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Bharat Dogra

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A New Interlocutor

Kuldip Nayar

The Government of India has appointed Dineshwar Sharma, former Intelligence Bureau Chief as interlocutor to find a solution to Kashmir's problems. This is not the first time that such an exercise is being conducted. New Delhi has had interlocutors in the past. Then instead of officials, ministers were appointed so that issue could get urgency as well as an immediate attention. But nothing came out of these exercises.

The Kashmiri leaders wanting more than what New Delhi would offer, there was no meeting point. Talks covered the gamut of problems. But two sides were so distant from each other that the dialogue would not go very far. The Kashmiris want the Valley to be converted into sovereign Islamic republic. This is something which India cannot give because it does not think that Kashmir is a disputed territory. It is considered part of Indian union. I have visited Srinagar as an interlocutor many a times but I could not offer anything near what they wanted.

What has disappointed me is that the disappearance of grey area,

which was visible till a couple of years ago. The stances have hardened so much so that even social contacts between Muslims and Hindus have got snapped. I am sorry to bring in personal example. In the past, Yasin Malik would invite me to his house for dinner and conduct me to his house through the labyrinth of lanes.

True, he has turned what is called a 'separatist'. But I vainly waited for a word from him. I do not believe that he did not know about my presence in Srinagar. The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front he heads has posted his men at the airport to know who comes to the valley. Yasin Malik gets the "separatists" feedback.

I had Yasin's fast unto death broken on the condition that I would personally conduct a probe into human rights violations by the Indian security forces. He agreed to my supervision instead of the Amnesty International probe and broke the fast. We produced a report and found Yasin's allegations mostly correct. The report was quoted widely by Pakistan to the

embarrassment of Indian government. But this does not make it any less significant.

True, Yasin says that he is not an Indian. But our relationship was not on the basis of nationality. Can bitterness snap even personal bonds? Should I presume that I wrongly assumed certain things and that personal relations have no meaning in the face of political exigencies.

To cite another example of how personal relationships are pushed into the background for political purposes, another Kashmiri leader Shabir Shah is a changed person today. He was like my chela (disciple). He was then pro-India. He has changed into a staunch opponent. Yet, I do not know why personal relations should die. Is it the price that I have to pay for a change in Shabir's ideas?

Kashmir, no doubt, requires attention, especially for those who believe in a secular and democratic India. No amount of opposition should swerve them from their commitment. If they change, it means that their earlier stance was only a façade.

This holds good for the entire India. We are in the midst of challenges to the very idea, propounded by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, who won us freedom. It pains me to see that some voices have begun to appreciate the ideas of Nathuram Godse, who killed the Mahatma. Were India to question its ethos, the Muslim-dominated Kashmir would feel insecure. A Kashmiri Muslim engineer, who dropped me at the airport, told how he was suspect even at a liberal place like Bangalore and harassed by the police.

Parties have reduced politics to the identification on the basis of caste and religion. People should assert themselves through liberal organizations or leaders and ensure that the poison of religion and caste does not spread. If the nation fails, Kashmir and many other parts of India may flounder in the muddy waters of religion.

It is in the interest of Kashmiris not to disturb the status quo until they can have something better. This is possible if the three parties, India, Pakistan and the people in Kashmir, come together for a dialogue. New Delhi is not prepared for that because Islamabad has gone back on its promise not to allow its territory to be used by terrorists.

This was also agreed upon when Pakistan was under General Musharraf's rule. He went to Agra and almost signed an agreement with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, until news had leaked, that India's then Information Minister Sushma Swaraj changed the draft agreement omitting Kashmir from the text. Since then the two countries have stayed distant. Musharraf's misadventure at Kargil only has aggravated the matter further.

It must be said to the credit of Atal Behari Vajpayee that he took a bus to Lahore. I was sitting behind him when he showed me New Delhi's telegram which said that several Hindus had been killed near Jammu. He said he did not know how the country would react about his trip to Lahore but he was determined to pick up the thread with Nawaz Sharif. The rest is history.

The Indus Water Treaty can be replaced with another treaty but the consent of Pakistan is necessary.

When it has not been willing to allow getting electricity from the run of the river it is difficult to imagine that it would agree to the use of rivers in the Indus system even though water from them is pouring into the Arabian Sea without being used for either irrigation or hydroelectric projects.

There is a tendency in Pakistan to link everything with Kashmir, which is a complicated problem and it would take many years to solve. The revision of Indus Water Treaty, which can satisfy both the countries, would add to the peace prospects. Let the treaty be discussed separately. The rest can follow. The only point to be taken into account is how the two countries can span the distance between them.

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What It Means To Be Religious

Sandeep Pandey

While there seemed nobody except the Bangladeshi government which was willing to let in the close to four lakh Rohingyas being driven out of Myanmar as a result of ethnic cleansing in Rakhine which had the tacit support of the government there including the famed Aung San Suu Kyi, now thoroughly discredited, an international Sikh charity organisation Khalsa Aid moved in swiftly to set up 'langars' or community kitchens which are traditionally offered in Gurudwaras. Even India, which otherwise has a historic reputation of responding sympathetically to any humanitarian crisis and accommodating all hues of people seeking refuge, due to a right wing government in power turned the extremely impoverished community away on the excuse that they could be a potential threat because of their religion. While the Indian National Human Rights Commission has highlighted the Article 21 of the Constitution upholding Right to Life and Personal Liberty even for the Rohingyas and opposed plans for the deportation of about 40,000 of them living in India, the government is planning to keep them in 'detention centres'.

The Prime Minister celebrated Diwali with soldiers on border, as has become the wont, and Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh lit 1,87,213 diyas or earthen lamps, one in the name of every citizen in Ayodhya at government's expense. PM Narendra Modi must be asked why does he have to rush to the border on every occasion of religious and national importance? Lal Bahadur

Shashtri, a PM his Bhartiya Janata Party holds in higher regard than the members of Nehru-Gandhi family, had given the slogan 'Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan.' Should he also not be visiting some families of farmers whose members have committed suicide or parents of children who died in Baba Raghav Das Hospital, Gorakhpur, which could have been avoided with better health care facilities, instead of demonstrating his militaristic mindset every time.

CM Yogi Adityanath announced a package of Rs 133 crores following up on Rs 350 crores plan declared earlier in June for Ayodhya's development. This colossal waste of public funds on purely religious events violates the secular principle incorporated in the Indian Constitution. More than constitutional, it is morally unacceptable when half the children are malnourished and people can be found begging on every major street crossing of major cities, including the 'smart' ones, and outside temples, mosques and shrines. The left over of the 25,000 litres oil burnt in earthen lamps was being collected by people after the event, possibly to be used for cooking. The oil used was that of mustard and sesame and maybe soyabean too.

Models especially invited from Mumbai dressed up as Ram, Sita and Laxman arrived in a UP government helicopter to create an impression, according to mythology, of Ram arriving after 14 years of exile from Lanka in Pushpak Viman. This use of a state helicopter by artists was

in violation of governmental protocol. It needs to be investigated who authorised its use for this event. The Governor Ram Naik, whose job it is to see that Constitutional propriety is maintained was part of the event, almost hand in glove with the UP government. Very quick to point out any irregularity in the last government he seems to be overlooking some discrepancies in the present one. His Rashtriya Swayamsewak background, which is the ideological parent of BJP, prevents him from being unbiased.

While the Khalsa Aid is winning global accolades, what the UP government has done is only advancing the political agenda of BJP which relies on religious polarisation. Whereas people belonging to Sikh religion are using their private resources for a noble cause, the people engaging in politics as torch bearers of Hindu religion are taking the public resources down the drain. They have brought disgrace to their religion by indulging in pomp and show. It would have been so much better if Yogi had fed 1,87,213 people of Ayodhya a wholesome meal. But there is no concept of feeding people respectfully in Hindu religion like in Sikh religion. The only way somebody is fed is by treating him/her as a beggar. That is why Hindu and other religions have failed to get rid of the practice of begging whereas Sikh beggars are non-existent.

The core universal religious values

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The Dragon Blinks Pragmatic Engagement

D. K. Giri

The Chinese President Xi Jinping, expectedly, emerged stronger after the quinquennial Communist Party Congress last week. The 19th Congress since the Party was founded in 1921 Xi has the prerogative of nominating 70 per cent of the Party's Central Committee, its most powerful apex organ, and would stay in office for a third or even fourth term beyond 2022. This is contrary to Party tradition whereby a successor to the incumbent President is chosen five years before he or she takes office. At this Congress, no such thing happened.

Obviously, India and the world would have to deal with Xi for another decade as he is popular and occupies the exalted position by successfully fighting corruption and consolidating the development plank. In his marathon speech lasting over three and a half hours he adumbrated Chinese agenda in all its dimensions. He talked of the 'Chinese dream' which is interpreted as an ambition of being a world power and building Chinese military as the world's largest one.

Should India be wary of the Chinese 'dream'? True, New Delhi is in an adversarial position with its neighbour as it shares 4,000 kms of borders. Further, China's geo-political approach in the region coupled with its expansionist tendency should bother India.

But let us understand Chinese ideology shaped afresh by Xi who is now mentioned in the Chinese Constitution amended by Congress.

This rare honour was given only to two other leaders: Mao Zedong and Den Xiaoping. Xi's ideology consists of two major objectives: nationalism and capitalism.

How do both affect India? As China's current standing in the world rests on its economic might, capitalism carefully crafted and built by the Communist Party, in its quest for continued growth based on exports, Beijing would look for markets. As European markets are saturated and experiencing slump, India becomes the ultimate market for it.

Having realized this, Xi while visiting India in 2014, had suggested closer relationship with New Delhi. Asserting, "we should aim for expansion of strategic communication among leaders, maintaining border stability, enhancing economic cooperation and people-to-people contact".

No wonder, China has decided to invest US \$85 billion in India and despite popular angst against Beijing's aggressive posturing against its neighbor, Chinese goods continue to flood Indian markets. Will China stake its huge economic benefit from India by engaging in a military confrontation?

The Chinese understand that the success of a country's foreign policy is determined by its economic strengths. Successful economies have greater latitude in shaping an independent foreign policy in an interdependent world, than the weaker economies. As the

economies of China and India become more interdependent, there is correspondingly greater scope for dialogue and cooperation. That is why China adjusted the wide diversities it has with India and adapted its policies at enhancing economic and commercial ties with India.

A charitable as well as progressive view of China's South Asia policy flows from its relations with India in spite of the wars between two countries in the past. China wants to have development of each South Asian country, not only of its own restive areas. It feels development will prevent people from crossing over to other countries and foment trouble. China's investment in Pakistan is based on such an assumption, that Pakistan might go the Afghanistan way, which might exacerbate the unrest in Xinjiang province and Tibet. China-Pakistan economic corridor should cater to the poor and difficult Baluchistan demanding separation. Many Chinese engineers engaged in projects in Baluchistan have been killed as the locals know that development will ironically weaken the will of the people to fight for separation.

The other pillar of ideology is 'nationalism' or 'Chinese Core'. A nationalistic agenda generates anti-India rhetoric in the Chinese Establishment whereby its nationalism has led Chinese forces and border guards to nibble away undefined borders, claiming vast swathes of territory in South China Sea and Japan-claimed Senkaku islands.

In the same vein, Beijing rivals New Delhi's status on Asia's stage. China has made several incursions on the Indo-China borders, Depsang plains in April-May 2013, Chumar in the Western sector in 2014-15, Barahoti area of the middle sector in mid-2016, Doklam face-off in 2017 that lasted for 73 days.

In addition, China has consistently blocked India's entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) which controls global atomic commerce, vetoed the UN declaring Jaishe-e-Mohammad Chief Masood Azar a terrorist and runs its China-Pakistan economic corridor projects through Gilgit-Baltistan which affects India's sovereignty.

More serious, China has encircled India with its 'string of pearls' whereby Beijing will endeavor to expand its naval presence by building civilian maritime infrastructure along the Indian Ocean periphery. Simplistically, it implies access to ports and airfields, expansion and modernization of military forces and fostering diplomatic relations with trading partners.

Importantly, 'string of pearls' in geo-strategic terms refers to the Malacca Strait, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Maldives, Strait of Hormuz and Somalia. It also includes Bangladesh and Myanmar. Pertinently, the Malacca Strait, not far from Nicobar Islands, connects the Indian Ocean with the Pacific Ocean, Malaysia, and Singapore on one side and Indonesia on the other.

Besides, about 80% of Chinese fuel from the Middle East passes through this. From Myanmar, 2,400 kms of gas pipeline has been built by China which also has a military base in Myanmar's Coco Island. Beijing

has invested US \$46 billion in Pakistan's Gwadar port as a part of their joint economic corridor. The Gwadar port is 240 miles away from the Strait of Hormuz which gives an opening to Central Asia.

This port also connects to the Karakoram highway linking it with the Arabian Sea, which is of concern to India. Moreover, China has invested in building Sri Lanka's Hambantota port on its Southeast part. Similarly, it has built a container shipping facility in Chittagong, Bangladesh. It has a military base in Maldives's Masao Atoll.

Undeniably, China's capitalist economy depends on foreign sources for its energy security. It is the largest importer of oil. The sea lines of communication that link the Chinese mainland with ports throughout the Middle East and Africa coasts have become a major source of conflict for China with other countries. True, the 'string of pearls' might be economic in nature but, admittedly, it creates a security dilemma for China and India in the Indian Ocean.

How should India respond to this? One optimistic scenario for India to operate is China's economic growth and development agenda for itself and its neighbors. At any rate, China always had a complex political regime. It cannot be judged in a uni-dimensional way. India should invest a lot more in studying and dealing with China. India has heavily erred in the past. So, going by historical experience, New Delhi cannot be complacent and ignore Beijing's moves. In fact, it should play the Chinese game: Deepen trade and economic links which will deter Beijing from any military adventurism.

Two, India should encircle China with allies that are affected by Beijing and are opposed to its aggressive actions. New Delhi has already invested heavily in diplomacy with countries around China, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Mongolia. It should consolidate its relations with traditional friends like Japan, South Korea and Russia. In South-East Asia new potential allies are Philippines, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam who are wary of China.

Undoubtedly, Chinese nationalism and capitalism would lead to neo-imperialism through domination in trade, military bullying and wherever it can, through territorial expansion. Beijing would not want to jeopardize its economic interest, but the military angle might be used precisely for protecting its economic gains.

Notably, India has moved closer to China's archrival Japan and US. Beijing will be wary of New Delhi's increasing nearness to these countries. It might seek to disengage India from Japan and US and allies of America. India, on its part, is unlikely to do so, given Chinese proximity with Pakistan which aids and abets terrorism against India.

Will China follow the proverbial strategy, "if you cannot beat them, join them"? That is a probable, given Chinese proclivity for guarding its self-interest in lieu of principles and trust. But New Delhi cannot count on this. It has to engage with China pragmatically. We should learn from past mistakes *vis-à-vis* China. Hence, New Delhi should deeply study Sun Tzu's 'The Art of War', the oldest military treaties in the world, in order to deal with China. This calls for a combination of economic might, diplomatic skill and military strategy. Is New Delhi up to it? It better be.

The Unemployment Demon

Neeraj Jain

India is in the grip of a severe unemployment crisis. Its severity can be understood from just a few random statistics from a few recent newsreports:

- *The Hindu*, September 17, 2015: The Uttar Pradesh Government advertised to fill up 368 posts of peon in the State Secretariat. More than 23 lakh applications were received. Among those who applied were 255 Ph.D. holders and 2.22 lakh engineers; thousands of candidates with Masters degree in Commerce, Humanities and Sciences were also among the applicants. The minimum qualifications for the post were education up to 5th standard, and ability to ride a bicycle. The job had a monthly salary of about Rs 16,000.
- *Indian Express*, June 27, 2016: More than 9 lakh candidates applied for 14,000 constable posts in Madhya Pradesh. The applicants included 14,562 post graduates, 9,629 engineers and 12 with a PhD degree.
- *India Today*, January 31, 2017: The West Bengal Group-D Recruitment Board invited applications on-line for recruitment of 6,000 Group D personnel in various categories. More than 25 lakh candidates applied for these posts, including graduates, postgraduates and even PhDs. The job required an educational qualification of Class 7, and

carried a salary of about Rs 16,000.

- *NDTV*, February 10, 2017: More than 92 lakh candidates appeared for the on-line examination conducted by the Railway Recruitment Board to fill up 18,000 vacancies in various categories in the Indian Railways.

Manipulating Data

And yet the Government of India claims that the unemployment rate in the country is very low. According to *Economic Survey 2015–16*, the all-India unemployment rate was only 2.7 percent as per the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) estimates, and 4.9 percent according to the Labour Bureau. This rate is comparable to, and in fact lower than, unemployment rates in the developed countries.

The total labour force in the country (this is the number of people who are employed plus those actively looking for work) was roughly 490 million in 2013.¹ Of this, the Labour Bureau estimates that around 24 million are unemployed (while the NSS estimates unemployment to be only 13.23 million). This is obviously a huge underestimate; the actual unemployment rate in the country is going to be many times more than this figure, because as many as 25 lakh young people are applying for a peon job

in just a single state in the country!

One simple tactic used by the official statisticians to play down the unemployment levels in the country is by reducing the labour force. Note that the number of unemployed is the difference between the labour force and the number of people employed, also called the work force. Now, one simple way of reducing unemployment figures without increasing the number of employed is by reducing the labour force. This is precisely what India's official statisticians have done. Over the period 1983 to 1993–94, India's labour force grew at 2.05 percent per annum, but during the period 1993–94 to 2009–10, it fell to 1.30 percent (Table 1). What can account for the sharp drop in the growth rate of those looking for work? Higher enrolment of children in school would no doubt reduce the size of the labour force, but it would account for only a small fraction of the missing workers. The main reason for this drop is that many workers gave up looking for work because no jobs were available for a long time. They joined the pool of what are called "discouraged workers". The discouraged workers are not included in the unemployed, nor are they included in the labour force, whereas actually they should be included in both.

Let us estimate the labour force in 2009–10 if it had continued to

Table 1: India: Labour Force, Work Force and Unemployment Rate² (in million)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Labour force</i>	<i>Work force</i>	<i>Unemployment Rate</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Growth Rate</i>
1983	308.6	302.8	5.8%		
1993–94	381.9	374.5	7.4%	1983 to 1993–94	2.05%
2009–10	469.9	460.2	9.7%	1993–94 to 2009–10	1.30%

grow at the same rate as in 1983 to 1993–94, that is, at 2.05 percent instead of 1.3 percent (that is, let us include the discouraged workers in our calculation). In that case, the labour force would have been 528 million instead of 469.9 million, and the total number of people unemployed would have gone up to 67.8 million instead of 9.7 million!

Even if we exclude the discouraged workers from our calculations, employment statistics of the Government of India have little meaning. Official statistics

consider any person employed if he/she is engaged in ‘gainful activities’ during the period under study, even if he/she is selling peanuts and does not earn enough to eat two full meals a day. This leads to strange results. Commonsensically, having a job means that a person should be earning enough to be above the poverty line, especially in a country like India where the poverty line is so low that it is a measure of destitution. Now, the Planning Commission estimates that the incidence of poverty in India (even with India’s ridiculously low poverty

line) was 21.9 percent in 2011–12.³ One would therefore expect at least a similar percentage of the labour force to be unemployed. But as mentioned above, *Economic Survey 2015–16* estimates the all-India unemployment rate to be a mere 4.9 percent (Labour Bureau estimate)! Evidently, going by the Government of India’s criteria, one may be earning so little that he/she is considered below the official poverty line, and yet be considered employed. Such is the worth of the government definition of ‘employment’.

Table 2: Formal and Informal Employment in Economy⁴ (in million)

	2009–10
Total Labour Force	460.3
Organised Sector Employment	72.9
of which:	
<i>Formal Employment (1)</i>	30.7
<i>Informal Employment (2)</i>	42.1
Unorganised Sector Employment (3)	387.4
of which:	
<i>Formal Employment (3)</i>	2.3
<i>Informal Employment (4)</i>	385.1
Total Formal Employment (1+3)	33.0
Formal Employment (1+3) as % of Total Employment	7.2%
Total Informal Employment (2+3)	427.2
Total Informal Employment as % of Total Employment	92.9%

Estimating Unemployment Levels in India

The only meaningful jobs in the country are what are called organised sector jobs. This sector includes all units with 10 or more workers if using power and 20 or more workers if not using power. The organised sector accounts for only a small share—15.8 percent—of the total employment in the country (Table 2).

The actual situation of organised sector employment is actually far worse than that suggested by this figure. Indian organised sector firms have adopted a systematic policy of replacing permanent staff with contract or temporary workers, and are also subcontracting out work to smaller units in the informal sector who are able to produce goods at much cheaper rates due to low wage costs. Consequently, the Planning Commission admits that informal employment within the organised sector has been increasing, and today more than 50 percent of the organised sector jobs are informal jobs.⁵

Therefore, actual number of organised workers in the country, what the *Economic Survey 2015–16* calls ‘good jobs’ or formal sector jobs,⁶ where the workers have at least some legal rights such as security of employment, minimum wages, sick leave, compensation for work-related injuries, right to organise, etc., is a very small percentage of the total number of jobs in the economy—they constitute just 7.2 percent of the total employment. The remaining 92.9 percent are informal jobs.

These are jobs with very low wages/earnings. Many of these people do not earn even the minimum daily wage, which itself is barely subsistence wage. In 2004, the Indian Government constituted the National

Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS) under Prof. Arjun Sengupta, to advise on issues related to the country’s unorganised workforce. In its study, NCEUS set an overall minimum of Rs 20 per day per person in 2004–05 as its cut-off for defining the “poor and vulnerable”, and calculated that 77 percent of Indians fell below this cut-off!⁷ That’s a mind-boggling figure.

Most of the people doing these informal jobs—such as fruit sellers selling a few dozen bananas on hand carts, peanut sellers hawking peanuts and other such snacks on bicycles, roadside hawkers selling clothes or other sundry items, scrap collectors collecting old newspapers and scrap from homes, graduates who for want of a job hire autorickshaws for 12 hours every day and join the long queues of autorickshaws at railway stations, sales boys and girls going from house to house selling cosmetics / sarees / books / etc., unorganised sector construction workers working in dangerous conditions at construction sites, farmers toiling day and night in an attempt to extract the maximum possible from their tiny holdings—should actually all be considered as unemployed. The harsh truth is that in India, people take whatever work they can get, regardless of how low the wages/earnings are, for there is no alternative: there is no unemployment allowance for those without jobs. In other words, most of the people in informal employment in the country should actually be considered underemployed, and they should be included in the unemployed.

This means that of the 460 million workforce in the country in 2009–10, at least 40 or 50 percent or even 77 percent—the NCEUS estimate for the poor and vulnerable—should be

considered to be underemployed (that is, unemployed). Add to this the number of people officially unemployed, plus the large number of discouraged workers, and unemployment in the country would reach stratospheric levels.

Article 39 of the Directive Principles of the Constitution directs the Government of India to ensure that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood. Article 41, titled Right to Work, calls upon the government to make effective provision for securing the right to work. And Article 43 directs the State to endeavour to ensure by suitable legislation or economic organisation or in any other way, to all workers, agricultural, industrial or otherwise, work, a living wage, conditions of work ensuring a decent standard of life and full enjoyment of leisure and social and cultural opportunities. So many provisions in the Directive Principles regarding implementing the Right to Work. Even though these provisions are not judiciable, Dr. Ambedkar had made it clear before the Constituent Assembly that the Directive Principles are ‘fundamental to governance’, and all future governments must ‘strive’ to ensure their implementation. It is clear that the extremely high levels of informal employment in the country, and the terrible conditions and low pay in which these informal workers work, are a violation of the Directive Principles, they are a violation of the dreams of the founding fathers of our nation. They would have been aghast to find that on the one hand, so much wealth generation is taking place in the country that it now boasts of the fourth largest number of billionaires in the world, and on the other hand, there is such a huge number of

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When Hate Comes Calling: Fighting Back in India

Duncan Green

Fake news, populism and ethnic and religious hate crimes are not just a US problem. Indian activist and writer Mari Marcel Thekaekara laments the wave of hate engulfing her country, and celebrates some of those who are fighting back

A peace movement? The mere suggestion evokes pitying looks, even from friends. Been there, done that. In the seventies, actually. More accurately, I'm obsessed with an *anti-hate* movement. Because I receive regular reports of lynchings and gruesome murders from friends working on minority rights. Along with complaints that many major Indian newspapers are currently treading carefully when it comes to reporting hate crimes, primarily against Muslims, Christians and Dalits. Perhaps they are doing so because thugs claiming allegiance to the party in power can, and frequently do, come down violently on critics. Last month, Bangalore journalist Gauri Lankesh was gunned down for speaking unpleasant truth to power. She was the latest in a series of such murders.

Journalists publishing stories of hate crimes, are dubbed 'presstitutes' by the Hindutva lobby. Hindus protesting at the subversion of Hinduism are derided as 'sickulars'. They have an army of trolls paid to rave, rant and abuse any writer who dares to criticise the current regime.

But it's not only journalists and intellectuals challenging the ideology of the larger family of hate spewing organisations, called the Sangh Parivar, who are at risk. Muslims, Dalits, Christians and

protesting Hindus are also targeted thanks to a growing climate of hate and the warped, alarming belief that if you are not Hindu, you are not Indian. Dalits who, though classified as Hindus, have been brutally murdered by mobs known as "cow vigilantes" – a euphemism for thugs and criminals strutting across India with impunity because they claim to be protecting the cow, sacred to many Hindus. These Dalit victims are condemned by the accident of their birth into a particular caste to remove all dead animals, from cats to cows. There is no choice, it's a caste-designated job. They are paid to dispose of the animals. They skin the carcasses to sell to the leather industry. This is the "crime" for which many young dalit men have been brutalised and murdered.

But for the most part, Hindus and Muslims learnt the art of peaceful co-existence. Communities mostly live separate social lives, but their livelihoods are often dependent on each other. People send each other sweets at festivals, work together amicably. Muslims fought fiercely for freedom in the Independence movement. They are Indians. They opted to remain in India during partition, because it's where they were born and where their ancestors lived for centuries.

In the last two decades however, we've witnessed manufactured hate being spread around India, in a

chillingly, systematic, venal process. There's been a sustained slow release of poisonous lies, a disinformation campaign to win majority minds and hearts by instilling fear, fiddling with facts. Christians are converting illiterate, poor Hindus, they say. Fact? The Christian population has remained static at 2%. Neither two hundred years and the might of the British Empire, nor hordes of evangelising missionaries succeeded in seriously converting India.

Muslims have a dozen children each, funded by Saudi Arabia to change the demographics and make Hindus a minority in their own country is another claim. Fact? The decadal rate of population growth for Muslims is the lowest it has ever been in India's history.

Sadly facts have little or no role to play when it comes to hate mongering. The shrillness has reached deafening decibels. But finally, more and more people are speaking out against this manufactured hate.

Harsh Mander, a former civil servant resigned in protest after the 2002 killing of over 2000 Muslims in Gujarat. Last month he led a pilgrimage to atone for the crimes against minorities. His 'caravan' travelled across India to visit families who'd had their loved ones brutally tortured, mutilated, then

murdered. Of the 78 bovine-related (cows and buffalos) hate crimes since 2010, 97% occurred after Prime Minister Modi's government came to power in 2014. In 46% of the cases, the police filed charges against the victims/survivors.

Hope comes too, when prominent author Nayantara Sahgal writes, 'it is unbearable to watch my religion being

transformed into what it was never meant to be by people who call themselves Hindus, but practice a brutal, militant creed of their own that drives them to lynch defenceless innocent Indians, pump bullets into those who question their creed, and enter a train armed with knives to stab to death a fifteen-year-old boy who is returning to his village after his Eid shopping in Delhi''.

Then there is Siddharth Varadarajan, the Founding Editor of India's fast growing online newspaper The Wire. His paper has consistently spoken out against the hate campaign and against corruption in high places. His latest target, Jay Shah, the son of powerful politician Amit Shah, seen as many to be the force behind Modi's throne, has earned him a £1.5million lawsuit for defamation.

I salute Harsh Mander, Nayantara Sahgal and Siddharth Varadarajan, who put their lives on the line to stand up for justice, for the idea of India.

Mander's group seeks to begin a healing process. To form peace and reconciliation committees all over India so locals can intervene *before* violence starts. We need innovative, effective solutions to stop the hate campaign

to prevent the disintegration of India. And we need all Indians to muster the kind of passion that emerges at an India-Pakistan cricket match, to stop the lies and the divisive disinformation that is tearing the country apart. Mander's pilgrimage ended symbolically, in Porbandar,

Gandhi's birthplace. It was an immensely moving moment. As people sprinkled petals in the room Gandhi was born in, they said, 'We are all Gandhi'. That, surely, is a good place to start reclaiming the idea of India, for which Gandhi lived and died.

Disturbing Questions About Pesticide Poisoning

Bharat Dogra

The Times of India reported on October 4 from Yavatmal district of Maharashtra that eighteen farmers were killed due to inhalation of profefonos, a pesticide used on cotton, while 467 other persons affected by pesticide poisoning were admitted in government hospitals in recent weeks. This is very disturbing news, a very big tragedy, and yet this has not received the importance it clearly deserves so that important lessons can be drawn from this.

One question that has been raised is that while pesticide poisoning cases were taking place in such large numbers why adequate attention was not drawn at an early stage so that preventive action could be taken in time to avoid many cases of poisoning. As it is this district is already on the radar of the government as a particularly sensitive district due to the large number of farmers' suicides taking place in this district, perhaps the highest among all the districts of India.

In such a sensitive district surely administrative mechanisms should have been well in place to take strong preventive action as soon as a disturbing trend regarding pesticide

poisoning emerged. However it is clear that no such adequate preventive action was taken by the administration till the poisoning cases had increased beyond about 400 cases or so which is a very high number.

Another disturbing question is regarding the changes that have been taking place particularly after the spread of genetically modified cotton or Bt cotton, which has made farming more risky and hazardous. The use of dangerous agri-chemicals has been increasing instead of decreasing as was promised at the time of the promotion of GM crops initially.

If conditions have already become so hazardous one shudders to think of what will happen once GM food crops are also introduced and as is well-known already very high power efforts are being by made by very resourceful and persistent lobbyists to achieve this in the form of obtaining approval for cultivation of GM Mustard.

These are very dangerous times for our agriculture and we need to very alert to protect our farmers and farming from huge and irreversible hazards.

High Hazards and Eco-Costs of Red Wine

One of the most widely spread myths in recent years has been that wine and particularly red wine can have some important health benefits. This myth helped to keep high the revenues of the liquor industry at a time when growing consciousness about the adverse impacts of hard liquor was leading to a reduction in their consumption among some sections. But the reality of the high hazards and eco-costs of wine including red wine is now coming out from several sources.

We may start with the simple fact that the alcohol content in wine including red wine is two to six times higher than in beer, more generally it is about three times higher. The alcohol content of red wine ranges from 8 to 18 per cent. The alcohol content of beer ranges generally from 2 to 9 per cent, it is more commonly 4 to 5 per cent. To make a further distinction, the alcohol content of wines ranges from 8 to 14 per cent while the alcohol content of fortified wines ranges from 16 to 22 per cent. When the alcohol content of wines is so much higher than beer (and of course it is the same ethyl alcohol) then of course it follows that people can get more easily drunk on wine and also that this can be more addictive. In fact the chances of people getting addicted on wine, particularly red wine, are higher as their health benefits have been widely propagated and so many people including youths believe that taking a little extra red wine will not harm them. I have myself seen very well progressing individuals getting ruined when

their starting with a little red wine eventually turned into addiction.

The *Telegraph* (UK) reported on 1 December 2014 in a news item titled "Drinking a glass of wine is the same as downing three shots of Vodka," "Enjoying a glass of wine after work does the same harm as drowning three shots of vodka, the head of Public Health England has warned as he said alcohol was becoming the silent killer of working class Britons. Duncan Selbie said that deaths from liver disease of working age people have increased by 500 per cent since the 1970s - many arrive home, pour a glass (of wine) and have no idea how much wine they are drinking.

Later Nicola Harley reported in the *Telegraph* (UK) dated 7.1.2016, "A landmark report by Chief Medical Officer Dame Sally Davies due to be published on Friday will destroy the long-held belief that red wine can cut the risk of cancer, heart disease and memory loss when drunk in moderation. In the first overhaul of alcohol guidelines for two decades, doctors will reportedly warn that there is no 'safe level' of alcohol consumption and drinking just a small amount may in fact increase the risk of some cancers."

The *Independent* (UK) reported on the same day, "Red wine's supposed health benefits are set to be rubbished by government experts, according to reports. The first alcohol guidelines shaking since 1995 will reportedly say that even a glass of red wine a day could increase the risk of breast cancer by 13 per cent."

Ella Pickover reported in the *Independent* in a news item titled 'Red wine increases cancer risks, but 9 out of 10 persons are not aware of the dangers, "Nine out of ten people are not aware that drinking can increase a person's chances of getting cancer, a poll suggests. The latest evidence suggests that the claimed benefits of drinking red wine for heart health are less than previously thought and are outweighed by the harmful effects alcohol has on cancer risks."

Even some of those who claimed some health benefits for red wine had to admit that same benefits can be derived by eating grapes and berries, while others said that the benefits can be derived from better exercise, while at the same avoiding the several hazards of red wine.

A report by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence advised middle-aged people "there is no safe limit of alcohol consumption."

Earlier a study published in *Alcohol and Alcoholism* found that drinking wine could increase the risk of breast cancer.

Moderate consumption can also disrupt sleeping patterns and pose serious dangers when taken alongside certain medications.

Red wine is made by crushing and fermenting dark coloured whole grapes. The process by which red wine is made also allows for lectins to possibly remain in the drink.

Lectins are being probed for their association with several serious health problems.

Apart from serious health hazards various aspects of making wine are associated with heavy eco-costs. The *Economist* reported some time back that it takes 960 liters of water to make a single liter of wine (based on data from Water Footprints Network). Decanter magazine pointed out in a review of the eco-costs of the wine industry, "Synthetic fungicides, herbicides and fertilizers, non-degradable materials and environmentally harmful have been integral to the cultivation, packaging and transportation of our beloved nectar!" The San Joaquin Valley in California known for its 109 vineries is also known for its heavy load of smog-forming gases. Community Research and Development Information Service reported - Europe's vineries are heavy polluters. The EU wine industry releases considerable amounts of polluted wastewater into the river systems, in addition to producing solid organic waste that is often mishandled similarly.

The world vineyard area is spread over 18.5 million acres. The produce here is used in highly concentrated form to produce wine. This takes away a lot of land and water which is increasingly very much needed for producing staple food. Migrant workers in many vineyards are exploited badly. As much as 274 million hectoliters of wine is being produced in a year and consumed too, but its implications for health, environment, food security and overall well-being need to be understood clearly, overcoming the myths spread by vested interests.

– **Bharat Dogra**

(Continued from Page 3)

are compassion, large heartedness, tolerance and empathy. While the Khalsa Aid has amply demonstrated these, their Hindutva counterparts have displayed their sectarian tendencies. The Sikhs associated with Khalsa Aid are definitely religious who also don't discriminate on the basis of religion, race, caste, etc. They have provided succor in 2005 earthquake, including to Hindus, 2009 in Swat crisis and after terror attack in Manchester earlier this year. Even though Yogi has pompously declared that now there is Ram Rajya established in UP, only the second time in history, in which there will be no discrimination on the basis of caste, religion, etc. but it is no secret that RSS-BJP thrives on anti-Muslim propaganda and misadventure. They cannot be called religious even though Yogi Adityanath, being the Mahant of Gorakhnath temple in Gorakhpur wears religious outfit. Performing rituals in not being religious, but living the universal values is. The RSS-BJP is merely interested in politics of symbolism. People indulging in politics in the name of religion can at best be described as pseudo-religious.

With the emergence of RSS and coming to power of BJP in various states and at the centre we've witnessed more hate crimes, targetting of Muslims and dalits and subjecting them to lynching, curb on freedom of expression and in general creation of an atmosphere of religious intolerance. Actually this is acting against the spirit of religious values and RSS-BJP are doing serious damage to the fabric and image of Hindu religion in the world. From that perspective they are, in reality, anti-religion.

(Continued from Page 8)

underemployed and unemployed in the country.

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Killer Aadhar Card

I begin this note using the word “killer” for Aadhar Card as millions of people are being prevented from getting pensions, including senior citizens from the age of 60 to 90-95 years, and also food grains under National Food Security Act of the government, due to the decision of the government linking the Aadhar Card with everything like bank account, pensions, cheap rations from ration shops, and so on. Old aged people in urban areas are one of the biggest sufferers as they are finding it difficult to draw their pension from banks. Earlier, pension to old, poor, disabled and to BPL families was being released by the government in cash but now it is being released through banks to avoid duplication and fake beneficiaries. Bank accounts have been linked with Aadhar Card. Poor people who do hard work with their hands and senior citizens in the age group of 60 to 90-95 years are suffering because of this, as after standing in long queues in the banks, they come back empty handed as their thumb impressions does not match.

Under the National Food Security Act, rations were earlier being supplied to the beneficiaries without Aadhar Card, but now the government has linked it to Aadhar Card. The government linked the Aadhar Card of the head of the beneficiary family with their ration card. But when the beneficiary goes now for getting rations, the dealer is insisting for Aadhar Card of each beneficiary in the family and therefore denying rations to them. As a result of this, poor people are being denied of cheap rations

and are consequently dying of hunger. Such deaths due to denial of foodgrains by dealers in absence of Aadhar Card have been reported in States such as Bihar, Odhisa and West Bengal. Recently, a girl died in Jharkhand due to starvation as her family was denied ration as her ration card was not linked with Aadhar card.

I do not understand what is the benefit of this Aadhar Card to this government. It has made the life of every citizen in the country troublesome and miserable. The biggest impact is on 70 percent of our population which relies on food subsidies and other benefits that the government provides to them. One major point of contention over making Aadhar Card compulsory for providing benefits and subsidies to people is that it contradicts the Supreme Court’s ruling in 2015 which stated that Aadhar can only be a voluntary decision of the individual, and that as long as a person is eligible to avail of these benefits and subsidies, the government cannot deny him/her those benefits. A survey conducted by Andhra Pradesh Government found that 50 percent of respondents cited Aadhar as a reason for missing out subsidies and benefits. Yet the Government has forced Aadhar cards on every citizen. Further, the manner in which the Aadhar Act was passed in Parliament by introducing it as a money bill in Lok Sabha so that the Rajya Sabha would not be able to vote on it, also exhibited the intention of the Government, which the entire country must have judged.

– **Sharad Yadav**

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‘Vanishing’ Tribes of Andaman & Nicobar Islands

Chandra Bhal Tripathi

Recently I noticed a post by Sarah Burrows of Survival International written some months ago that said: **“Jarawa Hunter-Gatherers Say They Don’t Want to Be Part of Our World.** Jarawa are being forced into civilisation and treated like animals in a zoo. Like the Hadza of East Africa, the Jarawa hunter-gatherers of the Andaman Islands also face extinction, thanks to the ever-expanding nature of agriculture and civilisation. To add insult to injury, a highway has been built ...”

I wonder how these seemingly professional documentary makers have been permitted to make documentaries on the tribes that were earlier known as ‘primitive’ and now described as the ‘particularly vulnerable tribal groups’. In the past some foreigners visited the interior tribal areas and made films with a commercial motive. When I visited A&N islands for the first time in April 1978 with Shri Bhola Paswan Shastri, the first Chairman of the Commission for SC & ST, we could visit only two ‘primitive’ groups, viz., the Great Andamanese on the Strait Island and the Onges on the Little Andaman Island. Due to turbulence of waves our motorboat (the Chief Commissioner’s motorboat) could not land on the Jarawa territory. Later we flew to Car Nicobar and visited the sturdy Mongoloid Nicobarese people who had all been converted to Christianity. There had been no contact with the Negrito group of the two Sentinel Islands. Another ‘primitive’ group, the Mongoloid Shompens, lived far away in the farthest island of the Nicobar

group of islands which was only 70 miles away from the tip of Sumatra island of Indonesia.

We are lucky that the famous British social anthropologist AR Radcliffe-Brown went to the Andaman Islands in 1906–08. His study The Andaman Islanders (1922) provides valuable benchmark information about the Great Andamanese people who were at that time divided into 12 tribes with each of them having a distinct dialect and the total population of 600 (if I remember correctly). During our visit in April 1978 only one out of 29 Great Andamanese people was left with Negrito characters due to very high degree of miscegenation, particularly during the Japanese occupation. There were only 102 Onges left on the Little Andaman Island and the population of the Jarawas spread into two adjoining islands of Middle Andaman was estimated to be about 500 on the basis of the sustaining capacity of the forests within which they wandered.

The Jarawas were in the stage of food gathering and hunting and were highly suspicious of any outsiders. As soon as they would notice a boat coming towards their island they would come out with poison-tipped arrows and shoot. The first contact was made by a team of the Port Blair station of Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI) led by its Superintending Anthropologist, Dr. TN Pandit, who was treated almost like an untouchable by the local bureaucrats led by ex-Army Chief

Commissioner (now the head of the Union Territory is designated as Lt. Governor) and an IAS Chief Secretary. Anthropologists have always been in conflict with the generalist administrator there. The credit for contacting the Jarawas goes to a Sikh Dy. SP Bakhtawar Singh who had joined the local police service as a Head Constable long ago. He possessed tremendous commonsense and waved white handkerchiefs to indicate friendship. The team left some cooked food like rice and banana on the shore. The Jarawas did not show up but the next morning it was found that the food had been picked up. The story is authentically narrated in a documentary captioned ‘Man in Search of Man’ produced by AnSI in 1974. It was shown to us.

During our first visit in 1978 we had heard of the plan of a Grand Trunk Road through the Jarawa territory and were dismayed by it. In the report of the Chairman’s visit, drafted by me, we opposed it and indicated the proper policies for dealing with the ‘primitive’ tribes of the Union Territory. We also discussed the wrong policies being pursued by the local administration in dealing with these ‘primitive’ groups. The Onges had already been spoiled by the administration and the wrong policy of settling Bangladeshi Hindu refugees in a part of Little Andaman island leading to constant friction between them and the Onges. It was funny that the local authorities thought it fit to dress up Onge women in imported skirts with English inscriptions on sex and the

like. The reason for draping the Onge women in skirts was the imminent visit of the then stern Prime Minister Morarji Desai who the authorities thought would be very angry if he found this tribal group in a naked condition. In an egalitarian society the administration had introduced the concept of Raja and hierarchy completely alien to them and the henchmen of the administration, dressed in pants and shirts, were brought to Delhi for the Republic Day parade as 'museum specimens'. The Commission's report containing policy suggestions was sent to the Prime Minister and the Home Minister. I don't know about the fate of that document.

I got two more opportunities to visit A&N islands in 1982 and 1984 with the Parliamentary Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. I understand that subsequently some young anthropologists have been able to establish greater rapport with these 'primitive' tribal groups and even learnt their language/dialect. I wonder how this lady (Sara Burrows) was talking with the Jarawas and if she had been able to establish enough rapport with them as to learn their language. I do, however, appreciate her concern for the Jarawas.

It is interesting and worthwhile narrating some of my experiences with Jarawas in 1984. After my work with the Parliamentary Committee was over I accompanied Prof. LP Vidyarthi of Ranchi University and Dr TN Pandit to the Jarawa territory. The Administration had launched a programme of visiting the Jarawas on every full moon day, leaving cooked rice and banana on the shore. Out of excitement these naked people

would jump into the boat to grab the food, allow the visitors to stay on the shore for about 15 minutes, they were not allowed to transgress into their territory further in the interior and were supposed to go back to their boat soon. We were warned not to wear any clothes except underwear, no vest (baniyan) else they would tear the clothes off out of excitement. One could not wear spectacles due to fear of their being broken. The Jarawas who have supple hairless bodies would pluck the hairs on the bodies of the 'civilised' people, wondering what objects these were. Due to false propaganda by colonialists and administrators these children of nature were dubbed as 'ferocious' only because they would come out with bows and arrows if they found outsiders trying to poach their limited natural resource of livelihood. Personally I found the Jarawas to be extremely friendly people. For two decades I had been suffering from lumbosacral spondylitis and had started developing a stooping posture. Suddenly I felt a painful jerk as a Jarawa adult had jumped onto my back and was holding me tightly. Another Jarawa man came and sat on my lap. Being Negrito they are a shorter version of the typical blacks. An extreme case of friendliness was evinced when a woman, with marked steatopygia like the Bushmen and the Hottentot, put her infant in my hands and wanted me to fondle it. In the modern Indian society women would never do that faced with a stranger and would rather apply a black kohl to the infant to protect it from the evil eye. When I returned to Port Blair my story was an absolutely new and incredible one for the bureaucrats and the local Station Director of All India Radio requested me to broadcast a talk on my experiences with the Jarawas.

I regret that in 1997 I could not avail of the offer of National Geographic when I visited them in Washington DC and they wanted me to take up a project with an initial grant of USD 20,000. I was already 67 with commitments to family and it was not feasible for me to go and live in the jungles with these 'primitive' tribal groups to do authentic anthropological field work. Had it come a few decades earlier I would have jumped at it. But serving in the Government, though in the Constitutional organisation for the SC&ST for 37 years, had already made me useless (to quote, Dr Ram Manohar Lohia, 'nikamma' when I had spent only three years in government service). I also did not believe in 'cut and paste' research or depending on unemployed young field staff of dubious credentials. Let us hope that in our misguided notion of 'civilizing' the particularly vulnerable tribal groups of these verdant islands we don't prove to be the cause of their disappearance from the earth in not a too distant future.

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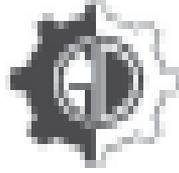
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