

janata

Vol. 72 No. 42
November 12, 2017

**Bangladeshis in India and
Rohingyas in Bangladesh**
Sandeep Pandey

Nehru for Our Time
Rajmohan Gandhi

Containing China?
D. K. Giri

**Demonetisation:
One Year Later**
Neeraj Jain

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Supreme Court reopens Gandhi's Case

Kuldip Nayar

I think the Supreme Court's order to appoint an amicus curie in Mahatma Gandhi's assassination is important. More about how it happened and why, are two points which needs pursued. The plea filed by Dr. Pankaj Phadnis, a trustee of Abhinav Bharat, however, suggests a foreign hand. But that remains to be proven.

I recall that the assassination was the biggest security lapse. I was working at the news desk of *Anjam*, an Urdu daily, when PTI teleprinter rang the bell which a news agency does only in rare cases. I jumped from the desk to see the story. It said, 'Mahatma Gandhi shot.' There was no other detail. I asked my colleague, who had a motorbike, to drop me at the Birla House where there was practically no security. One person manned an apology for the door.

Today, when Mahatma Gandhi's assassination is recalled with a sense of loss and sorrow, the point forgotten is that it was the biggest lapse of security. The government had ample evidence to infer that a radical Hindu group was out to kill the Mahatma. Yet very little security

was provided to counter the plot.

Only 48 hours earlier, Madan Lal of this radical group had placed a bomb at the back wall of Gandhiji's prayer meeting platform. I used to attend the prayer meeting. I was there on the day the blast took place. The Mahatma showed no concern and conducted prayers as if nothing had happened. I too thought that it must be a cracker. Only when I read the next day's newspapers did I realise how close was Gandhiji to death.

Sardar Patel was the Home Minister then. Following Gandhiji's murder, he submitted his resignation to admit his failure. But Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru told him that the Mahatma wanted both of them to build modern India. Later, even the ban on the RSS was lifted.

The Home Ministry at that time should have probed more to understand how deep the Hindu right had spread. Even Sardar Patel had remarked at that time that the RSS had created an 'atmosphere' where something like this could happen. When I joined the ministry in 1955

as Information Officer and served there for nearly 10 years, I tried to find some leads. There was not a shred of evidence to make me infer that the case was thoroughly probed. Or, maybe, there is something incriminating involving some persons in the government that the government does not want to disclose. The Archives of India has not yet got from the Home Ministry even the papers on 'Transfer of Power', which is also the title of the three-volume book brought out by the British within two or three years of their departure to tell their side of the story.

Soon after the Mahatma's assassination, when I reached the Birla House, I did not see anybody guarding the place where Gandhiji fell after having been shot. Some blood was on the path leading to the prayer platform. There was no policeman around to ensure the preservation of blood, important evidence.

Why has no government has gone back to those days to reconstruct events? I can understand the BJP's diffidence because its mentor, the RSS, did not want any probe even to begin with. But the Congress governments should have perhaps dug deeper.

The only piece of information is the trial and the judgment delivered by the then Punjab High Court at Simla. It is an open secret that some ladies of civil society knitted pullovers for Godse. The government, for reasons best known to it, has been reticent on these things.

The 132-year history of the Congress hardly brings out what the followers of Gandhiji went through after his assassination and what they

are going through today. The government looks at them with suspicion as if they are trying to oust the government. The power which the BJP wields is unchecked. In a democratic set up, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has cornered all the power and rules the country by himself. The party pays lip sympathy to Gandhiji and puts up his photo at meetings and that too because it attracts votes. Even otherwise, the Mahatma hardly fits into the free market economy and the inequitable growth of today.

No doubt, the law and order machinery at that time bungled. But it is strange that no police officer of that time has left a plausible account of the events leading to the

assassination. It is true that a few Hindu extremists were arrested. Yet I believe that the plot was larger, involving scores of people in high places. The confession of Swami Aseemanand, connected with the Malegaon bomb blasts, has shown that the network of Hindu ultras was quite wide. So must have been the case when Gandhiji was shot dead.

Tushar Gandhi, who moved for the first time in the Apex Court, said he can explain his locus in the case and opposed the plea, saying there was no point in reopening of the case. The apex court, which has appointed a senior advocate as an amicus curiae in the matter, said it would wait for his report before going ahead with the case.

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Naushir Bharucha Marg,
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Janata

is available at

www.lohiatoday.com

Footprints of A Crusader

(The Life Story of Mrunal Gore)

by

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Published by

Kamalakar Subhedar,

Secretary, Samata Shikshan Sanstha,

Pareira Wadi, Mohili Village,

Sakinaka, Ghatkopar(W),

Mumbai 400072.

Mobile: 9820092255

Contribution: Rs.300+

Bangladeshis in India and Rohingyas in Bangladesh

Sandeep Pandey

Indian Home Minister Rajnath Singh says that Rohingyas in India are illegal immigrants not refugees. To justify his argument he says Rohingyas have not come to India by following proper procedure and making a formal application for seeking asylum. Now the entire world knows that Rohingyas had to flee Myanmar when they faced persecution there. Does Rajnath Singh expect them to go to the Indian Embassy in Myanmar or in Dhaka to make a formal application for seeking asylum when their priority is to keep their families together and somehow survive as they run away from the security of a home in Rakhine to an uncertain future. The Indian government wants to deport all of the 40,000 Rohingyas who're in India. However, it would be a violation of the principle of non-refoulement, i.e., not sending back refugees where they are unwelcome. But Rajnath Singh says that India not being a signatory to the UN Refugees Convention it would not violate any international law if it chose to deport Rohingyas to Myanmar. The Home Minister is trying to hide behind the veil of technicalities but is this response expected of a regional power aspiring to be a world leader? This is probably the first time in its long history when India is trying to shut its doors to a refugee or a visitor from abroad.

Irrespective of all evidence that they are extremely impoverished community the Indian government sees them as potential security threat. Earlier a similar apprehension

was expressed for illegal Bangladeshi immigrants. Bangladeshis are also very poor. They come to seek jobs in India. Most Bangladeshis in north India are garbage collectors. Some of them sell black masala tea on court campuses. The people who used to traditionally do the garbage collection work are in better jobs or doing sanitation work in better paid jobs like regular government service. Hence Bangladeshis are not taking away the jobs of any Indians. They are doing work which no Indians want to do.

There are Indians migrating to Gulf and other countries of the world including the United States illegally in search of job. There are 5 lakh illegal Indian immigrants living in US alone. Indians have been migrating since ages. Initially when the system of passports and visas was not there it was not considered illegal to move from one part of the world to another. But slowly restrictions began to be placed on such movements. Suddenly some people found that they were illegal. For people who cannot get a passport made or obtain a visa from the country they wish to travel to, like in all other government departments there are middlemen, who can get the work done for a hefty fee. For example, if somebody from Gujarat wanted to go to US, the asking rate for preparing the required travel documents is about Rs. 20 lakhs.

Indians are settled in various corners of the world for several generations now. More enterprising

among them have ventured to assimilate themselves in local politics, have contested elections and even held high offices. Mahendra Chaudhry became Prime Minister of Fiji, Mauritius has had several Indian Presidents and PMs including the present one, Anerood Jugnauth, Trinidad and Tobago had Basdeo Pandey as its PM and former Governor of South Carolina, Nikki Haley is current US Ambassador to United Nations, to just name a few.

Question is how is an Indian illegally going to Gulf different from a Bangladeshi illegally coming to find work in India? Just because s(he) or the Rohingyas are Muslims is it correct to brand all of them as potential threats to India's security? There are more people living in India, some very influential, who pose greater threat to national security than these poor immigrants.

There is movement of workers within the country too. Workers from poorer states like UP, Bihar, Odisha, Chattisgarh migrate to better off states like Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab to find work. For Shiv Sena there is no difference between a Bangladeshi or a person from UP or Bihar who is seen as competitor with locals for odd jobs. Hence the issue is not that of nationality or religion alone.

The Bhartiya Janata Party Member of Parliament Varun Gandhi has rightly called for display of empathy towards Rohingya immigrants with a willingness to

grant them asylum after examining them case by case satisfying ourselves on security concerns. However, the rational suggestion of Varun Gandhi was countered with a question on his commitment to national interest by his own party's Minister. The atmosphere of nationalist jingoism created by the Hindutva brigade precludes the possibility of any meaningful discussion on any issue. The BJP sticks to its pre-decided stance on every matter with no scope for course correction. The arrogance of Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh does not let them examine any alternative point of view.

The Indian government should try to convince government of Myanmar to accept the Rohingyas back. But unless Myanmar is ready for this it would be improper to push the Rohingyas back into their territory. As a regional leader India is expected to help Bangladesh deal with the current refugee crisis created there because of entry of over six lakh Rohingyas from Myanmar. It cannot simply wash its hands off any responsibility by merely sending some relief material there. Narendra Modi has the ambition of being remembered as a good PM. But he does not possess the statesman like quality which any great leader must exhibit. He visited Myanmar during the middle of crisis but didn't mention the issue of Rohingya is his interaction with Aung San Suu Kyi, who has now fallen from grace in the eyes of the world.

The Bangladeshis in India must be given a work permit without the citizenship status and Rohingyas must be given refugee status if India is to be seen as country with large heart.

Nehru for Our Time

Rajmohan Gandhi

The 17-year span, from 1947 to 1964, of Jawaharlal Nehru's premiership, took this writer from being an 11-year-old schoolboy to age 28. That youngster was cheeky enough, in his twenties, to find fault with some policies of "Panditji", which is how almost everyone then addressed a much-loved prime minister who had spent his life toiling for India's freedom.

In the late 1950s, I found it hard to understand how a lover of individual liberty like Nehru could overlook the Soviet state's oppressions. And although socialism, which Nehru was advocating, held an appeal for me, so did Rajaji's critique of the emerging licence-permit-quota raj over which, it seemed, Nehru was presiding.

However, an instinctive adulation dwarfed these critical reactions, and I was quite touched by the first serious conversation I had with Nehru. This took place in the late summer of 1963, in what everyone now knows as Teen Murti Bhavan, but what many then thought of, remembering pre-1947 times, as the British commander-in-chief's house.

Before this meeting, I had seen Panditji. But, to use the modern phrase, I had not met him one-on-one.

Here is why I had to meet him. Some of us planning an international Moral Re-Armament (MRA) event in Delhi tried to book Vigyan Bhavan for half a day in November 1963, but no one in any government office was

willing to say how we could go about it. Told eventually that only the prime minister could decide whether the prestigious venue could be rented by non-governmental persons, I sought an appointment and was lucky enough to get it.

Vimla Sindhi, remembered by many as the cheerful person receiving visitors at Teen Murti, greeted me. I was ushered into Panditji's presence. He was seated on a sofa in a ground floor room. I was offered a seat opposite his. Nehru was not only close to his 74th birthday but also unwell, impacted by the war the previous year with China. "Kahiye," he said to 28-year-old me.

I informed him of the reason for troubling him. He showed little surprise that India's Prime Minister had to decide whether the Vigyan Bhavan auditorium could be made available for a non-official event, asked me the date, wrote it down, said it was OK, and told me whom to contact.

The meeting lasted only a few minutes but I felt stirred as I left, struck by his state of health and his helpful response, about which I had not been confident for I was aware Nehru entertained reservations about MRA. Yet, I found him willing for the MRA event to be held in what perhaps was the capital's finest venue then.

When the event took place, attended by many (including Rajaji, a sharp Nehru critic then), Panditji

acceded to another request from me. This was for an appointment for Peter Howard, the British writer heading MRA.

When, accompanied by me, Howard called on him in his South Block office, Nehru seemed frailer. He had to swallow a couple of pills while talking to us but seemed quite interested in what Howard had to say and also in photographs I showed of young Indians interested in a bid for, “a clean, strong and united India”.

Six months later, on May 27 1964, I was at a camp in the Nilgiris with numerous young Indians when word arrived of Nehru’s death. While conveying the news, I choked. Everyone felt bereaved.

More than 52 years later, persons like me are hurt by the false stories disseminated about that astonishing, if also human and flawed, figure whom millions loved and were proud of.

Crucially, Nehru’s ceaseless concern for the mind of India is missed. He wanted that mind to be innovative, rational and free. When a coercive call was made anywhere in the land, Nehru rose at once to denounce it. More than his 14 years in prison, his 55 years of tireless service, his accomplishments as prime minister for 17 years, it was his love of personal liberty that India needs to recall today.

And also his flair with words. Not many books stimulated a couple of Indian generations the way Nehru’s Autobiography and Discovery of India did. Few speeches were more affecting than “A tryst with destiny” or “The light has gone out”. Both were connected to a passion for personal liberty.

The world knows a state can coerce. Or elements in society can. A government may allow non-state intimidators to lead the way until the time is ripe for the government to coerce directly — or for the bullies to take over the government.

Today, we hear calls for silencing brave human rights activists, threats to ruin those who make films that include Pakistanis. Humiliating promises have been extracted. Policemen are glorified when they act against “bad” extremists but may

be prosecuted if they confront “good” extremists. Calls for transparency on alleged encounter killings are shouted down.

We are becoming a mirror image of our neighbour and can expect to see demands for newspapers, TV channels, films, schools and universities to exclude material unwelcome to vigilante groups.

Lovers of liberty should prepare themselves.

A Beloved Freedom Fighter, then a Reviled Nation-Builder: The Pain of being Nehru

Apoorvanand

Bhagat Singh, a 21-year-old revolutionary, writing in 1928 makes an interesting comparison between Subhash Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru. Describing Bose as a narrow, emotional nationalist, he advises the youth of Punjab to follow Nehru, a rational internationalist, as he alone could give them the right kind of intellectual nutrition. Nearly 90 years later, he would be censored by his followers for such retrograde views.

Bhagat Singh became a martyr symbolising eternal youth, Bose remains the ever-living guerrilla fighter and Gandhi, Nehru’s mentor, was killed by an independent India and elevated to sainthood. Nehru would outlive them all, moving past the romantic phase of nationalism to perform the prosaic task of state-making. His once-lovable face, which had attracted Amrita Sher-Gil for its sensitivity, was to suffer the blemishes of age. Disappointments and failures as an administrator were to further dent his image.

It is amusing that Nehru is singled out for every perceived abomination; Partition, Kashmir, illiteracy, the Hindu rate of growth, non-arrival of socialism, communalism, and, of course, dynastic succession. He is seen as an ambitious man who, by cunningly winning the Mahatma’s trust, deprived worthier leaders like Sardar Patel, Rajaji, Rajendra Prasad and J.P. Narayan of their due. They are, in popular imagination, the wronged.

H.Y. Sharda Prasad felt Nehru to be the most loved figure after Krishna in this land. The affair was not to last long. Once a heart-throb of the masses, prime minister Nehru created unease, especially in educated Indians. His insistence on not using force as a first resort to resolve conflict was seen as a sign of weakness. Hindus have not been able to forgive him for his idea of secularism and insisting on treating Muslims as equal citizens.

Nehru presided over the business of lawmaking, seeking to replace the communitarian conventions governing the lives of the people. It was bound to challenge their belief system and hurt them. There was no Gandhi to support him. The Congress, a party of Hindu patriarchs, wasn't convinced of his scientific-rationalist outlook and refused to play the role of social educator. He had little help from the Communists, who faulted him for not being revolutionary enough. JP, who held a special place in the hearts of the masses, refused his invitation to play a role in this transformatory, post-romantic nation-building process. Ram Manohar Lohia, once his favourite, turned into an eternal rebel. Ambedkar did work with him for a while but, in the face of stiff resistance from Parliament on the Hindu Code Bill, gave up. Faced with the prospect of a long-drawn battle with a conservative Hindu society, Ambedkar took his followers to Buddhism, a religion, and turned into a god himself. Nehru's scientific-rationalist views and training didn't permit such easy ways out.

Rajni Kothari, writing in 1964, recognised the enormity and complexity of the task history had bequeathed to Nehru. Nehru, wrote Kothari, "taught leaders the art of managing men and institutions and based political solidarity on the complex mechanics of secular relationships rather than on neat notation of sacrifices and transcendental nationalism".

It required patience, perseverance and hope in the human capacity to communicate and reform, to be able to survive the tardiness of this process. There was also a need to overcome the neat divide of Left

and Right and create an ideological consensus in society to enlarge the spaces of shared life. The educated classes of India, who benefited most from his institution-building process, did not subscribe to the scientific and rationalist philosophy behind it. They insulated their lives from his cries. He was seen as someone who wanted, using his unassailable authority, to deprive them of sacredness and sever their ties with the religious past which gave them security.

In an era of identity politics and militant nationalism, only those who

fit into the neat categories of predefined identities can aspire to be icons. Only natural that Nehru, an ambiguous figure, homesick in the West but alien and lonely in his own land, born a Brahmin but seen as half-Christian, half-Muslim, a warrior against colonialism but no English-hater, a leader of the nationalist movement but no nationalist, is now nobody's child.

Nehru warned Richard Attenborough not to deify Gandhi in his film. He paid heed. We didn't. We judge Nehru as a fallible being. Would he hold a grudge ?

SM Joshi Socialist Foundation and Lokayat in association with other Progressive Groups of Pune Launch Campaign to Raise People's Understanding About the Indian Constitution October 28 to November 26 (Samvidhaan Divas)

At the initiative of SM Joshi Socialist Foundation and Lokayat, a meeting of some progressive groups of Pune was organised on October 11, 2017 wherein it was decided to launch a campaign to raise the awareness of people, especially the youth and students, on the Indian Constitution. This is to debunk the false nationalism being propagated by the BJP-RSS, which have reduced nationalism to shouting slogans like 'Bharat Mata ki Jai' and putting up large size national flags in Universities and calling all critics of the government as anti-nationals. The various groups decided to form a forum called Samvidhaan Jagar Abhiyaan Samiti and campaign amongst people that true nationalism, love for the nation, means loving the people of the country and upholding the spirit of the Indian Constitution.

In this context, they decided to focus on two issues:

- 1) Making people aware of what the Constitution expects from the people, which is outlined in Article 51A that talks of Constitutional duties—including rising above religion, caste and region and loving all the people of the country, cherishing the syncretic culture of the country, upholding the spirit of the freedom struggle, renouncing practices derogatory to the dignity of women, and so on.
- 2) Making people aware of the desire of the founding fathers of the nation regarding the orientation of economic policies that future governments should pursue. This is outlined in the

Directive Principles of the Constitution. Dr. Ambedkar made it very clear in his speeches on the floor of the Constitutional Assembly that the Directive Principles are to be fundamental to governance for all future governments, and that they must strive to implement their spirit. This includes striving to make available education, healthcare, nutrition and decent employment to all people of the country.

Loving the nation essentially means striving to fulfill these desires of the nation's founding fathers, and upholding the values propounded in the Constitutional duties section of the Constitution.

The meeting was attended by representatives of several groups. The attendees included Subhash Ware, Haji Nadaf, Vithal Gaekwad, Milind Deshmukh, Nandini Jadhav, Ibrahim Khan, Shamsuddin Tamboli, Adv. Santosh Mhaske, Neeraj Jain, and several student representatives of different groups.

The campaign will include rallies in different parts of the city, programs in various slums to educate people about the Constitution, campaigns, distribution of pamphlets and booklets, street play and songs, etc.

The inaugural rally was organised on October 28 in Tadiwala road area. It was a huge success, with more than 300 people participating in the rally. The next rally was organised in Gokhale Nagar – Wadarwadi area bastis on November 4, in the form of a Samvidhaan Dindi. Rallies will also be organised in Hadapsar area

(Continued on Page 11)

Press Release

Chandrasekhar should be released: Socialist Party (India)

The Socialist Party (India) [SPI(I)] demands immediate release of Chandrasekhar Azad 'Ravan', Bhim Army chief, from prison and removal of National Security Act (NSA) imposed on him. Chandrasekhar is lodged in Saharanpur jail from 9 June 2017. He is an accused in four cases of inciting violence and property damage during the incident at Saharanpur Dehat Kotwali on 9 May 2017. The Allahabad High Court ordered his release on bail on 2 November 2017 in all the four cases. But the next day after the bail orders of the Allahabad High Court, the Uttar Pradesh Government imposed NSA on him. While ordering Chandrasekhar to be released on bail, the High Court has admitted that the cases filed against him are politically motivated. But the Uttar Pradesh government has imposed NSA on Chandrasekhar, ignoring the remarks of the court. According to this draconian law, he cannot come out of jail for a year. The government has decided to slap NSA on Chandrasekhar to keep him in detention. This shows that the present Uttar Pradesh government has no faith in the justice system and citizen rights.

SP(I) believes that the decision to impose the NSA on Chandrasekhar is entirely motivated by political reasons. Since Chandrasekhar has been granted bail by the High Court, he should be released from jail immediately, and the NSA imposed on him should be removed.

The National Security Act, enacted in 1980, is a gross violation of the civil rights granted by the Constitution. Governments have repeatedly abused this law. It has now also been misused in the case of Chandrasekhar. Socialist Party (India) urges the central government to repeal the NSA.

SP(I) is ready to extend legal help to Chandrasekhar in this matter. If the activists of Bhim Army wish so, then a senior member of SP(I), Justice Rajindar Sachar, will fight his case in the Allahabad High Court with the support of Senior Advocate Ravikiran Jain.

Janki Prasad Gaur

President

Socialist Party (India) Uttar Pradesh

Containing China?

D. K. Giri

“China rises to Conquer” was the catchphrase that echoed around the world, mainly in Asia, after Xi Jinping became the exalted leader of the Communist Party of China at the 19th Congress last month. Buoyed by nationalism and capitalism, twin pillars of Xi’s ideology, China aspires for a world role. It seeks to fill the spot vacated by the US that looks more inward, and withdraws from positions of influence. Beijing’s strategic thinking is, in the absence of US backing, its neighbours would take an accommodative stance. China is putting this thinking into test by means of both inducements and pressure.

As the investments from Japan and the western countries dwindle, China is stepping into extending loan or investment to the developing countries, mainly in the Asia. Nepalese Ambassador to India Deep Upadhyay said in a seminar: “we have kith-and-kin relation with India, but we would like tap the surplus money that China has.”

India faces the brunt of Chinese world ambition, and its jealousy as a competitor in Asia. Beijing wants to scuttle India’s regional and global rise. For the fourth time, it has blocked India, the US and other countries’ bid to list the mastermind of Pathankot terror attack Masood Azhar as a global terrorist. It plans to build Pakistan at par with India. The China-Pakistan axis is precisely meant to stem India, in Asia’s new geo-politics. Some observers in both these countries would say that their friendship is “deeper than the ocean,

and taller than the mountains”. These are, of course, political hyperboles, there are no permanent friends or foes in international politics, it is the national interest that guides relations.

On the other hand, China is abrasive in diplomacy, not making any sacrifices to install itself in the leadership position. It should open its markets, take a magnanimous position on territorial disputes, be firm with volatile leadership of North Korea and so on. The economic and security concerns vis-à-vis Beijing have not abated. Therefore, India should prepare itself economically, militarily and diplomatically for a long-term rivalry with it.

How is New Delhi preparing to deal with Beijing? Two current initiatives merit mention in this context. One is the recent visit of Bhutan king Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck last week with his wife queen and one-year-old crown prince. The visit was significant for at least two reasons. It followed the 73-day Doklam standoff between Indian and Chinese armies. Second, Thimpu is New Delhi’s close friend. India is Bhutan’s largest trading partner, 82% of Bhutan’s total imports are accounted for by India and 90% of its exports come to India.

Prime Minister Modi, after assuming office, chose Bhutan to be his first visit abroad. Bhutan does not have diplomatic contact with China. But Beijing wants to bypass New Delhi, in dealing with Thimpu. New Delhi will want to thwart this

maneuver, hosted the king to review the ‘whole gamut of relations’, and to discuss preparation for the golden jubilee celebration of diplomatic ties in 2018.

New Delhi has two other projects with Bhutan, one strategic, and the other economic. It has mooted the idea of BIMSTEC – Bay of Bengal initiative for multi-sectoral, technical and economic co-operation. This project is conceived as an alternative to SAARC, which is defunct owing to irreconcilable differences between India and Pakistan on cross-border terrorism etc.

Bhutan is the key partner in this initiative. BIMSTEC comprises Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand. These countries constitute 21% of the world population, totaling 1.5 billion people, and have the GDP of \$2.5 trillion. The second is to tap into the huge potential of hydel power in Bhutan.

After India’s flip-flop on Tibet under Nehru, Bhutan remains the buffer between the Asian two big powers, hence becoming the key to India’s China strategy. Let us recall that Tibet was kept as a buffer between India and China by the British, but Nehru gave away all our influence on it, without reciprocal guarantees from Beijing. Now, New Delhi considers Tibetans as a State-in-exile, where as Beijing treats Tibet as one of its provinces. India’s support to and perception of Tibet is like crying over spilt milk. Be that as it may, New Delhi cannot afford to

equivocate or fumble on Bhutan, and must avoid repeating the blunder.

The other grand strategy New Delhi is contemplating is in fact, the brainchild of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who just won a landslide victory to run the fourth term in office. This is the policy of Quadrilateralism involving Japan, US, India and Australia. The project was conceived in 2007, but got aborted next year as Australia developed cold feet not to antagonise China. After the resounding victory in the elections, and in the wake of North Korean missile threat, backed tacitly by China, Abe has revived the project, and other three countries have responded positively.

This is Abe's pet project in Asian Multilateralism. Obviously, China's unilateralism and expansionism drive makes other Asian powers to band together. In an interview, Japanese foreign minister said, "Japan will propose a top-level dialogue with the US, India, and Australia to promote free-trade and defence cooperation across Indian Ocean, from South China Sea to Africa." Japan would like to see deep and substantive cooperation among the four on defence, maritime security and infrastructure development. In 2007, Abe had foreseen an "arc of freedom and prosperity along the outer rim of the Eurasian continent."

The 'Quad', a broader Asian network will allow the free flow of people, goods, capital and knowledge. Its principle is shared and established only the purpose and process have to evolve. For the US since Obama Administration, they withdrew from the G-2 joint leadership with China, and wanted to install India as a pivot to their Asia strategy. For New Delhi, it is an

extension of joint military exercise called "Exercise Malabar". It was initially between US and India, Japan later joined as a permanent member; Australia and Singapore also have sent their warships. China calls Quad the Asian 'NATO'.

In response to Tokyo's revived initiative on 'Quad', India, unlike in the past, has responded readily. The closer India-Japan relation, what I call Japindia vs Chinpak has helped the new initiative progress fast. New Delhi has stated unambiguously that it will be open to any move that aligns with India's interest and promotes its view point. Although Japindia predate NaMo, he has added greater depth and substance. Tokyo would like to look beyond the US, and India beyond non-alignment. Unlike in the past, New Delhi is ready to embark on any complex geo-political jousting in Asia in order to advance its interest. However, Anthony Yazaki, an expert on India-Japan relations, comments, "for India, embracing Japan is work in progress". But, it is on the right track.

On containing China, New Delhi can out manoeuvre Beijing. Admittedly, India, as of now, does not have the financial wherewithal to compete in a like-for-like fashion, observed Andrew Small, of German Marshall Fund, an expert of China, US and Pakistan relations. In South-Asia India, does not have outside partners to contain China, China is making forays into South Asia. The OBOR – One Belt-One-Road, the biggest Chinese power game, is not met with any collective response. 'Quad' may provide one.

Significantly, India is embedded in a network of strategic relationships, unlike China, which will surely, have an edge. That is precisely Beijing's

concern. This is a great departure from India's policy of non-alignment in the past. Foreign policy experts continue to debate if non-alignment was a viable policy. In an interdependent world, staying neutral or non-aligned is not an option. India has paid a heavy price for doing so. Its defence budget staggeringly shot up taking away the critical funds needed for its development projects. At any rate, all that is behind us now.

Finally, India could play the Chinese game. China took Japanese and Western investment, by offering its cheap labour, India could do the same. China promises \$85 billion investment in India. So, for India, it need not be a zero-sum geo-politics with China. India could manoeuvre some of the development accruing out of China's wealth to India's advantage.

At the end of the day, all these boil down to deft diplomacy. Abe said after his election victory, "strong support at home, helps one pursue bold policy abroad." Can NaMo say the same after De Mo, GST clutter, and religious vigilantism etc ?

Madhu Dandavate

By

B. Vivekanandan

Price: Rs. 20/-

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As the Guru so the Disciple

Sankara Narayanan

While speaking at Diwali-Milan function organised at the BJP headquarters in New Delhi on October 28, 2017, Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a veiled warning to his own party men said the BJP is speaking in different voices.

He called for a debate on internal democracy in political parties, asserting that the growth of 'true democratic spirit' within them is necessary for the country's future. But how he had responded to even the very mild critical views of his party's elected representatives and cadre on demonetisation and GST was also widely reported in the media. Dissenting opinions of senior leaders like Yashwant Sinha and Arun Shourie were ridiculed as the frustrated voices of job aspirants @80. That is the real face of the 'true democratic spirit' of the Modi sarkar and the BJP.

Modi pointed out that funding to political parties is often debated but not their values, ideology, internal democracy and how they give opportunities to the new generation of leaders. But funding of political parties is no less important than their values, ideology and internal democracy. He is on a weak wicket in the case of funding received by his party, and hence the deliberate diversion. How he has given opportunities to the new generation of leaders is well exhibited in the post-Modi era in Gujarat, where leaders of taluka-level calibre have been entrusted with the state's administration.

The country, he said, is not much aware of the practice of democracy within parties and the media should turn its attention to it. He added, 'Whether democratic values are a part of their (parties') core values or not, should be debated widely. . . . I believe the development of a true democratic spirit within political parties is necessary not only for the country's future but also for democracy.'" Shourie's ridicule that BJP government is a government of 2.5 persons (Modi, Amit Shah and an in house lawyer) reveals much about the true democracy prevailing under Modi. Standard Operating Procedure of the Modi sarkar, according to Shourie, is to abuse its critics.

Modi lamented that there are many voices within the BJP. He noted that earlier, when it was a small organisation, and even during the times of Jana Sangh, its forerunner, there used to be 'ideological harmony' from its central leadership down to workers in the bottom rung. The party's expansion might be a reason behind divergent views, he said.

Modi's statement that the development of a true democratic spirit within political parties is necessary not only for the country's future but also for democracy, and his distaste over many voices within the BJP, do not go together. When internal discussions are choked, the dissent bursts out in different forms to reach the public. Should there be complete unanimity of views within the party?

Barring the core ideology, divergent views about a party's policies and programmes are very normal. Even the core ideology changes with time. Party issues are public issues and they need to be discussed publicly. To expect complete unanimity is undemocratic and it amounts to regimentation. Though all political parties dislike differing views within them, BJP is a class by itself in this respect because of its regimented upbringing.

The most prominent ideologue of the RSS, Guru Golwalkar, while addressing a gathering of top ranking RSS leaders on March 16, 1954, at Sindi, Wardha, said, "If we say that we are part of the organisation and accept its discipline, then selectiveness has no place in life. Do what is told. If told to play kabaddi, play kabaddi; if told to hold meeting, then hold meeting. . . . For instance some of our friends were told to go and work for politics. That does not mean that they have great interest or inspiration for it. They don't die for politics like fish without water. If they are told to withdraw from politics then also there is no objection. **Their discretion is just not required.**" (Shri Guruji Samagra Darshan or SGSD, Vol III, p. 32)

In another significant statement, Golwalkar said, "We know that some of our Swayamsevaks work in politics. There they have to organise, according to the needs of work, public meetings, processions etc., have to raise slogans. All these things have no place in our work.

However, like the character in a play, whatever role has been assigned should be portrayed with best of capability. But sometimes Swayamsevaks go beyond the role assigned to a performer (*nat*) as they develop over-zealousness in their hearts, to the extent that they become useless for this work. This is not good.” (SGSD, Vol IV, pp. 4-5)

Golwalkar while addressing a group of 1,350 top level cadres of the RSS in 1940 stated: “RSS inspired by one flag, one leader and one ideology is lighting the flame of Hindutva in each and every corner of this great land.” (SGSD Vol I, p. 11). This decree of ‘one flag, one leader and one ideology’ was also the battle cry of fascist and Nazi parties of Europe in the first half of 20th century. What they did to democracy is well-known to this world.

We find here Golwalkar referring to the Swayamsevaks loaned to the political satellite as *nats* who are meant to dance to the tune of the RSS. It should be noted here that the above plan of Golwalkar of controlling the political arm was elaborated in March 1960, almost nine years after the establishment of the Jana Sangh (the forerunner of the BJP) in 1951. If the leaders of Jana Sangh/BJP are supposed to be ‘nats’, just imagine the plight of the party’s cadre! The naked truth is that RSS makes its cadres spineless. As a pracharak of the Sangh and a disciple of Guru Golwalkar, Modi has dutifully converted the government and the party into spineless *nats*.

In a democratic form of state, the government comes first, the organisation or the party next, and the leader comes last. But in Modi’s

dispensation, all the three are rolled into one entity—Modi. Strangely, while he and his government are not accountable to the party, the party is answerable to him. And his government is answerable to an unconstitutional authority headquartered in Nagpur. He, his party and the government are mere performers. Yet, he audaciously gives a grandiose lecture on true

(Continued from Page 7)

on November 11, and Ambedkar Nagar basti on November. The concluding program will take place on November 26 at SM Joshi Socialist Foundation Auditorium.

The organisers plan to take this campaign to all over Maharashtra. A daylong workshop was organised on November 5 for activists at SM Joshi Socialist Foundation to advance their understanding of the issues

democratic spirit and inner party democracy.

Reference:

Shamsul Islam, “An Open Letter to the ‘Hindu Nationalist’, Narendra Damodardas Modi Ji, Chief Minister of Gujarat”, <http://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/rdv19n2/letter.htm>.

related to the campaign. Subhash Ware and Neeraj Jain were the main speakers at the workshop, in which more than 80 activists from all over Western Maharashtra participated.

This is the first phase of the campaign. The second phase will take place from November 26 to January 26, the details of which will be worked out as this present campaign advances.

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Published by Anamika Publishers and Distributors. Ansari Road, New Delhi 110002

Demonetisation: One Year Later

Neeraj Jain

Those who take the meat from the table, Teach contentment.

Those for whom the contribution is destined, Demand sacrifice.

Those who eat their fill speak to the hungry, Of wonderful times to come.

Those who lead the country into the abyss, Call ruling too difficult

For ordinary men.

– *Bertolt Brecht*

Exactly a year ago, in a televised address on November 8, 2016, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that currency notes of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 denominations would no longer be legal tender from midnight that night. The Prime Minister stated that this step was being taken to curb counterfeiting and funding of terrorism with fake notes, and most importantly, to crack down on black money in the country.

The total currency in circulation in the country at that time was around Rs 17.9 lakh crore. Of this, around 86%, or around Rs 15.44 lakh crore, was in Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes. This meant that till the government replaced the abolished currency with new currency notes, the economy would have to make do with 14% of the currency has to serve the task of the whole. Even though the Prime Minister claimed that the step was being planned for more than nine months,¹ the monumental inefficiency of the Modi Government becomes evident from the fact that it had made no advance preparations for quick replacement of the old notes with new notes. According to a newsreport that

quoted former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram and also a former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Deputy Governor, even if the government printed note for note, given the capacity of the four currency note printing presses in the country, it would take at least six to seven months for these printing presses to print new notes to replace all the scrapped notes.² Once printed, the notes had to sent to the remotest corners of the country—5,93,731 inhabited villages, 4,041 towns, 3,894 census towns and 1,456 urban patches.³

The sudden move without adequate preparation for its consequences led to chaos across the country. People were first forced to queue up outside banks for hours to exchange/deposit their old notes. After that, they had to stand outside banks almost daily in long queues to withdraw their money, because the banks were short of cash and were permitting people to withdraw only Rs 2,000–4,000 at a time. The worst hit were the daily wage workers, as they had to forgo a day's wages in order to stand in the queues. It took several months for the cash crunch to ease. By then, around 120 people had died of exhaustion waiting in these queues.

The Modi Government claims that all these travails faced by the people were a small sacrifice for the gains of demonetisation. The BJP in fact made demonetisation a key poll plank during the UP Assembly elections, claiming it to be a 'pro-poor' move that showed the resolve

of the government to fight black money and corruption. Many people believed these claims, and the BJP won the state elections with an unprecedented majority. On the first anniversary of demonetisation (November 8, 2017), the BJP has announced plans to commemorate it as 'anti-Black Money Day'.

EXAMINING GOVERNMENT CLAIMS

Let us examine the claims of the government about the benefits of demonetisation one by one.

i) Will It Overcome the Problem of Terrorist Financing and Curb Terrorism?

Terrorists need financing. Modi and Jaitley argued that demonetisation would curb terror funding by eliminating fake notes circulating in the economy, and thus help reduce incidents of terrorism.

What has happened on the ground, one year later? Data from 10 months before the note-ban (January-November 2016) and the 10 months after shows a 38% rise in the number of terrorist incidents in Jammu and Kashmir. The number of security personnel killed has risen by 2%.⁴ Clearly then, demonetisation has not helped curb terrorism in any way.

A simple analysis reveals that this was only to be expected. Terrorists use both banking channels and fake notes. The major part of their financing is done through banking channels, using various innovative techniques. That cannot be curbed

by demonetisation. And so far as fake notes are concerned, to the extent that terrorism is financed from abroad, state actors are involved in printing these fake notes. They have sophisticated facilities to print fake notes. They can easily duplicate the new notes too, and they did it within days! The Indian Army recovered fake Rs 2,000 notes from two terrorists killed in Bandipore district of Jammu and Kashmir, less than a fortnight after they came into circulation.⁵

ii) Has It Overcome the Problem of Counterfeit Notes?

The RBI in its annual report released in August 2017 says that Rs 43 crore of fake notes were detected in fiscal 2017. This includes notes of all denominations.⁶ That is a negligible amount. And when compared to the total value of currency in circulation, Rs 17.9 lakh crore, it becomes even more negligible—only 0.002%.

This is not unexpected; it is in tune with previous figures. For fiscal 2015-16, RBI data show that the total value of fake notes was Rs 29.64 crore, which was 0.0018% of the Rs 16.41 lakh crore currency in circulation.⁷

Was it worth giving citizens so much trouble in order to eliminate such a small amount of fake currency? And as the RBI itself admits, the new notes are being faked too, the above figure includes fake Rs 2,000 notes too.

Just to mention in passing, the problem of fake notes is a global phenomenon. In the USA also, there are a large amount of fake dollars in circulation; the dollar is in fact among the most counterfeited currencies in

the world.⁸ But for all his idiosyncracies, Trump has never even suggested demonetisation as a way of tackling it.

iii) Has it Significantly Curbed the Black Economy?

Both Modi and Jaitley have repeatedly claimed that demonetisation was an attack on the black economy. As mentioned earlier, the BJP is in fact commemorating the first anniversary of demonetisation as ‘anti-Black Money Day’. But figures released by the RBI belie their claim. The annual report of the RBI released on August 30, 2017 reveals that nearly Rs 15.28 lakh crore of the Rs 15.44 crore sucked out of circulation by demonetisation had returned to the banking system.⁹ That is, only Rs 0.16 lakh crore, or 1% of the total currency circulating in the economy had not come back. This was the total black cash that the government has been able to wipe out by this ‘historic’ measure.

That 99% of the demonetised currency had found its way back to the RBI has actually been an open secret for quite some time. An article published in the eminent journal *Economic and Political Weekly* had shown, based on RBI data, that 98.8% of Rs 15.44 lakh crore had come back by January 13, 2017.¹⁰ The RBI delayed acknowledging this for so long, to avoid embarrassment to its masters.

RBI data thus prove, beyond doubt, that demonetisation has completely failed in making a dent on the black economy. Official data themselves prove that Modi’s and BJP’s claims about demonetisation are nothing but bluster. The government has failed in achieving

its third, and most important, objective of demonetisation too.

There is actually nothing surprising in this. Several pro-people economists such as Professor Arun Kumar had shown, immediately after the demonetisation announcement, that this was no way of curbing the black economy, and it would end in a complete failure. We had also made the same prediction in our booklet, *Demonetisation: Yet Another Fraud on the People*, published in January 2017.¹¹ All these predictions and analyses have been borne out. We summarise these analyses below.

Why Demonetisation was Destined to be a Failure

People think that black money means bundles of notes tucked away in suitcases or pillows or lockers. That is not the case. Then what is black money? For this, it is important to understand the difference between three terms: black money, black income and black wealth. All three are different, and together comprise what can be called the ‘black economy’. People mix up these terms, and use them interchangeably.

First you earn income; out of this, you consume one part, and save the rest. This saving you invest in various assets. That gives you your wealth. Wealth is held as a portfolio—you can invest it in real estate, gold, share market, etc. or hold it as cash. Thus, cash is only one component of your wealth, and a very small part of it.

Coming to the black economy, here, first, black income is generated through a whole range of activities. These activities can be entirely

illegal, such as the drugs trade, or the manufacture of fake medicines, or the arms trade, and so on. Or they can be activities which are completely legal, but are undeclared (either wholly or in part), as people want to avoid taxes. These can include: under-reporting of income by doctors or lawyers to save taxes; under-reporting of profits by industrialists by means such as overstating costs (for example, by showing purchase of raw material at higher than actual prices) or understating production; and under-invoicing and over-invoicing in international trade.

It is not the case that only black activity or black business is carried out with cash, and white or normal activity is carried out by cheque or credit card or other such means. Normal business also requires cash. So, normal cash holding and black cash holding are not two different things. One may ask: that may be so, but is it not that black business is more dependent on cash transactions than white? The answer to this also is no. In both black and white business, cash is held for shorter or longer period, and then thrown into circulation, and this is equally so for both types of business. Therefore, if currency is demonetised, both white and black cash holdings are affected, and both are equally affected.

To put the same argument in another way, black businessmen are as much capitalists as white businessmen. It is only misers who hoard money; capitalists believe in investing money to earn more money. And so, black money holders, like white money holders, also try to expand their business by investing their black money/income. Therefore, just like white money

holders, black money holders also will be holding only a small fraction of their total income in cash at any point of time.

The point we are trying to make is, only a part of the black income is held as cash. Most black money holders invest their incomes in assets, which yield returns, such as buying land or shares with it, or sending it abroad through various means. A *Hindustan Times* report of last year gave several arguments to show that black money hoarders keep very little of their earnings in cash. It in fact quoted a finance ministry official as saying that ill-gotten wealth mostly enters the formal economic system through real estate and shell companies.¹²

The part of *black income* that is kept in cash is what is actually *black money*, while that invested in assets is *black wealth*. Demonetisation at the most affects black money; it does not affect black income generation, nor does it affect black wealth one tiny bit.

Let us consider a concrete example of black income generation to understand this in greater detail. An especially important sector where black incomes are generated, and where black incomes are invested in a big way, is real estate. Funds are taken out of the country through various illegal means such as hawala channels, or over-invoicing of imports, or under-invoicing of exports, or transfer pricing. They are then brought back into the country as foreign investment or FDI (this is known as “round-tripping”) through channels such as the infamous Mauritius route. In this, sham corporations are registered in Mauritius, through which funds are routed into India,

often through a mechanism called P-notes (participatory notes, where the ultimate investor is not identified to the Indian market regulator SEBI). The earnings on such investments are not taxed in India because India and Mauritius have a double tax–avoidance treaty (according to which a Mauritian entity investing in India does not have to pay capital gains tax in India, and only pays taxes in Mauritius), while at the same time the investors pay little or no taxes in Mauritius too because of the tax structure there. The amendments to the Indo–Mauritius Treaty done in May 2016 will not have much of an impact on this “round-tripping” of funds, as firstly, P-notes are exempted from this amendment, and secondly, there are other routes available through which such funds can be routed into India without attracting much tax, such as through Netherlands.¹³ FDI flows into the real estate sector have zoomed in recent years—between 2005 and 2010, FDI in India’s real estate and housing market jumped 80 times. In 2010, nearly \$5,700 million of foreign funds were invested in this sector. It is this infusion of black money into real estate that has contributed to the sharp and sustained rise in land prices, making housing unaffordable for an overwhelming majority of Indians.¹⁴

We have discussed the round-tripping of black money in some detail to explain how a major part of black incomes is invested via phoney legal means, through banking channels. Such black incomes would not be affected by demonetisation. That will only be curbed if the government takes steps to curb the illegal parking of funds abroad, and its round-trip back to India.

Estimating the Size of the Black Economy

Let us now try to make an estimate of the size of the black economy in India. This is not an easy exercise. Estimates of the black income generated every year vary from 25% to 75% of GDP.¹⁵ An authoritative analysis has been made by Prof. Arun Kumar, an eminent economist who was Professor at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning at the Jawaharlal Nehru University. He estimates the black income generation in India to be 62% of GDP. This is fairly close to the estimate made by a report of the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy in 2014 that estimated domestic black money as being equal to 70% of GDP.¹⁶ The GDP for 2016–17 is estimated at Rs 150 lakh crore, so 62% of that would be roughly Rs 93 lakh crore. This then is the size of the black income that was generated in the economy in the year 2016-17. Black wealth would be several times this amount, as it has been accumulating over the years. Even assuming a low figure of say five times, this means black wealth would be around Rs 500 lakh crore.

Let us now make an estimate of the black money in circulation as cash in the economy. It is this ‘black cash’ that the government attempted to demobilise by demonetisation. The Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes in circulation in the economy totalled Rs 15.44 lakh crore. But not all the notes in circulation are a part of the black economy. Thus, for instance, a significant proportion of our GDP—around half, according to CSO estimates—is produced in the informal sector, and around 85% of the population relies on it.¹⁷ While

the incomes in this sector are mostly unrecorded, the dominant part of this is not ‘black’. It is true that the incomes in this sector do not fall into the direct tax net, but then in any case these incomes are too small to pay direct taxes; on the other hand, due to the tax structure of the Indian economy which collects more revenue from indirect taxes rather than direct taxes (70:30), they anyway are subject to indirect taxes.¹⁸ In this sector come the income of farmers and small traders and daily wage workers and small

service providers and other such sections of the population. Most of the transactions in this sector are in cash. Apart from this informal sector, a significant portion of the cash in the economy is in businesses, like petrol pumps, railway stations, airports, etc., and this too is not black. Therefore, of the total currency in circulation, assuming that half was in the informal sector, and of the remaining, at least 50–60% was in businesses as legal currency, that means just around Rs 3 lakh crore would be black money.¹⁹

Table: Estimating Black Money in the Economy

Total GDP of India in 2016	~ Rs 150 lakh crore
Estimated size of Black Economy	62% of GDP
Total amount of Black Income generated every year	Rs 93 lakh crore
Total value of Rs 1,000 and Rs 500 notes (1)	Rs 15.44 lakh crore
Legal currency in circulation in informal economy (2)	~ 50% of (1)
Legal currency in the formal sector (3)	25–30% of (1)
Estimated Black Money in circulation in economy (1–2–3)	20–25% of (1)
Total value of Black Money demonetised	$20 \times 15.44 / 100 =$ ~ Rs 3 lakh crore
Black Money as % of Black Income generated every year	$3 / 93 \times 100 = 3.2\%$

This is the maximum amount that the government was seeking to wipe out by demonetisation—Rs 3 lakh crore. But this amount is just 3% of the total black income that would have been generated in the economy in fiscal 2016-17 (Rs 93 lakh crore), and 0.6% of the black wealth (assuming black wealth to be a low Rs 500 lakh crore). Even if the government had been fully successful in eliminating this Rs 3 lakh crore of black money, it would have eliminated only a very small

fraction of the total black income generated in the economy in 2016-17, and an even smaller fraction of the black wealth.

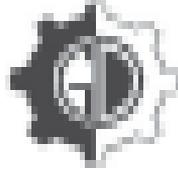
The most fatuous thing about the demonetisation exercise of the Modi Government is that the government has taken no steps to attack the black income generation in the economy or the black wealth accumulated in the economy over the years.

(To be concluded)

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Published on Sunday, November 12, 2017 & Posted on Wednesday November 15, 2017 at Mumbai Patrika Channel, Mumbai GPO-1



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