindutva outfits to impose restraints on our behaviour and conduct that takes our struggle for emancipation back a thousand years.

On October 2016, in preparation for the Assembly elections in 2017, Modi said while addressing a rally in the Mahoba district of the Bundelkhand region in Uttar Pradesh, that justice demands that the government works as per the Constitution and provides gender justice for everyone and urged everyone to take proper measures to give equal rights to women. Mr. Modi speaks with a forked tongue!

Homophobia is on the increase with the BJP proclaiming that homosexuality as anti-Hindu!

BJP is the only major party to support the re-criminalization of homosexuality under section 377.

Modi has remained silent on this question and in December 2013, following the Supreme Court decision, BJP chief Rajnath Singh reportedly told journalists: "Gay sex is not natural and we cannot support something which is unnatural." LGBTQ communities are more exposed and vulnerable than ever before and this increased culture of homophobia hurts those who are already affected by systemic and communal injustices.

And to top it all, the Attorney General, Mukul Rohatgi, recently argued that citizens do not have an

absolute right over their body. "The concept of absolute right over one's body was a myth and there were various laws which put restrictions on such a right."

So much for Modi's 'Sab ke Saath, Sab ka Vikas'!

And the assurance of 'Ache din ane wale hai' is certainly not for the poor and underprivileged.

### **Social Justice and Human Rights**

Social Justice and Human Rights have been relegated to the scrap heap and patriarchy and narrow fundamentalist views are pandering to the base sentiments of the conservatives and the disenfranchised.

The intelligentsia has been discredited and replaced with representatives of big businesses. They are the lobbyists and policy makers. The Parliament has been ridiculed and disgraced by the ruling party and opposition alike and the judiciary is gradually being compromised. Civil Society Protests and movements are suppressed violently and fear inhibits any critique.

Rebutting the move to link Aadhaar to the permanent account number and filing of income tax returns, senior advocate Shyam Divan told the Supreme Court that the Constitution was not a charter of servitude. "We are independent citizens who cannot be forced by the State to part with our fingerprints in exchange for being able to file our income tax returns," he said and termed the newly inserted Section 139AA in the Income Tax Act, which mandates the linking of Aadhaar with PAN, a "Faustian bargain".

He said that linking Aadhaar with essential activities of life, such as opening a bank account, filing returns

and buying property or a vehicle, would turn the "entire nation into one large concentration camp where citizens are under State surveillance round-the-clock."

When Tilak and Gandhi were convicted and sentenced to prison for their publication of allegedly seditious material in 1908, Tilak, reportedly told a police officer, "The government has converted the entire nation into a prison and we are all prisoners. Going to prison only means that from a big cell, one is confined to a smaller one." Gandhi, in 1922, pleaded guilty to the charge of sedition, stating that he was proud to oppose a satanic government.

I believe that the insulation against the erosion of democracy is a larger dose of democracy. We should strive for a participatory democracy with the direct participation of every citizen, the vision of Gandhi's Gram Swaraj.

In Karnataka, after a long struggle, we have managed to revise the Panchayat Raj Act of 1993 to be much more in tune with devolution of power, providing autonomy to local governments and recognising the right of every citizen, including children, to determine their present and shape their future.

But even here, in a Congress ruled State, there are insidious and determined moves to undermine this law.

Perpetual vigilance and perseverance on the part of citizens is the only way a democracy can work. Obama warned in his farewell speech that "democracy is threatened whenever we take it for granted". We cannot risk that.

### **The Right to Rebel - The Need to Rebel**

The time for dissent is here and

we have not just the right, but a duty to rebel. We love our country and we believe in and must protect our Constitution and Fundamental Rights. We will be committing moral suicide if we don't.

We cannot be told what not to eat, what not to do and what not to say. This government is forcing life choices on us that undermine any feelings of nationalism and unity we may have and this is an insidious form of cultural nationalism.

Gandhi said, "Affection cannot be manufactured or regulated by the law. One should be free to give full expression to their disaffection unless it incites violence." Because of the treat of being branded anti-national and its consequences, we have imposed on ourselves an unofficial and perhaps unconscious self censorship on our actions and words.

I know we will be targeted and labelled anti-national. Our FCRA could be cancelled unilaterally; we will be watched and can be put on the hit list of the Bagarang Dal goons.

But rebel against an authoritarian regime is our duty as citizens and rebel we must.

### **Conclusion**

Rewriting history and erasing public memory is one way to weaken people's ability and their will to fight oppression. All authoritarian regimes have done this to varying degrees and the Indian experience is no different. The BJP saffronised text books and the Congress wiped out traces of the Emergency - the sea-saw perception of history according to the powers that be. The only way to ensure a vibrant democracy and keep governments accountable is to exercise our right to dissent.

Two years ago, for the 40th anniversary of Indira's Emergency, there was suddenly a clamour to remember and though there were just a few who did so, I am grateful that we are remembering at all; especially now that the silhouette of another dictatorship is eclipsing our fundamental rights and undermining democratic institutions.

The time has come to gather our forces to protect what is ours and save our country from tyranny.

In the words of Martin Luther King; "The saving of our world from pending doom will come, not through the complacent adjustment of the conforming majority, but through the creative maladjustment of a nonconforming minority."

So I believe that 'we the people' still do have the power to overturn dictatorships. We have done it in 1977 and we will do it again. But for this we need to first acknowledge the presence of the beast. We also need to study the 'Emergency' of 1975 and learn our lessons. Then we need to empower ourselves, not just by Constitutional provisions, but to know and feel that we hold the fragile heart of a participatory federal republic in our hands.

I have faith in India and her people - we the people are the insulation against a dictatorship.

As Robert Kennedy said; "It falls to each of us to be those anxious, jealous guardians of our democracy, to embrace the joyous task we've been given to continually try to improve this great nation of ours, because for all our outward differences, we in fact all share the same proud title: the most important office in a democracy, citizen."

So let us act!

**(concluded)**



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