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It's Kashmir again
Kuldip Nayar

Sharad Rao (1940-2016)
Qurban Ali

Dalit Uprising and After - II
Subhash Gatade

**Neoliberal assault
on knowledge:**
Madhu Prasad

Nuclear weapons in South Asia

Editor :
G. G. Parikh

Managing Editor : Guddi

D-15, Ganesh Prasad,
Naushir Bharucha Marg,
Mumbai - 400 007.

Email : janataweekly@gmail.com

Shameless act by UP Government

Sandeep Pandey

When on August 1 the Supreme Court ordered eviction of official bungalows allotted to six former chief ministers of Uttar Pradesh within two months, the UP government instead of complying with the order brazenly decided to amend the Uttar Pradesh Ministers (Salaries, Allowances and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1981. The 2016 amendment says that a government residence shall be allotted to a former chief minister of state, at his/her request, for lifetime, on payment of such rent as may be determined from time to time by the Estate Department. Security requirement of former CMs has been given as a justification for this action.

Now security threat perception changes over time. As a former CM a threat to his/her life is likely to reduce. For example, among the six past CMs who would have been affected by the SC order if the amendment was not introduced, Narayan Dutt Tiwari probably doesn't face the kind of threat which requires any special arrangement for him. Hence giving a privilege for lifetime just based on one-time security assessment is not justified and is frittering away public resources.

Moreover, when an underprivileged person applies for housing under any urban or rural poor government housing scheme he/she has to submit an affidavit that he/she doesn't own any other house anywhere. Shouldn't there be a similar clause for former CMs if they were being provided with government housing lifetime? If they have their own house then at some point in time based on security threat assessment they should be asked to move into their own house. Even a former Prime Minister is only allowed to retain his/her official residence up to ten years after retirement.

It doesn't make sense to award a house for lifetime to a former CM or for that matter to anybody including a former President or a Vice President, who enjoy such a privilege at present. It is quite likely that after his/her death the relatives and followers would ask the house to be converted into a museum and then it will be occupied forever.

Another Bill was introduced to keep certain influential sections of society happy and more importantly so that it would not appear as if the government was worried only about

privileged former chief ministers. No need to say that the present CM also stands to benefit from this. The Allotment of Houses Under Control of the Estate Department Bill, 2016 was introduced and passed to provide houses to journalists, political parties, Speaker and Deputy Speaker of Legislative Assembly, gazetted officials, officers of judicial services and trusts. Among these except for trusts, who'll be charged market rent, rest all will have to pay 'such a rate as may be prescribed.' This is blatant misuse of power as Estate Department can prescribe arbitrarily low rents depending on how well connected the occupant is.

The government has also used the opportunity to introduce another amendment in the Uttar Pradesh Ministers (Salaries, Allowances and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act to increase the salaries and other benefits for CM and ministers. The basic salary of the CM has gone up from Rs. 12,000 per month to Rs. 40,000. With a 40% increase in gross salary the CM will now take home Rs. 1.4 lakhs. This is in addition to the Rs. 75,000 salary which he gets as a legislator. It is not clear when there was already an increase in the salaries of legislators in 2015, what was the need to increase the salary of CM's post? In a state where the daily wages in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme are merely Rs. 161 per day, that too up to a maximum of 100 days a year, and Samajwadi pension scheme grants Rs. 500 per month to a needy family, it is splurging public money at the cost of poor.

Dr. Rammanohar Lohia, whom the government members revere like a legend, has famously said that difference between the income of

(Continued on Page 3)

Between The Lines

It's Kashmir again

Kuldip Nayar

A few years ago when I persuaded Yasin Malik, the first militant in the valley of Kashmir, to give up his fast unto death, his demand was that the International Amnesty should visit the valley to verify the violation of human rights. He broke the fast when I gave an undertaking that I would myself head a team to Srinagar to prepare a report on the violations of human rights.

Today that kind of confidence has gone. The Hurriyat has refused to meet the delegation because the Hurriyat is not sure whether the delegation can deliver. There is yet another reason. The Hurriyat wants to rehabilitate itself in the eyes of Kashmiris, who have gone beyond the stage of talks. They want a separate, sovereign country. And they feel that the Hurriyat failed them in the past because it sought solution within the Indian union.

Home Minister Rajnath Singh of the ruling Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) headed the delegation. The Home Minister was justified in saying that the Hurriyat, refusal went against the spirit of Kashmiriyat, which disseminated message of love and harmony. The Hurriyat does not seem to recognise that. It gives little importance to the fact that the ruling party came to power through free ballot box, the democratic way of measuring support in the country. The BJP has secured a majority in the 543-member Lok Sabha on its own, with no alliance before or after the polls. On the other hand, the

Hurriyat is only a combination of three factions. One is led by Yusuf Raza Gillani, who still wants accession to the Islamic state of Pakistan, the other by Yasin Malik and the third by Shabir Shah.

Gillani is their leader because he represents anti-India feelings on the one hand and the Islamic content on the other.

My feeling is that at least two of them have become irrelevant in the present situation in the valley. They still prefer a settlement through a dialogue. The youth have, however, gone back to gun because they do not find either Yasin Malik or Shabir Shah delivering what they want, that is Azadi. The gun is no solution either.

Over the years the oil producing Islamic nations' organization has lost its importance in India. Even the Muslim population, some 25 million cares little about what it says. Therefore, it was not surprising that the Indian media did not even report that the OIC had asked for referendum in Kashmir. The Muslim countries are themselves to blame for this because they blatantly support Pakistan, just because it is a Muslim country.

Unlike Pakistan, where the last word is with the army chief, India is ruled by parliament. The Hurriyat has insulted it. To insult it is to insult the Indian people. It was the suggestion by the CPI(M) that the delegation

went. Yaechuri, the party's secretary, was insistent that the talks should begin with the Gillani group. Raising the anti-India slogans when the delegation reached Gillani's residence may be helpful in placating the hardcore. But it does not address the core of the problem. Raj Nath Singh has made it clear that Kashmir was an integral part of India and will remain so. This has put an end to the dialogue on Kashmir that Pakistan has been relentlessly demanding. Where do we go from here? There is no option to talks. Even a limited war can become the nuclear one.

What New Delhi has to appreciate is that the Kashmiris' desire to distance themselves from India may not be considered in any meaningful transfer of power from New Delhi to Srinagar. Yet the impression that the Kashmiris rule themselves has to be sustained. The National Conference waged a long war to get rid of Maharaja Hari Singh and had an icon like Sheikh Abdullah to provide a secular and democratic rule to the state. But the party suffered defeat in the assembly polls because it was seen too close to New Delhi.

The People's Democratic Party (PDP) won because its founder, Mufti Mohammad Sayyed, kept distance from New Delhi, without alienating it. The Kashmiris voted for him because he gave them a feeling of defiance. Omar Farooq Abdullah had to pay the price of National Conference's image of being pro-Delhi. Kashmir's link with India is too close to challenge it beyond a point. Still the opposition, however small, gives the Kashmiris a vicarious satisfaction of defying New Delhi.

Kashmir feels strongly about New

Delhi's step-motherly treatment meted out to the language. And it is generally believed that it is languishing in neglect because Urdu is considered the language of Muslims. If New Delhi were to own and encourage Urdu, the Kashmiris would have at least one reason less to feel aggrieved.

People are generally poor like the rest of India and they want jobs which they realize will come through only development, including tourism. But they are not themselves picking up the gun or any other weapon to drive militants out. One, they are afraid of them and, two, there is a feeling that what the militants are trying to do is to give them an identity. Therefore, the criticism that there is no resistance to the militants from within the valley should be understandable because it is part of alienation.

I still believe that the 1953 agreement which gave India the control of defence, foreign affairs and communications can improve part of the situation in the state. The Kashmiri youth who are angry over the state's status as well the situation can be won over by the assurance that the entire Indian market is available to them for business or service.

But this alone may not do. New Delhi will have to withdraw all the acts relating to the fields other than defence, foreign affairs and communications. The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act which was promulgated some 25 years ago to meet the extraordinary situation in the state is still in operation. Were the government to withdraw the act, it would placate the Kashmiris on the one hand and make the security forces more responsible on the other.

(Continued from Page 2)

poor and rich should not be more than ten times. Akhilesh Yadav is now earning 40 times more than a daily wage (MNREGA) worker, whose funding source has presently dried up, and 400 times more than a Samajwadi pensioner.

Mayawati was criticised for having built her own statue. Now Akhilesh Yadav has got his portrait installed in the Assembly in the series of former CMs. Is he already preparing for retirement?

Akhilesh Yadav should take lesson from his party's MLA from Balha in District Bahraich, Bansidhar Bouddh. The dalit MLA still lives very simply. He has a mud house which collapsed in recent floods. He and his wife Lajjawati farm their agricultural fields and tend their cattle themselves without any help. Bansidhar used to have only a second hand motorcycle till recently. Now he is a Minister but still there is no change in his lifestyle except that he has a government vehicle.

In a democracy Bansidhar is an ideal people's representatives and not Akhilesh Yadav, who has promoted lavish and feudal culture for ministers in addition to being a symbol of dynastic politics. Bansidhar represents politics as a service. Akhilesh Yadav represents politics as aggrandisement. People are going to prefer representatives like Bansidhar over Akhilesh Yadav. As soon as that happens politics will fulfill its real role and the idea of democracy will be realised. As public funds would be properly utilised the benefits of development will reach the poor. Right now it the politics represented by Akhilesh Yadav which sustains the disparity and inequity.

Sharad Rao (1940-2016)

Qurban Ali

Veteran trade unionist and socialist leader Sharad Rao died in Mumbai on September 1, 2016, after a two-year fight with chronic pancreatic cancer. He was 76. The aggressive union leader breathed his last at Nanavati Hospital in Vile Parle. He is survived by his wife Shanta Rao, son Shashank and daughter Shilpa. Mr. Rao credited for uniting over a dozen labour unions under his leadership controlled a large chunk of the Mumbai public transport and civic services system through the BEST Workers Union, Municipal Mazdoor Union and Mumbai Auto rickshawmen's Union and several others which were part of the Hind Mazdoor Kisan Panchayat.

Son of a bus conductor, Sharad Rao was born on February 9, 1940, in a family hailing from Talapady-Kannur in Dakshina Kannada and was relocated to Mumbai after Independence. As a youth, he worked closely with socialist leader George Fernandes, and took charge of the unions after Mr. Fernandes graduated to national politics in Delhi but the two parted ways when Fernandes joined the NDA led by Bharatiya Janata Party. He was also a close associate of many other prominent trade union leaders of left and socialist parties.

While the working Mumbaikars may only remember him for his frequent calls to strikes by the auto rickshaw drivers, Mr. Rao's contribution to improving the living

standards of the workers has been invaluable. He brought together the labour class from the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, Brihanmumbai Electricity Supply and Transport Undertaking, Chatrapati Shivaji International Airport, Thane Municipal Corporation, Maharashtra State Electricity Board, and the Hind Mazdoor Sabha, while heading the auto rickshaw, hawkers' and gumasta unions.

Over the last four decades, he fought hard for an increase in wages of the sanitation workers in the BMC, ensuring permanent jobs for thousands of contract workers at Mumbai airport. He pushed for the auto rickshaw drivers to receive constant fare hike, stepped up the pressure on the BMC to issue licenses to more hawkers, and pushed for an effective implementation of the national policy on urban street vendors.

In 2000, Rao led BMC workers in a major strike over festival bonuses, disrupting essential civic services, including hospitals and public transport. After his union members dared to shut water supply to the city for two days, the high court stepped in and threatened to have the army take over the city administration.

In September 2012, the Rao-led rickshaw union had threatened to go on strike for a fare revision. Though there was no strike,

Mumbaikars had to accept the auto fare increase. However, in 2013, he refused to join a trade union strike claiming the issues of autorickshaw, taxi drivers were being addressed by the government and that of the civic workers by the BMC administration.

While the upper-class Mumbaikars were worried for the commotion hawkers caused in posh neighbourhoods, Mr. Rao's agitation in April 2013, ensured that the BMC did not evict hawkers overnight even though the Centre had passed the Street Vendors Bill, 2013, for their protection. Under his leadership, wages of the sanitation workers reached Rs. 25,000 per month from the initial Rs. 80 over two decades ago.

"He was the last of the generation of leaders who intensely fought for the cause of the workers and the labourers. There will not be another leader like him," said Prashant Kakade, his long-time friend and president of Federation of Aviation Workers.

Union leaders said Mr. Rao's loss is irreparable. "We will never be able to find a replacement for someone who ensured workers' living conditions improved and their families remained intact. He fought hard to ensure that the auto drivers work in a third shift and run share trips in Mumbai," said Govind Kamtekar, who had been a close associate since 1987. Labour union

leaders fear Mr. Rao's loss will leave a gaping hole as Bharatiya Janata Party-ruled States push for aggressive labour reforms. The labour movement suffered a setback following the death of Sharad Rao.

“At a time when there is so much twisting and tweaking with labour rules and laws, and stress is just on bringing in business, his presence will be felt more,” said Pradeep Menon, union leader and a friend since Mr. Rao's early days as labour leader at Hindustan Unilever Limited.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis expressed grief at the demise of Rao and recalled his lifelong struggles for the rights of the common workers through his different unions. “In Mr. Rao we have lost an aggressive leader for the organised and the unorganised workers. Starting his struggles with the Bombay Labour Union, Mr. Rao had a great influence on workers. This is a big loss to the labour movement. He had a huge impact on the working class. He stood up for all when they needed him till his last breath. He will be remembered by all.” Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said. Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu also condoled the demise of Sharad Rao whom he described as a great union leader and a longtime friend.

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar also condoled death of Sharad Rao in Mumbai. In his condolence message, Kumar described the deceased as veteran socialist and leader of the workers who was heading a number of effective labourers' unions. Rao gave leadership to 'Greater Mumbai

Electric Supply and Transport Union', 'Mumbai Auto Rikshaw Union' and Labourers of Mumbai Municipal Corporation. The departed leader always used to think for welfare of labourers he said.

Sharad Rao was leading Hindustan Lever Limited union from 1957 to 1967, later Trade union movement, Bombay Clerk's union in 1970 and Save Octroi movement.

He was the working committee member and City worker in BMC in 1978. He was active in several organizations including Bombay port trust. Rao who was staying in Goregaon had contested in Vidhana Sabha elections in 2005 and 2009 as Nationalist Congress party candidate from Goregaon west constituency. Sharad Rao was popular as labour leader for the last five decades.



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Nuclear weapons in South Asia: programmes, plans and dangers

What is the status of the nuclear arsenals of India and Pakistan? What dangers come from the postures and plans they have adopted? What influences do China and the United States wield in the region?

These and other topics were the subject of Dr. M. V. Ramana's talk on 'Nuclear Weapons in South Asia: Programmes, Plans and Dangers' that was organised by Dr. Asghar Ali Engineer Memorial Advisory Committee and Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace (CNDP) on 27th August 2016 at Mumbai Marathi Patrakar Sangh. The talk was dedicated to the memory of Praful Bidwai, illustrious journalist, activist and social science researcher, who, among various other issues, worked tirelessly for nuclear disarmament and peace.

Dr. Ramana began by talking about how the early history of nuclear power in India, starting with the bill enabling the creation of an organization aimed at working on atomic energy introduced in the Constituent Assembly in 1948, barely a few months after independence, shows the importance given to nuclear power by the leaders of the country right from its inception as an independent nation. Although the purpose of the development of atomic energy was said to be for '*peaceful purposes*', it was revealing that Pandit Jawarharlal Nehru, soon to be India's first Prime Minister, had to concede that he did '*not know how to distinguish the two* (peaceful

and defense purposes)'. The development of nuclear infrastructure by the Atomic Energy establishment took into account the possibility that the facilities constructed and expertise gained could be used for military purposes. In particular, the CIRUS reactor that started operating in 1960 and the Trombay reprocessing plant that was completed by 1964 allowed India to produce plutonium that could be used to make nuclear weapons.

Ramana then described the public debate about developing nuclear weapons that took place after the death of Nehru and the first Chinese nuclear weapon test in 1964. The debate revolved around questions of security, cost, morality, and prestige. Although it did not result in a decision to produce nuclear weapons, a series of developments eventually led to nuclear weapon test in 1974 in Pokharan, which was described as a peaceful nuclear explosion. The decision to conduct that test was reportedly taken soon after 1971 war with Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh. Ramana pointed out that the decision to test was not taken in a moment of insecurity but in a moment of success (in breaking up Pakistan, India's chief regional rival, into two countries). The timing of the test also undermines the argument of some who see China's nuclear test as a cause for India's weapons.

Although India did not follow the path taken by other nuclear weapon states and weaponise its nuclear design, the weapons program wasn't

inactive after the 1974 test. Instead, the nuclear establishment refined nuclear weapon designs and lobbied for more weapons tests. A missile programme was also set up that resulted in the design and production of the Prithvi and Agni missiles that could deliver nuclear weapons.

During the 1990s, increased activity by the bomb lobby, a group of people who advocated India developing nuclear weapons, succeeded in getting India to vote against the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. In parallel, the rise of Hindu nationalists and the Bharatiya Janata Party, with their militarist worldview, coming to power also created the conditions for the May 1998 nuclear tests. That involved five explosions on May 11 and 13, including that of a boosted/thermonuclear weapon (hydrogen bomb); there has been a recurring debate over whether that particular design was successfully tested.

Ramana also briefly described the trajectory of Pakistan's nuclear programme, starting with the strategic relationship the country established with the United States, shortly after independence, in the context of the Cold War. Pakistani scientists were first trained by the United States as part of its Atoms for Peace programme. After the 1965 India-Pakistan war, where the United States did not aid Pakistan (whereas China did), some Pakistanis, in particular the US-educated Foreign Minister Z.A. Bhutto, called for a bomb. This call was to intensify after 1971 war that

resulted in division of Pakistan and Bhutto launched nuclear weapon program in 1972, one month after taking office as President. After the 1974 Indian nuclear test, the US halted nuclear cooperation and A.Q. Khan, a metallurgist based in Holland, offered his services to help with the Pakistani nuclear programme, going on to set up the uranium enrichment programme. Revelation about this secret programme led the United States to impose sanctions on Pakistan, which was then reversed after the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979 and the United States started using Pakistan as a staging ground to engage with the Soviets indirectly. The sanctions were re-imposed in 1989 only after the Soviets left Afghanistan. In the meanwhile, Pakistan had produced highly enriched uranium and developed bomb designs that were tested in May 1998. There were five explosions on May 28 and one on May 30, 1998. These were all of fission weapons and Pakistan did not conduct a thermonuclear weapon test.

In the aftermath of the 1998 nuclear tests, both India and Pakistan have been involved in the creation of doctrines and command structures to plan for the potential use of nuclear weapons. In India, the military has gained greater control of nuclear weapons. Peace talks between the countries have primarily been attempts at proving that India and Pakistan are responsible states and no substantial measure has been agreed upon.

As of 2014, the estimate of weapon-grade plutonium in India is around 600 kilograms. About 5 kg is sufficient for one nuclear weapon. The estimated stockpile of Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) as of the

end of 2014 in India is 3.2 ± 1.1 tons with a U-235 content of 1.0 ± 0.3 tons. This is said to be primarily for the nuclear (Arihant) submarine programme. However, because the estimated stockpile vastly exceeds what might be needed for all envisioned nuclear submarines, it is possible that the HEU might be used in nuclear weapons. About 25 kg is sufficient to produce one nuclear weapon. For Pakistan, the stockpiles are estimated to be 3.1 ± 0.4 tons of HEU and 190 kg of plutonium as of the end of 2014.

Both countries have tested numerous missiles and other delivery vehicles. India is in the process of developing two technologies that are profoundly destabilizing: Ballistic Missile Defense and Early warning systems. Ramana talked at some length about early warning, which involves setting up radars and satellites to detect the launch and flight of missiles. Although India has a 'no first use' policy, it is not clear how this commitment of no first use translates into actual deployment and action. In principle, this policy means waiting for an incoming missile to explode before retaliating. But setting up early warning systems suggests that the leadership does not envision waiting for such an explosion and might launch missiles as soon as there is warning of an impending attack; in other words, it would no longer be a strict no first use commitment.

Early warning technology has great potential for errors and accidental launches. Ramana provided examples from the Cold War era where U.S. leaders received false warnings that indicated Soviet nuclear missiles were approaching the United States when there was actually no such attack underway.

One saving factor was that because they were so far apart, the United States and the Soviet Union had a longer time period to confirm missile launches; the travel time for a Soviet missile to reach the United States or vice versa is approximately 30 minutes due to the geographical distance between the two. But that is not the case in South Asia. India and Pakistan share boundaries and the time taken by a missile from one country to hit the capital city of the other would be only 6-13 minutes depending on where it was launched. Once you take away the time it takes to detect the launch and confirm that the missile is indeed directed towards the other country, there would be barely a couple of minutes for the Indian or Pakistani leadership to make a decision to respond. Because any technology is capable of errors and accidents, deploying an early warning system will increase the risk of inadvertent or accidental nuclear war.

Turning to a different aspect of nuclear weapons in south Asia, Ramana pointed out that the argument that nuclear weapons deter war failed within a year of the nuclear tests, when India and Pakistan had a military conflict over Kargil in Kashmir. The Kargil war was the first large scale military engagement between any two nuclear weapon states in the world. It involved a dozen or more nuclear threats by high-level officials in both countries, and there were reports that nuclear weapons were prepared for use on both sides.

The greater danger is in the longer-term, and this has to do with the lessons learnt by the Indian and Pakistani military establishments in the aftermath of Kargil. For Pakistan, the main lesson was that its nuclear

arsenal prevented India from launching a massive attack, which India's conventional military advantage could have allowed it to persecute. The strategy adopted in Kargil had earlier been presented to Benazir Bhutto in 1996, but she had rejected it then. For Indian military planners, the problem was that India would have to find ways of waging limited wars despite presence of Pakistani nuclear weapons. Similar lessons were also inferred by the two countries after the 2001-02 military crises that followed the attack on the Indian parliament.

There are news reports suggesting that in 2004, the Indian military adopted a strategy called Cold Start that would involve a "shift from defensive to offensive operations at the very outset of a conflict... not giving Pakistan any time to bring diplomatic leverages into play vis-à-vis India". Pakistan's response to this development has been to lower the threshold for use of nuclear weapons, with talk about developing '*Battlefield Nuclear Weapons*' for use against incoming tanks. This game of lowering the threshold for the use of such catastrophic weapons is profoundly dangerous and destabilizing.

Lastly, Ramana mentioned the role of United States and the dangers of a four-way race that has intensified in recent years. U.S. relations with India changed radically during the Bush administration (2000-08). The Bush administration's foreign policy was guided by neo-conservatives that saw the world in highly polarized terms. China was perceived as the chief barrier to U.S. supremacy and dominance in the international world order. Members of the Bush Administration, therefore, wanted to

prop up India as a counterweight to China. As Condoleezza Rice, who went on to becoming Secretary of State, wrote in 2000: "India is an element in China's calculation, and it should be in America's, too. India is not a great power yet, but it has the potential to emerge as one."

Under the 2004 Next Steps in Strategic Partnership, the United States agreed to help India with civilian nuclear activities, civilian space programs, dual-use high-technology trade and missile defense. In other words, India's nuclear weapons ceased to be seen as something to be concerned about, and instead became seen as a necessity to keep China off balance. This policy has continued even in the Obama administration, which signed a Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region. An important clause in the vision was the joint affirmation of "the importance of safeguarding maritime security and ensuring freedom of navigation and over flight throughout the region, especially in the South China Sea". U.S. support for India's NSG (Nuclear Suppliers Group) membership should be seen in this light.

There are two questions relevant to the NSG discussion. *What does India gain by becoming a NSG member?* According to Ramana, India has nothing to gain in material terms since it already had access to nuclear reactors and uranium. The only possible benefit is purely *symbolic* – being able to sit at the high table with the big boys. But *what does India have to lose or pay to join NSG?* According to Ramana, the stakes are quite clear – it is part of the United States' ploy to get India on to their side against China in multiple spheres –

diplomacy, NSG and even possibly the Security Council. The question that Ramana says we need to ask ourselves is – *is this the role India should be playing? Is this competition with China desirable?*

Ramana concluded by pointing out that there's essentially a four-way race happening between India-Pakistan-China-United States. Pakistan seeks military and economic help from China and United States to balance India. India seeks support from United States to further its great power ambitions. China is trying to establish itself as an emerging global power able to re-order the international system. The United States is trying to limit its decline as the dominant world power by constraining and balancing the rise of Chinese power and influence. The dangers of this military and nuclear race and the build-up of nuclear weapons are extremely worrisome. Also of concern is the fact that all of this is happening out of sight and is therefore out of the minds of the general public.

The session was chaired by Anand Patwardhan and Darryl D'Monte represented the Dr. Asghar Ali Engineer Memorial Advisory Committee on the dais. The audience consisted of students from various institutes, people who are engaged in struggles in Jaitapur and nuclear issues, professors and researchers. The question and answer session that followed the talk was wide-ranging, involving discussions about topics as varied as the relationship between deterrence and terrorism, and the ethical quandaries associated with the production of radioactive waste that is hazardous for centuries.

–Pratiksha Nair

Dalit Uprising and After - II

Why Hindutva Would Not Be The Same Again

Subhash Gatade

‘Keep Cow’s Tail With You, And Give Us Our Land’

..on March 20, 1927, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar led the Mahad satyagraha – for drinking water from the Chavdar tank at Mahad. This was the “foundational struggle” of the dalit movement, a movement for water – and for caste annihilation.

In his statement at the time, Dr. Ambedkar put the movement in the broadest possible context. Why do we fight, he asked. It is not simply for drinking water; drinking the water will not give us very much. It is not even a matter of only of our human rights, though we fight to establish the right to drink water. But our goal is no less than that of the French Revolution. ..

And so dalits went to drink the water at Mahad. They were met with ferocious repression: an attack by caste Hindus followed. The dalits retreated, came back several months later on December 25 for a renewed struggle, and since the collector had given an injunction against any further attempt, Ambedkar decided to honor this and instead burned the Manusmriti. A fitting climax to the first battle of dalit liberation!

(<https://seekingbegumpura.wordpress.com/2013/03/22/the-mahad-satyagraha/>)

Dalit Uprising in Gujarat and the manner in which it has rattled the state government and has severely impacted the BJP’s well laid out plans to consolidate its support base among Dalits has been a whiff of fresh air for every peace and justice loving person in this part of Asia.

What has caught imagination of the people is the key slogan of the movement which says ‘Keep Cow’s Tail With You, And Give Us Our Land’. It is a single slogan which encapsulates question of caste discrimination as well as

communalism and puts forward a positive demand to fight material deprivation - which has been an integral part of the sanctified hierarchy of caste.

The emphasis of the movement that Dalits leave the ‘stigmatised professions’ - which has condemned them to be the lowest position on *Varna/Caste* hierarchy - and wholehearted participation of thousands and thousands of Dalits in it, the militancy it has added to the Dalit movement has broken a new ground in the dalit movement.

No doubt that there was lot of spontaneity in the movement but the way it moved ahead and has added new edge to dalit assertion could not have been imagined without the young leadership which took charge. Their inclusive approach also helped them rope in activists of other organisations or attract many such people who are opposed to or uncomfortable with Hindutva politics on a common agenda. Inclusiveness of the movement was also evident in the fact that Muslims - who have been put in very miserable condition post 2002 carnage - also joined

the *Azaadi Kooch* to Una. Many welcomed it on the way in large numbers and also travelled to Una in their hundreds for the 15th August independence day rally held there.

A less discussed aspect of this upsurge is the fact that dalits are merely seven per cent of the state's population and have not had a long history of militant movement but despite these limitations the impact of the movement has been phenomenal. Not only it compelled the BJP to change its Chief Minister for mishandling the movement but it also disturbed its dalits outreach plans elsewhere.

Remember barring the historic struggle led by Dadasaheb Gaikwad - a close comrade of Dr Ambedkar - in late 1950s in Maharashtra where issue of land was highlighted, rare have been the occasions in post-independence times that issue of material deprivation of dalits was creatively integrated with socio-cultural discrimination and political marginalisation. Una has changed the picture. It has also raised many unheard of slogans in the dalit movement. 'Dalits of the World Unite', 'Workers of the World Unite' or 'Jai Bhim', 'Lal Salam' and Jai Savitribai'. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9jqgA75o5PE>)

Analysts have rightly put it that dalit movement in recent times has largely remained limited/focussed on what can be called issue of 'Identity/Asmita' but Una marks a new beginning where issue of 'existence/astitva' has also come to the fore. Possibly gone are the days when 'victimhood' was highlighted or rhetoric of 'Brahminism down-down' was repeated ad nauseam and a

careful silence was maintained about economic issues. As a revolutionary activist shared in his email '[a]n important thing to note is that the Una Struggle can also be seen as part of a continuum where social movements connects itself with anti-systemic struggles.'

Definitely the Una struggle which has sent shivers down the spine of the Hindutva Supremacists cannot be seen in isolation. It is rather a continuation of growing dalit assertion against Hindutva deprivations especially after the ascendance of Modi led regime at the centre. The realisation has slowly sunk in that not only it wants to attack affirmative action programmes but its economic policies - coupled with its regressive sociocultural agenda - are bringing ruin to the dalits and other marginalised sections of society. It is becoming more and more clear to them that the people in power want a docile/pliable dalit polity which can dance to their tunes. They want Ambedkar but not the real one but his sanitised version. How much they are scared about real Ambedkar and his ideas can be learnt from a decision of the Anandi Patel led government. It literally dumped four lakh copies of Ambedkar's biography which it had printed for massive distribution as the author of the book had also included 22 vows which Ambedkar recited with his followers at the time of conversion to Buddhism.

And this realisation has given rise to a tremendous reaction. Ranging from the successful campaign against derecognition of Ambekdar Periyar Study Circle active in Chennai IIT by the management (<https://kafila.org/2015/06/05/no-to-ambekar-periyar-in-modern-day->

[agraharam/](#)), or countrywide movement - where students and youth were in the forefront - after the 'institutional murder of Rohith Vemula' (<https://kafila.org/2016/01/22/long-live-the-legacy-of-comrade-vemula-rohith-chakravarthy-statement-by-new-socialist-initiative-nsi/>), or the massive mass mobilisation against demolition of Ambedkar Bhavan in Mumbai by the BJP led government or the 'Zameen Prapti Movement' in Punjab led by revolutionary left where Dalits have come together to form collectives, etc, one can easily see that such assertion is increasing in its intensity and militancy.

..In Punjab, the share of the Dalits in the 1,58,000 acres of Panchayat land is 52,667 acres. There are also legal entitlements for them in the Nazool Lands. However, the actual possession of these lands has remained with the landlords and rich peasants. As per the agricultural census 2010-11, the SCs in Punjab, who are a third of its population, owned just 6.02% of the land holdings and 3.2% of the land area of the state. Of these operational holdings also a large proportion (nearly 85%) are said to be unviable due to the small size of less than 5 hectares.

Since 2014, the Dalit peasantry organized under the banner of ZPSC (Zameen Prapti Sangharsh Samiti) and holding its red flag with the blazing sun firmly aloft, has begun to assert their claim over what is rightfully theirs. These lands used to be auctioned to dummy candidates of landlords; a gaushala in Sangrur district has been given land for 30 years at the rate of Rs 7000 an acre by the Akali-BJP Govt. of the state whereas the price for Dalits is over Rs 20,000 an acre. This spreading

struggle in districts of South Punjab has been met with police and landlord repression, false FIRs against 'unknowns' but the struggle rages on like a spreading blaze.

(<https://nbsdelhi.wordpress.com/2016/08/24/hail-the-assertion-by-landless-dalits-of-punjab-and-gujarat-of-their-right-to-land-land-to-the-tiller-key-to-annihilating-caste/>)

If the unexpected shift of a

section of Dalit masses - for various reasons - towards BJP was an important factor in its ascent to power in the year 2014, this growing assertion of dalits is a proof that they cannot be hoodwinked anymore. With the real agenda of these Hindutva Supremacists out in the open - which is witnessed not only in its attacks on right to life and right to livelihood of every exploited and marginalised section but also in its hurry to co-opt Ambedkar but

bulldoze every element of dalit assertion - the battle lines have been finally drawn.

And the unfolding Dalit Uprising has added new lustre to it.

(*translated from original Gujarati by G K Vankar, <http://roundtableindia.co.in/lit-blogs/?tag=sahil-parmar>)

Peoples Media Advocacy & Resource Centre

Western Railway Employees Union

Grant Road Station Building (E) , MUMBAI – 400 007.

WREU, the oldest trade unions in the country, earlier known as BB&CI Railway Employees' Union, is in the services of Railway men since 1920. WREU, a free, independent and democratic trade union, is a founder member of AIRF and HMS.

WREU fought for upliftment of railway men and their family in particular and labour class in general for the last 94 years. WREU/AIRF is instrumental in creation of PNM, grievance solving machinery in 1951, payment of PLB to Railway men since 1979, implementation of series of Cadre Restructuring in Group 'C' and 'D' categories in Indian Railways, implementation of recommendations of the 4th, 5th and 6th CPCs with modifications and RELHS Scheme for Railway men.

WREU was led by prominent trade union leaders, viz. late Miss. Maniben

Kara, Late Com. Jagdish Ajmera, Late Com. Umraomal Purohit, Late Com. Chandrashekar Menon, etc. In memory of late Maniben Kara, WREU established a charitable trust namely "Maniben Kara Foundation" with the objective of lighting against the evils of the society.

Apart from trade union activities, various non-bargaining activities such as organizing Health Check-up Camps, Blood Donation Camps, Family Planning Camps, Anti-Dowry campaigns, HIV-AIDS Awareness Campaigns, Safety Seminars, Trade Union Education Class, Adult Education, Guidance Camp, etc. are conducted for the benefits of the railway men and the general public.

Neoliberal assault on knowledge: education reduced to acquisition of 'skills'.

Madhu Prasad

The formal adoption of the neoliberal reforms programme by the Government of India (GOI) in 1991 had a far more pervasive impact on the education system and policy than is usually recognized. The commercialization and marketization of education put it outside the grasp of the majority of India's population, 78 per cent of whom were living on less than twenty rupees per day (Arjun Sengupta Committee report), and altered the concepts of knowledge, education and its curricular content.

The democratic deficit was the most obvious feature of the National Policy of Education (NPE 86-92). It introduced non-formal education

(NFE), as a low-cost alternative to be treated as 'equivalent to schooling' for the working poor, the marginalized and children in "difficult circumstances". When the Supreme Court in its 1993 judgement (*Unnikrishnan vs the State of Andhra Pradesh*) stated that the constitutional Directive Principle 45 should be read in conjunction with Article 21, it established that the right to education flowed from the fundamental right to life thereby converting "the obligation created by the article (45) into an enforceable right". This required the 86th Constitutional amendment in 2002, which was tailor-made to coincide with neoliberal dictates to reduce public spending on education. Two

1

It must be emphasized that this is no left-wing revolutionary demand. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, in industrializing nations the responsibility for providing education had been taken up by modern states that arose with the rise and consolidation of capitalism to fulfill the productive and 'democratic' needs of Capital for a better educated and 'free' labour force. Engels had upheld the rationale of the demand during a speech delivered at Elberfeld in February 1845: The "general education of all children without exception at the expense of the state – an education which is equal for all and continues until the individual is capable of emerging as an independent member of society. . . would be only an act of justice. . . for clearly, every man

has the right to the fullest development of his abilities and society wrongs individuals twice over when it makes ignorance a necessary consequence of poverty." (Marx-Engels Collected Works Vol. 4. P 253).

Emphasizing that no country had successfully ended child labour without first making education compulsory, American political theorist Myron Weiner also noted that Asian States which made education compulsory - Japan in 1872, the two Koreas, Taiwan and China after WWII - were all poor when they undertook the task. Their development was founded on successfully taking up "the legal obligation of the state to provide an adequate number of schools,

significant limitations to the "enforceable right" restricted it to children between 6 to 14 years of age and provided for education only "as the State may, by law, determine". The limitations allowed a retreat from the original constitutional responsibility and denied millions of children access to quality education. The RTE Act 2009 legalized the inequity.

A genuine right to education law would have encompassed completely free and compulsory Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and, following the adoption of the 10+2 system, extended up to Class XII thus covering all children from 0 to 18 years.

appropriately situated and to ensure that no child fails to attend school." Modern states regard education as a legal duty, not merely as a right: "parents are required to send their children to school, children are required to attend school and the state is required to enforce compulsory education." The state is bound to protect children from the compulsions on impoverished parents and from would-be exploiters. ("India's Case Against Compulsory Education", *Seminar*, 413 (January). P 83-86)

Independent India's first Education Commission (1964-66), the D.S. Kothari Commission, examined the failure to achieve the Constitutional goal of education for all up to the age of 14 years by 1960.

It recommended far-reaching structural changes for setting up a national system of free and compulsory education through schools of comparable quality. This could not be left to private institutions like the elite schools “transplanted in India by British administrators and we have clung to it so long because it happened to be in tune with the traditional hierarchical structure of our society. Whatever its place in past history may be, such a system has no valid place in the new democratic and socialistic society we desire to create.” (1.38)

The report strongly advocated the establishment of state-funded common neighbourhood schools with a socially, culturally and economically diverse student body as the authentic institution of a pedagogically sound and egalitarian national system of education which would “provide ‘good’ education to all children because sharing life with the common people is, in our opinion, an essential ingredient of good education.” (10.19). Echoing its logic, *The Report of the Committee of Members of Parliament on Education* (1967) asserted that “the unhealthy social segregation that now takes place between the schools for the rich and those for the poor should be ended; and the primary schools should be the common schools of the nation by making it obligatory on all children, irrespective of caste, creed, community, religion, economic conditions or social status, to attend the primary school in their neighbourhood. This sharing of life among the children of all social strata will strengthen the sense of being one nation which is an essential ingredient of good education.” (Government of India 1967: p 2). This principle has

recently been reiterated in a landmark judgement of the Allahabad High Court (August 18, 2015).

Achieving universal access to education was recognized as not just a question of reaching a numerical target. It could not be divorced from its democratic content and purpose. However, Indian capital had aligned with sections of the feudal landowning elite and accommodated with Brahmanical ideology which sanctioned harshly exploitative caste divisions among the toiling masses. This allowed both classes to gain economically and politically but it was at the expense of the ruin of the majority of peasants, artisans, tribals and working people. Having failed to break out of the vicious cycle of inequality the goal of universalizing school education could never be achieved. The education system inevitably sank into deep crisis which was aggravated each time a policy decision further narrowed access with multi-track discriminatory arrangements (alternate schools, multi-grade teaching, education guarantee centres, use of contractual and para-teachers, the RTE Act 2009).

The present regime’s proposed National Policy of Education 2016 (NEP 2016) promises to accelerate this process. Amendments to the already flawed RTE 2009 will allow for ‘alternate’ schools which do not ‘require’ the basic infrastructural and pedagogical norms laid down in the Act, limit the no-detention policy to lower primary (class V) and vocationalize the elementary curriculum in targeted areas. Dove-tailed into the Skill Development program and the amended child labour law which now permits under 14-year-olds to work in ‘family

enterprises’, this ‘education’ policy will reinforce caste distinctions and ensure that the majority of India’s children from oppressed and marginalized sections will be condemned to a childhood of labour.

This outcome is not accidental. It follows from the neoliberal policies of marketization of education as a ‘private good’, and of knowledge as a tradable ‘commodity’ or ‘service’, that have been pursued by successive governments for more than two decades. Since the 1970’s ‘neoliberalism’ has emerged as the ‘solution’ favoured by international finance capital to recover from the severity of its recurring economic crises. Public funds are diverted through Public Private Partnerships (PPP) to allow “opening up” of the entire range of human activities to penetration by private capital. This imposes a heavy burden on the most vulnerable sections of society and has a very negative impact on education, health, employment and job security, food security, housing and provision of public utilities. Production and consumption by the masses are kept under tight control through “austerity measures” and the modern ‘welfare’ state of the 20th Century is transformed. People’s control over their own lives shrinks as corporations take over decision-making in the name of “efficiency” and “professional management”.

However, unlike knowledge, commodities are produced primarily for exchange for profit rather than for any intrinsic value. In highly developed systems of commodity production like capitalism all market exchanges are affected by scarcities, monopolies, manipulated tastes and more or less accidental variations in supply and demand. Thus the ‘commodification of

knowledge' would appear to be a contradiction in terms unless knowledge is degraded to the 'acquisition of skills' required for 'services' that are available in the market.

The entire terminology of the NEP 2016 is devised within the

framework of skill acquisition. "Competencies" and "outcomes" are units to be monitored, measured, graded and readied for the market. The purpose of education is the grooming of 'human resource' to create a work-force that will enter the market-place as and when supply and demand movements are

2

The failure to universalize elementary and secondary education was used to propagate the idea of higher education as an 'elite' privilege and a 'non-merit good' undeserving of public subsidies. From 1998 institutions of Higher Education (IHE) were advised to "raise their own resources by raising the fee levels, encouraging private donations and by generating revenues through consultancy and other activities." The millennium year 2000 was a water-shed year for the higher education sector in India. The Ambani-Birla Report, entitled *A Policy Framework for Reforms in Education*, was authored by prominent industrialists and produced by then Prime Minister Vajpayee's Council on Trade and Industry! It explicitly stated that privatization and commercialization were the chief instruments for reform in higher education and that the 'user-pays' principle would ensure profits for investors. With its companion Model Act (2003) prepared by UGC, it demanded restructuring of higher education on the *model of market-oriented enterprises promoting corporate values*. Shelved because of strong opposition from academicians and teachers and students unions, its basic features continue to provide the framework within which higher education policies are conceived and sought to be legislated today.

The World Trade Organization (WTO) and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) made their entry into the arena of higher education. Prof. Nigvekar, then UGC Chairperson, articulated GOI's position that education had become "a tradeable product and knowledge has become commodified". In countries like India, GATS regulations will negatively impact educational access, impose one model of private, commercial and import-oriented education, weaken national systems due to foreign competition and effect domestic regulation and authority. Yet, despite growing opposition, an offer made in 2005 to put higher education on the WTO-GATS table as a tradable service was not withdrawn at the recent Tenth Ministerial Conference held in December 2015 at Nairobi.

Commercialization of education provides autonomy to capital by opening up a market for investment as knowledge is now a key component in economic development but its impact on the academic community is decidedly anti-democratic and has grave consequences for the very conception of education as a *public good*. The privately-borne high cost of education shrinks the range and influence of subjects and courses that are not directly linked to the demands of national and international

favourable. When they are unfavourable, during periods of recession and slow growth as they are now, this work-force will become Capital's essential buffer, the "reserve army of labour" that keeps wages low, jobs contractual, and workers afraid to unionize and fight for their legitimate democratic rights.

capital markets which generate the maximum jobs and the biggest salaries. Neoliberalism has altered the focus of syllabi from values of critical-thinking to "skills" such as "teamwork," "communication" and "leadership." The language and ethic of the corporate world sends out the wrong message that education must equip individuals with marketable skills, and that the ultimate goal is "productivity". Unfortunately, influenced by policy makers and the media, even students, parents, and society at large have begun to accept education as a "private good" so that both 'providers' and 'consumers' adopt a market perspective by viewing education as a means to recoup investments made either in providing or in acquiring it.

All over the world disciplines and areas of research that are foundational to innovative systems of knowledge depend significantly on state funding and philanthropic support. Replacing this with profit-oriented enterprise means that these disciplines suffer deterioration and the critical and transformational purpose of educational institutions declines. As they become more financially autonomous but less socially accountable 'producers of graduates and research outputs', the most important objective of these 'entrepreneurial institutions' is to generate profits.

Education serves a broad public purpose as it critically conceptualizes values and goals for national development and for strengthening civil society. Both are necessary components of Indian society's unfinished agenda of democratic transformation. The impact of neoliberal policy on educational institutions in general, but particularly on IHE's, threatens their very existence as environments fostering the process of "educating oneself".

The 'excellence' of education is measured by exorbitant fees because market logic dictates that those who pay more, get more; those who pay less, should expect less and those who lack resources should simply be brushed aside.

"To limit knowledge to what will actually be put into practice. . . is the deliberate reduction of one's being to the condition of a cog in the techno-economic machine."

3

On campuses across the country, protests against privatization, curbing democratic rights of students and faculty, and in support of social justice have been called "anti-national" by the present regime. But here we are confronted with opposing concepts of nation and nationhood. The first, generated through collective struggle, finds expression in the civil liberties and equal rights protected by the Constitution. These liberties and rights are enabling conditions for an on-going politics of democratically negotiated nationalism.

'sons' have the 'duty' to defend her. Within this Hindu majoritarian conception, 'others' are second class citizens restricted by the will of a self-appointed governing class, the 'Hindus'. But 'Hindus' themselves are defined as those who exemplify the ideology of the Sangh Parivar! The 'nationalism' of the Sangh Parivar is fundamentally anti-democratic and anti-constitutional.

On July 27, 2016 HRD Minister Javadekar held a closed-door six-hour long meeting with the RSS and its affiliates including ABVP to discuss how NEP 2016 could "instill nationalism, pride and ancient Indian values in modern education." Conformism and a slavish mentality bred by indoctrination in a particular ideology is sought to be cultivated through the curriculum with no space for critical reasoning and rigorous

(Michel Henry, *Barbarism*. 2012. P121). Market orientation encourages certain qualities in individuals but may be indifferent, or even opposed to the general development and articulation of critical faculties. With today's 'common-sense' reflecting the neoliberal redefinition of the individual, no longer a productive social being or citizen but an economically autonomous fiction, the 'consumer', this obvious truth can become blurred.

examination to arrive at truths or search for alternate avenues of knowledge. This is exactly the conception of knowledge promoted by votaries of the instrumentalist view of commercialized education. The degree holder has to be packaged in a way that conforms to the requirements of the market. The training which is 'valued' makes workers fiercely competitive in relation to fellow workers, but docile in dealings with superiors.

The communalization of education, like the commercialization and commoditization of education generates an anti-democratic socio-political environment in which neoliberal capitalism flourishes. Strong fascistic tendencies surface in governments that aggressively advocate neoliberal economic policies.

Footprints of A Crusader (The Life Story of Mrunal Gore)

by
Rohini Gawankar

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