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Pre-poll gambits

S. Viswam

Both the Congress and the BJP spent the last few days mapping out strategies incidental to the beginning of the run-up to 2014. The Congress is still in two minds about formally naming Rahul Gandhi as its prime ministerial candidate. The general notion within the party is that any announcement in this regard needs to be made only ahead of the actual poll. In the BJP, the situation is somewhat different. With the induction of Narendra Modi into the central parliamentary board and the central election committee, the issue seems to have been resolved. Modi ought to be the BJP's official candidate if President Raj Nath's reshuffle makes sense. The assumption is that he will be acceptable to all allies barring Bihar CM and JD(U) leader Nitish Kumar. Secondly, Modi's induction into the top echelons has also witnessed the downgrading of a handful of hitherto top leaders of the party not all of whom may find Modi acceptable. That Modi will have a large say in preparing and executing strategies is already evident. It was at his instance (or should we say insistence?) that Amit Shah has been named a general secretary. It is public knowledge that Shah faces charges of criminal conspiracy in the Sohrabuddin Sheikh fake encounter case. Was it also on

Modi's instance that Varun Gandhi who has emerged as an anti-Muslim campaigner in the party brought in as a general secretary?

Modi is the only chief minister to have been elevated within the BJP hierarchy as a reward for winning three assembly elections in a row. Other chief ministers with the same achievement have been ignored. All in all, the 2014 Rajnath Singh team seems to confer special status to hard core party workers and leaders at the cost of the tried and tested leaders. L. K. Advani has been put in his place, while Yashwant Sinha, Jaswant Singh and Arun Shourie have been sidelined. What all this will do to the BJP fortunes remains to be seen. In the public eye, however, the BJP will be seen as a party which has a lot of inner-party differences and a lot of candidates with prime ministerial ambitions, all of whose aspirations have been checked by Modi's advance.

Let us come to the Congress. First, Rahul Gandhi allowed his status to be upgraded from that of general secretary to that of vice-president but encouraged the notion that he still would prefer to remain a worker than the prime minister. When this idea

Between the lines

was received with bafflement and incredulity, the party bosses swung into action and spread the story that Rahul was very much in the prime ministerial race. At the same time, the very thought of Rahul Gandhi losing out to Modi seems to have scared a section of the rank and file. This led to the party officially endorsing the Sonia-Manmohan model of power sharing as being valid and applicable to the future also. Which means that the party wants to keep all options open. Two power centres are acceptable and now being promoted as a workable mechanism. While the party commends Manmohan's cryptic remark that by implication suggested that he could accept a third term as PM, the line is open to Rahul also to become PM in case he wants to.

In sum, it would seem that the BJP is also delaying the official nomination of Modi as the official candidate. For present, he is on top of the list, with a strong element of winnability. In the case of the Congress, everything depends on the party's performance in 2014. If it can cobble a coalition together, it can provide leadership as it has been doing for the last nine years. In which case, the ball would be in Rahul's court. If he says no, then the Sonia-Manmohan "arrangement" can be revived.

Madhu Dandavate

By

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Travails of Pakistan

Kuldip Nayar

It is boisterous, even maverick. Pakistan thy name is uncertainty. Yet, it is strange that whenever it is posed with pressing problems before elections, the country has always surprisingly found solutions to them. This time it has chosen an interim Prime Minister in former justice Hazar Khan Khoso, who will be conducting free and fair elections.

There were pulls from several parties and it seemed impossible at one time that some name would emerge as a unanimous choice for the interim prime ministership before the elections on May 11, announced recently. It was a good practice which even Bangladesh has done away with and India does not need any because the Election Commission has developed enough teeth to bring the errant parties under some discipline.

This does not mean that the coming elections in Pakistan would be impartial. Pakistan Army Chief Pervez Kayani has promised the country that the elections would be independent. It is, indeed, strange that the army wants a fair poll. But it is an open secret that the army which holds sway over Pakistan will not interfere in the elections. Still it is unfair to contend that all members of the National Assembly of Pakistan would get elected through genuine methods. The past does not say so and the future does not hold any promise.

Former President General Pervez Musharraf, who has returned to

Pakistan after a self-imposed exile, gives confused messages. He would like to have impartial elections but he is the one who has interfered with polls in the past to get his favourites retained. In fact, his entry into Pakistan's politics is going to be quite a disturbance. I do not rule out that he would use some methods (even the army) to get himself elected from Karachi and few of his colleagues from elsewhere.

It is strange that the first statement that Musharraf made on reaching Pakistan is that Kargil was a "victory for the Pakistan army." It is understandable that Musharraf wants to placate the army but he cannot mutilate facts that he and his army were squarely defeated and for him to deny the reality is the same kind of thinking which has brought him to contest the elections. People know who won Kargil and no amount of Musharraf's claim can undo the truth.

The unpopularity of Musharraf could be gauged when an angry lawyer threw a shoe at the former President as he headed to court to face legal charges after returning from his four-year-long exile. In any case, this was not the first time that Musharraf had to face such a humiliation. Two years ago, a man tried to hurl a shoe at him when he was addressing a gathering in Britain.

A retired Pakistani Lt. General, Saheed Aziz, has brought out a book to nail the lie and he has alleged that

the army “put our children in the line of fire.” But the point that Musharraf refuses to see is that reality may complicate matters. Was it the entry of Musharraf that has pushed the Imran Khan phenomenon into the background because at one time it was taken for granted that Imran’s Tehreek-e-Insan party would sweep the polls?

The old political complexion may continue after the next election. Punjab looks like going the Nawaz Sharif’s way and Sind would stay with the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP). The North Western Frontier Province may again be back with Awami National Party (ANP), reminding one of the red shirts under the leadership of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan during the freedom struggle. The fourth province, Baluchistan, is categorically against the PPP and may therefore return either ANP or any amalgamation of some nationalists who are still fighting against the army for their identity.

The scene does not help India in any way. In fact, Pakistan is getting murkier and murkier. First, its soldiers beheaded two Indian soldiers and now Indian prisoners are tortured to death, using racial abuses. In fact, Pakistan has to sort out the minority problem if it wants to be considered a civilized state. The main problem with Pakistan is what the students learn in schools and madrasas.

In Pakistani schools, the class V social studies text (English), taught to 12-year-olds, begins with citing the difference between Hindus and Muslims (for example, Hindus burn the wife after her husband dies but Muslims don’t), the need to be aware of the hidden enemies of

(Continued on Page 15)

World Social Forum, Tunisia - Few Reflections

Dr. Sunilam

World Social Forum (WSF) started with the aim to build a better world in 2001. WSF is a meeting place for democratic discussions of ideas, for deep reflection, formulating proposals, exchanging experiences and strengthening social movements, networks that oppose neo-liberalism and the domination of capital. WSF activities and processes are governed by a Charter of Principles. It is not a religious governmental or partition body, but it is characterized by plurality and diversity. It is neither an organization nor an association. It only provides an open and democratic space to the peoples’ movements and organizations for discussion. They decide their own subjects and discuss them during WSF.

At the social forum held in Dakar in 2011, the idea of organizing the next forum for 2013 in the Maghreb-Mashriq region was widely discussed several times within the movements, as well as in international council meetings. Finally, it was decided to hold WSF 2013 in Tunisia, in order to strengthen social movements around the world, especially in the Arab region.

The Twelfth WSF was organized on 26-30 March 2013 at Tunis. Around 54,000 representatives from various social movements, networks, NGOs and members of various civil society organizations participated in the programmes of WSF. I got the opportunity to attend WSF on behalf of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (VK - India) for one week. I participated

in various debates and programmes organized by VK, SADED, Via Campesina, Global Progressive Forum, FES, Jubilee South, etc.

The programme started with a grand rally on 26 March from Clock-Tower, which had witnessed the assembly of revolutionaries on 14 January. Most of the programmes were held in the Tunis University El Manar Campus. The issues of liberation of Philistine and Western Sahara were seen as key issues.

Nepal Situation

Discussion on the Nepal situation was organized by VK, in which Dr. Uddhab Pyakurel, eminent writer and lecturer in Kathmandu University, and socialist thinker Vijay Pratap, analyzed the situation in Nepal, presented their views on the on-going process of drafting of the constitution-making, various political and electoral equations, and the role of neighbours of Nepal. Dr. Uddhab narrated the political history of Nepal and told the audience about the Maoist movement. He said that 27 percent of the population of Nepal participated in the movement, which included various social groups and people of different age groups. The Maoists were successful in convincing the people that they can oust the King of Nepal. Finally, people’s power has overthrown the monarchy for the first time in the history of Nepal. He said that four to five times the Constituent Assembly was extended. The election dates could not be announced till date. Now the Chief Justice of Nepal

is heading the eleven-member cabinet. On most of the issues consensus has already been evolved. He added, people's movement has resulted in the better representation of women and Dalit groups in the parliamentary process. He said that people of Nepal are losing patience. They want early elections. He told the gathering that a consensus is worked out on the question of integration of Maoist People's Army into Nepal Army. Most of the Maoists have taken voluntary retirement and 3,000 cadres were included in the Nepal Army. During the Question-Answer Session, he said that the Maoists do not have any alternative development model. They rely on anti-India sentiment and were successful in mobilizing the marginalized sections of the Nepali society. He said that almost all political parties of Nepal have good understanding with World Bank and IMF, and they are ready to accept almost all conditionalities for investment in the country.

Vijay Pratap gave his in-depth analysis of Nepalese politics and various possibilities during the up-coming elections. He said that Nepal has witnessed various political models and experiments are still on. He also shared his discussions with top leadership of Nepali Congress, Maoists, CP-ML and Madheshi leaders. Discussion on 'Understanding the Dead End Dynamics of Making Nepal a Republic' lasted for around three hours, with interventions of Thomas Wallgren, - a philosopher from Finland, and students from Tunisia and Germany.

Tunisian Revolution

During various workshops, the issue of Tunisian revolution was discussed in detail. Most of the

participants of WSF were interested to know more and more about the Tunisian revolution. Similarly, Tunisian participants were also very eager to share information and analysis of the revolution. University students and faculty of Tunis University participated in a big way. One could observe their happiness during various discussions. They were enjoying a newly acquired freedom after the revolution. Although Tunisia is a Muslim country, the active role of women was seen during WSF. During every meeting, they were telling their experience about the revolution period. Tunisian women were not seen with naqaabs (veil), but it was interesting to know that university girls are fighting to avail the right to wear naqaabs during classes, although it is forbidden in the campus area. When some girl students attend classes with burqa, teachers deny teaching them in the class.

I got an opportunity to attend World Parliamentary Forum and participate in the debate on economic and social rights in the new constitution. Tunisian Parliament has formed a commission to draft the new constitution. The Chairman of ANC, along with Members of Parliament and other intellectuals, participated in the meeting held inside the Parliament of Tunisia in addition to over 50 Members of Parliament from various countries who were participating in the WSF. Although there is no dead-lock or stalemate on finalizing the constitution, Ennahda and other Islamist groups want to include shariat laws in the constitution, but democrats, leftists and socialists are opposing shariat laws and insisting on separating religion from politics. The second issue is the separation of

powers to four pillars of democracy. Till now, two drafts of the new constitution have already come up for debate in public. People want that the new constitution must reflect the sentiments and aspirations of the common people. During discussions in the Parliament, the focus was to link economic, social, cultural and human rights with the constitution so that dignity to all can be ensured. A debate on the preamble of the constitution still continues. People want that the question of dignity, freedom and justice should be included so that the preamble text reflects the spirit of revolution. People also want that the social and welfare role of their state must be mentioned in the constitution and it should provide right to decent work, right to quality food, right to education and academic freedom, right to decent home, right to safe drinking water, rights of immigrants, family rights, property rights, and the right to development. The Chairman of the Constituent Assembly assured the parliamentarians that the constitution will be ready by the first week of July and elections will be held in Tunisia between October 15 and December 15.

Climate Justice

I spent most of my time in attending various programmes in the climate space area. The question of climate crisis – climate justice was debated in detail during various discussions. The impact of change in temperature will create food crisis in the world. Farmers of various countries shared their first hand ground level experiences to show that climate change has already started making an impact on the lives of the farmers, which is resulting in reduced food production. Most of the experts and panelists agreed to the consensus view of farmers

that GMOs cannot be the answer for increasing food production in the world. Members of various civil society organizations from the US said that five corporations are controlling 80 percent of the market, but still they were successful in resisting the launch of GM products in California. The question of impact of dirty energy on climate was also discussed at length. In one of the programmes of Jubilee South, it was decided to organize a worldwide protest against use of dirty energy from 11 October to 11 November 2013. Organizers informed that the previous year a week-long campaign was organized for climate justice in 66 countries. Some environmentalists complained that the impact of climate change on bio-diversity of oceans is generally neglected. The general consensus was that the 'climate change' has become 'climate crisis' because of the continuous increase in consumption levels of people living in rich countries. Now carbon trading is used by corporations and rich countries for making profits (and pressurizing the governments of poor and developing countries to change their laws) which is resulting in destroying the livelihoods of poor people in big numbers. A German scientist shared his scientific research work in which he concluded that the US has polluted the environment, which is to the tune of US\$500bn. He suggested that all those who feel concerned about the climate crisis should launch a campaign against US administration to donate \$500bn for climate justice fund. The issue of sustainable development was also discussed.

International Trade

The issue of economic justice was also discussed in various programmes. Organizations were

seen preparing for the up-coming ministerial meeting to be held in Bali (Indonesia) on 3-6 December 2013. Gerak Lawan was seen campaigning to declare the WTO as illegitimate. It was the general view of the participants that no matter how you reform the WTO or improve its agreements, it will never be fair or just as it is built on the principles of free trade, endless growth and the capitalist exploitation of people and nature. They were of the view that even change of the Director-General (DG) will not change WTO, as the new DG will not have people's welfare in mind. The demand of the group against WTO was also to revoke all FTAs and investment treaties, and demand governments not to sign any more FTAs or BITs. Many new formulations were presented during the discussion with the alternative models of international trade based on economic justice.

Another popular campaigns was the campaign for the Robin Hood Tax. It was stated in the meeting that 11 countries have joined together to implement Financial Transaction Tax in European Parliament which include Australia, Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain. It is proposed to have a Transaction Tax of 0.05 percent on the financial transactions worldwide. This can generate revenue of 500bn Euros, including 200bn Euros in Europe alone. This money can be used to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for which only 200bn are required per year.

Future of WSF

Global Progressive Forum organized many programmes in WSF. The Fourth Global Progressive

Forum World Conference to be held in spring 2013 has generated a lot of interest, particularly among the European participants of WSF.

Various films on people's movements were shown during WSF programmes. I got an opportunity to watch 'Voices of Revolution' shown by FES. Discussion on the outcome of revolution was very in-depth and gave an insight of Tunisian society and politics.

The future of WSF was also discussed in many meetings. Almost all the participants were of the view that the process of WSF should continue. It was a nice experience to see that the key leaders – founders of WSF were participating in various meetings as other general participants. Even the meeting of the International Council (IC) was open to all the participants. Most of the participants were satisfied with the outcome of WSF during the last twelve years. Everybody seemed concerned about democratizing the process. One of the founder-members, Chico Whitaker proposed to dissolve the IC. It was interesting to note that even the IC members did not defend the continuance with the present IC. A proposal to organize the next WSF in India was also discussed along with other proposals. Many participants shared their views about the fact that only those who get funding from some NGO are able to attend WSF. The question of continuously decreasing resources for participating in WSF was also discussed.

During the programmes, it was interesting to see demonstrations in solidarity with the Palestinean Freedom Movement. Some organizations from the Latin

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Socio-Economic Profile of Muslims in Maharashtra

Prepared for Maharashtra State Minority Commission

by Director, Centre for Study of Social Exclusion & Inclusive Policy,

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Maharashtra's multicultural milieu is marked by crucial contribution made by Muslims. The Sachar Committee Report, 2006 stated that the condition of Muslim in Maharashtra demands special attention of the state where the Muslim members are the biggest religious minority. Seven surveys commissioned by the Maharashtra State Minority Commission to Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Nirmala Niketan's College of Social Work of Mumbai University and Research Centre for Women's Studies of SNDT Women's University that were submitted in 2011 discovered that a very large proportion of Muslims live in very dismal economic conditions. Nearly 1/3rd of the respondents in the TISS research reported an annual household income of less than Rs.10,000, 24.4% between Rs. 10,001-Rs.20,000, 7.5% between Rs.20,001-Rs.30,000, 3.8% between Rs.30,001-Rs.40,000, 1% between Rs.40,001-Rs.50,000 and 5.6% above Rs.50,000. In the 21st century, limited occupational diversification is noticed among educated middle class Muslims in the cities of the state due to new openings in IT and construction industry.

As per the census 2011, Maharashtra's Parbhani and Nanded districts had 30% Muslim population and Malegaon and Bhiwandi were Muslim majority Cities. Mumbra and Kashi mira in thane district are emerging as new hub for economic activities, technical education institutions and community work

among Muslims. In Malegaon block of Nashik district, highest percentage of Muslim community is to be found (42.5 %) as a proportion to the total population followed by Bhiwandi in Thane (35.8 %), Nanded (26.5 %), Aurangabad (25.5 %) and Parbhani (25.1 %). Marathwada as a region had a late integration and betrays a story of neglect. In Malegaon of Nashik district Muslims are mainly concentrated in the urban area (70.96%) as compared to rural areas of Malegaon (3.6%). Among the tehsils, highest percentage of Muslim community is found in Shrivardhan tehsil of Raigarh district (20.26%), and nearly similar in percentages in both the rural and urban areas. In Vidarbha region, in Akola, Yavatmal and Amaravati Muslims constitute 8.3% of the total population.

Work and Employment Profile

In a state level survey by the Minority Commission in 2011, it was found that nearly 32.4 per cent of Muslims reported as being 'a worker' as compared to 42.5 per cent of total population in the state. Among Muslims the work participation rate was reported higher among men (49.97 %) as compared to women (12.67 %). Muslims in rural Maharashtra reported nearly 38.12 per cent as worker as compared to 29.97 per cent in urban areas. Among Muslim men not much difference was observed in rural and urban areas as compared to Muslim women population. Nearly one fourth of Muslims women living in rural areas reported as workers,

while it was only 6.3 per cent in urban areas.

Among Muslims in Maharashtra, nearly 70.7 per cent engaged in category of work activities such as semi skilled and skilled informal sector work such as carpentry, masonry, electrician, plumber, mechanic, manual labour, coolie job, solid waste management, butchery, weaving, beadwork, jari and embroidery work, tailoring, hawking, petty trade, pulling cycle rickshaws and handcarts, driving four wheelers and heavy vehicles ; nearly 8 per cent as cultivators, mainly small and marginal farmers; 17.6 per cent as agricultural labourers and 3.6 per cent in household industry. The proportion of Muslim population involved in cultivation and agricultural activities is lesser than their counterparts in Hindu as well as total population in Maharashtra, however, Muslim's involvement in household industry and other category of activities is higher than them. In rural areas a higher percentage of Muslim population has reported as agricultural laborers as compared to Hindu population, while the proportion of Hindu population reported as cultivators is more than double than the Muslim population. Nearly 44 per cent of Muslim women workers reported as agricultural labourers, and their proportion in rural areas are 61.6 per cent. Among Muslim population, the involvement in other category of activities is higher among men as compared to women, in both rural and urban areas. It should be

noted that nearly 70 per cent of Muslim population in the state of Maharashtra is found in urban areas where non-agricultural activities dominate.

Unemployment:

Census collects data on persons seeking or available for work among non workers. In 2001 census, those who reported as marginal worker were also asked about seeking or available for work. About 39.9 per cent marginal workers among Muslim community in rural areas reported as seeking/available for work. Among Muslim non-workers, nearly 6 percent reported as 'job seekers' in rural areas. The age wise job seekers were highest in 20-24 years followed by 15-19 and 25-29 years. Thus unemployment among Muslim youth is a most challenging problem faced by the state.

In urban areas, Muslim job seekers among marginal and non-workers were little higher as compared to rural areas. The age specific rate of job seekers among marginal workers was observed much higher level as compared to non-workers. Muslim men were found to be actively seeking /available for work in higher percentage than their women counterparts.

As per NSS 61st Round in 2004-05, unemployment rate was found much higher in urban areas with wider difference by gender and community. Muslim men reported nearly two times higher unemployment than their Hindu counterparts. The unemployment rate was higher in urban areas for both men and women as compared to rural areas.

Pattern of Landholding

In the NSS 60th round in 2004 in which information on land cultivated

was collected revealed that 'having no cultivable land' percentage was much higher among Muslim household in Maharashtra as compared to their situation in the rest of India. From 1993-94 to 2004-05 the situation remained similar. In 2007-08, land possession data showed that Muslim household possessed less land or no land in higher proportion than Hindu households. In urban areas possession of land was much less.

Housing

In Greater Mumbai (NFHS 2 and NFHS 3) and Nagpur (NFHS 3) data were collected from slum and non-slum areas. Both survey clearly show that Muslim household in these districts were living in much higher percentage in slum areas as compared to Hindu and Christian households. Large majority of Muslims in Bhivandi, Mumbai, Malegaon and over 40 towns declared as minority population concentrated, live in ghettos without basic amenities such as safe drinking water, electricity, toilets, proper roads, closed gutters. The ghettoization is detrimental to the long term well-being of the community as well as for national integration. Very small percentage of other minority groups lives in slums. It indicates that majority of Muslim in the cities in Maharashtra is mostly engaged in the low paying skilled, semi skilled or unskilled jobs owing to their low educational qualifications.

Migration

As per NSS data of 2007-08, 84.5 per cent women in rural areas and 65.7 per cent in urban areas reported marriage as reason for their migration. The family migration in urban areas is second most dominating reason among females. Among men, economic

reason was most dominating reason for migration as reported by nearly 53 per cent in rural and 73 per cent in urban areas. Migration due to education was reported by little higher percentage in urban areas as compared to rural areas. Migration among Muslims women due to economic reasons was reported by about 1.5 per cent in rural areas and 3.5 per cent in urban areas.

Bank loans

The reluctance of banks to grant loans to Muslims is another factor for their economic backwardness. In all studies commissioned by the Minority Commission, the respondents have stated that in most cases, banks are biased, and there are no well-defined and objective criteria for rejecting loan applications of Muslims resulting into arbitrariness, bureaucratic bungling, corruption and leakage. The average amount of loans banks disbursed to the Muslims is found to be lower than the one given to other minorities, especially Buddhists and Sikhs.

Socio -economic Infrastructure

Muslims in Maharashtra are a highly deprived community in terms of several socio-economic indices. Their employment pattern is highly skewed towards lower level activities in the tertiary sector with hardly any occupational mobility. The access of Muslims to bank credit is low and inadequate; the community has one of the lowest monthly per capita expenditure (MPCE), and lowest representation in the public sector employment. In response to persistent exclusion of Muslims from development efforts, the Ranganath Mishra Commission Report (2007) had asked for 10% reservation for Muslims in central and state government jobs and 6% within OBC quotas for

Muslim OBCs, and the inclusion of Muslim and Christian dalits in the scheduled castes list and Equal Opportunities Commission to be set up expeditiously. But these recommendations are yet to be implemented.

Muslim communities throughout the state have complained that to avail any government scheme, agents charge Rs. 1000/- for fulfillment of formalities/paper work and if the amount is granted by the state, they disappear with money. Hence it is important to monitor the implementation of the schemes thro' voluntary organizations/NGOs/potential beneficiaries.

The Muslim community lags behind severely in political representation. The number of Muslim MLAs is 5. The number of Muslim MLCs is 11. Representation of Muslims in Indian Administrative Services has been less than 1% for the last three decades. The number of Muslims in Maharashtra cadre IAS in 2011-12 is one among total 288 IAS officers. One Muslim officer resigned in July 2011. The sanctioned strength for IAS officers is 350 - there is a shortfall of 62 officers in the cadre. In 2010-11, there were 2 Muslim officers out of total strength of 350. In 2009-2010 also there were 2 Muslims out of 340 IAS officers' posts. The number in the IPS is 4 out of 203 officers in 2011. The sanctioned cadre strength for police officers in Maharashtra state is 302.

The major reason for the socio economic deprivation of Muslims is the high incidence of communal riots. Absence of civic ties due to ghettoisation creates an insular feeling. Mumbai which has 15 to 18 % Muslim population, according to

various estimates, is the worst hit. During 1908 to 2009; Mumbai alone was inflicted with 83 communal riots which claimed nearly 1,900 lives and resulted in injuries to over 8,000 people. No other city or region in Maharashtra has had more communal riots than Mumbai. It exceeds that of the communal incidents in Malegaon. A distant second in the 1908-2009 riots list is Aurangabad (12 incidents), followed by Pune, Nagpur and Malegaon (11 incidents each). Though Bhiwandi occupies fifth spot with 8 incidents, it ranks second in terms of deaths. During 1998-2008, 172 lives were lost in 1,192 incidents in the state due to highly polarized society that is sharply divided along caste and religious lines.

Syncretism Culture

Culture of Maharashtra is marked by a high degree of syncretism and pluralism. Political economy of communal conflicts is proving to be a major threat to this glorious legacy. Maharashtra has had 1,192 communal clashes during the 11-year period from 1998 to 2008, the highest in the country. Throughout the 11-year period, Maharashtra witnessed 10% to 23% of the total incidence of communal riots in India. Its share was particularly high during 2005-06, when 20% of all such incidents took place in the state. In this context, massive development intervention among poor Muslims with special focus on inclusive growth is a need of an hour.

Recommendations

This inquiry into causes of socio economic deprivation of Muslims is a crucial exercise to arrive at remedial measures and doable agenda for inclusive development of Muslims thro the government

initiative of Multi Sectoral Development Programme (MsDP). Main rationale for MsDP is to remove disparities faced by areas with sizable minority population. In Maharashtra, four districts Parbhani, Hingoli, Washim and Buldhana are identified by Central Government as Minority Concentrated Districts for Multi-sectoral Development Program during XI Plan (2007-12).

Bhivandi

Known as Manchester of India, this textile city is famous for handloom and power loom industry. As most of the workers are migrant and working too hard, citizens groups are not active in the city.

- The state has to be pro-active in ensuring social security and social protection to the informal sector workers. All of them must be provided with ration cards.
- Currently only 30% of the city has a drainage system. Remaining 70% of the city of Bhivandi must be provided drainage system so that most of the illnesses related to water born diseases can be controlled.
- Public health and sanitation measures against unhygienic living and working condition must be taken as early as possible. Eradication of contagious disease programme TB, skin ailments needs an immediate attention.
- Occupational health and safety standards for workers in powerloom and handloom industries need to be operationalised by Factory Inspector's Office and Labour Bureau. Support structures and medical facilities must be provided for disabled people.

- Massive urban housing scheme for Muslims is urgently required in Bhivandi.
- Modernisation of slaughter house in Bhivandi as per the norms of Maharashtra Pollution Control Board is need of an hour, hence adequate financial assistance must be provide in the PRI and state government budget.
- To eradicate child labour in Bhivandi, the Child Labour Prevention Act, 1986 must be implemented.
- Create new posts of Community Development Officers at the Bhivandi Municipal Corporation.

Mumbai: Behrampada, Dharavi, Jogeshwari, Madanpura, Govandi, Mankurd, Kurla, Govandi, Mumbra

Mumbai has Muslim ghettos spread around all three railway lines-central (Kurla, Byculla, Mazgaon), Western (Behrampada, Dharavi, Jogeshwari) and Harbour (Madanpura, Govandi, Mankurd). There is a need to establish a strong centre-link programme that would co-ordinate, policies, programmes and ground realities. This unit established either in the Department of Minorities Affairs or the Minorities State Commission. It

- must monitor the socio-economic and financial sector programmes within the access parameters of the minorities such as budget allocation for the minorities in proportion to the population and their levels of development,
- top priority in the budget must be given to housing, roadwork, drainage, water supply and

electricity

- call for a mid-term review of programmes and ensure that the allocations made for the minorities/ women and other vulnerable groups are not re-allocated, but will be spent for the purpose it is intended.
- facilitate the dissemination of information about the various state welfare programmes especially targeting the minorities, but of all programmes and initiatives aimed at addressing issues of socio-economic justice. The idea is to have a single window approach to programmes.
- resolve dispute over land ownership in favour of the community.
- The present condition of the slaughter houses in the city is very bad, and is a threat to the health and hygiene of persons living nearby, as well as persons working there, and people who consume the meat that comes from there. Hence modernisation is urgently required, at least to ensure that basic standards of hygiene are in place.

Malegaon

Malegaon has a potential to emerge as a modern industrial hub and urgently needs an Urban Renewal Plan.

- Major housing scheme, drainage and sanitation measures, tapped water, street lights, roads and public transport demand urgent attention for the poor Muslim workers in Malegaon.
- Small scale manufacturing units-power-loom, textile, oil, food and

plastic industries and oil refinery should be provided regular and reliable electricity supply, credit and banking facilities, physical infrastructure in terms of road and transport for passengers and goods.

- Powerloom industry must be modernized and yarn bank must be established. Paithani sarees produced in Malegaon deserves more proactive marketing.
- Vocational Training Institutes must be established for generating skilled workforce as majority of population Malegaon is young in age.
- Malegaon film industry should get encouragement and state support in terms of investment, marketing, land for development of film city with studios, loans, consultancy services and awards the way Bollywood and Marathi Film industries are getting.
- The government should encourage formation of 5000-6000 SHGs of women in Malegaon.
- The state government must evolve a special package for the industrial development of Maegaon city.
- The government must make concerted efforts for intermixing of different religious communities thro' creation of mixed neighbourhood as against extreme segregation existing currently, sports, cultural activates, public parks, libraries, community centres, youth camps, health checkups by voluntary organizations for all citizens.

(to be concluded)

India needs democratic socialism

Brij Khandelwal

Activists committed to the core values of democratic socialism reaffirmed their faith in the founding principles of the socialist movement in India at a four-day 'Retreat' held in the verdant green hills of Vagamon, 60 kms from Kottayam in Kerala.

Jointly organised by the Association for Democratic Socialism, Delhi, the Centre for Socialist Studies, Bangalore and the Samajavadi Mahila Sabha, Mumbai, the 42 activists, ideologues and party workers, of whom 17 were women, unanimously adopted the Vagamon Declaration that urges political parties across India to transparently commit themselves to the ideologies they professed and take appropriate steps to minimise the yawning gap between "claiming and doing" – Precept and Practice. Their ideologies must define their approach to public life and ways to insulate political parties from the all pervasive opportunistic and permissive culture that had promoted a set of politicians who think clinging to or seizing power by any means was justifiable. This negative mind-set has played havoc with the growth of a healthy people-oriented polity in the past half a century.

It was high time people of India woke up to the grim realities and compelled politicians of all hues to declare their abiding faith in the Democratic Socialist principles enshrined in the preamble of our constitution.

The Vagamon Declaration signed by the participants of the 'Retreat', commits them to use all available

democratic instruments to strengthen the core values of democratic socialism and to espouse the cause of the oppressed, deprived and the marginalised sections of the society.

When deliberations began the question posed by many related to the need for defining the relevance of Democratic Socialism in the changed political milieu of

Vagamon Declaration

We the members of Association for Democratic Socialism, Delhi, Centre for Socialist Studies, Bangalore and the Samajavadi Mahila Sabha, Mumbai and other persons from across the country, committed to the ideology of democratic socialism having gathered at Vagamon, District of Kottayam, Kerala between the 29th March and 1st April 2013, urge the people of India, especially those in public life to uphold principles in public action. We call upon the political parties and political actors to declare their respective ideologies and commit themselves to them. In the past we have suffered from a big gap between the claim and the reality in public action. Now, there is no claim nor is there any reference to principles or ideology. It is high time for all of us to take a call on bringing ideology to the centre stage of our public life. It goes without saying that de-emphasizing ideology has led us to accept opportunistic compromises as well as aspiring or clinging on to power by any means.

For a healthy politics, a robust economy, sound collective values, and above all a just society, we call upon the political class to preserve and practice the principles of equality, liberty and fraternity enshrined in our Constitution. In a pluralist polity and a heterogeneous society like ours we must practice the principles of social justice and solidarity to ensure equality and freedom. All these values practiced together ensure "parity of participation" essential for both individual as well as public good. Furthermore these values constitute the most viable and credible ideology called Democratic Socialism that is mentioned in the Preamble of our Constitution.

We call upon the citizens of India to demand from their leaders that they practice these values in politics, economic planning, social and cultural policies, development interventions, industrial project and agricultural activities. It is our desire as well as duty to fight for the protection and practice of these values. We declare and pledge ourselves to use all available democratic instruments to commit our leaders to these values as they are in the interest of all Indians, especially the poor, deprived, oppressed and marginalized. We call upon the political parties to commit to these fundamental principles of a just and an equal society in their manifestoes and programmes and implement them. We urge the citizens to evaluate their leaders as they relate to these values.

We issue this "Vagamon Declaration" on 31 March 2013 to blow the bugle on protecting, preserving and promoting Democratic Socialism.

globalisation, privatisation and liberalization. Participants said some of the old postulates and positions taken by Socialists earlier needed updating and revision. A continuous dialogue therefore was the need of the hour. However, it was felt, the principal parameters and the core values of the socialist movement could neither be diluted nor lost sight of.

Several participants said that while analysing the overall success or failure of the Indian democratic experiment, it was not prudent or advisable to compare our experiences with the western models, given the extremely complex and heterogeneous and hierarchical structure of our ethos and the prevailing socio-economic conditions.

In many situations it had been observed that community or sectarian politics had 'obstacled' national political objectives as has been demonstrated in the case of Jammu & Kashmir politics and Tamil-Sri Lanka imbroglio.

The 'Indian Electionised Democratic' model had been heavily dented by casteism, money and muscle power, criminalisation of politics and most importantly the weakening of the ideological commitment of political parties, speakers said.

Unfortunately the transformational crusade by many leaders of the freedom movement failed to garner support and influence politics in a fundamental manner. To get the best results it is imperative that socio-cultural changes precede fundamental political restructuring.

The Indian socialist movement, despite its crucial contribution in reorienting and refocusing priorities, failed miserably to provide a

credible and durable alternative. The mushrooming growth of socialist parties and the amoebic splitting and fragmentation due to "bloated egos" of leaders, only helped generate disillusionment and cynicism all around, the participants observed.

The players may have failed but none can deny that India's march towards an era of "diffused prosperity" can come only through democratic socialism which firmly believes in extending political equality to all other spheres of human activity and behaviour.

The Democratic Socialists have now to respond afresh to growing challenges in the fields of education and the new linguistic scenario, the need for wide representation and reservation, land acquisition complexities, environmental degradation and sustainable development. They have to resolve the Deshi versus Global dichotomy, the gender inequalities, the apartheid in education, address the rural-urban divide, the mass exodus to the urban centres and problems created by increased mobility, etc.

On the foreign affairs front, Democratic Socialists have always championed the cause of the poorer countries of the southern hemisphere. India needs to develop more friendly relations with neighbours. Of late it had been observed that regional considerations were influencing foreign policy decisions leading to lopsided policy decisions and hence there was need to evolve a coherent national foreign policy accommodating the regional aspirations also.

On the agricultural front speakers said issues relating to land acquisitions, the subsidy tussle, the patent and seeds controversies, distribution of land, price mechanism of agricultural produce all need to be

addressed urgently.

The Democratic Socialist retreat concluded with a firm assertion that the socialists of all hues must eventually come on a common platform and bid for power. Right now dozens of groups are splintered and pulling in diverse directions. This is not a very happy situation and should therefore be corrected through active intervention by senior leaders of the socialist movement. A dialogue with political outfits sharing common beliefs and insights must begin and continuous inter active sessions involving socialist workers must be held in different parts.

The retreat suggested that a school of socialism may be started with appropriate syllabus to train the cadres from all over India in the ideology of democratic socialism.

(Continued from Page 5)

countries organized a protest against the US Aid tent in the campus area and use of the flag of Israel in the campus, as a result of which both banners and flags were removed.

Although political parties cannot participate in WSF directly, various organizations and foundations were seen propagating the ideas of social democracy, Marxism and other ideologies, without any resistance from the participants.

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Let us build Socialist Party(India) to build strong, egalitarian India.

*Draft resolution for the second biennial conference of the Socialist Party (India)
to be held at Thiruvananthapuram on 17 and 18 May, 2013)*

Large scale goondaism, violence against women, torturing of youths belonging to minority community, wide spread corruption from top to bottom, deteriorating work culture in government establishments, non-stop price-rise coupled with high rate of unemployment and ever widening gap between various classes and regions – these are some of the black spots on the face of India today. Profit thirsty corporate houses controlling the print and electronic media are serving heavy doses of vulgar consumerism and violence corrupting the young minds. Leading political parties are indulging into game of mudslinging and of image building of their own show boys.

The Congress party, which is leading the coalition Government at the centre has nobody but itself to blame for break down of law and order machinery, innumerable number of scams involving crores of rupees and slowing down of growth of economy, because no hurdles were created by opposition parties or class organizations.

However the people cannot shed the responsibility for enhancing vices like drinking, gambling, ill-treatment of their women folk, giving bribes to get out of turn largess from the authorities. spreading filth at public places, not discharging their duties as parents, teachers, doctors, lawyers, etc. If the people want the rulers to be honest, they should start practicing integrity and habits of good work culture. People get government they deserve. Rulers hail from society and, in a democracy, are elected by the

people. Good people will occupy seats of power if the people at large shun allurements at the time of elections. And put in earnest efforts to eliminate corruption, maintain cleanliness at public places and develop habits of treating women honourably.

There is one good sign. Recently, young people thronged the streets on issues of corruption and heinous crimes against women. But such waves of agitation don't make a driving force to navigate the polity towards desired goals. Adopting a comprehensive set of well thought out policies and building up an army of dedicated activists can alone assure enduring system of good governance.

The Socialist Party(India) call upon all well-meaning men, women and youths to join heroic task of forging effective political instrument to build a strong and India. Following egalitarian is an agenda of action:

Defence of the Nation

Jawans, who are rendering sterling service to safeguard the borders, should be treated well by their superior officers. Trained jawans should not be deployed to serve as orderlies - a legacy of bad old days of colonialism. Their families back home must also be looked after with love and honour.

India has earned a bad name of largest single big purchaser of military hardware in the world market. Lakhs of crores of rupees go down the drain as commission. This must be stopped. Our scientists and

technicians, who have put satellites in the sky, can certainly develop and produce heavy armaments and vehicles for our armed forces. No more purchases be made from the Western producers.

There should be no stockpile of nuclear arms.

Honourable treatment to women and their empowerment

Men should ensure that there will be no female foeticide, honour killing, bride-burning for dowery or murdering of a girl who refuses to respond to a boy's flirtations. Harassment of and violence towards the females, at home or workplace or on the street, must stop. Menfolk should radically change their mindset and habits.

Popular pressure should be built up to prevent obscene and vulgar scenes printed or tele/broadcast in media which are generally controlled by the profit-hungry corporates.

Not opening an exclusive bank for women, but channeling adequate flow of banking services towards women, from all the branches of the banks, should be promoted and monitored.

To maintain communal Harmony

Communal Violence law must be enacted soon and implemented ardently. Innocent youths should not be rounded up in combing operations nor should they be made to linger in jails for indefinite time. Persons responsible for terrorist acts must be brought to book with no loss of

time. The security forces should stop flow of money and explosives to the terrorist groups. Ordinary people and particularly the youths must not be unjustly harassed.

For promoting social equality

All-out efforts must be put in to eradicate caste system and offer special opportunities to the backward castes in the field of education, employment and other walks of life.

Forest Rights Act 2006 must be implemented within a reasonable time span.

To curb goondaism

Interference by political bosses in the working of police machinery should be stopped. There must be drastic downsizing of security provided to VIPs. The police personnel should take stern action to curb goondaism. Production of illicit arms and ammunition must be totally uprooted.

Police personnel should be provided with proper facilities for housing, health, education, etc. Time bound clearance of citizens' applications in government offices, banks, electricity, judicial courts, etc.

Officers and employees in government, sem-government establishments, banks, law courts, etc. should be asked to clear citizens' matters in a prescribed time frame. Instead of English, they should use Indian languages and behave properly with the citizens.

Discard western model and adopt Indian model of development

We the people of India have made a resolve in our Constitution that we will establish Sovereign, Secular, Democratic, Socialist Republic.

Provisions in its chapter four enjoin the Indian State to provide

adequate means of livelihood to every able-bodied man and woman, prevent concentration of wealth in a few hands, develop agriculture, handicrafts and small industries, etc.

The rulers-that-be and all political parties would do well to remember all this because they are taking oath in the name of the Constitution.

After taking note of the ill effects of the privatization-liberalisation –globalisation policies, (which were dictated by the IMF, World Bank and WTO), it has become imperative to discard Western model of development and adopt Indian model, by keeping in mind the fact that two-thirds of our population are engaged in agriculture.

Full employment, protection of environment and lessening the gap between various classes and regions should be accepted as goals of our development policies.

The State should supply infrastructure facilities like communications, water, power, credit, research and marketing to producers engaged in agriculture, forestry, dairy, fishery etc. Their cooperative societies should be strengthened.

Use of fossil fuel be minimized. Nuclear energy, looking at its hazardous nature, should not be used. Instead, renewable sources like solar, wind, gohar be harnessed.

Remunerative prices to their produce should be ensured.

Production of daily use commodities like cloth, oil, soap, medicines, etc. be reserved for cottage and small scale industries and their location be decentralized in the direction of achieving panch-croshi self-reliance. Cooperative

management be promoted as far as possible.

Capital goods industries and all-India services like railway, banking, insurance must be in the domain public sector.

Reserve Bank of India should exercise diligent control on financial transactions, particularly on capital account. PDS must be buttressed.

With a view to ensure adequate regular supply of foodgrains, sugar, kerosene, etc. at reasonable prices to poor and middle income groups, PDS structure must be buttressed. Pilferage be eliminated,

System of cash transfers should not be adopted as it is fraught with immense potentiality for misuse and fraud.

FDI must not be allowed to enter retail trade.

Labour

Legitimate rights of workers, particularly to collective bargaining and peaceful collective action, must be protected.

Social security, in the form of life and health insurance and old age pension be provided to all workers in the unorganized sector.

The State should ensure common, qualitative and free education to all. Similarly, basic health services be provided to the vulnerable sections of society.

North-eastern States and Jammu-Kashmir

The terrain in those border states being so difficult, greater priority be accorded to providing rail and road facilities there.

(Continued on Page 15)

World Bank's Sham Consultations

Workers Union, Delhi Mahila Shahri Kaamgar Sangathan, National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM), Delhi Solidarity Group, SRUTI, Delhi Forum, Programme for Social Action and others on April 5, 2013 stormed the 'civil society consultation' on review and update of the World Bank's environmental and social safeguard policies organised by World Bank at India Habitat Centre in New Delhi. Terming these consultations as eyewash activists didn't allow the consultations to proceed since World Bank continues to hide behind the central and state governments in India or other government agencies in different countries and shirk responsibility for any environmental and social damage.

Vimal Bhai, Matu Jan Sangathan-NAPM, said, "the way these consultations are organised are no different from what has been going on for decades. Many such reviews have been conducted, thousands of groups and individuals have participated with the intent of seeing genuine reform of the institution, and possibly its democratization, only to be utterly disappointed. The current exercise, therefore, is nothing but a charade to mask the true intentions of its major 'shareholders': France, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States, who are grappling with serious economic downturns and are conveniently using the Bank to force open global investment opportunities with scant regard to environmental and social impacts.

Madhuresh Kumar, NAPM, added that if indeed the World Bank was seriously concerned about the impacts of its investments, then the best test would have been

the sensitivity demonstrated in the investments made by its various lending operations. In India, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the Bank's private sector lending arm, is complicit in massive human rights and environmental violations that form the basis of the super-mega \$4 billion Tata-Mundra 4000 MW power project in the ecologically sensitive Kutch region of Gujarat. The World Bank, in its wisdom, has further endorsed such environmental crimes by offering a \$1 billion loan to the building of the Fifth Power System Development Project, which essentially is a transmission line for Tata-Mundra and three other large coastal power projects. Participating in such manner, the Bank conveniently escapes any blame for the disaster, and yet benefits from financing such 'development projects'."

Umesh Babu, Delhi Forum, said "the Bank's Policy on piloting the use of borrower systems for Environmental and Social Safeguards has in the past decade been a mantra to pave the way for promoting investment at any cost. Over a decade ago the World Bank funded the Indian Ministry of Environment and Forests' Environmental Management Capacity Building Project. The result was a massive dilution of India's environmental and social safeguard norms. What's worse, the processes that resulted lent voice to those within administration and industry who were crying hoarse that the carefully evolved rigour of "forest" and "environmental" clearance standards in India was thwarting economic growth."

Lakshmi Premkumar, PSA, said, "it took the movement groups and

people's organisations across the globe 30+ years to pressurise the World Bank Group to formulate, re-formulate and have in place mechanisms that would safeguard social-environmental-cultural-traditional interests of communities and people affected by the Group's financing of so called 'Development projects' across the World and in India. However, it took the Bank, in particular International Finance Corporation (IFC), only one stroke of destructive imagination to bring in the new model of 'Financial Intermediary Lending' that wiped out all mandatory requirements posed by environmental and social safeguard principles on lending, as they are not bound by such standards. At a time when the FI model of lending in India by IFC and the World Bank at large are expected to cross the halfway mark of their collective investments, it does not make any sense at all for the World Bank to be holding such reviews of their environmental and social safeguards; they simply do not matter at all to the actual practice of the World Bank and its agencies."

Activists urged the members of the civil society who had come for the consultation to leave the meeting, if they really felt the pain of the people of this country. World Bank has pushed for policies which have undermined the sovereignty of India and its people, privatised services, opened up market for loot and plunder of natural resources by the private corporations and very fundamentally changed the policies of this country in favour of capitalists forces.

Shouting slogans of "*World Bank ! Quit India !*", "*World Bank ! Down*

Down !” activists refused to budge from the venue until the World Bank Country Director Onno Ruhl, left the hall at 2 pm followed by Stephen F Lintner, Senior Advisor, Sanjay Srivastava, Regional Safeguards Advisor and other Bank officials along with few CSO members and Bank consultants who stayed till last.

Activists warned that these sham consultations will not be tolerated unless Bank owned upto damages, compensated communities and stopped funding the environmentally and socially destructive projects in name of ‘development’. People’s Movements have been struggling across the country against its own governments demanding justice and challenging their nefarious capitalist designs but that doesn’t mean World Bank can hide behind them. They are part of the larger design of the global financial systems and we will continue to challenge it.

The current ‘consultations’ are therefore a sham and must be denounced by anyone deeply concerned about the nature of democracy and are keen to ensure that all peoples of the world benefit from human activity that is based on deep appreciation and adherence to the Principle of Prior and Informed Consent and the Principle of Intergenerational Equity.

–Rajendra Ravi, Anita Kapoor

(Continued from Page 13)

As insurgency is fast receding in those areas, the military may be withdrawn or at least Armed Forces Special Powers Act be lifted.

People in other states where citizens of above states happen to stay for employment etc. should accord brotherly treatment towards them.

Foreign Policy

Maintenance of world peace and cooperation and Protection of Human Rights should be the guiding principles of our foreign policy.

(Continued from Page 3)

Pakistan (religious extremists are not mentioned) and the importance of unceasing jihad. It devotes a total of three sentences to a united Pakistan, the last of which reads: “With the help of India, East Pakistan separated.”

The class VIII textbook (English) is still briefer and simply states that “some leaders of former East Pakistan with the active help of India managed to break away from Pakistan and established Bangladesh.” The Class IX and Class X (Urdu) books—by far the most detailed—devote nearly three pages, explaining the disintegration. The listed subtitles include: a) Incompetent government of Yaha Khan; b) Hindu domination of trade; c) Nefarious role of Hindu teachers; d) Language problems; e) Indian interference; f) The elections of 1970.

Meanwhile, on February 5 the Bangladesh International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) found Abdul Kader Mullah guilty of five out of six charges against him. Known as Mirpur Koshai (Butcher of Mirpur) because of his atrocities against the citizens in the Mirpur area of Dhaka, he was charged with beheading a poet, raping an 11-year-old girl and murdering 344 people. The ICT sentenced mullah, presently assistant secretary general of the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, to life in prison. For the protesters at the Shahbag Square, this was not enough—they want the mullah to be hanged. On the other side, the Jamaat protested violently

Bonds of friendship with the neighbors and other countries of East Asia and Africa be strengthened while taking due care and caution about the security concerns of our country.

and also staged demonstrations. But its efforts to influence global opinion foundered in spite of a well-funded attempt.

Curiously enough, Mullah’s case has been taken up by the government of Turkey. President Abdullah Gul sent a letter last month to the President of Bangladesh requesting clemency for all those accused of mass murder. Fortunately, Turkey’s president appears to be an exception and much of the world has shown little regard for genocidal killers.

Acharya Javadekar
A Satyagrahi Socialist



G. P. Pradhan

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Thatcher feared Islam

Kuldip Nayar

Thatcher feared Islam
 Kuldip Nayar

**Could a Muslim be
 entitled as secularist?**
 K. S. Chalam

Reconciliation by shared caring
 Harsh Mander

**Myanmar Communal Violence-
 Set back to Democratic Process**
 Ram Puniyani

**Socio-Economic Profile of
 Muslims in Maharashtra**

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I MET Mrs Margaret Thatcher for the first time when I was India's envoy at London in 1990. At that time she was counting on her achievements, including the triumph in the cold war. I sent her a congratulatory message for having vanquished the communist ideology. But she said she had even bigger enemies to defeat and mentioned Islam. I have always wondered whether the stirrings in the Islamic world were the doing of Great Britain's.

Around the same time, I knew that Prime Minister Thatcher too was losing her job because the men in "grey suits" had tapped on her shoulder and told her to quit. It was apparent that she had too many enemies in the party. Mrs Thatcher's sense of self-righteousness and her penchant for the spotlight had made even her most eminent colleagues feel small and deficient. Many of them would have liked to have pulled her down earlier, but they were pygmies who could not measure up to her, colossus that she was.

Mrs Thatcher was required to poll 15 percent more than the majority for an outright win, but she lost the election by five votes. The goings-on

behind the scene were as murky as in India. Never once did her party men tell her that she was fighting a losing battle. She did finally send her resignation after ascertaining the facts from intelligence sources. I had heard from her Conservative Party colleague, who later became a minister in Prime Minister John Major's cabinet, that they wanted her to go in the interest of party unity. But it was her party men who betrayed her, as one minister confessed to me, for she made them what they were.

A ruthless stripping of subsidies, a dose of privatization and a head-on collision with the trade unions had succeeded in sloughing off many of the ills that had made Britain economically stagnant. But the price paid was high—unemployment and a divided nation. I wish Mrs Thatcher had retired after coming back with a majority of over 150 seats in the 1987 election. That was her third consecutive victory.

In 1990, she seemed like a person who had stayed too long in power, just as Jawaharlal Nehru did in 1962, after India's debacle at the hands of China. She should have taken the opinion polls seriously as the Conservatives

had lagged behind by a greater margin than any political party ever had in the past. Nobody backs a losing leader, whatever his or her contribution at one time. How can one forget that Winston Churchill was thrown out despite his victory in the Second World War?

My first political report was on the defeat of the Conservatives in a by-election in mid-Staffordshire within days of my arrival. I had a feeling this might turn into a similar situation as the Allahabad by-election after which the caravan of V.P. Singh started rolling till Rajiv Gandhi's Congress (I) government fell in 1989. However I wished that the rule of Conservatives did not end during my tenure as High Commissioner, Mrs Thatcher lost her prime ministership just before I left London.

I must, however, admit she was fairly warm in dealing with me when I first met her. The Iron Lady had forgotten what I had written about her. What I noticed during my stay in London and surprised about was that the diplomatic corps openly discussing the challenge that Mrs Thatcher posed to the Queen's position, considered not only improper but also sacrilegious. There was no love lost between the two. Mrs Thatcher was blamed for it as it was common knowledge that she did not appreciate rivals to her popularity, not even the Queen.

I recall a story told and retold is about a party where the Queen and Mrs Thatcher wore identical dresses. After that, Mrs Thatcher's private secretary wrote to the Palace asking to be informed beforehand what the Queen would wear at a particular official function so that

Mrs Thatcher could avoid being similarly dressed. The Queen's reply was that she never bothered to even look at what Mrs Thatcher wore!

During President R. Venkatraman's visit to the UK, I had another chance to interact with Mrs Thatcher more closely when I sat next to her chair and discussed on different subjects for two hours. She told me that she had refused to visit a gurudwara despite many invitations. "Those people killed Mrs Gandhi," she said, adding, "What kind of people must they be!" Mrs Thatcher compared the violence in Punjab with the Irish Republican Army's terrorism. "Of course, yours is on a bigger scale," she remarked. But she was reticent on Kashmir, though she did say that nothing should be done at the expense of India's unity and integrity.

I remarked that ethical standards were disappearing from politics and that our own experience in India was that politicians enjoyed hitting each other below the belt. Mrs Thatcher said that in Britain it was worse. They would 'kick you' and even when you had fallen, they would not stop hitting you. She fondly recalled her intimate relationship with Mrs Gandhi. "Even when we differed, our personal equation did not suffer," she said.

As our conversation progressed, I also happened to see the softer part of the Iron Lady and felt how vulnerable she had become. She began talking about various issues before shifting to her personal problems, pouring her heart out to a person who had met her only a few times before. Her son, she recalled, had to move to America because of the "wild charges" (of using her

position to get favours from the government) made against him. She said she missed her grandchildren but she considered it a price she had to pay to be in politics. She would often admit that she was not a consensus politician, but a "committed politician." She, indeed, was but nevertheless the one who made Britain click.

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Could a Muslim be entitled as secularist?

K. S. Chalam

Public memory is very short and we have ignored an important political excitement in the form of a statement by Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray recently at the time of Pakistan Prime Minister's visit to Ajmer. Thackeray was all the praise for Diwan Zaimul Abedin Ali Khan of Kwaja Moinuddin Chisti Dargah in Ajmer for his daring statement that the P M should bring the severed head of the Indian soldier before entering Indian soil. Thackeray has recommended that he should be awarded a Bharat Ratna. There are usual brickbats on the statement of both Thackeray and interestingly even on Ali Khan. Ajmir Dargah according to some scholars is a symbol of composite culture of India. I had an opportunity to visit the Dargah as I was made to visit it in one of my official tours. I was generally reticent in refusing to visit a religious place as part of protocol (I am called as secular fundamentalist by my friends) and keep it discrete. However, I use the opportunity to learn more about the place from the locals. In my recent visit to Tiruchangode in Tamil Nadu, I was taken to a shrine known as Ardhanariswara, a Sangam period temple. The transformation of the temple from that of the original Tamil god Muruga into becoming Ardhanareeswara in the same place with two entrances, was interesting. Similarly, I had visited Ajmer and found lot of our Hyderabad culture in and around the Dargah and felt very happy that we have our share in this glory. My wife bought typical Hyderabad bangles.

The criticism against a Muslim head for his patriotism and his offensive against another Muslim

simply on an emotional tip about his motherland is found to be really arcane. This is contrary to the stereotyping of Muslims. In fact, religion never united the Muslims. If it were so, we would not have seen Bangladesh nor the Arab problem. Why is it that our so-called secularists have not recognized the importance of the statement of Ali Khan, the Khadim, even if there is some theatrics? Are the Muslims not qualified to be patriotic and remain secular in their approach to international relations? We have seen how Modi has become secular for the Americans now. In fact, most of our current debates on secularism in this country are wonderful examples of political drama and intellectual disgust without practical programme of action to sustain secularism in a pluralistic country. Then what is the harm in appreciating the khadim for his secular postures. The situation was different during the freedom movement. Scholar statesmen like M.N.Roy, B.R.Ambedkar and a forgotten Telugu Bidda K.B.Krishna had provided sincere and honest analysis of the Muslim problem and the need for secularism in India.

K.B.Krishna, who taught Marxism to A.K.Gopalan in Jail, was a Harvard university scholar and produced a dissertation on "Communal Representation in India" for his Ph.D degree. He has added some essays and published "The Problem of Minorities or communal Representation in India" in London in 1939. After a survey of the situation in different countries in the British colonies including Kenya, Krishna concluded that, 'the only

solution is to demand independence for India from British imperialism'. He has analyzed that, "Hinduism and Islam represent different stages of human development. The Islam of immigrant Moslems was divorced from its natural surroundings and transplanted in to Indian surroundings. The association of Moslems with non-Moslem communities in different localities created different situations and outlooks. This also accounts, in addition to educational and economic factors, for cleavages of opinions and interests in the political classes of the same faith. The differences between general Islam and Hinduism and between particular local Islam and Hinduism is expressed in the relationships of classes belonging to these faiths.... Moral ideas are the outcome of material needs. Religion is the organization of such moral ideas. At some stages of human development moral ideas and needs coincide.... The contradictions between morality and practice are becoming deeper with the growth of class antagonisms." Around the same period M.N.Roy had also expressed similar opinion and lamented that we generally do not try to understand the conditions and the situation of our own Muslim neighbor and alienate them.

B. R. Ambedkar has in a way drawn some of his insightful thoughts from the experiences of Muslims and his dialogues with Jinnah and others. He has narrated how 'every change, executive, administrative or legal inflicted a series of blows on the Muslim community'. The exclusion of Muslims from political power was

“the essence of the distinction” between the ruling group and the subject group. Thus, he had an inexplicable longing for the Muslim community. Was it a historical slip that Ambedkar was allowed to embrace Buddhism rather than Islam, which he was at one time contemplating? It also shows that Islam, compared to other Religions is far from open to proselytization. Then why the Muslim is stereotyped compared to others. In fact, religion is not a full time activity of people except the priest class and most of the conflicts are confined to the vested interests amongst them. K.B.Krishna said that ‘the Arab-Jew problem like the Hindu-Muslim problem is neither racial nor religious. It is a struggle between two classes belonging to different faiths accentuated by the political policy of imperialism’. The imperialists have gone now and we do not know who fastened their boots?

Abundant wisdom had gone in to the Constituent Assembly debates in formulating certain Articles relating to secular nature of the state. Though, secularism was added as part of the preamble during the Emergency, there was already a basic structure to entail secularism and socialism. The Constitution makers were not guided by the medieval feudal practices of some Muslim or Hindu princes and even English officers having wives from different religious groups to declare their neutrality. It was a depraved kind of an approach to a serious issue that was later theorized as “Sarvadharama samabhava” by some disingenuous scholars. In a country which was converted as a colony of several alien settlers and their belief systems, it was inevitable for the Native Indians to absorb unfamiliar practices

sometimes with persuasion and many a times with force. Could it be due to their large heartedness in embracing different faiths without any prejudice and they still remained at the bottom of the society to guard it? Or is it their vulnerability? Otherwise, how can one think of respecting an animal that is adored by one community and abhorred by others? Our principle of equality of treatment of all religions does not work like this. It might operate among those classes or groups who were from the same stock of people, but spread in to different faiths over a period of time and have come to an understanding to rule together. This feudal business is gone and India has become a democratic and secular state. Therefore, we need to practice rigorously what secularism stands for. It is neither atheism nor irreligiousness. It is detaching all the personal beliefs and practices including non-belief from public/ state functions, if someone represents the state. This is a private affair. It is not vulgar display of personal beliefs as we see frequently now by responsible people like Presidents, Prime Ministers, Judges, Governors and others. This is against the principles of secularism, if not unconstitutional. The statement of the Khadim of Ajmir come under secularism as he kept his faith as a private affair and attacked his fellow Muslim.

The ideal combination of socialism, equality, democracy and secularism are the basic principles of our legacy and not the so called protection of mathadipathis like Kesavanada Bharati. This is because of our long history of colonization by different alien powers and imposing different belief systems on the Native Indians. One should appreciate that the local beliefs

of common people who are in a majority follow their traditional practices, if necessary translate Allah, Jesus, and Vishnu into their own forms of worship. They just do not mind adopting some alien elements as seen from Peerla festival incorporating Muslim and Hindu practices in the South. The common people are not fundamentalist in their approach as it is one of the many events in their cultural life and not a fulltime activity like the religious fundamentalists. This is taken as a point for the priest class in every religion as the fragile point to exploit. It is noticed that the fundamentalists keep on inventing different kinds of festivals, rituals and stories and with the support of obtuse urban intellectuals like Nandys, they perpetuate their hegemony. I do not know much about the international angle in this business. But one can say that the experience of the West is different from India due to this fact.

The secularists and the leftists who claim to be secular have failed to develop an alternative culture and allowed the religious fundamentalists to flourish with the aid of modern technology. We have seen debates by some Marxists defending religion on dubious grounds as they have failed to practice what they taught. This is contrary to the theories that religion will disappear with the advent of capitalism and modernization. Is there any country where god’s birth, marriage, nuptial, love affairs and in different guises and in different regions with diversity, interpreted as universal to carry out rituals/ ceremonies throughout the year? They are all now being broad casted and televised with innovative and creative works in the dedicated TV channels and special

(Continued on Page 9)

Socio-Economic Profile of Muslims in Maharashtra-II

Prepared for Maharashtra State Minority Commission

by Director, Centre for Study of Social Exclusion & Inclusive Policy,

Prof. Vibhuti Patel, Head, Department of Economics, SNDT Women's University, Mumbai

Overall Recommendations

- Block wise disaggregated data- base on socio-economic indicators for Muslims in the state must be provided and regularly updated for proper targeting of development schemes and programmes.
- In 49 Muslim inhabited blocks in Maharashtra, basic civil amenities such as water, street lights in the urban areas, sanitation, road, hospital/health centre, ICDS centers, school, multi-purpose activity centers, community libraries and banking facilities must be ensured on a top priority basis.
- The government officers should be sensitized to issue BPL cards and judiciously implement anti poverty programmes and schemes for deserving Muslims. Community Based Organisations and No-Government Organisations should be empowered to monitor procurement of BPL cards.
- Wide publicity should be given to Maulana Azad Employment Loan Scheme, Educational loan and Scholarships.
- Quarterly audit of budgetary allocation for social sector human development initiatives for Muslims must be done so that the funds can be utilized on time.
- Reservation policy to be made applicable to Dalit and OBC Muslims as per Justice Rangnath Mishra's recommendation.
- The State must set an example by taking a lead in instituting an Empowered Equal Opportunities Commission as per the recommendations of Sachar Commission and Justice Ranganath Mishra Commission.
- Urdu medium schools to be adequately and consistently funded to meet the expenditure of school building, teachers' salaries and campus/play-ground maintenance.
- State initiative in construction of urban houses for the Muslims among whom 60% currently are living in the slums.
- Priority Sector advances by the public sector banks should be increased to 15% of the total lending in agriculture and small scale industry as compared to current lending of 6% and 7% respectively.
- To stop discrimination against Muslims in housing sector, stern action must be taken against housing societies and builders who discriminate against citizens on the basis of religion/ caste in selling or renting out flats/houses.
- Women headed households should be given special consideration in all affirmative and anti poverty programmes of the state.
- Maulana Azad Minority Economic Development Mahamandal, Government of Maharashtra should give religion wise break up of beneficiaries of financial aid/loans under loan schemes, subsidy, education loan, micro credit, Mahila Samridhi, loans for farmers and fisher-folks and micro fiancé for SHGs and vocational training scheme.
- To promote higher and vocational education among Muslims girls and women, colleges and vocational training institutions must be started in the areas inhabited by Muslims.

Employment and Livelihood

- Ensuring that the selection panels for government jobs has a representative from the Muslim community.
- Ensure minorities do not face discrimination regarding bank loans. The government should clearly indicate that such forms of discriminations are unacceptable
- There is a need for strengthening SHG programmes to ensure that the people do not have to take loans from private money lenders on high rate of interests.
- It has to extend the outreach of schemes such as Sanjay Gandhi Niradhar Anudhan Yojana
- Sharvanbal Seva Raj Nivrattan Yojana
- National Family Benefits Scheme
- Extend the Coverage of the Unorganized Sector Workers Bill to the people of Behrampada

- Ensure that the people are covered by insurance policies that are people friendly
- The various schemes for minorities have not reached the residents of Behrampada
- Sensitization of the bureaucrats, staff and the police.
- Employment of Muslims in Muslim concentrated areas.
- Professional skills and self employment opportunities among Muslims.
- The Government should strengthen its health and education delivery systems to ensure that people do not get indebted due to these basic requirements of the people.
- All rural and urban slaughter houses in the state need modernization that meets the standards of environmental and health safety standards.
- Hostels for working people

Creation of Skilled Labour Force

At least 20 new ITIs in Urdu Medium must be recognised on grant-in-Aid basis. And at least 20 second shift ITIs in Urdu/Marathi medium must be started in Govt/ Aided ITIs exclusively for minorities.

- 18. At least 10 new polytechnics in Urdu Medium (with affiliation from Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad) and 10 new polytechnics in English Medium must be started by the State Government for minorities.
- These can be started as Second Shift Polytechnics using same infrastructure of Govt/Semi Government Polytechnics

as suggested by National Knowledge Commission and A.I.C.T.E.

For effective time bound implementation of minority welfare schemes, following are the suggestions to be worked out at State level and local level by the Government and Non-Government Organizations.

1. Administrative set up of District Minority Welfare Officer, at each district Head Quarter is essential at par with District Social Welfare Officer by the State Government. (A.P. and U.P. model can be referred in this regard)
2. For empowerment of Minorities, a State level Minorities Welfare Action Committee must be constituted.
3. For mass awareness of the schemes up to root level, programs must be organized at each taluqa/minority populated areas.
4. In depth study of implementation of each and every scheme, practical difficulties observed during its implementation, number of deserved applicants, all such aspects must be considered to review the existing schemes to cater the needs of a large number of minorities.
5. Property-homes, shops etc. of the Muslims must be insured keeping in mind fear of riots.

Amendment of the Maharashtra Slum Rehabilitation Act 1970

The Maharashtra Slum Rehabilitation Act has to be revised to create housing for all the existing residents of the area. They are among the poorest people in Maharashtra

and they are a vulnerable community. Their problems are located in the overall neglect of the urban poor in state policies.

Establishment of People's Action Committee for Area Development

There is a need for a People's Action Committee for the Development of Behrampada to facilitate the development of the area. Comprising high level officials, BMC engineers community leaders (both men and women) and local NGOs, this committee will be responsible for the identification of bonafide residents. This need arises from the discussions we have had with the local bureaucrats and the community. The understanding we received was that when the housing board wished to build houses after the fire in Behrampada, they were faced with the difficulty of identifying the bonafide beneficiary, since so many came with the same set of documents claiming ownership entitlements. It was narrated that the surveyor had a knife placed at his throat and the records torn by the hoard of angry residents who crowded them demanding the inclusion of their names. This observation was reiterated by the women in the area. A few said that they were the original residents of the area, but many more were claiming ownership rights.

- The need for area development committee is necessitated by the principles of democratic and participatory development. It will ensure that the people have a say in their own development.
- This monitoring of the development programme by this committee will circumvent the problems of identification of beneficiaries and maintain vigilance against corruption and delays in the completion of the projects.

- It will also be able to mediate between those responsible for the execution of the project and the beneficiaries. Our discussions with the BMC officers and the community highlighted the difference in understanding/explaining delays. For instance the women living in the redeveloped part of Behrampada (i.e., the area destroyed by fire), complained about the difficulties of living without water. The water pipes had been laid but the supply had not been released. When we discussed this point with the BMC, we were told that this was because some miscreants had broken the pipes, to illegally divert water. The need to repair the pipes and ensure that they are not damaged was a major concern.
- It will be able to ensure and insist that there is better coordination between the various departments of housing, roadwork, drainage, water supply and electricity so that the project can be completed on time with the minimum overflow of the sanctioned budget.
- The Group will also ensure the education of the slum dwellers on the importance of sanitation and cleanliness in the environment to improve the quality of life issues.
- In addition, on the principle of social justice, Government and civil societies should send a clear message all housing societies that do not admit Muslims are against the country's policies of social inclusion. There should be a quota for Muslims in Government Housing schemes.

Food Security

National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) reports for 1993-94, 1999-2000 and 2004-05 (NSSO 1996, 2001 and 2007) on Calorie Deprivation in Maharashtra revealed that Religion wise distribution indicates that Muslims are the most vulnerable in urban areas with an incidence of calorie-poor of 55%. Their population share is only 17% but their share of the calorie poor is nearly one fourth.

The recommendations made here is only concerned with questions of distributive justice, although the policy makers will no doubt take into account the need for efficiency in the procurement, transportation and storage of food supplies along with efficiency of distribution. The findings of the study indicate the following shortcomings of the existing TPDS system:

- The procedure for the acquisition of ration cards places the most vulnerable people (the homeless, migrants, single women and tenants) outside the eligibility criteria.
- The rules governing proof of residence, income, etc. should be simplified. Deserted women in particular would find it difficult to acquire these documents.
- It is necessary to revise the Poverty Line Index on the basis of the current inflations. Additionally, it must factor in the high cost paid by the family for health and education, home repair and other basic amenities of water, electricity in the calculations.
- The existence of TVs or other major durable commodities cannot be criteria for the

measurement of poverty: For these commodities may be discards and pre-owned products that do not indicate the economic well-being of the households.

- The TPDS should be need-based rather than supply based. The coverage should be extended to all households requiring subsidies. The short supply and pilfering of essential commodities.
- There are errors of inclusion and exclusion in the TPDS system.
- Policies should ensure that women from minority communities have access to welfare schemes.
- Government Regulations to improve services should be widely disseminated. Government GRs are not necessarily known to the local officers and NGOs. Information should be published in the local papers.

This study calls for the following interventions 1) legislative changes of policies; 2) streamlining and monitoring of food storage and distribution network; 3) strict vigilance at the local fair price shops to ensure that there is no pilfering of essential grains; and 4) quality control of grains and lentils supplied in the TPDS. The right to food security should be available to everyone irrespective of caste, or religious/ethnic identity. It should be demand based and not supply based.

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Reconciliation by shared caring

Harsh Mander

In many parts of the world, communities live side by side bitterly estranged by conflict, hate and suspicion. The source of conflict may be external or civil war; identity-based conflicts of religious belief, ethnicity, race and caste; violent political battles of the right and left; battles for self-determination and political independence; and many others. What is common is that unhealed wounds fester and, consequently, foster legacies of suffering and hatred from generation to generation. The greatest of these burdens are borne by children, women, the aged, disabled people, and the poor.

People of goodwill everywhere, through history, have fashioned strategies to bring about reconciliation, or the meeting again of hearts and minds, between people separated by conflict and hate. I will outline here one unusual strategy deployed by Aman Biradari, initially in the aftermath of the brutal communal massacre in Gujarat 2002, and also during the consequent estrangement of people of Hindu and Muslim faith. This strategy has also been initiated recently in Assam.

Conventionally after most conflicts, members of the community seen by the victims to have caused harm and perpetrated violence on the suffering community rarely work for relief and reconstruction for victims of the 'other' community. The dominant 'common sense' — unconsciously accepted often even

by humanitarian agencies — is that relief workers from the group perceived to have caused harm will not be welcomed in efforts to help people after mass violence.

The heart of the strategy of 'Reconciliation through shared sharing' is a refusal to accept this post-conflict 'common sense': to swim against the prevailing currents of estrangement and suspicion, by resolving that all work in the aftermath of mass violence — for dialogue, relief, reconstruction, justice, welfare and caring — will be done only in diverse and pluralist mixed groups of youth, women and professionals. These must always include members of all the estranged and warring communities. More than what they contribute in tangible terms, the symbolism of mixed teams working together contributes most to healing and rebuilding trust.

Invariably such proposals are initially rejected as 'impractical'; with the conviction that none will accept it, that therefore it is pointless, even dangerous. Our experience has been quite the contrary. In Gujarat, although the victims were mostly Muslim, teams of *aman pathiks* and *nyaya pathiks* (literally those who walk the path of peace and justice) from both Hindu and Muslim communities have worked together for a decade, in relief camps and later for reconstruction and justice. We extended this strategy also to other old sites of violence like Bhagalpur.

More recently in Assam, after violent conflicts between indigenous Bodo people and Bengali Muslims in the summer of 2012, the climate was awash with bitter hatred and anger between these communities. Yet when we appealed for shared humanitarian work, people were surprised that many young people from both communities came forward, including a social work group of Muslim professionals led by Ashiq Zamin and Raju Narzary, a Bodo social work post-graduate, whose own property was burnt down in the violence.

With the help of these young leaders, we constituted a joint platform called Shanti Gazun, which means Peace, in Assamese and Bodo tongues respectively. With volunteers from Gujarat, Hyderabad and Delhi, young people from both communities went into camps of the 'other' community. People in the camps — who had suffered betrayal, uprootment and violence at the hands of their neighbours — were incredulous, angry and suspicious when they saw persons from the community of their attackers. But when the peace workers humbly persisted in their resolve to serve them, their resistance melted into a healing appreciation; dialogues were organised for the first time, and estranged neighbours often wept and embraced each other.

Our experience in Gujarat was that once people start returning to their old damaged homes and habitats, often in the neighbourhood of their attackers, the role of the joint teams becomes even more critical. They began with dialogues between people of different communities, sitting together and listening as tentative first steps to break the ice in the long journey to ultimately re-establish trust. Joint youth and

women groups organised recreation activities including sports, which further help people across the conflict divide to meet each other again. They helped children return to mixed schools in hostile pockets, and make up for interrupted schooling, and also organised special support for old people, widows and children who had lost loved ones.

People also need practical assistance in rebuilding their damaged livelihoods and homes. An audacious reconciliation plan was to appeal for people from both communities to contribute voluntary labour, or *shramdaan*, to help rebuild the houses damaged on both sides of the conflict. We made this appeal for the first time after the Gujarat carnage in Godhra, the epicentre of this mass violence. The slogan was that it would be hard to again destroy a house in which the sweat of both Hindus and Muslims were

(Continued from Page 4)

programmes in regular channels. It has a cascading effect on the gullible and ordinary people as seen from the amount of money spent on religious festivals increased enormously after the advent of ICT revolution (as found in some NSS studies). It appears that no social psychologist has studied the impact of this innovation on the religious intolerance of people. On the contrary, we have several scholars and prize fighters justifying the acts of religious fundamentalists.

One must appreciate the vision of our founding fathers in projecting the secular nature of our polity and to sustain it, the mandatory socialist and democratic stipulation with an ideal to create equality of opportunity. They are inseparable; one cannot survive or exist without the support of the other two values in a pluralistic country like India.

mixed. Defying the hot winds of hate, people offered voluntary labour to rebuild houses of people of the 'other' community in 80 villages in Godhra. Through this simple act, ordinary people of both communities demonstrated remorse and caring.

Much more important than the specifics of what the humanitarian or developmental interventions contribute, the main outcome is the healing impact from observing persons from the seemingly irreconcilably estranged groups coming together and working to help suffering people, regardless of their identity. By working together, the pluralist joint groups declare that they will not allow the god they worship, the colour of their skins, the size of their eyes or noses, or their castes or gender, to come in the way of their caring, love, commitment to justice and peace.

Secularism has become a way of life in India unlike religious wars, crusades in Europe. It is purely based on Indian value system founded on its geography and history. This needs to be protected and imbibed as a value, through constant efforts of intellectuals, government, political parties and civil society. There is no other way as of now and any public servants including the judiciary found undoing it should be severely dealt with. It is the principle of proportional representation in a democratic polity based on equality of economic opportunity together with scientific temper that would ultimately make religious problems trivial, as seen from the experience of the developed West. Till then, we need to cultivate constantly the feeling of brotherhood in an unemotional environment to build a nation called India.

Myanmar Communal Violence- Set back to Democratic Process

Ram Puniyani

Most of the countries of South Asia have faced the barbaric problem of violence targeted against religious minorities. The form of this may have been different, but the outcome has been similar, the brutality against religious minorities, violence against innocent human beings. The current times (Mid 2013) may be one of the worst when in the space of short span of we are witness to violence in Pakistan, Bangla Desh, India and Myanmar, more or less running parallel. Many a times when talk about violence involving Muslims has been under discussion, some propagandists have tried to associate Islam with violence and so the strife. Similarly some others may say that Hinduism permits violence as in Gita or so and so is the problem. In popular perception Buddhism is the religion of peace. The truth is that while the religious precepts are for morality, the part of religion invoked for violence has more to do with contemporary political issues, which are given the garb of religion. While Lord Gautama Buddha is surely the major apostle of peace, one has seen violence by Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka, Thailand and now overtly in Myanmar (March 2013).

Troops are keeping a vigil, martial law has been declared to stop the communal rage which has lasted for three days in Meikhatila in Myanmar. This violence has involved the Buddhists and Muslims. Here the official toll stands at 31 dead, while the unofficial figures are higher. A state of emergency has been declared in this state. As usual a trivial incident

involving the argument between the Buddhist couple and a Muslim owner of gold shop resulted in the triggering of simmering dislikes and discord between these two communities resulting in violence. While one Buddhist monk has also been killed the major victims of the violence are Muslims. This brings to our memory the communal clash of June-July (2012) in Rakhine State in western Myanmar. In that violence officially 110 people were killed and it left 120,000 people homeless. Those killed and left homeless were mostly stateless Rohingya Muslims.

Interestingly the communal strife was under the wraps during the preceding dictatorial regime. With the efforts to bring in democracy in some form these strife's are coming to surface due to the diverse and plural nature of Myanmar society, which is majority Buddhist but has substantial number of Muslim minorities. Rohingiya Muslims are probably the most persecuted minority in the world. Being a substantial number in Myanmar, they are from Indo-Aryan group, who settled in this part over a period of last couple of centuries, during the British rule, primarily. While the majority Buddhists are of Sino-Tibetan stock. Muslims live in the Western state of Rakhine state on country's Western border. They have been adversely affected by the 1982 citizenship law, which has deprived them of the citizenship; there is a total violation of their human rights due to this unjust law. They are subjected to forced labour

and have to work for the Government without any pay. The UNHCR has noted that since 1991 their freedom of movement is restricted. They are treated like second class citizens. Facing this adverse situation of gross violation of their rights many of them are trying to flee to Thailand, Malaysia and other places amongst others.

In 2012, June-July the violence between Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims was triggered by the rumour of rape of a Buddhist girl. As such it was a case of Muslim boy and Buddhist girl falling in love and eloping to get married. The boy was murdered and two of his friends who helped him to elope are facing death sentence.

Overall this reflects the unsolved problem of secularization and democracy in the region. The common factor in whole of South Asia is the migration of people for economic reasons, and with independence coming many of the dominating communities wanted to associate citizenship rights based on religion. Due to this some communities got deprived of citizenship formally or informally. Some were relegated to second class citizenship in practice. In Sri Lanka, the large number of Tamils who had gone there as plantation labour was denied equal rights and denied equality leading the extreme reaction in the form of formation of Liberation Tiger of Tamil Elam (LTTE).

In Myanmar 5% of the people are Muslims. Many of them had been the residents of this region from centuries. Denying them full citizenship defies all the logic of a modern democratic state. During the regime of military junta, which ruled the country for decades, a wrong precedent has been set, that of linking citizenship with religion. It requires deeper investigation as to why many monks have an anti Islamic attitude. One knows similarly many monks had played anti-Tamil role in Sri Lanka. There must be deeper societal processes which are at work and are usurping the democratic norms of equality of religions. One knows that democracy is coming up in Myanmar after long

decades after long battles, but still the remnants of the communal divide are dogging this nascent democracy. In a way this is also the colonial legacy which subtly promoted the divisiveness in the society.

With this violence in Myanmar coming to the fore the whole South Asia has to wake up and come to the grips of the legacy of the colonial past, a legacy perpetuated due to economic and political policies of rulers, rulers who have in a short-sighted manner resorted to abuse of religious identity for their political goals. Some political tendencies have thrived on the identity of religions and spread the 'Hate' about 'other' community. It is retarding

the process of development in each of South Asian countries and also putting strong brakes on the same. South Asia should have been striving towards the process of formation of South Asian Federation, which can expedite the processes leading to peace in the sub continent. Regional peace in turn is a prerequisite for development of the regions. We need to look beyond the narrow religious identities and promote the freedom of religion, equality of religions and dignity and honour for people of all the faiths for a better environment in those countries and a more congenial atmosphere for enhancement of human rights of weaker sections of society.

Against Violence

PUCL notes with regret and condemns the physical assault of Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee, and the State Finance Minister, Amit Mitra when they came to attend a meeting of the National Planning Commission in Delhi by activists of the Student Federation of India (SFI), the students wing of the CPI(M). PUCL considers such acts of violence and aggression by political parties as acts incompatible with democratic practices and ethics and unbecoming of a national party with a long tradition of principled politics.

PUCL is equally concerned and condemns the attack on CPI(M) offices and members by TMC cadres across West Bengal. The TMC leaders, led by the Chief Minister herself, cannot disown responsibility for the violent attacks by her party cadres considering that the same TMC party is in power in the state. The State Government has a constitutional responsibility

to maintain law and order and the ruling Government cannot, for any reason, disown responsibility for maintaining rule of law and the constitution, particularly when the law breakers belong to the ruling dispensation. The Government playing partisan politics is not only the reflective of democratic failure but also sounds the death knell of constitutional rule.

PUCL is specifically concerned about targeting by the State Government of any 'dissent' by any person or group seeking to ask accountability of the government. Whatever the provocation, it is incumbent constitutional duty of the state government to strictly implement the constitution and the law, without bias or favouritism.

PUCL calls upon both the TMC as also the CPI(M) to desist from using violence as a political tactic and tool against each other and their cadres. This not only causes

harm and destruction to ordinary people (including members of either parties) but also breaks the very fabric of democracy on which the Constitution of India is based.

—Dr. V. Suresh, General Secretary, People's Union For Civil Liberties

Read the article Megalomaniac Project in the issue of March 17th *Janata*. We, the community of Sonbhadra, can very well imagine the irrelevance of the project and the threats it has imposed. Sonbhadra is already in the list of critically polluted regions yet road is being widened and Industrial expanse is a continuous threat. Banwasi Seva Ashram is engaged in raising the people's voice against this development.

Dr. Ragini Prem
Secretary, Banasi Seva
Ashram



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Salaam to slum dwellers

Kuldip Nayar

**Modi growth story -
fact or fiction?**
Akshay Marathe
Mayank Gandhi

**Mastram Kapoor :
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**Predominance of
Petty-bourgeoisie**
K. S. Chalam

A walk in the winter
G. V. Sunder

Politics of Pardon

**Indefinite Dharna against
forced acquisition
for Delhi Mumbai Industrial
corridor**

State of Urban Youth

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Until recently, one refrain of a song in praise of slum dwellers was on most Indian lips. The refrain, Jai Ho-Jai Ho, had attracted so much attention that it fetched an Oscar Award. What the song conveyed was how those who were on the margin were doing their best to come up, without challenging the society. There was no demolition of houses or buildings which had come up illegally. The worst came only a few days ago.

True, natural calamities are hard to avert. But what happened at Mumbra, in the Thane district of Maharashtra, could well have been avoided but for the administrative inadequacies. It was more of a man-made crisis. Greedy real estate owners, contractors, politicians and bureaucrats, who maintain their regular liaisons, will have to share the blame for the tragedy which took the toll of 74 people and injuring 61 others.

When an eight-storey tower for slum dwellers comes up in a record three-four months, it is understandable how the building may have been raised. It is not easy obtaining approvals from civic authorities or getting a plan passed, let alone going ahead with the construction of a multi-storey building. It takes several

rounds of trips to the municipal offices, spread over months, and that too only after greasing the palms of officials can one think of obtaining approvals from various officialdoms.

This brings us to the basic problem that most metros in the country face today: acute shortage of housing. Obviously, the cake is small and the number of people wanting a slice has been on the increase. Had the size of the cake grown larger there would have been something for everybody to take home. But those in Mumbai know that the tragedy was due to the acute need for housing in Thane and its suburbs and the flourishing land-grab business patronized by the powerful politico-builder-police-civic official nexus. The nexus makes it easier for the builders to “manage” things the way they want.

Apparently, in the Mumbra case the builders had made all arrangements, including providing electricity and water to the residents, without any legal paperwork so that the flats can be occupied by the unsuspecting owners. But such a thing became possible only when the builders have had on their side the Thane Municipal Corporation (TMC) officials, who preferred to remain silent even after

the locals had complained about an illegal building coming up in their vicinity.

This goes on to establish how the realtors and municipal officials in the state or, for that matter in any other part of the country where space comes at a premium, connive at each other. In the Mumbra case, the TMC officials just ignored the complaints that the tower had come up on tribal or forest land. One thing that has come out clear is that the building has come up on a reclaimed land under which ran a nullah, which carried drainage water, after the TMC officials and a local corporator, who have now been arrested along with a senior police official, had helped. The two builders, who were slapped with culpable homicide charges, too have been taken into custody.

Understandably, chief minister Prthviraj Chavan has ordered an inquiry into the collapse. But what is tragic is that the chief minister became wiser after the event to admit in the state assembly that the building was completely illegal and may have come up on tribal or forest land. He further informed the house that Thane had 57 “very dangerous” and 1,159 “dangerous” buildings that were illegal and in which nearly 88,000 people lived. But if one were to take the entire figure of illegal structures in Thane district alone, as submitted by the state government to the Bombay High Court three years ago, it had touched the five-lakh mark. It must have multiplied into several more lakhs in and around Mumbai by now.

No doubt, the Indian real estate market is vibrant in nature. Since majority of people prefer to invest in real estate sector, more for long-term investment than for accommodation,

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Modi growth story - fact or fiction?

Akshay Marathe and Mayank Gandhi

The Gujarat growth model, being marketed by Narendra Modi is being seen by the middle class as a solution to all the problems of the nation. We intend to understand its strengths and weaknesses and indicate a constructive alternative model of growth. While it cannot be denied that Gujarat has seen growth in terms of water, electricity and good roads, there are some aspects of growth that need to be analysed.

One of the arguments for the Modi growth model is the legitimacy it gets due to three consecutive electoral victories. Congress has been ruling India for 60 years, CPIM had been ruling West Bengal for over 30 years, Lalu Prasad Yadav had won three terms in Bihar. We do not subscribe to electoral success begetting good governance.

Historical perspective

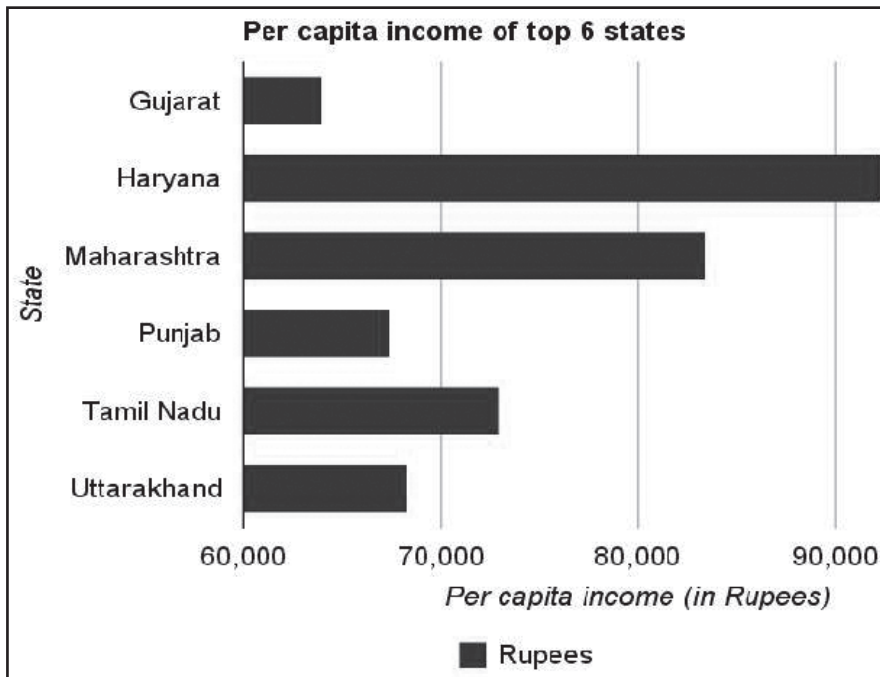
Gujarat has seen high growth rates for the last 20 years, even before Modi came into the picture. So the high growth in recent years is a continuation of the sound growth in the past. The Chimanbhai Patel era (1990 to 1995) was one of extremely high investments. Owing to these and subsequent investments, growth rates for the period 1995-2000, were around 8.01 per cent. From 2001 to 2010, that is, under Modi’s leadership, this number has risen to 8.68 - a marginal increase of 0.67 per cent.

Gujaratis have been known to be excellent tradesmen and entrepreneurs for centuries. We concede that a business friendly

atmosphere has been continued by Modi, which has resulted in this marginal growth. Fortunately for Gujaratis, there has been good rainfall and almost no drought in recent years. What must be noted though is that Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh have also experienced growth at comparable rates. In either period, Gujarat was not at the top (as is being made out by Modi supporters). In 1995-2000, it was at second position, and in the 2000-2010 period it was third after Uttarakhand (11.81 per cent) and Haryana (8.95 per cent). Industry has grown in Orissa and Chhattisgarh at 17.5 and 13.3 per cent respectively during 2005-09, higher than Gujarat’s 12.6 per cent. Gujarat ranked sixth among major states in per capita income in 2011, with Rs 63,996, after Haryana (Rs 92,327), Maharashtra (Rs 83,471), Punjab (Rs 67,473), Tamil Nadu (Rs 72,993) and Uttarakhand (Rs 68,292).

The Sardar Sarovar Dam has been one of the key components of Modi’s growth story. During his tenure, the dam was instrumental in reaching water to distant parts of the state. However, the dam was first proposed during the Janata Party Government and work on it was continued by all subsequent governments, including the Congress ones.

So, was the slight acceleration in growth due to Modi’s policies as he claims or could it also have been a result of the completion of the Sardar Sarovar project, and an



of ground reports and advance warnings, no curfew was imposed in Ahmedabad till noon the next day. The BJP government supported the VHP-called bandhs that, as events turned out, proved to be the pretext under which violent mobs were mobilized.” By the time curfew was imposed, the damage had been done.

The bloodshed has created lots of misgivings about the intention of the government in a significant number of the populace. Today, a large chunk of the national electorate, namely OBC (32%), SC (16.2%), ST (8.2%), Muslims (13.4%), Christians (2.3%) - Total (72.1%) of the people tend to look at him with suspicion and distrust. They may not be willing participants in Modi’s development model as they feel insecure because of his reputation. The development model heavily favours the urban middle class.

almost drought-free (except for Saurashtra region) ten years?

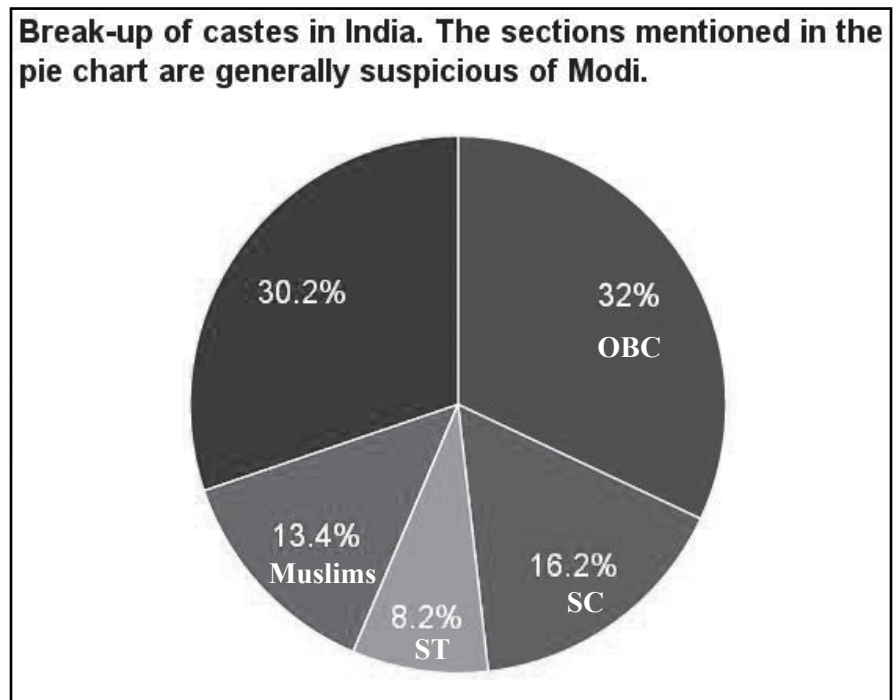
Non-inclusive growth

The 2002 riots, which were probably a reaction to the Godhra massacre, have nonetheless put a big blot on Modi’s record. At every opportunity it gets, the Congress uses the riots as its ammunition to label the BJP and Modi as ‘communal.’ The BJP then counters it by telling anyone who would listen that since 2002 there have been no riots in the state. We want to go beyond the communal angle and consider the riots from a purely security-centred perspective. For a moment if we ignore the religion of the Indians who died, a question arises: How can Modi be an ideal leader when he failed so miserably at protecting the lives of over a thousand of his subjects from rogue elements of the society? It is the State’s principal responsibility to ensure peace and protect to its citizens - Modi failed in this Rajdharma (a primary duty of the government to protect all citizens, regardless of their castes or religion).

He is alleged to have encouraged, if not engineered the riots, but so far has been cleared by courts and tribunals. Coincidentally, Headlines Today, a television news channel ran a story on the riots this week. The report shows that the Modi administration neglected warnings and refused to impose a curfew in the city - “Despite the flurry

Urban and industry bias

In the last 12 years, there has been a shift from focus on rural development towards an urban and



Mastram Kapoor : Socialist, Writer and Friend

Prem Singh

industry bias. Land acquisition is rampant in Gujarat (as is the case in other parts of the country as well). One of the authors (Mayank Gandhi) once led a rally in Surat of over 25000 farmers near the industrialized Surat-Hazira belt. Their land had been taken away by the Government to make way for large industries owned by Reliance, Adani, ONGC, Essar etc. The farmers were given a reasonable price for their lands, but the loss of livelihood was much too severe for them. Their cattle suffered because area of grasslands in that region was reduced to less than one-fifth of the original area! So while industry benefited greatly, locals were displaced and unemployed. The smoke spewing, gas guzzling plants have destroyed the entire ecology permanently. Is this the model of development that the nation needs?

Modi has spoken at length about how he convinced the Tatas to open their plant at Sanand in Gujarat, when their West Bengal venture did not work out. He makes a case that the people of Gujarat will benefit by automobile companies setting shop in the state. It is interesting to note that the BJP lost the Sanand seat to the Congress in the 2012 election! Had this industry really benefited locals as Modi claims, would they not have voted in his favour? By providing low interest rates, cheap rentals and waiving stamp duty, the Government did persuade Tatas to set up their plant, but was this in the interest of the people? No, it wasn't. To further add to the problems faced by the locals, the state government policy of ensuring 85 per cent recruitment for locals was also waived for the project. The fact is

(Continued on Page 10)

Dr. Mastram Kapoor, eminent socialist thinker and Hindi litterateur, passed away at the age of 87, at his residence in Delhi on April 2, 2013. He was diagnosed with cancer in its final stage two months before his death. The news was not communicated to him, although his family believes that he came to know about it. The last two months were quite difficult. He sat up for long to honour friends who came to visit, even though it was painful for him. Dr. Kapoor remained alert despite the physical trauma and continued to work for formation of a third front along with A.B. Bardhan, general secretary, CPI, and other like-minded people. His efforts in this direction were recounted by many speakers at the condolence meet held on his demise in Delhi on April 5.

Dr. Kapoor had put in much hard and dedicated effort to edit and publish nine volumes of 'Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Rachnawali' in Hindi and 'Collected Works of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia' in English. He also edited five volumes of 'Loksabha Mein Lohia'. This has definitely been a contribution of great significance for the political and academic world. However, it is important to remember the substantial effort of late Dr. Haridev Sharma also in the collection and sorting out of the material at the initial stage. Dr. Kapoor, a close friend and associate of Dr. Sharma, completed the unfinished project began by him, thus paying a fitting tribute to Dr. Haridev Sharma.

It is pertinent to mention here that the Hindi edition of 'Lohia Rachnawali' in particular, about which I had discussed with Dr. Kapoor, could do with much improvement in the later editions. It is highly regrettable that the later editions have carried the same proof errors and are without index. Dr. Kapoor, Surendra Mohan and other friends had hoped for inexpensive paperback editions too that could be easily accessible for students, researchers and the general reading public. But, because of the monetary profit involved for the publisher, five years later after the publication of the Rachnawali, this hope too has not been realised.

Dr. Kapoor had a long and fruitful relationship with Madhu Limye and Surendra Mohan. He had helped in editing and translating of Madhu Limye's articles and books. After completing Lohia's project, Dr. Kapoor was busy in compiling and editing Madhu Limye's works. He had classified the articles by Surendra Mohan also. I had benefitted by his ground work when I compiled Surendraji's articles, subject-wise, in book form.

Dr. Kapoor was very helpful as a regular writer in publishing 'Naya Sangharash', a monthly Hindi journal brought out by Prof. Vinod Prasad Singh and myself. He used to write for 'Samayik Varta' and also attended its editorial meetings. He was closely associated with 'Janata' and helped its publication in more ways than one. He was the founder

of Samajwadi Sahitya Sansthan, established with the help of Kamal Morarka, and published several books/booklets of socialist literature.

Dr. Kapoor was a serious political analyst and used to write regularly in Hindi newspapers, 'Janata' and other magazines on contemporary political and social issues. He had firm faith in socialism and social justice. He was against caste and was pro-reservation. He was a vigilant intellectual who kept knocking at the anti-dalit, anti-advasi and anti-OBC mentality of the upper castes and governments. On many occasions, his articles created debates among political activists and scholars. Simultaneously, he was an ardent advocate of Indian languages including Hindi. He never accepted the argument of the English supporters that the centrality of English is inevitable to make progress in the present globalised world.

Dr. Kapoor was a prolific creative writer of Hindi as well. He has published several books in the genres of novel, short story, poem and essay. His latest novel 'Kaun Jaat Ho?' created much discussion among readers and critics. One of his novels 'Ek Sadi Baanjh' was well received in literary circles when published two decades ago. His other novels are: 'Vipathgami', 'Rasta Band Kaam Chalu' and 'Naak Ka Doctor'. Dr. Kapoor has written literature for children also. Important titles in this mode are: 'Biju Ki Dadi', 'Nirbhayata Ka Vardan', 'Dand Ka Puraskar', 'Saheli', 'Neeru Aur Heeru' and 'Bhootnath'. Dr. Kapoor had his own unique approach about literature and art. Although he was a staunch socialist, Dr. Kapoor had a great admiration for the existentialist writers and

philosophers. He adhered to the idea of freedom of an individual with social commitment in literature. A study of his literary writings should be conducted by researchers/critics so that his socio-political ideas could be compared with the ideas expressed in his creative writing.

Dr. Kapoor received several awards/honours from governmental and organizations of dalits and adivasis. A few days before his death

(Continued from Page 2)

those in real estate business are out to make quick bucks. The only solution to this escalating problem is a stringent law that will make builders wary of certain standards. In fact, the Union Housing Ministry has proposed a specific clause to be included in the revised Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Bill it is likely to introduce.

If the proposed bill gets the cabinet and parliament nod, the builders will have to utilize 70 percent of the money collected for a particular project to spend it in that project and it would help to avoid delays. The bill seeks to establish a regulatory body for the real estate sector to ensure transparency in property or real estate transactions, besides other benefits which are aimed at protecting the consumers. But, as would one expect, there is a widespread opposition from the builder lobby.

What happened in Mumbra is not unique. There have been several such cases of official apathy in the past. One such instance that comes to my mind is another seven-storey structure that came down like a pack of cards in the Lalita Park area of the national capital a few years ago. In this unauthorized East Delhi colony, the building had come up using

he got the prestigious Yash Bharati award from the Uttar Pradesh government.

He is no more with us. If he had lived for some more time, he would have done more work. A soft behavior with firm ideological commitment was a mark of his personality. My humble obituary to Dr. Kapoor who, despite ideological or intellectual disagreements, gave everybody his/her due and respect.

substandard material. Thirty-four people had died and more than 60 people were injured in that accident. An inquiry was ordered by chief minister Sheila Dikshit then, but nobody knows what happened after that.

However, I do hope the probe ordered by Prithviraj Chavan does not meet the same fate. In most cases only a cursory inquiry is made and notices serviced on illegal constructors or, at worst, penalties levied. The builders after paying up penalties go scot-free. The builder lobby is so strong and powerful that politicians cannot survive without its patronage as they look up to it to fund them during elections. Corruption and greed is such a deep-rooted disease in our body politic that it can't be pumped out of our system overnight. It needs the biggest political will. But which party has the courage to bell the cat?

Still the remarkable thing about the efforts of living at the grassroots is the salutation to these people who have no resources. Jai Ho has become a salutation to a large extent. If the worst could be avoided, the slum dwellers would come out of the bondage of poverty as the days go by.

Predominance of Petty-bourgeoisie or the Middle Castes

K. S. Chalam

The notion of caste and class is so dominant that no intellectual discourse is comprehensive without referring to them in India. But, when we refer to Hindus, Muslims, Christian, Jain, Parsi or Buddhist, we consider all of them as homogenous groups. This is problematic when we discuss critical issues like Communalism, Casteism, Secularism or political ideologies. People are lumped together and the good, bad and ugly are attributed to the whole community that they might belong to or were born in. Therefore, when incidents like the so-called terrorist activities or fundamentalist outbursts happen, we tend to attribute them to the religion or social group to which they subscribe or fit. This is largely being followed in our media reports and the message is distorted or imperfectly communicated. In fact, everyone knows that we have economic or social groups within each category and if communicated properly, we can reduce the pervasive damage.

India, unlike other countries is identified with caste system while all others are signified with class categories. However, academics and activists have been using both the categories in understanding our socio-economic and political issues during the modern period. We have noted that there are around nine theories of caste in India. Interestingly, there is ambiguity about the theories of class applicable to India. Though the term class was used by Plato, the interpretations have been deployed by Marx, Weber, Davis and Moore, Nicos

Poulantzas, etc. The concept is being liberally used by laymen, experts and activists without sometimes knowing what they mean by that. Are they referring to Marx, Weber or others? But, the mainstream discourse appears to be related to Marxian classes as it was the Marxists and their critics who brought the concept into popular public discourse in India.

Marx used class in the context of production relations within a particular mode of production. Weber attributed different classes based on positive and negative privileges held by people in a market economy. The characteristics like quality, performance and possession are considered to determine the functional character of a class in Davis and Moore. It was perhaps the Greek-French scholar Nicos Poulantzas who has creatively elaborated the concept of 'classes in contemporary capitalism' by incorporating the advances made by Gramsci and others. As he was working on the theme in 1975 when capitalism had reached its zenith, his contribution seems to be more relevant and up to date. Poulantzas has advanced the concept of 'New Petty Bourgeoisie'. His analysis of class rests on three principles: 1. Classes cannot be defined outside of class struggle. Elaborating between class-in-itself and class for itself, Poulantzas has said that classes exist as antagonistic and contradictory quality of social relations. 2. Classes take objective positions in the social division of labour and are independent of their will. The

reproduction of the actual positions occupied by the social classes (as bourgeoisie, proletariat, poor peasant, petty bourgeoisie) depends on the class contradictions and class struggle. 3. The social classes are structurally determined by the economic, political and ideological levels. Like Gramsci, Poulantzas has given importance to the political and ideological factors as they are as important as the economic factors in MOP.

The traditional category of petty-bourgeoisie comprising independent artisans, small shop keepers etc. are dwindled and replaced by 'new petty bourgeoisie' consisting of white collar employees, technicians, supervisors, civil servants, etc. Poulantzas has brought in the idea of functional relationship with capital as one of the criterion in determining the class position of a group. For instance, experts (including economists and social scientists) at all stages of production process help to legitimize the subordination of labour to capital by making it appear natural and theorise that workers are incapable of organising production themselves. Even low-level clerks and secretaries share the ideological positions of mental labour and thus belong to the Petty Bourgeoisie and not to the proletariat. The Bourgeoisie is defined not only in terms of property ownership, but also in terms of the substantive dimensions which characterise the social relations of production. Thus, managers fulfil the functions of capital and the heads of state apparatus in a capitalist state do

manage the state functions in the service of capital and thus come under bourgeoisie.

There are several other issues that Poulantzas has discussed in the elaboration of classes in the advanced capitalist system that are substantially transformed since from the time of Marx. Social scientists in the West have used his categories to arrive at the proportion of each class in the economies on the basis of secondary data. It is found that the new petty bourgeoisie is 70 per cent of the economically active population in the USA. Income is taken as a criterion in India to define classes. It is noted that pundits of some political parties dictate that castes and classes are comparable, one cuts across the other (with base-superstructure allegory). This seems to have dented the efforts of some scholars/activists to understand our realities. Ketkar's and Ramakrishna Mukherjee's efforts to classify castes as "division of labourers" did not reflect facts. The nomenclature upper, lower and middle castes are being used to showcase Indian society.

The data generated by scholars, government and private agencies on income and socio-economic groups give us a fair view of the middle classes in India. If the first 5 per cent of the rich and the 30 per cent below poverty line are set aside, the rest of 65 per cent are the New Petty Bourgeoisie. It is close to the proportion of people who have access to TV and Mobiles - important factors that mould the new petty bourgeoisie. We know how friable are the petty bourgeoisie. How can we understand this phenomenon?

The caste system based on the
(Continued on Page 12)

A walk in the winter – with Mander

G. V. Sunder

Sankranti, the transition of the sun into the constellation of Capricorn in his celestial path, was over. Though Bangalore did not have biting cold, the coolness persisted. Due to dry weather the skin had broken and itching had set in all over the body.

I had just then started reading Harsh Mander's book 'Ash in the Belly' – a book about the hunger that still haunted the poor in the entire nation. In the initial pages only he had given several heart rending instances of how the people in the lower strata of the society were suffering from the fangs of hunger. According to him about 27 percent of the people in the country have only one meal a day and sleep with empty stomachs. He says that the one scourge that troubles most of the poor people in the country every day is the hunger. As we read the every day struggle of these people of the lower strata of the society with hunger, the mind gets disturbed, the eyes automatically become moist. According to the Report of the economist Suresh Tendulkar submitted to the Government in the year 2009, nearly 70 percent of the people live on an average daily income of Rs. 20. In the midst of the reports that the warehouses in the country are overflowing with the stored grains and grains are getting rotten for want of storage facilities, Harsh Mander's book about hunger really touches our souls.

As I read the book my mind became blank and was overcome by a sort of despair. It is at such a time that I got an opportunity to

visit the villages at the foothills of the Male Mahadeshwara hills. Male Mahadeshwara hills are situated in the Kollegal Taluka of Chamarajnar district of Karnataka. This was part of Madras province till the reorganization of states in the year 1956. Thereafter for about 15 years the people in this area lived under the constant fear of the dreaded forest brigand Veerappan, the Thief of the Tusks. No development works were possible in the area during his life time. But though more than 7-8 years have elapsed after his death, this area has remained a backward area till today.

When I visited this area, the Sankranti was over. It was harvesting season. In most of the fields harvesting had been done. Finger Millet is the main crop in the area though Sorghum, Maize, Bengal Grams and Chillies are also grown. In some places, along with Finger Millet, Foxtail Millet and Pearl Millet are also grown. Farmers had stacked the harvested Finger Millet and Maize in their fields. In some fields they were making the bullocks trample on the grain to chaff them. In some of the stacks they were winnowing the grains when the wind blew. The smell of the newly cut grass and grains was permeating the entire area. As a part of the festival of Sankranti, the horns of the cattle had been decorated with paints of varying colours. The cattle were mostly of the local variety but were looking beautiful and gorgeous.

We were staying near a village called Kadabur which was within

the jurisdiction of the Vaddaradoddi Grama Panchayat of Ramapura Hobli in Kollegal Taluk. This cluster of villages is situated at the foot of the Male Mahadeshwara hills spread out on the western side with an uneven landscape. The villages were surrounded by thick forests. As the rains were scanty here the trees were mostly bare-headed. Everywhere the leaves had fallen revealing the bare, dark and slender branches. In the midst of these were some trees with green foliage or foliage with dried yellowish green also. Even the trees in the far off hills sported dried colours. Even then, here and there one could see the green stripes of the still unharvested Sorghum and Finger Millet, grown with bore well water and the dark red carpets of the chillies, the golden coloured Maize, spread out to dry in the forecourts of the houses that added colour to the otherwise colourless picture. Wherever one stood, one could see the mind catching lines of hills of the Male Mahadeshwara range.

The sky was bright blue without clouds. In the warmth-less bright sun of the winter, we were proceeding towards Kadabur after crossing the village Koudalli. I did not notice even a single tank in any of the 22 villages of this Grama Panchayat – then where is the question of dams and canals. The entire area was rain-dependant. The winding mud roads that had not seen the tar, full of dust and ditches, appeared to represent the backwardness of the region.

We were staying in ‘Anisha’ a Trust, engaged in educating and training the farmers in the surrounding areas in organic farming. We were awe-struck at the number of varieties of the various crops grown by the farmers of the area and collected and exhibited at

‘Anisha’. How many seeds of how many varieties of crops. These local varieties were strong and are not easily destroyed by pests. They are rarely affected by diseases. ‘Anisha’ aims at preserving these local seeds, developing them and demonstrating to the farmers the technique of growing organic produce without using chemical fertilizers and encouraging them to use those techniques.

Though our purpose in visiting the place was to exhibit the audio-visual presentation on ‘What is Socialism’ prepared by the Centre for Socialist Studies, to the students in the colleges in the area, I left the job to my friends and thought of visiting the nearby villages and talking to them to find out about their lives. When I expressed my desire to Mrs. Valli of ‘Anisha’ she readily instructed one of her staff, a young lady, Chintai, to accompany me and take to me the nearby villages.

First we visited two small hamlets with hardly 30 to 35 houses, named Hucchappana Doddi and Keenappana Doddi which were part of the village Bidarhalli. Most of the people residing in the hamlets belong to a sub-caste of Lingayat community called the ‘Beda Kampana’. They were all small land holders. None had more than 4-5 acres of land. Most of them had 1-2 acres. Finger Millet was the main crop. Every day they would consume food cooked out of the same. Nobody sells the Finger Millet grown in their lands. They use it for themselves. Even when they accept wages for working in the farms of others, they take Finger Millets or Sorghum only instead of cash. Hardly four or five farmers had dug their own bore wells. Farmers who had water facility were growing

Maize and vegetables. There were coconut trees on the bunds of their lands and around their houses.

Men in most of the households go in search of employment to the far off stone quarries. They come back only at the time of sowing, harvesting and the festivals like Sankranti or village festival. The burden of agriculture and looking after the households is generally on the womenfolk and the aged men. In some of the households, men who had come for the Sankranti festival were still at home. Since the income from agriculture is meager, they say that they have no alternative but to go and work elsewhere.

We went around the hamlets and collected some information here and there. Every household had the BPL – Below Poverty Line – card which gave them access to food grains etc., under the Public Distribution System. People called them ‘Rice sheets’. Some who had recently married and set up new households did not have the cards. They were getting ration once in a month at subsidized rates. They said that the pregnant women and the milk-feeding mothers and their children were getting nutritional food made of green grams and wheat. There was an ‘anganwadi’ in the village and the villagers gave information about the food that is given to the children in the ‘anganwadis’. The school was about a kilometer away and the children there also get their ‘mid-day meal’. When I enquired with a student who had not gone to school that day, he said that they are given even a second helping. Usually it is rice and curry. When I asked if there were any people who were going hungry and slept with empty stomachs because they were poor or old the answer was that there

were poor people but no one went hungry. When asked repeatedly they said that none had a problem getting two square meals a day.

It was hot noon by the time we left those hamlets to go to another village. In that hot noon, an old woman was going somewhere walking with a stick to help her and with a bag of clothes on her waist. Toothless mouth, white ruffled hair, feet without footwear and aged about 75-80. We stopped her and talked to her. Her name was Kempamma. She was the mother of a farmer named Bommappa from the same village. The old woman was going some place to get her clothes washed and dried. She had had her meal. When asked if her son fed her, she retorted with a question to us "how can he not give me food?". My guide asked her a few more questions and got confirmation that the old woman was not suffering from hunger.

I told Chintai that these are villages where there are mostly people belonging to the major communities and there may not be people in these villages who might not have seen food and who may be suffering from hunger and that hence we should go to villages where there are scheduled castes and landless people. My companion readily agreed and took me in that hot sun to a colony called 'Bolu Dinne' about a kilometer away and which was inhabited by people belonging to the 'Bovi' community. 'Bovi's are touchables but are a scheduled caste. It was a hamlet situated on a bald hillock as its name itself had suggested. Mostly inhabited by Bovis but a few households also belonged to the 'Holeya' community, an untouchable community of scheduled castes and some Christians. The roads in the hamlet were quite broad and there

were about 60-70 houses. Most of the houses had 'Mangalore' (made of red mud and quite fashionable) tiles and others had local tiles, made of black mud, and straw for their roofs. Drinking water was supplied through bore-well and there was electricity in the hamlet. Most of the households had television sets.

None here had agricultural land. Everyone depended on manual labour. Men folk would go to other towns for doing stone quarry work. Some men who had come for the festival had stayed back in the hamlet. All the households were getting food grains under the BPL cards. We went round the hamlet and enquired if there were beggars, destitutes and people who went hungry and slept with empty stomachs. They said that they had not seen people who went hungry and slept with empty stomachs in their hamlet.

Next day, through the winding roads full of dust, leaving behind the marks of our footwear in the mud, and letting the occasional motor cycles, auto rickshaws and busses to pass us, we reached a colony called 'Met travu' which is on the outskirts of the village Martalli. This hamlet was inhabited mostly by people of 'Madiga' community, which is another untouchable scheduled caste. The colony had about 100 houses. From there we went to Sulvadi, Sandana Palya and Keerepaatibore which were inhabited by people belonging to the scheduled castes. Since the hamlets bordered on the Tamil Nadu there were many Tamil speaking people in the colonies.

In all these colonies people had constructed their houses on the sites given by the government. The houses had 'Mangalore' tiles. Some

of the houses had been built by the government only. Perhaps that is the reason why all these colonies were situated on the outskirts of the bigger villages on the uncultivable hillocks. The roads and streets in the colonies were quite broad. There was drinking water facility in all these colonies. There was also electricity. On the roofs of most of the houses we could see the television dish antennas. None in these colonies had cultivable agricultural land. Only some were doing agriculture on 'sharing' basis. Men folk were mostly going to other towns in search of manual work. When we asked as to whether they were not getting work locally under the employment guarantee scheme the people said that the daily wage that they get under the scheme i.e., about Rs. 125, is too low and that is why they go to far off towns where they get between Rs. 350 to Rs. 400 per day. We went round the colony, sat on the forecourts of the houses, spoke to people and gathered the information.

In all these colonies every one had BPL cards. Some aged people were getting old age pension also. Some students were getting scholarship money through banks. In all these colonies there were 'anganwadi's and there was facility for giving food to the children. We were keen to know if there were destitutes, very aged persons and others who were not getting enough food to eat and who were going hungry. In all these colonies we got only one answer; no one in these colonies was suffering from hunger, every one had enough food to eat.

In Sulvadi village, a youth by name Selvaraju was sitting in the forecourt of his house and chatting with his friends. He was of the

opinion that every household had at least one or two bags of Finger Millets. His wife offered us a chair and told us several things. They had been given gas stoves by the forest department. In order to prevent the people from going into the forest to gather firewood, which would also disturb the wild life, the forest department was offering gas stoves at subsidized rates.

According to another youth, since they were 'Madigas', an untouchable caste, the barbers in the village would not cut their hair or give them a shave. He said that they only cut the hair of children and very old people in the colony. Hence they had to go to Ramapura village which was about 15 kilometers away for a hair cut. Nobody there would know that they are untouchables. When asked if they could go to the hotel in the village, they said that they do not go there at all. We could make out the tone in which he answered that they were prohibited from entering the hotel also. In 'Keerepaatibore' also one youngster told the same story. We felt disgusted that even after 60 years of independence the scheduled caste people could not be extricated from such humiliations.

Vaddardoddi was relatively a bigger village. We thought that as the name suggested the village must be having a large population of 'Vaddas' another untouchable scheduled caste. But then a shop keeper told us that only perhaps once upon a time there were such people in the village and now all are Christians and now the people of 'Vadda' community were living in the colonies in some far off places.

The Bovis, Madigas and other scheduled caste people in the nearby villages suffer for want of a burial

ground for their dead. The thought as to where their bodies would be thrown, into which ditch or drain, and whether their dead body would rot for want of a decent burial, is a thought that haunts many of the aged and infirm people in these colonies. Periyanaamma, a Christian girl from Vaddardoddi told us that many aged people are becoming Christians because in that case they are assured of a decent burial after their death in the burial grounds of the Church. During our walk, we had seen many well organized Christian burial grounds in that area. We did not see many such grounds for the dead of the other communities.

That even in the midst of the 2G scam, looting of crores of rupees by the corrupt, bureaucratic apathy

(Continued from Page 4)

the people are directly or indirectly paying around Rs 60,000 for each Nano sold by the Tatas - this is a criminal misuse of authority by the Government.

If one analysed the latest Gujarat election result, one could notice that in the rural areas, BJP and Congress won almost equal seats, while in tribal areas, out of 21 seats, 18 were won by the Congress and 3 by BJP.

Poverty and malnutrition

While poverty has reduced in the state in general, it has done poorly in this respect when compared to other states. According to the Planning Commission, Gujarat's rank in poverty alleviation is 11th among a list of 20 major states. In fact, the tribal population (17% of the total) in the state has actually seen an increase in poverty in the last decade. What is worrying is that Gujarat's under-five mortality rate has stagnated and is far behind

and many such undesirable events, the people here are getting food grains regularly, at subsidized rates through the BPL cards surprised us. That I could, with my limited comprehension, see that the children were getting enough food in the 'anganwadi's and schools and that none was going hungry and slept with empty stomachs, at least in this backward and remote corner of India gave my mind, which had been disturbed and dented by Harsh Mander's book, some solace.

Finishing my walk through the villages, when on the fourth day, I waited for the bus at Vadakehalla village to take me to Kollegal and then on to Bangalore, the bright sun light felt very warm and pleasant.

that of its peers. Child mortality is significantly higher among girls than boys and that difference hasn't narrowed over the years. Malnutrition is very severe among Gujarat's children and women, and the only defence that Modi could come up with was an unfortunate diversion of the issue to the dieting habits of Gujarati women. It is no surprise then that in a recent study by UNDP, Gujarat ranked 8th among major Indian states in human development and the Planning Commission's Human Development Index has placed Gujarat as low on the list as 18!

One conclusion that can be drawn from these facts is that the high growth has apparently benefited only a select segment of the population. This means that Modi's Gujarat model is far less effective than it is being made out to be and shows that growth's implicit 'trickle down' effect is absent in the Modi regime.

Politics of Pardon

This is the second time in post-Independent India that a Press Council chief is coming to the defence of a person who is sentenced by the highest court of the country.

The first instance was when Justice Raja Gopal Iyengar, the then Press Council Chairman, supported censorship of the press during the notorious Emergency of 1975-77. The office which is supposed to uphold the freedom of press blatantly backed the draconian laws at that time.

Now, Markendaya Katju the present Chairman of the Press Council is advocating for the "Pardon" of Sanjay Dutt who is sentenced to five-year jail term. Our Constitution has unambiguously demarcated the functions of the Supreme court and the Press Council. According to layman's knowledge Press Council has no "Locus standi" in interpreting the sentence of the highest court.

If film actors or sportsmen are to be exempted from law courts' jurisdiction how can "Rule of Law" be enforced in the country? Some time back in the case of Navjot Sidhu a well known cricketer also courts have taken cognizance of the offence and he too spent some time in jail till the higher court handed a different verdict.

The learned jurist has now come forward to take the case of Zaibunnisa who is co-accused along with Sanjay Dutt. According to Katju she does not know that Abusatem kept the weapons in her house but even here we may have to respect the maxim that "ignorance of law is no excuse". Any how he should not appear as acting as a legal counsel for her.

If convictions are to be invalidated on extraneous considerations the next actor on the scene will be Salman Khan, who is facing charges

of killing prohibited birds for satisfying his fancy of hunting. He may argue his act is "unintentional". He is also facing charges of rash driving in which a person was killed and several others injured. His supporters may spend any amount of money to close the mouths of the victims with huge offer of money but the public support or sympathy of the fans could not absolve him of his offences. Already efforts are afoot to protect him through fair or foul means and help him to come out of the legal frame work.

In India now the courts are functioning in a totally impartial manner, uninfluenced by the statements of the influential politicians or the acts of those who are in power. It is amply proved

in the recent order of Thodupuzha Sessions judge who ordered issue of notices to P. J. Kurien. who happens to be the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. In this Suryanelli rape case the Kottayam police did not register a case against Kurien. This is a clear case where the law enforcing authorities are not cooperating with a rape victim just because the accused enjoys a big clout at the highest level.

Let the Supreme Court verdict on Sanjay Dutt and others and the Kerala Sessions court issuing notices to the Honourable M.P. be the ideal judgements for future processing of trials whether the accused is a political heavy weight or one who can mobilize lakhs of people to his side in the name of public opinion.

—Kakuturi Subrahmanyam

Socialist Party supports Shahbagh movement in Bangladesh

The Shahbagh movement currently taking place in Bangladesh, is an encouraging sign of growing progressive and secular forces in the Indian sub-continent. The movement started on 5th February, 2013, initiated by a small group of young urban middle-class Bangladeshis with the help of online blogs and social networking websites, but due to the overarching appeal of the ideas it stands for and its non-violent nature, it spread rapidly to people of all classes and backgrounds in Bangladesh.

The Socialist Party (India) supports the movement's demand that the Jamate-Islami be banned from politics due to its role in the massacre of Bangladeshi people during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation war, and the organisations and institutions affiliated with it be boycotted and their sources of funding investigated. The Socialist Party does not support the death penalty, but does believe that all those convicted of war-crimes during the liberation movement should be strictly punished. It is hoped that the movement will go a long way in reigning in fundamentalist Islamic forces in Bangladesh, which threaten the democratic and secular ideals on which the country was founded.

In recent times communal forces have gained strength in South Asia, from the rise of the Hindutva movement in India, to the persecution of religious minorities such as Shia and Hazara Muslims in Pakistan, to the targeted State violence against the Rohingya Muslims in Burma. In such circumstances, the Shahbagh movement breaks new ground and is a ray of hope for all those who are engaged in struggles for democracy, political and social reform, and religious tolerance in this part of the world. The Socialist Party too draws inspiration from and expresses its solidarity with this historic struggle.

Sandeep Pandey National vice president, Dr. Prem Singh National general secretary

Indefinite Dharna against forced acquisition for Delhi Mumbai Industrial corridor

The farmers and workers of Raigad district are on an indefinite dharna in front of Sub divisional office at Mangaon dist. Raigad, Maharashtra since April 10th. They have been served notices for acquisition of their land under the Maharashtra Industrial Corporation Act. 67,500 acres of land is to be acquired for Dighi port industrial area as a node in Proposed Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor. Farmers from 78 villages under Mangaon, Roha and Tala Tahsils would become completely landless.

All the village Panchayats have unanimously resolved not to give their land for this disastrous and pro-corporate project, which has been undemocratically planned too. However the state government. has not taken any cognizance so far. The panchayats have been further asked to surrender their common property lands and give NOC for their transfer. This has created a lot of unrest amongst farmers. The individual notices have been issued to six villages and the 7/12 extracts of all the lands in these villages have been stamped and reserved for the proposed corridor.

How are we going to survive if we lose entire land, the only source of our livelihood, ask the farmers. They don't trust the government and its assurances as the experience in the past has been totally negative. Why government is in a hurry to grab the lands before the new land acquisition bill gets passed at the Centre which gives space to the farmers to express their opinions, ask the farmers.

Despite the directions given by the Union ministry forced and compulsory acquisition is going on. The irrigated as well as good amount of fertile paddy fields are being acquired. This has enraged the farmers further.

The dharna started on 10th April in the presence of N. D. Patil, and several activists from various parts of the state, under the banner of Jagatikikaran Virodhi Kruti Samiti. Every day one village comes to dharana, to express their resolve not to part with their lands, in big numbers with women and children.

Detailed project report of this project has not been prepared yet. Environment impact assessment is also not done. Why the government is in hurry then? The government sources are not ready to disclose any information nor is there any transparency. This creates a lot of doubts in the minds of the farmers.

Sub Divisional officer Mangaon has been appointed as land acquisition authority, who has powers to fix the compensation upto 50,000 Rs. per acre according to the notice issued to the farmers. However the guardian minister of the district Suneel Tatkare, declared that he would try to give 10 lakh rupees. per acre. The farmers laugh at this attempt and they don't want to give the lands even if the compensation is increased. Recently the residents of Raigad presently living in Mumbai got organized and decided to launch agitation against this forced acquisition in Mumbai on 1st May at Azad Maidan.

The dharana would continue till mid May 2013, till every village registers its protest. Several groups and associations such as bar association, Patrakar Sangh, doctor' association, have declared their support to the agitation.

- Ulka Mahajan

(Continued from Page 7)

'varna' is hierarchical/ritual and the class, based on relations of production is economic. Given the present situation in India after 65 years of independent capitalist development and links with the international division of labour, castes have gained vibrancy. It is possible to identify the castes that were benefitted by the policies and attained upward mobility. If we keep the dvijas aside for the moment who are calling the shots at centre, the states are now increasingly captured by the Sudras, the fourth varna (panchams are outside except occasionally in UP). There is internal differentiation within Sudras with the rise of OBCs as petty ruling castes. This is very complex situation to understand. The middle castes seem to have marginalised the economic agenda of emancipation for which the socialists and communists have been campaigning in India for quite some time. It is now confined to those who are social proletariat or scheduled castes and Adivasis who do not come under either class or caste (internal differentiation is low). Therefore, the traditional struggles look to be nonchalant and might soon become obsolete. What is to be done?

State of the Urban Youth

Every third person in urban India is a youth. In less than a decade from now, India, with a median age of 29 years will be the youngest nation in the world. India's demographic transformation is creating an opportunity for the demographic burden of the past to be converted to a dividend for the future. For this to happen the country needs to adopt a three-pronged policy that will address the issues of employment, livelihoods and the skill status of youth.

The *State of the Urban Youth India 2012: Employment, Livelihoods, Skills developed and produced* by IRIS Knowledge Foundation, Mumbai on a commission from the UN-HABITAT Global Urban Youth Research Network of which it is part, is a first attempt to pull together a data and knowledge base on and of youth in urban India. With a number of commissioned chapters from well-known scholars, the focus of the Report is youth employment and livelihoods in urban India. Through a three-city survey the Report incorporates a youth perspective on the situation of urban youth that is revealed by data and literature. It does not aspire to make recommendations, but only to suggest broadly the need for a paradigm shift in addressing the issue of the urban young.

India has had a long history of urban youth activism in the shape of student movements that have grown into wider based political actions. Besides, India's policy makers have been conscious of the need to integrate youth in the programme of national development. However, the need for a specific youth agenda

today in policy and programmes has not quite been accepted. The solution, Padma Prakash points out in the Introductory chapter, lies in shifting the perspective from development for youth to development planning by youth.

The first section presents the setting, in terms of demographics, health status, existing legislation and policies that impinge on youth especially with respect to employment and livelihoods. Anuja Jayaraman (SNEHA, Mumbai) describes the demographics of urban youth showing the numbers and their distribution. She presents numbers and proportions that show in no uncertain times that urban youth population in the country is rising. Youth populations are rising from 353 million in 2001 to 453 million in 2011 and then to 464 million in 2021 after which it will decline to 458 million, showing the 'youth bulge'. Sidharth David (Centre for Enquiry into Health and Allied Themes, CEHAT, Mumbai), gathering literature from a number of sources in the absence of age-wise data on health, shows that the lack of perception of health as a youth right might be at the centre of the lack of attention to youth-specific health conditions and the absence of a youth-centred perspective on health care.

Against the background of a narrative of youth rights and legislation, is an evidence based report of the nature and extent of political awareness among youth. Sanjay Kumar (Centre for Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), New Delhi) comes up with surprising elements of youth perception of

politics and political engagement on the basis of a youth survey on the subject.

Lakshmi Priya and Aarti Salve Telang, document the fact that India has consistently recognised the need for youth development and the importance of addressing the needs of youth in policies and programmes. The chapter enumerates and describes the youth policies that a number of states have evolved. In the last chapter in this section Asha Bajpai (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai) sets out the laws and legislation affecting youth and the state of their implementation.

The second section reports the findings of a three-city youth survey (conducted by Trupti Shah in Vadodara, Anita Srinivasan and Abhijit Surya in Mumbai and Pratibha Kamble in Latur) that provides a youth insight on the data and knowledge base assembled by a set of scholars working on different areas impinging on the state of youth in urban India. The findings amply demonstrate that youth can not only discern developmental issues but may even be capable of suggesting innovative solutions to deep problems of development and growth. Of paramount importance is access to education and opportunities for acquiring skills. Young people can well recognise the constraints to acquiring skills: inefficient systems, corruption, denial of access because of various factors including economic class, community and gender. They are also quite clear about what makes a city safe and secure for the pursuit of occupations and livelihoods and what kind of an urban space they need to

achieve prosperity in the context of sustainable urban development.

The third section, the core of the volume, looks more closely at the employment, livelihoods and state of skills among young people in urban India contextualised within the urban reality of sharpening disparity. Poornima Dore (Sir Dorabji Tata and Allied Trusts (SDTT)) succinctly points to the yawning resource gap emerging in urban India and disproportionately affecting the young both in terms of missed opportunities and because they give rise to high aspirations that resources available to them cannot meet.

More than 110 million young are on the move across the country but most of them do not travel far, moving within the state. Tracking the trajectories of the migrants, from large datasets S Chandrashekar and Ajay Sharma of the Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, Mumbai produce an understanding of the pattern of resources and opportunities that attracts the young. Young people, men and women in equal numbers, in the age group 15-32 migrate from their places of origin for employment and education. The movement shows that there is an internal brain drain from the states with poor education and employment opportunities that in turn keeps these states from developing their potentials.

The mass of young people coming to towns and cities do find jobs, but not necessarily stable, secure jobs. Jobs are being created not in the larger more established sectors, but in the unstable informal sector. Bino Paul and Krishna M of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai and Hyderabad respectively have extracted from national data sets an

alarming picture of the youth labour market. Only a miniscule share of the jobs available to youth are formal carrying entitlements like social security while the vast opportunities for youth are informal in nature. Contrarily more and more youth are enrolling in higher education. Most significantly there is a perceptible discrimination against young women in the labour market with a huge proportion of them engaged in domestic duties.

Charu Sudan Kasturi (Hindustan Times, New Delhi) illustrates this data in an essay on the widening gap between education and employment. While more young Indians are acquiring an education, the employment scenario is not throwing up jobs that match their skill sets. A large number of the educated are either unemployed or are underemployed. At another level, the quality of higher education has not only remained static but appears to be deteriorating. The young are being short-changed in several ways. Can India afford to invest in training young people in skills that will not be productive? Is this the way to realize the demographic dividend?

Even after three decades of the women's movement and the growth of women's research emerging as a major discipline and influence in policy making women still have to battle it out for the right to live to work. Vibhuti Patel (SNDT University, Mumbai) and Nandita Mondal (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai) echo Paul and Krishna's findings that women are most visible in the lowest paying, low skill jobs that are also often tedious, risky and hazardous. Women are forced into domestic labour and sex work due to an absence of other opportunities. Safety and security

are important issues in assuring women's opportunities for work.

Not surprisingly the informal sector attracts a huge chunk of the youth population in urban centres. Vaijayanta Anand (Nirmala Niketan, Mumbai) discusses nature of jobs in the informal sector and underlines how the expansion of jobs in this sector is not the best option for absorbing or utilising youth power. She also points out that the six states of southern and western India, states that have better training opportunities (and more industry and enterprise) form a continuous zone accounting for 63 per cent of all formally trained people. These are also the states with more industry, higher levels of education, and training opportunities.

In sum, most of the jobs that the young are employed in are dangerous in insecure workplaces that have high risks associated. Jagdish Patel, labour and health activist assembles a telling picture of the abysmal work conditions in small and middle level industrial units and the poor attention being paid to worker safety. Regulations are many, but who is to ensure that they are implemented? With the waning of the labour movement, workers have neither voice nor a platform where they may seek redressal. This has resulted in sporadic, spontaneous and violent worker responses to such incidents as deaths that only serve to mitigate chances of long-term reform.

These are typically dubbed as youth violence. Given the situations and the unpromising futures that youth face it is inevitable that sporadic and spontaneous violence will occur more frequently. While youth revolt in the face of authoritarianism, corruption and divisive and sectarian

policies and actions of the state must indeed be applauded, spontaneous mob violence is not conducive to progress, development and indeed to securing stable future for youth.

The last section sets out an agenda for change, with a lead chapter on the challenge of mainstreaming the agency of youth for sustainable cities. Two young scholars, Sangeeta Nandi and Kadambari Anatharam (independent researchers), describe the sustainability challenge to urban development and locate the key barriers to realising the youth potential. They advocate youth-led

development that places youth at the centre of change. The way forward is clearly to recognise that young people may have a better chance of benefiting from development if they can have a say in the planning of their urban futures.

The coming decades are critical for India if the demographic dividend is to be realised. India must address the needs of the young and provide them the opportunity to realise their potential. A paradigm shift that involves the incorporation of youth experiences, issues and skills in the conceptual policy framework

and programme implementation is clearly indicated.

The full Report may be accessed at: <http://www.esocialsciences.org/Articles/show Article.aspx?acat=Recent+Articles&aid=5305> and at http://www.globalyouthdesk.org:8080/index.php?option=com_php&Itemid=57

For printed copies of the Report and other information, pi contact:

Aarti Salve Telang: aarti@esocialsciences.org . Call: (91) 022 67301060 or (91)022 67301000

Yusuf Meherally Centre

Low cost Medical Care for Rural Areas

Yusuf Meherally Centre is keen on promoting low cost, but quality, health care in rural areas. One model the Centre tried has been to create awareness among the Mumbai doctors that it is their duty to do something for the surrounding villages. It succeeded. It set up a Sunday clinic at Tara, a village on Mumbai-Goa highway in 1967 and that is still continuing. There is no dearth of doctors willing to serve patients free once a month or so.

Now there is a proposal to undertake a new initiative and do a similar experiment with a view to attracting medical men to rural areas committed to providing medical care, curative as well as preventive, without their expecting market salaries. For this, one idea that makes sense is to appeal to retired government doctors who do not wish to start private practice. It is possible they will respond. The same with the retired military medical officers. And there are quite a few medical men who are motivated by their ideology – Gandhian or Socialist who too may respond. The freedom movement, as also the early socialist movement, did succeed in making ideologically committed people to move to rural areas to provide health care.

The Centre appeals to Janata's readers to identify such people and introduce them to it.

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Flogging a dead horse

S.Viswam

Optimism is glue to third front
Kuldip Nayar

Should Dalits Remain Ugly?
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**Retreat on Democratic Socialism –
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May Day Greetings
HMS

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The formation of a third front as a national alternative to the Congress and the BJP is an idea whose time has actually come and gone. However, from time to time, frustrated or exasperated politicians revive the notion of an alternative that will adequately address the political problems of the nation more efficiently than either the Congress or the BJP. The proposal figures in the columns of most newspapers, and prominently too, till it dies a natural death and fades away silently into the limbo till someone revives it again. We are experiencing yet another revival phase. The sponsor of the proposal this time happens to be the UP Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav, whose party and leader (Samajwadi Party and Mulayam Singh Yadav) currently support the UPA at the Centre. Akhilesh has journeyed all the way to Tamil Nadu to remind his state counterpart Jayalalithaa that the present is the ideal time to create a third front and oust the Congress and the BJP from the race altogether. As usual, as the next parliamentary round nears, many parties find themselves seeking an anchor that will safeguard their political future and fortunes. The present scenario, about a year ahead of the Lok Sabha

polls, is in fact a good time for the Third Front johnnies to get together. This is because the political scene is highly confused. Public perception does not credit either the Congress or the BJP with the potential of securing a majority. The BJP is a big noise-maker and drum beater but its winning chances at the hustings are none too bright even if it manages to cobble an alliance of more parties and expand the NDA. And, then, it has pushed itself into a corner by its premature and unwise projection of Narendra Modi as the BJP-NDA's prime ministerial candidate. Currently, the senior leaders are vying with one another to make confusion worse confounded. Party president Rajnath Singh nominated Modi as the most popular among Indian leaders but insists that he is not the prime ministerial candidate. Lok Sabha Opposition leader Sushma Swaraj says no one is ruled out from being named prime ministerial candidate and that Advani has as much chance as has Modi. Realisation that the party made a mess of the "Modi for PM" campaign has dawned on the leadership at last. It is now trying to placate Modi, Advani, and Nitish Kumar. In the process it is getting caught deeper and deeper

in controversy and confusion. The BJP has compromised its relations with one of its allies - JD(U) - and is extricating itself with difficulty. The Congress is comfortable for the present, its problems fortunately not directly stemming from or tied to electoral politics. It has still a year to get its act together, and does not seem under pressure to finalise the UPA composition for 2014 in a great hurry. If the voter has to choose today between the BJP and the Congress, the choice is bound to be the Congress, even with all its shortcomings and drawbacks and even with Rahul Gandhi as leader. This Gandhi is yet to convince the nation that he is a serious player. Indeed, so far there is no indication from the party that he will be the Congress prime ministerial candidate. The Congress will take a call on this issue only if and when it is forced to or if and when it is sure of victory. The party will expose neither Sonia nor Rahul Gandhi to an electoral defeat. Luckily for it, the BJP is making things easy for the Congress by projecting Modi as its savior. The stronger the campaign for Modi, the larger will be the exodus of Muslim voters from the NDA alliance parties. This will suit the Congress because it will attract Muslim voters without wooing them hard. By sending Akhilesh to call on Jayalalithaa Mulayam has sent a message to regional leaders that he is willing to break with a third force. The ball is thus in the court of leaders like Jayalalithaa and Navin Patnaik and yes, Mamata Banerji too. If they do not take the initiative now they will have to miss the bus again. One cannot keep on flogging dead horses eternally in the distant hope that the dead horse will come to life suddenly!

Optimism is glue to third front

Kuldip Nayar

Mid-term polls seem inevitable. Most provincial leaders are lessening in influence. They want to cash in on their depleting assets before too long and may want to extract the maximum before they lose the advantage they enjoy at present. Mulayam Singh of the Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh is rapidly losing the ground. So is Mamata Bannerjee in West Bengal. Much would depend on how the leaders can hold on to their own before the polls take place.

The outcome is anybody's guess. One thing that is sure as of now is no single party will get a majority in the Lok Sabha, comprising 543 members. And which parties will join hands is difficult to say at this juncture. It all depends on whether the parties carry the credentials of being anti-communal and how far they are convincing. It is apparent that the BJP, known for its Hindutva thesis, may be on one side and the rest on the other side.

There is, however, a possibility that a third group may emerge. The Congress and the BJP are the two groups and their alternative will be the combination of the others. Outside support of the Congress or the BJP is necessary to make the majority, which will be 273. Debunking the idea of a third front government after the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP asked Mulayam Singh Yadav why his party had not withdrawn support to the UPA even though he had many complaints against the Congress. But he has his compulsions. Nevertheless, his son

and UP chief minister Akhilesh Yadav has very much kept a third front alive front after meeting with his Tamil Nadu counterpart J. Jayalalithaa.

That an alternative to both the Congress and the BJP is needed is generally accepted. But such a front cannot be on the old lines. When idealism lessens, many compromises will be made and even ethical considerations will be pushed to the background. This would mean leaders without qualities will begin to stalk the land. No doubt, India is going through such a phase today. It does not, however, mean that one set of undesirable people should be allowed to replace another set of undesirables. The beginning for a change can be small, but it cannot be dubious.

The third front in India, if and when formed, has a lot of work to do to clear the mess the Congress and the BJP have piled up over the years. The biggest crime the two parties have committed is to politicize the ills in the society to stay in power. With musclemen and money bags, they have destroyed the values, brick by brick. However, the biggest problem that parties which constitute the third front suffer from is that each one of them has, at one time or the other, been part of the alliance which the Congress or the BJP had forged.

Against this background, it is understandable why both the Congress and the BJP have pooh-poohed at the idea of a third front when Mulayam Singh Yadav touched on the revival of the subject. At the

same time, the statements emanating from top Congress and BJP leaders, mocking at the birth of a third front, indicate that the two main political parties are edgy as well as uncertain about their future with the general elections due anytime between now and early 2014.

However, there is one big question that remains - that of consensus building. When there are so many parties with conflicting ideologies, different working styles and personality clashes, the biggest problem would be who among the dozen-odd leaders will become the prime minister? Mulayam Singh Yadav is already counting his eggs even before they are hatched. Then there are regional leaders like J. Jayalalithaa of Tamil Nadu and Chandrababu Naidu of the Telugu Desam from Andhra Pradesh. Even Mayawati of the Bahujan Samajwadi Party has nursed such an ambition for some time. But my worry is how can parties with regional outlooks govern and upkeep the diverse Indian population?

In such a scenario, the only option available is to arrive at a consensus and choose a prime ministerial candidate who has the understanding of foreign relations and the economic growth of the country. There are thousands of young men and women, who are working voluntarily at the grassroots in the fields of health, education, environment and human rights. They can all be strung together. They, in turn, will bring in their experiences and contacts to make the front more meaningful. Even the communists will be keen on roping in all such elements that are outside the orbit of the BJP and the Congress.

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Should Dalits Remain Ugly?

K. S. Chalam

The recent dreadful incident in the Paris of Andhra and pride of upward mobile shudras of our state, Tenali made all of us who love the town, hang our heads in shame. A 45-year old lady was ghastly killed in the presence of her daughter for preventing the felonious animals from sexually abusing the daughter, a good looking B.Tech student. In the eyes of the beasts, the pretty looking mother and daughter were found without a male companion as hapless dalits. They were coming from shopping when the incident took place just opposite the statue of the father of the nation. Though the media has not revealed the background of the incident, circumstantial evidence leads us to the specifics that they were easy prey due to their social background. Strangely, a section of the media was busy with the news of a missing film star indicating the blatant discrimination and frivolity. Katti Padma Rao, President of Dalit Maha Sabha informed us that he got the couple married in 1985 and the family is well educated, the fact that the two daughters studying science and engineering courses demonstrates.

The incident in Tenali, Guntur after a gap of around two decades in the neighbourhood of Chundururu amply shows that economic growth did not bring any social change, but led to further nasty feudal depths of despair. Now, we have entered a different dimension of caste atrocity. This reminds us why Dr Ambedkar wanted annihilation of castes. In his most famous speech prepared but

not delivered at the Jat-Pat-Todak Mandal, Lahore in 1936, he cited a press report of 4th January 1928 about the conditions imposed by upper caste Hindus on Balais, a dalit caste in 15 villages in Indore district. Out of 8 conditions, two were related to women that they should not wear gold and silver and fancy gowns, etc. perhaps to keep them as their slaves. Is there any change in the mind set of people as far as women, particularly of lower caste are concerned?

There are several studies to indicate how the lower castes fought against the so-called upper caste/ brahminical values. It is recorded that the lower caste Nadars and Ezhavas of Tamil Nadu and also in Travancore presidencies resisted the inhuman condition that the women folk of the community were made not to wear any upper garments, to entertain the lust of the upper castes. The leaders of the Nadars and Ezhvas appealed to the British and defied the upper caste dictates by wearing upper jackets. This exasperated the ego of the dominant castes leading to a caste battle during 1818-19. Army was called in by the British to abate the situation. Of course, this revolt of the Ezhvas and Nadars made them to unite under Narayana Guru and shifted their traditional occupation to other callings to emerge as one of the most upward mobile community in the post-independent India. We just do not have instances of such revolt from lower castes or dalits in Andhra. Does Sunila symbolise this?

In this context, we may reflect here on the notion of beauty and aesthetics in relation to the social composition of our society. It is strange that the younger generation with the so-called development oriented mind set think about beauty and glow of women in terms of the standards offered by the Anglo-American or white skin cultures. They consider, under the influence of beauty market, that all others like the dark skinned African-Americans are slaves meant to serve the rest. Hindi channels (some Telugu too) have almost banned dark people. There seem to be no change in the attitudes and values of people even in an era of globalisation. However, the local people with dark, brown skins have proved the indoctrinated upper castes wrong through their intelligence and charm, when opportunities are democratically thrown open. In fact, Rammanohar Lohia in his article on "Beauty and Skin Colour" published in March 1960, narrated how the greatest woman of Indian myth, Draupadi was dark and charming. He narrated the beauty of fish eyed Meenakshi of Madurai telling the rest of the world how her beauty bit more to the heart than the eye. The grace of Tambaram Lalita, a Tamil beauty seem to have attracted the attention of Lohia who lamented how the aesthetic judgment of the whit-skinned Europeans dominated the world and distorted our aesthetic sensibilities. In fact, there are historical records to evaluate the native Indian beauty and wisdom of the women folk. I remember that I had the occasion to officially interact with the most beautiful woman in my life who was a dark person and could relate her to the Yakshini kept in the Patna museum (see Basham, A L). The Yakhshini figure, a first century AD sculpture was a chance discovery of a British

officer who found it in a dhobi ghat about a century ago. The woman I was referring to was a Bihari and there were absolute resemblances between the living beauty and the Yakshinini of ancient India. It is appropriate to bring to focus that the native Indians or the so-called lower communities were more attractive than the aliens who came here and enslaved the locals resulting in their destitution and physical devastation. It is with the advent of democratic government and adequate food that the downtrodden are slowly recovering from the damage and restoring their original charm. You can see this happening to Chenchus of Kurnool.

It is not only in the physical elegance but even in the exposition of their knowledge and wisdom, the women belonging to this community is exemplary. Srimati Panabaka Lakshmi, M.P from Bapatla, Guntur, a Post-graduate from Andhra University has been a parliamentarian for two decades and has proved her calibre and competence as a Minister in the central government. The Prime Minister has recognised her skills and efficiency in dealing with whatever subject assigned, has now entrusted her with two important portfolios. This shows that the women of the lower communities are as competent as anyone else if chances are given. This trend appears to be the crux of the problem.

The upper caste crooks of Tenali seem to have a crush for the women and were waiting for an opportunity to pounce. Interestingly, there is very little analysis by our intellectuals who were very critical about the increasing menace of dalit-lumpen elements when Chundururu occurred. Is there any parallel in recent period

where a mother lost her life defending the honour and chastity of her daughter? Is it not our responsibility to make Sunila's sacrifice a symbol of self-respect and esteem of the new generation of women that we should be welcoming!

(Continued from Page 3)

I recall Mallika Sarabhai contesting the last Lok Sabha election as an independent candidate. She chose to contest against L.K. Advani and her reason for doing so was that she wanted to send a message across the nation that people believing in democracy and secularism have to fight for the space which the political parties have come to occupy. Some human rights activists also followed the same path. They had constituted a people's political forum, Lok Niti Manch, a platform where groups and individuals fighting for protecting the rights of people assembled, to contest elections.

The only condition to join the Manch was that they must believe in democracy, secularism and a welfare state. It is another matter that none of the contestants, including Mallika, had won. And it did not matter to them. But the initiative came for praise from like-minded people because a process to cleanse politics and to oust all such elements who are motivated by power and money had been set in motion. Today, their number may be small, but once the message spreads they will gradually gain in strength. Gandhian Jayaprakash Narayan, who successfully ousted Indira Gandhi government in 1977, constituted the Janata Party which won a majority in the Lok Sabha. I do hope that someday, such efforts will bear fruits and take the shape of a political party like the Greens in Europe.

May Day Greetings

On the occasion of May Day, Hind Mazdoor Sabha extends its greetings to all the working people sweating in the fields, factories and offices in India and the rest of the world. May Day not only honours and commemorates the martyrdom of the workers way back in 1886 in Chicago but has also over the years come to signify international labour solidarity and respect for workers' trade union and other human rights in every country. It is a day for us to remember yet again the many challenges the trade union movement has been facing in this era of globalization.

For the labour movement in India, the May Day this year comes when elections to some state assemblies are due and especially general elections to the nation's Parliament are also due next year. The workers have great stake in these elections. During the last few years, we have seen different political parties and coalitions coming to power but it has not meant any better deal for the workers. The workers should realize that their interests have become mere pre-election slogans that are forgotten by the politicians once the elections are over. The time has come for the workers to hold the political parties responsible for the promises made in the past. The trade unions have been struggling against the policies of indiscriminate economic liberalization, privatization and dilution of labour laws which are adversely affecting workers employment and social security rights. These elections provide an opportunity for the workers and the trade unions to bring to the centre stage, the respect for workers' rights and the main issues

of employment, livelihoods and social security for the poor. HMS hopes that workers will judge the prospective candidates on the basis of their record and support only those candidates who stand for the secular democratic India, social security and collective bargaining rights of the workers.

The struggle to achieve our objectives respect for workers' rights, employment and social security for women and men will not end with the elections however. The trade union movement in India has to reflect as to why our demands for Respect for Workers' Rights are not being heeded by the political class in India. One major cause that comes to mind is the divisions in the labour movement. The 'house divided' situation is preventing united action by the workers' organizations and allowing the political system to ignore the workers' interests. Now, more than ever is the need to consolidate the fragmented trade union movement. When the interests are common, as are the demands, there is little reason to remain divided, coloured by the political divisions. HMS, therefore, once again, calls for creating a united, democratic and independent labour movement in India that will provide space for many others to join in and create conditions for organising the unorganized.

Now coming to the economic situation, we had eventful 2010, 2011 and 2012. The entire world had undergone worst type of turbulence. India was no exception. Millions of jobs were lost in USA. Companies having big names slashed thousands of jobs at a stretch. The jobless

rate shot upto 7.6 percent. The position in India was no better. As per sample survey conducted by the Ministry of Labour & Employment, Government of India, five lakh workers were axed in just three months.

The working class in India had to face another onslaught. The sky-rocketing prices of essential commodities had hit the common man (*Aam Aadmi*) the hardest. The prices of wheat, rice, gram, sugar, milk and pulses shot up in most cases by 100 per cent.

All these factors prompted the Indian Trade Union Movement to rise to the occasion. They were stung by the ordeals of "*Aam Aadmi*" and unresponsive attitude of the Central Government and were left with no option but to join heads.

The Indian Trade Union Movement got a big boost when Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) and Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) also decided to join the movement and a National Convention of Workers was held at New Delhi on 14th September, 2009. A detailed action programme was finalized which was successfully implemented throughout the nation. The working class of the nation was expecting that the Government would take serious note of our activities and would come up with some positive, corrective measures but it did not happen.

All Central Trade Unions decided to convene another National Convention of Workers on July 15, 2010 wherein once again detailed action programme of Gate Meeting/

A New Socialist Network

D. K. Giri

Dharna/Court arrest/ Jail Bharo, etc. was finalized which got tremendous response from working class. But all these efforts could bring no change in reluctant, apathetic and anti-worker attitude of the Government. At this stage the trade unions were compelled to have another National Convention of workers on 7th September, 2011. HMS lamented that despite several rounds of all-in united protest by the entire Trade Union Movement of the country, the Central Government has remained totally unresponsive to major concerns of working people. It was also decided to hold countrywide multiple forms of action such as Satyagraha/Jail Bharo/Mass Squatting in all the State Capitals and Industrial Centres. This was again a grand success as the leaders with lakhs of workers participated.

Disappointed by the apathetic attitude of the Central Government, the CTUOs observed another General Strike on February 28, 2012. Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister invited the CTUOs for discussion two days before the date of General Strike which was politely declined stating that it was too late and the PM may invite the CTUOs after February, 2012.

Later on, the CTUOs held another National Convention of Workers on 4th September, 2012 which decided to have countrywide two-day General Strike on 20-21 February, 2013. All the affiliates were exhorted to join enmasse. The Labour Minister held the meeting with CTUOs and the PM also formed a group of ministers to discuss the issues raised in the National Convention of Workers but without any result.

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True to many people's anticipation, the global Socialist International (SI), the network of Social Democratic and Labour Parties has lost its steam. It had become ineffective as a progressive body of opinion and action. There was no renewal of strategy or revitalization of the organization, as the leadership had not changed for 24 long years. There was an attempt by many concerned political parties to install new leadership in the 24th Congress of SI in Cape Town, South Africa, last August-September. Surprisingly, the incumbent leadership decided to cling on even by imposing a leadership contest. It could have been gracious on its part to withdraw and let a new person take over by consensus. In a voluntary international ideological network, electoral contests ought to be avoided. However, the leadership contest left a bitter taste in the mouth of many parties, as they were disappointed with the status-quoist atrophy of the organization. They were, perhaps, left with no choice but to create a complementary body in order to reinvigorate the Socialist network, the biggest ideological and progressive network in the world. The new network is called the Progressive Alliance: A network of progressive forces for the 21st century. Split in any political instrument is not advisable as the splinters usually become weaker than the parent body, but an organization mutating into a new structure in response to the environment is a healthy development. Progressive Alliance seems to be part of the second phenomenon.

Pre-Congress Prognosis

I must say I feel less guilty now of strongly critiquing the leadership of Socialist International in an article ("Socialist International in Cape Town", Janata, 28 August 2012) and suggesting that Cape Town Congress will prove to be a turning point in the journey of Socialist International. So it has been. The assumption was based on the incapacity of the leadership to comprehend the world situation, and conjure up new ideas to address that situation. Both the lack of vision and incapacity for action underplayed the role of Socialist International, and undermined its efficacy. For instance, "when the world swung back from Communism in the East to unbridled capitalism in the West and elsewhere, the latter being exposed by the global financial crisis" it was a great opportunity SI could have grabbed to present Democratic Socialism as a credible and viable alternative that could handle market instability and rapacity, restore the faith in the government, as both productionist (pro-growth) and distributionist (pro-social justice), and accommodate the interests and values of the civil societies. But it failed to be the authentic as well as an effective voice of the progressive forces in the world. So, SI needed to transform, mutate, into a new structure embodying fresh ideas and strategies.

What is the Progressive Alliance?

Before we ponder on the prospects of the Alliance, it is in order that we identify the new body as defined by its founders. It seems to be

early days, though, to accurately characterize the new creature as it is said to be still evolving.

One of its draft documents says about the Alliance that “the progressive democratic, social democratic, socialist and labour movement is based on common commitment to the joint pursuit of freedom, justice, social equality and international solidarity.” The pursuit of these values makes the Alliance decidedly Social Democratic, and the broader range of nature of organizations committed to both democracy and socialism makes it inclusive.

In its analysis of the current global situation, the Alliance identified the interface between the economy and the society. The economy should be so planned and managed that it serves the society, not create divisions and conflicts, which are commonplace now because of a false dichotomy between growth and distribution. The Alliance suggests, “the new social issue, conflicts cropping up from inequality, must be addressed in order to make participation possible, prevent distribution conflicts, and ensure the ecological balance of our environment.” Three key principles in the foregoing assertion, “parity of participation” (freedom and equality), preventing distributive conflicts (social justice) and maintaining ecological balance (sustainable growth) constitute the new development paradigm that combines growth, efficiency and justice. This is what some would call “Decent Capitalism”. (Decent Capitalism: A Blueprint for Reforming our Economies, (Sebastian Dullan et. al., Pluto Press:2011). If we can live with the terminologies like Decent Capitalism, ethical capitalism, good

and bad capitalism, the book makes a lot of sense. The authors say in the introduction (page 4) “in this book we develop a proposal for an economic model whose fundamental orientation is to ensure social justice and environmental prosperity at a high level of prosperity”. Let me hasten to add that, although one agrees with the formulations in the book, the title ‘Capitalism’ with whatever prefix does not inspire, capitalism has been associated with exploitation, and competitive greed.

One of the characteristics of the new Alliance is its emphasis on solidarity and togetherness. The current transnational challenges like climate change and global capitalism are sought to be addressed by national governments. Many celebrated authors and commentators have pointed out the truism that global challenges cannot be met by national governments or inter-governmentalism, For instance, Anthony Giddens, makes this point strongly in his book, “The Politics of Climate Change”. The Progressive Alliance correctly asserts, “Challenges like these can only be tackled by working together, and not against each other.”

Yet, another organizing principle of the Progressive Alliance is highly commendable. That is, “a co-operative world order”, based on shared solutions. They pronounce: “together with social movements and groups of civil society, we want to shape the future....” We, in the Association for Democratic Socialism (ADS) have been advocating for quite some time, a “tri-sector approach” – active collaboration between the government, market, and the civil society. For the sake of credible policies, inclusive growth, and

a fair society, there ought to be synergies between the actors of these three sectors. They have to sit around the same table with their respective strengths – legislative authority of the State, efficiency and expertise of the market, human values and people-proximity of the civil societies. Conflicts between them will hinder growth as well as development, of course one is not ruling out creative tensions between these actors. The authors of new economic model in “Decent Capitalism” endorse this strongly, “we need a new balance between State, Market and Society, and it is clear that both State and Civil Society must be given more weight.” This balance or collaboration should be the new platform for Social Democracy and all progressive forces. If we do not comprehend this critical interface, we will be falling prey, in varying degrees, in different contexts, to authoritarianism of the State, radicalism, and at times, extremism of the Civil Societies, and market fundamentalism. Any of these is unhealthy for any society.

The last principle in the draft document under Who We Are is “people-centric approach”. This is a tough call, but very welcome, indeed. It is tough, because the Western Societies and economies have grown on modern technologies, and big businesses” which alienate people, dilute communityness and attacks nature. People become machine-dependent and anti-nature as the emphasis is on speed, delivery at any cost and ruthless approach. Machine-centered approach has caused social tension and individual stress. The Russian novelist Maxim Gorky, commenting on modern technology had said, “Man has learnt to fly like a bird in the air, man has also learnt to swim like a fish in the

water, but man is yet to learn how to live peacefully with his neighbor". The sister organization of ADS, The Schumacher Centre in India, has been promoting people centered approach since 2000. Inspired by legendary economist, E. F. Schumacher, the author of the classic, "Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered", Schumacher Centre has been combining the 'collaboration' of Buddha, 'service' of Gandhi, and 'compassion' of Schumacher, which has generated the scope for Buddhist economy (a chapter in Schumacher's book) now called compassionate economy. Schumacher also talked about Gross Domestic Happiness (GDH) along with GDP. Such ideas align with a lot of eastern as well as western values.

Alliance must look East

Drawing on the Eastern traditions is also necessary for redefining the contours of Democratic Socialism. This is where Socialist International faltered by not going deep into politics beyond the Western societies. One hopes that Progressive Alliance will not repeat that mistake. Former Austrian Chancellor, Alfred Gusenbauer writing on redefining Social Democracy said, "Social Democracy may have originated in the West, but its future will be written by the East." Both democracy and socialism are evolving into truly international ideology requiring inputs from all traditions. Mono-cultural societies in the West have to prepare for multicultural democracy as the movement of people along with goods, capital, and services have become commonplace. Prof. John Kean talked about "democratizing the history of democracy". He said we need no longer read the history of democracy as a movement from

Globalisation – A Socialist Perspective

Bapu Heddurhetti

Of late, there has been a wide spread debate on 'globalisation' all over the globe. The Socialist International recognises that "Globalisation is a phenomenon that has emerged forcefully in the latter part of the 20th Century and is likely to grow in the 21st century". However, many people, particularly in India, oppose Globalisation. Even while eulogising the concept of '*Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*' - the whole world is a family – India also has a tradition of opposing globalisation. Even today there are people in India who do not eat chilies because they came from overseas. Recently a religious pontiff was boycotted by other pontiffs because he had traveled 'across the seas' which is supposed to be prohibited in Hindu religion.

In India, some socialists also oppose globalisation. Having grown politically during the freedom struggle, which was 'opposing' the British rule in India and having had to be 'on the left side of the Speaker' for many years after independence, these socialists never found a proper equation with power and hence always suffered from the 'opposition psychosis'.

However, in spite of a large number of people opposing globalisation and a large number of articles appearing in news papers all over the world opposing globalisation - Nobel prize winning economist Amartya Sen calls the anti-globalisation movement the most globalised movement - it is slowly becoming a reality. Globalisation has come

to stay and the trend appears to be irreversible. Hence it has become necessary for socialists to understand as to what is globalisation and also understand the 'opposition' to it, as also to develop a 'socialist perspective' on it.

Most of those who oppose 'globalisation' oppose only the 'capitalist globalisation' but confuse it with opposition to what Prof. Leslie Sklair of the London School of Economics calls 'generic globalisation', while ignoring the fact that there can be other forms of globalisation including a 'socialist globalisation'.

What is Globalisation

It would be better to understand globalisation, i.e., generic globalisation, and enumerate its advantages so that the criticism of globalisation can be put in perspective. After reviewing several definitions of globalization, Al-Rodhan, Nayef R.F. and Gérard Stoudmann define it as 'the process of international integration arising from the interchange of world views, products, ideas, and other aspects of culture'. For Albrow, Martin and Elizabeth King it includes "all those processes by which the peoples of the world are incorporated into a single world society".

It was perhaps economist Takis Fotopoulos who aspectualised the generic globalization into 'economic globalization', meaning liberal regime of commodity, capital and labour markets beyond national boundaries: 'political globalization',

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meaning the emergence of trans-national political organizations and dilution of the nation states: 'cultural globalization', meaning world-wide inter-mixing of cultures - and other concepts like 'ideological globalization', 'technological globalization' and 'social globalization'.

Political globalization has roots in ancient history and has been glorified of late. Socrates had said "I am not an Athenian, or a Greek, but a citizen of the world". The call by Karl Marx, in the Communist Manifesto to the workers of the world to unite was a call for globalization of the working class. From the setting up of the International Working Men's Association by Marx and others to the establishment of the United Nations Organisation after the Second World War and the European Union are the examples of political globalization.

Political globalization is changing the pith and substance of the very concept of national sovereignty. It is being done in two ways. One, by opting for regional arrangements and thereby sharing, if not surrendering, 'sovereignty' and two, by opting for 'intervention' in the sovereignty of other nations in the name of protecting the human rights.

The Socialist International recognizes both these changes. It says "Regional cooperation is making headway in the international community. Europe is firmly moving towards ... shared sovereignty. Europe is aiming at an open form of regionalism, which we support and consider to be the most appropriate way of meeting the challenges which cannot be met efficiently by Nation States acting on their own. A sovereignty which is shared

regionally enhances their position".

As a corollary to such a view of sovereignty, the Socialist International justifies intervention in the sovereignty of a nation state for protecting and preserving the basic human rights. It says: "We support the need to advance the 'right of intervention on humanitarian grounds', within the framework of international law, because no reasons of state or difference in identity can ever justify genocide or ethnic cleansing, or provide impunity to dictators who systematically violate universal human rights".

Socio-cultural Globalisation : Socialists at the international level are aware of the social impact of globalisation and the social metamorphosis that the globalisation is engendering. The Socialist International recognises that the industrial society is getting transformed into an information and knowledge based society "taking place at a pace and extent hitherto unknown in history".

All societies all over the world are slowly becoming the melting pots of different races, religions, languages and cultures. Multiculturalism and multilingualism, which were historical realities in India for ages, are becoming realities in Europe and other western countries due to globalisation. These different races, religions, cultures, languages, etc., cannot remain segregated for long. The process of homogenization will overtake all the different societies over a period of time, howsoever long. The effect of homogenization is clearly visible in culture. Starting from the Chinese leaders shunning the Mao Tse Tung coat in favour of the European suit to the fusion of classical eastern music and western

music, the cultural homogenization appears clearly at work.

Internet, which connects the computers around the world, is a curious tool. It is not only a product of globalization but is also a promoter of it. While 394 million people were using the internet in the year 2000, by 2010 a record 1.8 billion people were using the internet. By 2010, 22 percent of the world's population had access to computers with 1 billion Google searches every day. YouTube that brings hitherto unavailable music from all corners of the world to all corners of the world is viewed by 2 billion people every day.

Criticising the branding of the World Social Forum as 'anti-globalisation' by the proponents of 'economic globalisation', Prof. Noam Chomsky says "Take the World Social Forum (WSF), called 'anti-globalization' in the propaganda system - which happens to include the media, the educated classes, etc., with rare exceptions. The WSF is a paradigm example of globalization. It is a gathering of huge numbers of people from all over the world, from just about every corner of life one can think of, apart from the extremely narrow highly privileged elites who meet at the competing World Economic Forum, and are called 'pro-globalization' by the propaganda system".

The Lopsided View

The current criticism of globalization is based on its lopsided view. Globalisation is wrongly equated with only the growth of multi-national corporate giants and their international expansion of business which can be called 'economic globalisation'. The criticism is mainly directed against

the investment in the developing countries by these multi-national corporate giants, and the political clout that this investment is said to deliver to these giants. In India particularly, the historical memories of the 'East India Company' gobbling up the country politically engenders a phobia in many an intellectual about globalization.

In the year 2000, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) identified four basic aspects of globalization: trade and transactions, capital and investment movements, migration and movement of people and the dissemination of knowledge. Even this was an inadequate understanding of the phenomenon of globalization though it was appropriate that an economic organization should so understand and define it. The IMF, being an economic organization, did not bother to include the political, social and cultural dimensions of globalization.

The Socialist International recognized this lopsidedness of the view and expressed its concern. It said in its **Declaration of Principles of Socialism adopted by the XVIII Congress at Stockholm in June 1989**, "Globalisation is becoming uni-dimensional with the formation and growth of the multi national corporations and the transcending of the national borders by a free movement of capital".

Prof. Noam Chomsky is still more strident. He says "The dominant propaganda systems have appropriated the term '*globalization*' to refer to the specific version of international economic integration that they favour, which privileges the rights of investors and lenders, those of people being incidental. In accord with this usage, those

who favour a different form of international integration, which privileges the rights of human beings, become '*anti-globalist*'. This is simply vulgar propaganda, like the term *anti-Soviet* used by the most disgusting commissars to refer to dissidents. It is not only vulgar, but idiotic".

Positive aspects of Economic Globalisation

Globalization is also perceived as a positive force in the world, particularly in the area of finance with a positive impact. For example, in the countries that started globalizing, the per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by 1.4 percent a year in the 1960s and 2.9 percent a year in the 1970s to 3.5 percent in the 1980s and 5.0 percent in the 1990s. On the contrary, the non-globalizing developing countries' annual growth rate fell from 3.3 percent during the 1970s to only 1.4 percent during the 1990s. However it is very interesting that the rich countries saw steady declines in growth from a high of 4.7 percent in the 1960s to 2.2 percent in the 1990s. With regards to trade and transactions, developing countries increased their share of world trade, from 19 percent in 1971 to 29 percent in 1999.

It is not as though only the foreign companies are coming to India, investing their money in India. The charge can be equally levelled against Indian companies also. Recently Tatas, an Indian company purchased Cores, an English company. The French Prime Minister recently joined issues with Laxmi Mittal, the Indian international steel giant, on the floor of the French National Assembly. Many other Indian corporate giants are investing their monies in foreign countries also. However, the opponents of

globalisation do not say that these Indian companies should not invest abroad. But when foreign companies are allowed to start their production units in India there is a hue and cry by the so-called 'nationalists' and 'patriots'.

However the Socialist International feels that there is need to emphasise the other than corporate and financial dimensions of globalization. It says "We need to make it multi-dimensional by emphasising the need for a free movement of labour also so that any person from any part of the world can migrate to any other part of the world in search of better conditions of living". But the same appears to be already happening.

Millions of people getting employed in India due to outsourcing by foreign countries, like in 'Call Centers' and millions of Indians getting employed abroad and repatriating millions of dollars of money to India are instances of one aspect of economic globalization. About 85% of Dubai's population consists of migrant workers, a majority of whom are from India. More than 10 % of Kerala's population is working and earning abroad. Remittances from Indians working overseas increased by 18.9 per cent to US \$ 66.1 billion in 2011-12 from US \$ 55.6 billion in the previous year. Here also the opponents of globalisation, do not say that these millions of Indians should not be employed abroad or that they should not repatriate their earnings to India.

It is estimated that nearly 14 million immigrants came to the United States between 2000 and 2010. As of 2005, the global labor pool of those employed by

multinational companies consisted of approximately 3 billion workers. According to World Bank estimates, remittances totaled US \$ 414 billion in 2009, of which US \$ 316 billion went to developing countries that involved 192 million migrant workers.

A new crisis caused by globalization is brewing in the European Union. Millions of workers from east European countries which were part of the former Soviet Union and have now become part of the European Union are migrating to the west European countries and since they are ready to work for wages lower than the wages demanded by the west European workers, it is causing distress among the workers of the west European countries. Thus in this instance, globalization is working in favour of poorer nations and against the interests of the developed nations.

Towards a Socialist Globalisation

Should the socialists be socialists or be Anarchists and Communists? The Anarchists and the Communists had opposed the 'State' and wanted to destroy it. But then the democratic socialists tried to put positive content in the state and harness it as an instrument for transforming the capitalist society into a socialist society. Another but similar challenge is facing the democratic socialists. What should be the attitude of the socialists with regard to Globalisation. Should they oppose it or should they try to harness it in the service of socialism? While some people, particularly in India, want to oppose Globalisation tooth and nail, there are others who are taking a pragmatic view and are trying to harness Globalisation in the service of socialism as they had done with the institution of state.

For harnessing globalisation in the service of the socialist ideals, the Socialist International is taking the democratic route. It is talking of democratizing the multi-national corporate giants, in transforming the present capitalist society into a socialist society. In this direction the Socialist International says "These multi-national corporations are slowly taking over the space hitherto occupied by the political State, with the result that the State has begun shrinking. Hence an urgent need has arisen to democratize the functioning of these corporations so as to ensure not only the participation of the stake holders in the decision making processes of these corporations but also to use these economic instrumentalities in promoting the socialist ideals of freedom, equality and fraternity as the Socialists of the 18th and 19th centuries did with the institution of State".

Prof. Leslie Sklair of the London School of Economics also reiterates the same view. He argues that the 'generic globalisation' has concretely manifested itself as 'capitalist globalisation' and "the only way of making a successful transition from capitalist globalization to socialist globalization will be through a democratic process in which capitalist forms of democracy are themselves transformed into socialist forms of democracy".

Prof Sklair also tries to define the contours of Socialist Globalisation. He says "We can identify the fundamental differences between capitalist globalization and socialist globalization in the economic, political, and culture-ideology spheres. In the economic sphere, while capitalist globalization (through the trans-national corporations) prioritizes the accumulation of

private profit, socialist globalization would prioritize the creation of employment that is worthwhile both for individuals and for the community as a whole. In the political sphere, while capitalist globalization, directed by the trans-national capitalist class, organizes society through parliamentary democracy based largely on states and national societies, in socialist globalization society would be organized through participatory forms of democracy. And in the culture-ideology sphere, while the value system of capitalist globalization revolves round the culture-ideology of consumerism, the value system of socialist globalization would revolve around human rights and responsibilities."

While mapping the route to Socialist globalisation Prof. Sklair speaks of 'Producer-Consumer Co-operatives' globally connecting with each other, even over distances in view of exponential advances in transport and communications, in mutually beneficial and non-exploitative relations. He cites the International Co-operative Alliance, which, though not a "clear evidence of embryonic socialist globalization", is pointing towards the possible alternative globalisations.

Prof Sklair concludes, "The contradictions of capitalist globalization can only be resolved in the interests of the vast majority by grasping the dynamics and opportunities of generic globalization and mobilizing them to create the conditions for successful socialist globalization. In my view this will involve a gradual withering away of the state, not the privatization of state functions that the Trans-national Capitalist Class driving

neo-liberal capitalist globalization is currently engaged in, but a multitude of networks of producer-consumer co-operatives, from the small and localized to the larger and trans-national”.

Responding to Prof. Sklair’s thesis, Prof. Ben Selwyn of the University of Sussex, Brighton, using Marxian tools, argues that the transformation of the capitalist globalisation into socialist globalisation will come through the regimen of labour over capital. He says “My argument is that we need to conceptually distinguish between the political economy of capital and the political economy of labour, and that it is the latter, in theory, vision and practice, that possesses the capacity to transform capitalist globalisation into socialist globalization”.

The Socialist International says “The great paradox of this historical period is that never before has mankind had more possibilities of fighting ancestral problems such as inequality, hunger, disease or lack of education. Yet these opportunities are currently being used to increase and not to bridge the existing gaps. It is our resolve to reverse this trend and thus put globalisation to work at the service of human progress ... The management of globalisation calls for better and stronger political actions, better quality and level of democratic participation locally, nationally, regionally and even internationally ... We propose Global Progress to face the challenges of globalisation”.

Hence to oppose globalisation *per se* is like throwing the baby with the bath water. So instead of blindly opposing the globalization, like the communists, it is time the

socialists evolve socialist responses to it and think of ways and means of harnessing the processes of globalisation in the service of the socialist ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity, as the socialists harnessed the institution of state which was characterized by Marx as the executive committee for managing the affairs of the bourgeoisie into a welfare state as a precursor to the creation of an egalitarian society.

(Continued from Page 6)

The unprecedented Nationwide General Strike on 20th and 21st February, 2013 was a grand success. More than ten crore workers participated. Ports and Docks were completely paralysed. There was nil production of Coal in the country. All the states except West Bengal and Tamil Nadu observed strike willingly. Bank, Insurance, Public and Private Road Transport, Defence Civilian employees, taxis, auto-rickshaws went on strike. Hundreds of workers were arrested, lathi

(Continued from Page 8)

Athens to Westminster to Capitol Hill! There were other traditions which would have contributed to the growth of democracy. At any rate, Progressive Alliance has clearly thought through its vision. How it operates through new structures, strategies, and activities is speculation at the moment, although the draft document does talk about what the Alliance does, and how the structure may look like. We wish the Progressive Alliance a promising

Like the time and tide do not wait for any one, history will not wait for the socialists, as the framing of the Constitution of India did not wait for them. The concern of the socialists should be to find out if the processes of globalisation are adversely affecting the enhancement of the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity and if yes, how to mould the processes so that they enhance these ideals and help in ultimately building a socialist society.

charged. Railway Unions held lunch hour gate meetings in solidarity. The unity of all Central Trade Unions and in-dependent federations of workers is expected to be maintained to renew pressure on the Government through all the peaceful methods of protest to ensure that the Government wakes up from its deep slumber. Let us take a pledge on this May Day:

LONG LIVE THE MAY DAY
LONG LIVE
THE WORKERS SOLIDARITY

Harbhajan Singh Sidhu,
General Secretary,
Hind Mazdoor Sabha

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Socialist Party(India)

Dear friends

The control of neo-imperialist forces over our economy, politics, education, languages and culture has reached a dangerous point. Thus, our independence, achieved after long struggle and sacrifices, is under great threat. Instead of confronting the neo-imperialist invasion, India's present political establishment, already hounded by corruption, communalism, casteism, regionalism, muscle and money power, family rule, etc. has become its agent. Most political parties have ignored the basic philosophy of the Constitution that seeks to ensure equality and prosperity for all its citizens in all spheres of life. Instead of abiding by the Directive Principles of the Constitution, governments at the centre and the states are following the dictates of the World Bank, IMF, and WTO. The country's precious resources are being looted by hundreds of multi-national companies/corporate houses that have infiltrated into every sector including the Defense. The consequences are obvious: suicides by lakhs of farmers, large scale displacement, series of scams, price rise, unemployment, illiteracy, diseases, crime and fundamentalist tendencies that threaten the country's internal and external security.

The prospective candidates for the post of prime minister are putting up their performance skills before big business houses to win their support. The mainstream media propagates this naked nexus of leaders and capitalists through live telecast. Most of the civil society constituents of the country,

Second Biennial Conference, 17 th and 18h May,2013

Mrinal Goray Nagar, Panchayat Association Hall, Vellayambalam Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala

16th May, 2013

National Committee meeting from 3 to 7 p.m. After dealing with the formal agenda, in-depth discussion will take place about how to build strong party organization. National Committee members and State presidents are requested to invite to the meeting such of their colleagues who are interested in this subject.

17th may 2013

8 a.m. to 9.30 a.m.-Registration of delegates and member-visitors
9.30 a.m.—flag hoisting.

10 a.m. to 11 a.m:

Meeting of the National Council consisting of three delegates elected by every properly constituted District Committee to consider the following agenda:

- 1) Presentation of accounts for the last two years by the treasurer.
- 2) Election of the office-bearers and National Committee members
Election Officer, Surendra Gautam, will announce the procedure and time schedule of the election.
- 3) Consideration of amendments to the constitution as recommended by the National Committee

11 a.m. to 1.30 p.m:

Plenary session: Agenda-

- 1) Speech of the Chairman of the Reception .Committee
 - 2) Fraternal greetings
 - 3) Presentation of General Secretary's report
 - 4) Presidential address by Bhai Vaidya.
- 3 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.: - moving of the resolutions

18th May 2013

9 a.m. to 10.30 a.m.:

separate meetings of Socialist Yuvajan Sabha and Socialist Mahila Manch.

10.30 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. - Discussion on the resolutions.

1.30 p.m. to 2 p.m.- Valedictory function and thanks-giving.

3 p.m.to 7 p.m. – procession and public meeting

Dr. Prem Singh, General Secretary.

Note-

1) Reception counter at Thiruvanthapuram railway station will be open from 6 a.m. on 16th May 2013 to 12 noon on 17th May.2013.

2) Contact numbers- Rajshekharan Nair-09447034808

George Jacob-09447115073 Adv. E V Phillip-09387822490

ShrikumarNair- 09447963 217.

including the youth, bestow praise upon leaders who openly preach and practice communal fascism. Needless to say, the corporate and

communal forces could take centre stage because there was no genuine socialist alternative in absence of the Socialist Party after 1977.

Retreat on Democratic Socialism – A Report

Gururaja Budhya

Therefore, after a long process of deliberations held at various cities, the Socialist Party was re-established at Hyderabad on 28 May 2010. The decision has been motivated by a desire to build a new and committed socialist India that will counter the present crisis. The Socialist Party is committed to establish socialist system based on the legacy and philosophy of freedom fighters and socialist thinkers like Acharya Narendra Dev, Jayaprakash Narayan, Dr. Rammanohar Lohia, S.M. Joshi, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, and Yusuf Meherally.

The second national convention of the Socialist Party will be held at Trivandrum in Kerala on 17-18 May, 2013. We would like to request the like-minded activists/artists/academicians to kindly attend the convention as special guests. The presence/message of the special guests would certainly encourage us to strengthen the party organization and to fight the corporate capitalism decisively.

We would be happy to make arrangement for special guests' stay and meals at Trivandrum. They may contact me or comrade S. Raj Shekharan Nayar, reception committee chairman (mob.: 9447034808)/George Jacob (mob.: 9447115073) for further information. Please let us know about your travel plan so that we can receive you at the railway station/airport.

With sincere regards

Yours sincerely
Prem Singh
General Secretary
(Mobile : 9873276726)

The 2nd National Retreat on Democratic Socialism was held for 3 days (29th to 31st March 2013) at ECONEST Asha Sadan, Vagamon. The series of Retreats were planned to deepen the understanding of core of Democratic Socialism and issues related to it. The 1st Retreat held in Hyderabad, discussed the core values of Democratic Socialism. The aim of the 2nd Retreat was to produce an action programme. 41 participants from five States attended.

The three days were divided into six sessions – five on issues (Politics, Economy, Socio-Cultural, Foreign Policy and Land & Agriculture) and the last on the action programme. Each Session was structured in such a way that an initiator introduced the subject and the issues to be discussed, which was further elaborated by a respondent. This was followed with one and half hours of discussion.

A brief summary of the sessions follow:

Session I: Politics

The Session was initiated by Dr. D. K. Giri. According to Dr. Giri, in Indian democracy there is a gap between ideal and reality and theory and practice. The strong points of Indian democracy are political consciousness, political mobilization, vibrancy, activism and strength of institutions and Constitution but the practice is weak.

Indian democracy cannot be compared with the Western democracies as it has developed its own character like family rule and uncontested election of the leader of the parties.

There are inputs into Indian democracy by non-party actors such as business, civil society, and media by influencing politics as well as by putting pressure. This gives hope for the citizens to be active vis-à-vis rights and responsibilities.

This was responded to by Ajith Muricken who started with the question what do we hope to achieve through democracy. According to him, democracy should lead to freedom and well being of the individual. Democracy is a universal consciousness.

The dynamism of Indian democracy has brought in sections of society such as the subaltern classes – dalits, women, etc. They participate in the political space which leads to their emancipation. However, identity, political alignment based on fragmented interests and using democracy for undemocratic purposes forms the weakness of Indian democracy.

In the discussion that followed, the points raised were:

- State under threat – internally by terrorism and externally by regional groupings and the MNCs that undermine sovereignty.
- Water for all
- Indian democratic system is

caste oriented, and is now ridden with corruption, black money, and criminalization. The political parties lack ideology.

- With liberalization in the 1990s, the character of the State has changed from being a welfare state. We need an action plan for the poor
- State should be under the law. Its institutions like political parties should function under law. This will ensure accountability.
- Question of governance should be addressed
- Social change should precede political change
- Democracy should deliver, must be universal, and should always evolve
- Who is a Democratic Socialist? Whoever imbibes and practices the core values of Democratic Socialism
- The Preamble to the Constitution said, “we are a sovereign, secular, socialist, democratic republic of India”. We need to test against these to see where we are today, what went wrong and twowhy.
- Education is key to promoting democracy
- Need to strengthen democracy at the grassroots

Session II: Economy

The subject was initiated by Bapuheddurshetti. He started with defining Socialism as extending democratic principles to the economy i.e. democracy is political equality for everyone; Socialism is to bring this equality to economy.

Wrong economic policies tend to perpetuate inequality. Socialists believe that it is necessary to have equality because it creates a better society. Along with equality we also need solidarity.

For example, in agriculture, if there are farmers, one with less land and one with more and irrigation is provided then the farmer with less land will benefit but the farmer with more land will benefit much more. Hence, the Socialist view is first divide the land equally between the two farmers, then provide irrigation and both will benefit equally.

Similarly in industry, “convert the workers to owners and the owners also become workers then there will be equality and there will be no exploitation.”

Equality must be aligned with solidarity. Hence we must think of bringing farmers and agricultural labour in a cooperative model.

Shri Sunder responded to the above. According to him, today the inequalities and disparities in incomes are very high. Earlier factory owners exploited the workers but today the State exploits them. Earlier in the private sector there were restrictions on remunerations to its employees and board of directors but today all restrictions are removed. There is too much disparity.

The points raised during discussion were:

- The issue of employing on contract basis. The employees have no social security, it goes against the Democratic Socialist principles of equality – equality of facilities, wages, perks, post-retirement security, etc. The government stopped recruiting because of economic compulsions and started taking people on contract basis. As socialists do we want to formulate our thinking on

this? The other view – there is something called “decent work”, if contract jobs have these built into it, then why not? In Maharashtra there is welfare fund for the unorganized sector. In Gujarat, there is a labour card for the unorganized sector workers, which ensures the employer contributes to the workers PF, health benefits, etc. Such provisions can be brought into contract jobs.

- To bring about re-distribution, there is need for more like ability, infrastructure, capital, etc.
- Agriculture: The issues in agriculture have changed. We have had structural changes – land reforms. Today the value of land has changed and also the use of land. Today there is the question of land acquisition, farmers losing the right to decide on what to grow etc. Another threat is the genetically modified seeds patented by MNCs. The farmers will be forced to buy seeds from the MNCs.
- Apart from agriculture and industry we must look at the services sector. The new working class is the IT professionals. How do we define this class? The women in this group? Similarly, Socialist facilities are available in the organized sector, we need to bring them in to the unorganized sector as well.
- As Socialists are we concerned only with humans or do we incorporate other concerns such as flora, fauna, etc ?
- Youth: 45 percent of India’s population falls in the category of “youth”. What role do we envisage for them?
- Migration: Migration from agriculture to cities will happen.

To stop migration we must invest more in agriculture. However, statistics of agricultural production shows that except for the States of Maharashtra and Kerala, all other States produce enough to feed all their people. So, cross state movement is not required. At the same time, migrations have reduced because of schemes such as NREGA; so also there are no agricultural labour because of NREGA

- Skill: The NSS surveys show that 1-2 employed units are dying but 5-6 employed units are thriving. But what is lacking is skill. Today we have a Skill Development Mission. 14 Ministries are involved in the Mission. The youth must move from agriculture, acquire skills and that will fetch them jobs.
- How can we create more jobs? Can MNCs, the liberalized economy create more jobs? Then how do we address the question of job security and dignity of life? The other view is that there is no dearth of jobs, what is lacking is a match between jobs available and skills. Today campus recruitments are happening at the IITs, which shows there are enough jobs.
- Socialists across the world are accused of not handling the economy well. If Marx said societies will move from feudalism to capitalism followed by social class revolution leading to socialism, the Democratic Socialists have brought in the concept of welfare state to bring in socialism. However, we do need growth. This growth must be fair and inclusive.

Session III: Socio-Cultural

The Session was initiated by Dr. Sarala Gopalan. According to Dr. Gopalan, while there has been significant progress in India, it is lagging in the social sector.

Health: Infant mortality has come down but is still just less than 50; life expectancy at birth was less than 40 at independence and now is 60; whereas life expectancy of women should be five years more than men, in India it is less than men. In this age of technology and knowledge, it is unforgivable that women are dying at child birth. The main reasons for death at child birth are lack of infrastructure, clean places for birth, anemia & poor nutrition among women, absence of service personnel with training, and lifestyle diseases.

The government talks about public-private partnership but we need to go a step further. Communities have to take responsibility and do more. SHGs have been able to contribute a lot but it has been patchy. Civil society workers are not equally committed everywhere. The Government of India schemes have all been started with good intention but their implementation has failed.

Education: With the Right to Education Act, India has made some strides but still we have 35 percent illiteracy. In schools the rate of admission has gone up but the rate of retention in schools is low. One way to keep girl children in schools is to give them bicycles but then there are other issues like good roads, dignity of the girl child, safety of the child, qualified teachers, etc.

Skills: Our education system does not ensure skill set as per the demand. This is in spite of talking about skills, so many committees recommending vocational trainings, etc. In India, we have a huge population that is young and without skills they cannot contribute.

Dr. Susan was the respondent in this Session. According to her, we need to address this issue because today we have two Indias – one, India that is growing and shining; and the other, Bharat, which is backward and marginalized. Here there is inequality and we need a Democratic Socialist response.

The issue that concerns the marginalized today is that of livelihood. Livelihood is not just income generation but it is an integrated system enabling people to have a secure and sustained living – access to education, health, hygiene, rights, risk reduction, housing, clothing, skills, means of production, information, social acceptance and inclusion.

Contemporary issues such as land acquisition, climate change, renewable energy, harmony with nature, etc. also need to be addressed from the point of view of inequality. The poor contribute least to global warming but they suffer most from its consequences.

Dr. Susan also proposed whether a discussion on tri-sector partnership i.e. partnership between State, Business and Civil Society, would be useful.

(to be concluded)

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Quiet changeover
Kuldip Nayar

**Change of Class-Caste
narratives under Globalisation**
K. S. Chalam

**A Plea for changing
the electoral system**
Bapu Heddurshetti

Retreat on Democratic Socialism
Gururaja Budhya

**When Protectors
turn predators**
Kalpana Sharma

Low cost health care

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Disgrace abounding

S. Viswam

Parliament's ongoing budget session is to end on May 10, but the end is likely to come much earlier. Indeed, the way things are shaping, some surprises may also be in store for the country. For, what is happening in New Delhi these days is raising serious doubts over the longevity of the UPA government. This particular government has been limping from one crisis to another during its second term. While the Prime Minister has ensured that his name has remained clean and un-besmirched, the same cannot be said for all his colleagues and the government as a whole.

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Sushma Swaraj is often given to exaggeration in her anxiety to score debating points. But her claim in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday that the 15th Lok Sabha (the ongoing one) has seen the most corrupt government since independence is probably correct. Every session, she said, is marred by a fresh scam which gets bigger than the previous ones. This statement cannot be faulted. The monetary size of each scam also gets bigger. The total amount involved in all the scams put together is to the tune of several lakhs crores. It is a

mind-boggling sum.

But the latest exposure of the government's shenanigans in respect of the functioning of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is shocking beyond description. Nothing like this has happened in the entire post-independence history of our beloved country. The first assault on the government's credibility in regard to the CBI question came last Friday when the CBI director Ranjit Sinha told the Supreme Court that the agency's draft status report on the Coalgate investigation was shared with Union Law Minister Ashwani Kumar, the PMO and the coal ministry. The opposition promptly demanded the law minister's resignation. The investigation pertained to irregular allotments of coal blocks during the UPA's first term. The amount involved, according to notional estimates by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, was in the region of Rs. 1.86 lakh crores. However, the Prime Minister defended his cabinet colleague.

The fat was in the fire for the government on Tuesday when the Supreme Court criticized the

CBI and the government, and the opposition demanded not only the prime minister's resignation but the ouster of the government since the government's credibility had been completely lost. Some of the remarks made by the court are a direct indictment of the government and tantamount to the charge of usurpation of rights by the government to which it is not entitled by law. The first duty of the court, it said, was to liberate the CBI from political interference, external influence and intrusion. Hinting that there is already a cloud of suspicion over the CBI's impartiality, the court said this cloud must be lifted. The court had to ensure that officers manning the agency are of impeccable integrity. The court held that there was no law that allowed ministers to order the CBI to show them status reports.

The court proceedings came as a huge embarrassment for the government. Even for the prime minister, they were a big blow. The prime minister's office was among the offices which were privileged to have a peep into, and correct/change/modify the contents. What was galling for the court was that the CBI had earlier misled the court by not disclosing that the report had been vetted by the government. The court was constrained to say that the conduct of the government and the CBI tantamounted to "a vital erosion of trust."

The CBI embarrassed itself a bit more when its chief Ranjit Sinha claimed that the agency was not autonomous but a part of the government. The CBI cannot exist in isolation since there were occasions for it to consult the

Quiet changeover

Kuldip Nayar

The acquittal of Sajjan Kumar, a Congress leader from Delhi, was bound to create a furor because he has come to symbolize the anti-Sikh riots in 1984. Even though 29 years have lapsed since the killings, the anger has not lessened because the demand by the Sikhs to punish the guilty has not been met. Some way would have to be found to alley their hurt.

When the black and the white were at the point of clash in South Africa, a commission for law and reconciliation was appointed. The purpose was to have the truth out without pursuing the cases endlessly. Some such way in India may not meet the demands of the Sikhs, but may bring the real purpose of rioting out. A conciliation committee should not be after punishment but to find out the reasons for the crime. True, the Sikhs will not be satisfied with the mere commission but without conciliation the truth may escape us.

In the meanwhile, Karnataka goes to the polls. There is no electoral wave sweeping through the state, either in favour of the ruling BJP or that the Congress. Nor is there any pollster willing to bet his last penny on the mood swings of the electorate. There is disconnection between people and the political process, suggesting that the anti-incumbency factor has been fast catching up with the BJP, allowing the Congress more than a foothold—and say—in the state.

Yet irrespective of the outcome, the Karnataka results could well be the yardstick the two main parties would use to assess the atmosphere

in the country with the talks of mid-term polls looming large. Even otherwise, they will put on red alert both the Congress and the BJP before the four states—Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Delhi—go to election later this year and that of the Lok Sabha, due in 2014.

In fact, the timing of the assembly election in the southern state is such that it will even keep the voters in the rest of the country guessing. They would be too keen to know what the state electorate does, divided as it is between Lingayats and Vokkaligas. It seems the caste factor will come to play a crucial role in most assembly seats in the state, as seen in the past, with the minority votes becoming the clincher.

And, as in every poll, money will play a crucial role in Karnataka. There will be no doubting about the link between the assets of a candidate and the victory. The last assembly election in the state saw as many as nine candidates winning their seat on sheer money power. One candidate has declared Rs. 690 crores as his assets.

There may not be any difference this time. Even a cursory look at the candidates' list in Karnataka tells the story of how more and more rich people are being roped in by the parties to contest elections. From liquor lobby to mining barons to real estate owners, all have been distributed tickets by both the parties. At least 10 of those candidates, belonging to both the Congress and the BJP, have more than Rs. 100-crore worth of assets. This only strengthens my belief that in spite of

(Continued on Page 15)

the Election Commission's efforts money factor has been steadily rising. We have seen this trend for more than a decade now and I will be surprised if more such businessmen do not join the ranks in future. The Muslim electorate will still count.

Understandably, all top political party leaders have hit the campaign trail. The Congress had their star campaigners in Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh while the BJP paraded leaders like party president Rajnath Singh, Arun Jaitley and L.K. Advani to garner votes for their respective parties. The BJP has fully unleashed Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi on the scene. His chauvinistically Hindu speeches are polarizing the state and sending such messages to the rest of the country.

The anti-BJP sentiment is a problem the ruling party will find difficult to contend with. Even otherwise, the party's reputation was clouded by corruption and criminal cases during its entire tenure of rule, besides the internal bickering which led to the former chief minister B.S. Yediyurappa quitting the BJP and forming the Karnataka Janatha Paksa (KJP). The wily politician may not win many seats but can certainly make a dent to the chances of the BJP.

Similarly, another former chief minister H.D. Kumaraswamy who has been out of power for the past five years has his strong support base in the Hassan district, dominated by the Vokkaligas. He is capable of making deep inroads into both the Congress and the BJP vote banks. Kumaraswamy has played a sharp card by accommodating those political "migrants" who were denied tickets by other parties. Yet, the Janata Dal (Secular) and the clout

(Continued on Page 8)

Change of Class-Caste narratives under Globalisation

K. S. Chalam

Social scientists study transformation of not only the economic structures but also the social relations that are interconnected. They have created different tools and concepts to describe their findings. One of the important socio-economic categories that have become popular is the concept of class, and in the Indian context, caste. Schumpeter, one of the greatest intellectuals of the last century in his "Imperialism and Social classes" has said that, "Class is something more than an aggregation of class members. It is something else, and this something cannot be recognized in the behaviour of the individual class member. A class is aware of its identity as a whole, sublimates itself as such, has its own peculiar life and characteristic "spirit". As there is no consensus among the scholars on the core of class analysis or even the definition of class, we may use Schumpeter's definition.

Caste is the craftiest notion that has been haunting the social process in India from times immemorial. This has been further complicated with new categories like 'Depressed classes', 'Scheduled castes', 'Backward (most) classes', 'Scheduled tribes' etc. that were added during the British rule. In fact, there is no universally accepted term to describe all social categories uniformly, since some castes are listed as scheduled in one state and backward in some other states (for example, dhobi, barber, etc). In the case of untouchables and

adivasis, there is some clarity. The notion of 'Depressed Classes' was later dismantled by the time the Constitution got drafted. Sociologists particularly those who were trained in the West had tried to formulate theories about caste. But, sociologists like R. K. Mukherjee and others were critical of the theories about dominant caste of M N Srinivas who according to them brought confusion to divert the attention of scholars from class.

We need to understand that class and caste have different characteristics. The former is a dynamic concept that keeps on changing with the mode of production while caste remained static for ages with some alterations at the top over a period of time, but without substantial change in the social ranks (Chalam, 1988). The study of castes became popular both in the academic and political discourses after the Mandal Commission. It is strange that those who oppose or favour backward classes now, were silent for three decades after the Kaka Kalelkar Commission report submitted in 1955. The Commission had several conflicts of opinion on the use of caste as a criterion of backwardness and cited that in the terms of reference of the Commission, they were asked to examine only 'classes and sections'. Thus, the confusion as some activists think, is not a constitutional construct, but appears to be a bureaucratic meddle that seems to be triggering uninformed

battles among different caste groups now. This, it is alleged, was further accentuated by populist writing by some activists/scholars.

It is difficult to understand the Indian socio-economic, and thus political, situation by using the dual categories of class and caste after globalisation. The interaction between classes and castes is complicated due to internalization of some castes. The *dvija* castes and bourgeoisie seem to be converging. This is mystified by some western scholars due to their ignorance and lack of deep study or may be due to the misguided translations of certain transactions by local elite or their nominees. It seems this clash of opinion had prevailed during the 19th century when Marx was grasping and writing on India. Like his countryman Max Muller, Marx never visited India. The source material was so inaccurate that made him to coin a term 'Asiatic Mode of Production' to comprehend oriental societies with certain peculiarities that were absent in the occident. Yet, the concept did not move the elite (Indian included) to change their approach to study classes and was responsible for the bloodiest turmoil in ideological debates (see Wittfogel).

Leaving the debate at the academic level, we can proceed to examine the contemporary situation in India after the official declaration of a capitalist mode of development about two decades ago. It was expected that caste differences and discrimination would disappear once economic opportunities are created. In fact several scholars like Corbridge and Harris who tried to reinvent India, argue for the continued relevance of class as a unit of analysis. There are equally good

number of scholars who contend that without using the concept of caste, it is difficult to comprehend the social and even economic process in India. I have listed out some metaphysical and empirical dichotomies as preliminary first order issues to be addressed before proceeding further to understand the significance of the liberalisation in India (2011).

The onslaught of globalisation and its deep penetration is carried out with the willing cooperation of state actors who knew the consequences of liberating the economy for our social structures. It is strange to find that the so-called global opportunities have benefited only few upper and traditionally well entrenched castes and did not spread across all eligible castes as popularised by the defenders of globalisation. Curiously, those who appear to be opposing the policies for political reasons have actually strengthened it with tactical idea of Indian/Hindu way of liberalisation, industrialisation and modernisation. It has created a very innovative idea of Multi-Caste Corporations (MCCs) by bringing socially identical castes together to form business groups who are spread throughout. The prospects for crony capitalism have been intensified with MCCs under globalisation. ICT has facilitated internationalisation of petty bourgeoisie. This has not weakened the caste, but on the contrary has improved caste economic solidarity and the shudras are widely differentiated. Realising the lacunae, the global players have outsourced as before, through their foundations, to develop academic ideas to counter the criticism. We have now formations like Dalit or OBC business conglomerates and credible scholars talking about advantages of market. But,

everyone knows that the weaker sections have become very weak and remain subordinate to the dominant international bourgeoisie.

It is established by some scholars that the FDIs are not interested in addressing any of the concerns like that of ILO or about inequalities that are created through investments, except their super profits. Further, it has helped to develop: 1. consumerist elite, merchants and media, 2. globalising bureaucrats and politicians, 3. globalising professionals, and 4. owning and controlling Trans National Corporations (TNCs). The TNCs are class conscious and have an agenda to prove the socialist globalisation as a myth and rubbish caste as a stupid idea under the influence of upper caste advisors.

Yet, the U.K Parliament has passed a Bill recently to restrain caste discrimination among the Indian-origin people. The spread of the evil among migrant workers across the globe with caste based colonies even in USA do really show the verve of caste under globalisation. Does this trend make the slogans like 'workers of the world unite' and proletariat upsurge infructuous and class war a distant dream?

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A Plea for changing the electoral system

Bapu Heddurshetti

India has adopted the First Past the Post System (FPTP) of electing the members to the House of the People i.e., the Lok Sabha and the Legislative Assemblies of the various States. Under the system a candidate who gets the highest number of votes polled in a constituency defined by geographical boundaries, is declared elected even if he gets a very small number of votes in absolute terms.

There are several deficiencies in the system. The first deficiency is that under the system of geographically defined constituencies, it is not possible to have constituencies with even approximately the same number of electors. For example, in the elections held in 2004, while the Outer Delhi parliamentary constituency had 3368399 electors, the Lakshadweep had only 39033 electors. But in the parliamentary proceedings, the members of parliament elected from these two constituencies will have one vote each with the same value.

The second deficiency of the system is that a candidate may get a large number of votes to get elected and another candidate may get a very small number of votes and still get elected. For example, in the elections held in 2004, Sajjan Kumar polled 855543 votes to get elected in the Outer Delhi parliamentary constituency whereas Dr.P.Pookunhikoya could get elected by polling only 15597 votes in Lakshadweep parliamentary constituency. While these are extreme examples, the distortion

takes place in varying degrees in various constituencies.

The third deficiency is that it is the candidate getting the highest number of votes polled who is declared elected though only a small percentage of electors might have cast their votes. It is not necessary that a majority of electors must vote for him. For example only 46.13 percent of the electors voted in Outer Delhi, and though the votes polled by Sajjan Kumar were 55 percent of the votes polled they were only 25.39 percent of the total electorate. But in Lakshadweep, 81.52 percent of the electors voted and Dr. P. Pookunhikoya got only 15597 votes. Though they were 49 percent of the votes polled, they were only 39.95 percent of the total electorate. So while Sajjan Kumar got more votes in absolute numbers, and was more popular amongst voters, Dr. Pookunhikoya was less popular amongst voters but more popular amongst electors. But it is to be noted that both did not get the votes of a majority of the electors.

The fourth deficiency is that the candidate who gets the highest number of votes is declared elected though more voters might not have preferred him. This happens because the votes of the electors not preferring him get divided amongst his several rivals. For example, if there is only 30 percent polling and there are five candidates, the candidate who gets only 10 percent of the votes may be declared elected if each of his rivals gets only 5 percent of votes. For example,

though Dr. Pookunhikoya was declared elected, he had been rejected by 51 percent of the voters.

It is also possible that a defeated candidate in one constituency may have polled a far larger number of votes than the successful candidate in another constituency. This results in votes/seats disparity, with a party getting more votes but still getting lesser number of seats and a party getting lesser number of votes but still getting a larger number of seats resulting in the installation of a government which may not be enjoying the confidence of a majority of the total number of electors and or even the confidence of the majority of electors who elect to vote.

Take for example, the elections to the very first Lok Sabha held in 1951. Asoka Mehta was the General Secretary of the Socialist Party. He thought that unless the party contested a large number of seats, it could not impress the electorate that it wanted to emerge as an alternative to the Congress. But he failed to understand that in the First Past the Post system of elections, concentration on constituencies where the party could have won would have produced better results. In those elections, the Congress got 364 seats out of 489 seats whereas it garnered only 44.99 percent of votes polled while the Socialist Party which got only 12 seats had secured 12 percent of votes polled. If, instead of the first past the post system we had proportional representation system, i.e., if the

parties had been allotted seats in proportion to the votes polled by them, the Congress would have ended up with only 220 seats, far short of the majority and the Socialist Party would have garnered 52 seats and emerged as the largest opposition party. While the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party of Acharya Kripalani, which secured only 9 seats though it had polled 5.79 percent of votes polled, would have been allotted 28 seats and the PSP which was formed by the merger of the SP and the KMPP would have become a formidable parliamentary opposition of 80 members. This perhaps could have changed the course of India's history.

Asoka Mehta's recipe that the Socialists should contest a large number of seats to impress upon the people that they want to emerge as the alternative was right, but he failed to understand that if only we had a Proportionate Representation System of elections, that would have benefited the party. However, it is unfortunate that the Socialists did not pursue the logic inherent in the situation and did not even think of mounting pressure for changing the electoral system.

The distortion continues till today. Though now, it is the Congress, which is at the losing end, it does not bother about changing the system. Take for example the elections to the 11th, 12th and 13th Lok Sabhas. In the elections to the 11th Lok Sabha, the Congress gathered 28.8 percent of the total votes polled but secured only 140 seats whereas the BJP polled 20.29 percent of votes polled but secured 161 seats. However; if the parties were to get the seats in proportion to the votes polled by them, then the Congress would have got 156 seats and BJP would

have got 110 seats. This could have changed the history of India as not the BJP, but the Congress would have formed the government.

This was repeated in the elections to the 12th Lok Sabha. In that election the Congress won in 141 seats whereas it polled 25.82 percent of total votes cast and the BJP secured 181 seats though it polled less number of votes than the Congress - 25.59 percent. If the seats had been allotted in proportion to the votes polled, the Congress would have been allotted 140 seats and the BJP 139 seats. In the elections to the 13th Lok Sabha, the Congress secured 114 seats whereas it had gathered 28.3 percent of votes polled while the BJP which had polled only 23.7 percent of the votes cast, ended up getting 182 seats. If the seats had been allotted in proportion to the votes polled, the Congress would have got 154 seats and the BJP which actually formed the Government, would have got only 129 seats. It is quite possible that the BJP would never have been able to form a government at any time and the party would have gradually vanished from the electoral scene. However, it is most unfortunate that the Congress, like the Socialists of the 1950s, do not appear to be bothered about changing the electoral system.

We have introduced the 'preferential voting by single transferable vote' system in the elections to the Rajya Sabha and legislative councils. This results in the candidates who are able to get a majority of the votes polled i.e., at least 51 percent of votes polled, getting elected. We have also introduced weightage system in the election for the office of the President of India, where the

weight of a vote of a member of the legislative assembly of a state with a large population is more than the weight of a vote of the member of the legislative assembly of a state with a smaller population. For example the value of a vote of a member of Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly is only 8 whereas that of the Uttar Pradesh is 208. These mechanisms to some extent correct some of the distortions in the electoral system.

Indian elector has, of late, come of age. In the first general elections held in 1951 the electors were given pieces of paper which they were supposed to put in the box carrying the election symbol of the party to which they wanted to vote. Then we introduced a ballot paper containing the list of the names and the election symbols of all the candidates and the electors were supposed to stamp on the name or the electoral symbol of the candidate to whom they wanted to vote. At present, we are using electronic voting machines where the elector is supposed to press the button placed against the name and the election symbol of the candidate for whom he or she wants to vote. In substance, the Indian elector has become more sophisticated in casting his ballot.

Now it may not be very difficult to educate the electors to cast preferential votes in a system of single transferable vote and also introduce the system of proportional representation. Though the Election Commission of India has been making several recommendations on electoral reforms, it is unfortunate that it has not given a thought to replace the present FPTP system with the system of proportional representation and the preferential voting by single transferable vote.

Security to Mukesh Ambani defies all democratic traditions

People's Union for Civil Liberties is of the firm opinion that the decision of the Central Governments to provide 'Z' category security to Mukesh Ambani defies all democratic traditions.

While in no way entering into any discussion as to gravity of threat to Shri Ambani, PUCL is in principle, seriously concerned that State machinery should be made available to a private person – one has not heard of government security being provided by U.S.A. government (where terror syndrome is very high) to the counterparts of Mukesh Ambani like Warren Buffet or Bill Gates.

It is also reported that Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) is unhappy because it will mean diverting its personnel from other sensitive regions. Already the shortage of security forces is being felt both in meeting terrorist challenge and even internal security in many places in the country. The government, one would have thought, would deploy more security / police personnel for such public duties, rather than to safeguard private individuals.

This arbitrary and discriminatory decision of the Central Government to provide security for a single individual also stands out when contrasted to the lack of sense of urgency and concern shown by the same government to ensure safety and security of thousands of women from sexual violence occurring with such repeated tendency in Delhi and other places. It strengthens the impression, that for the Central Government, some individuals

are more important than ordinary citizens.

It is also very ironical that the Central Government which has been lax and remiss to respond to requests of State Governments to urgently send CRPF and other paramilitary forces to contain sectarian violence which had killed scores of people and caused immense destruction, as in Assam last year, should respond with such great alacrity to protect a private individual.

PUCL is of the view that the State agencies cannot be made available for private purposes. Such a decision is both arbitrary and discriminatory in favour of industrialists. In fact the National Police Commission (NPC) and other similar bodies have pointed out that providing 'Z' category or high security to politicians and others has become a status symbol. If this decision is not revoked how will the government refuse similar request from other billionaires. Surely the State / Government is not the Executive

Prabhakar Sinha (*National President*), **V. Suresh** (*National General Secretary*)

SC raps government

Utkarsh Anand

In an apparent reference to recently provided security cover to industrialist Mukesh Ambani, the Supreme Court on Wednesday questioned the rationale behind the move even as the common man continues to feel unsafe for want of protection.

“We read in newspapers that the Ministry of Home has directed for

Committee of the Billionaires.

It will not be out of place here to point out that the Governments – both Central and State – are remiss in carrying out urgently required police reforms to improve policing, sensitise the police force and ensure safety for women, children, elderly and other citizens across the country. Even though the Supreme Court has several times noted with anguish the unwillingness of many governments to implement the recommendations of National Police Commissions and other bodies, our leaders don't seem to be bothered or to care.

PUCL reiterates that the Government has a constitutional duty to ensure protection and security of all citizens, which will be affected more if the decision to provide 'Z' category security to Mukesh Ambani is not rescinded immediately.

PUCL calls upon the Government to withdraw this decision which is discriminatory and against all principles of equal citizenship.

CRPF security to an individual. Why should a private businessman in Mumbai be provided state security? If they have threat perception, let them engage private security. Why should state security be provided to them? Private businessmen getting security is prevalent in Punjab, but it seems that culture has now gone to Mumbai too,” observed a Bench led by Justice G S Singhvi.

The Bench did not name Ambani, but the observations were apparently made in the context of the recent top-level security cover for him, provided by the MHA last month on a threat perception.

The move to provide full-time security to Ambani was sanctioned by the MHA two months after a letter threatening him was hand-delivered to his office in Mumbai, allegedly from the banned Indian Mujahideen. Ambani is footing the bill for the 'Z' category security, usually reserved for prominent political leaders.

"It is public exchequer. What about the security of the common man? Every day we hear news that a minor is raped. A five-year-old would not have been raped if there was proper security in the Capital," said the Bench, citing a recent incident wherein a minor was kidnapped and raped.

The family had alleged that the police refused to pay heed to their repeated requests to immediately search the child and rather offered her father Rs 2,000 to keep quiet about his daughter's ordeal. The minor is still recuperating in a hospital. It also took strong exception to continuance of security cover for various persons with criminal records and asked: "Why should persons facing criminal charges like rape and murder be provided security at state expense unless there are specific instances based on records of a threat perception? We have to create our own mechanism to assess security threat. Security given to private individual facing criminal prosecution must be withdrawn. We have seen people facing cases under 302 (murder) and 376 (rape) sections of the IPC getting state security."

The Bench also asked the Delhi government to ensure that those provided state security protection do not stay in the capital with their personnel beyond the stipulated 72 hours.

(Continued from Page 3)

of Kumaraswamy are restricted to the old Mysore region.

What is shocking is that I have not seen any worthwhile issue being raised by any political party, major or minor. Instead what we hear is the dole packages, including cheap rice, laptops to students and farm loan waivers. This has become a fashion of sorts before every assembly election to woo the voters. But to get a simple majority of 113 in the 224-seat assembly will be a dream come true for both the Congress and the BJP. They may have to bank on the bits and pieces parties like the Reddy brothers' BSR Congress and the

It lamented that gun-wielding guards have become a status symbol. It referred to an example of a Buddhist monk asking for security cover. The case will be heard on July 9.

- The Indian Express, May 2, 2013

fledgling Loksatta as well as those "rebel" independent winners to form the government. Kumaraswamy could emerge as the kingmaker.

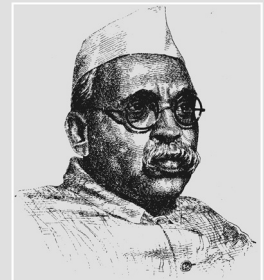
By a quirk of fate the Congress, with its nose ahead at this stage, may well be the one to occupy the Vidhan Soudha. And if the Congress does manage to form the government, it would be an achievement of sorts because Karnataka has almost always gone against the national political currents, voting to power such parties that were not ruling at the centre. This was the pattern followed by the electorate in the state since the emergency in 1975. We are, perhaps, in for a surprise to see the reversal of that trend.

Attack on Pakistani prisoner

The attack on Pakistani prisoner in Jammu is most condemnable and cowardly. Government should immediately take specific steps for the safety of Pak prisoners. India must not do Sarabjit Singh. Both countries need to immediately act soberly and not allow mischievous elements to spoil relations between the two countries.

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Letter to the Editor

Low cost health care

This has reference to the Yusuf Meherally Centre ad in Janata (March 10 & 24) issues, give the date). Let me first say that, though I am a doctor and a reader, I am not offering my services as a doctor, I am presuming, if you wish to say so, to give some advice to the Centre. Yusuf Meherally Centre (as per the website yusufmeherally.org) appears to be a voluntary organisation committed to rural development and judging by its activities and the number of branches it has, popular among its peers and also that it was the first to start a Sunday clinic in 1967, which still continues. The latter means that it is popular among the medical fraternity too. I strongly feel that the Centre should not only motivate doctors and paramedics to go to rural areas, but should spearhead a campaign to make available affordable health care to people, rural or otherwise, and, as the ad says, both curative and preventive. It should become a strong advocacy institution working for universal health care as socialists had visualized in olden days.

There is such a lot in the field of health care that cries out for change. The medical profession that was once among the noblest ones, has degenerated into a money making industry. The fees charged are determined, not in the spirit of service or by the capacity of the patient to pay, but by the dictum popularized by the market philosophy: charge what the people can pay. Hospitals have lost the charity altogether and while many have closed down, those which have survived are struggling to learn how to become money making machines. They do this in the name of the state

of the art services. While advertizing is frowned upon in the profession, a doctor or a group of doctors, employs a person to seek customers. Ethics, obviously, has taken leave. There is little that a doctor will not do to make a little extra, even from the government schemes, instituted to help the needy. These are used to make illegal money. Patients are enticed, touts go round, and those who come are forced to undergo some unnecessary procedures, some unnecessary diagnostic tests. And, of course, there is the evil of cut practice. General Practitioners (GPs) often earn more by referring patients to specialists than by treating them.

The tragedy is that the government spends a pittance on health care - as compared to what most countries spend, it is much less. The country has less doctors than what the WHO recommends. The same with paramedics. We overprescribe – the list of what is wrong is usually long.

YMC, if it wishes to popularize low cost, but quality health care, should, as said earlier, not merely seek doctors that are willing to take less than the market salaries, but work to transform the health care in the country, make it a service and persuade the medical fraternity and the community, to believe and advocate that the health care should not be a profit making industry.

As said earlier, we need more doctors. While YMC cannot and need not become a medical college, it can advocate that there should be more medical colleges in the country and some of them in rural areas. Let's remember that one ex-

health minister had suggested that there should be one medical college in each district. The Centre can popularize this idea. And it could also popularize the idea of having a short medical course. There was a short course once upon a time even after independence, but the medical fraternity succeeded in seeing to it that it stops. The fraternity does not tell the doctors, its members, to go to rural areas, but it also does not want any person who is from a rural background to be trained in a short time to provide primary health care to his brethrens. Te Centre could also say that these short course doctors need not be for rural areas only, they can practice in urban areas too because, if there is any serious problem, specialist services are easily available. It could also advocate that more medical work be given to nurses. In many countries nurses do much more than what they do in India. It can advocate that all doctors should do a rural stint before they take the degree or even after taking the degree, and popularize the idea that all hospitals should be neighbourhood hospitals, in the same way as the idea of neighbourhood schools is being popularized. The Centre should take up all this with the political parties, with local legislators and the public bodies. It can make gram sabhas, municipalities, corporations, etc. to pass resolutions demanding more money for health care, free and affordable and universal health care, better sanitation, safe drinking water, etc. And it should do better job for rural areas. If this is done there will be no dearth of doctors for rural areas.

—A reader

End imports from China

In the wake of Chinese intrusion into 19kms of the Indian territory, the Socialist Party demands that the Government of India must stop all imports of Chinese goods into India. Banarases, Holi 'pichkaaris, woolen clothes, religious statues, various kind of electronic goods, etc are some examples where our markets are flooded with Chinese products. We do not support direct military action at this stage and believe that the dispute should be resolved through bilateral negotiations. But we do support and demand policies which should protect our local markets of small and middle scale industries and local craft artisans across the country. Such a decision will strengthen our economic power. Banning imports from China and promoting domestically produced products will give double boost to our economy and put more pressure on China to respect international borders including India's.

However, Socialist Party firmly stands for the Indian land occupied by China in the war of 1962. Further, we also support independence of Tibet as desired by the late socialist stalwart Dr. Rammanohar Lohia.

Socialist Party (India) had earlier made a demand that India must not rush into signing Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and other bi- and multi-lateral trade agreements that would jeopardize access to essential and affordable medicines, seeds and adversely impact other sectors of small and medium scale enterprises.

The Socialist Party believes in sustainability at local level as

envisaged by Mahatma Gandhi's Gram Swarajya model. Opening markets internationally is not providing equal level playing field to domestic players. We have seen how big industries (whether domestic or multinational) are given over and above the due benefits and

promotions to help protect their markets and domestic players are dealt with heavy hands making it all the more difficult for them to survive. In the present context, it is in our interest to stop patronizing Chinese products and strengthen domestic production and markets.

- **Dr. Sandeep Pandey** (Vice President),
Dr. Prem Singh (Spokesperson),
Omkar Singh (General Secretary),
Girish Pandey (President, Uttar Pradesh)

Shahbagh movement in Bangladesh

The Shahbagh movement currently taking place in Bangladesh, is an encouraging sign of growing progressive and secular forces in the Indian sub-continent. The movement, started on 5th February, 2013, initiated by a small group of young urban middle-class Bangladeshis with the help of online blogs and social networking websites, but due to the overarching appeal of the ideas it stands for and its non-violent nature, spread rapidly to people of all classes and backgrounds in Bangladesh.

The Socialist Party (India) supports the movement's demand that the Jamat-e-Islami be banned from politics due to its role in the massacre of Bangladeshi people during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation war, and the organisations and institutions affiliated with it be boycotted and their sources of funding investigated. The Socialist Party does not support the death penalty, but does believe that all

those convicted of war-crimes during the liberation movement should be strictly punished. It is hoped that the movement will go a long way in reigning in fundamentalist Islamic forces in Bangladesh, which threaten the democratic and secular ideals on which the country was founded.

In recent times communal forces have gained strength in South Asia, from the rise of the Hindutva movement in India, to the persecution of religious minorities such as Shia and Hazara Muslims in Pakistan, to the targeted State violence against the Rohingya Muslims in Burma. In such circumstances, the Shahbagh movement breaks new ground and is a ray of hope for all those who are engaged in struggles for democracy, political and social reform, and religious tolerance in this part of the world. The Socialist Party too draws inspiration from and expresses its solidarity with this historic struggle.

Sandeep Pandey, *National vice president*,
Dr. Prem Singh *National general secretary, Socialist Party (India)*

Reteat on Democratic Socialism – A Report-II

Gururaja Budhya

Education Discussion:

- Some participants felt in socio-cultural issues, the issue of caste should be discussed. While some felt that the entire basis of the caste system is “purity and pollution”, it should be completely abolished. Others felt that there is no need to abolish caste per se but what is required is to remove the inequalities that exist among castes and bring about fraternity. A third view was that we cannot fight caste per se. If we do we will fail. So we need to address the problem of caste through certain tools and the best tool is development interventions. Socialism started in a big way in Britain through its National Health Service; and in the Scandinavian countries education for all was the basis of socialism. Casteism, interestingly is bouncing back and hard; if we cannot resolve this social issue, we should convert it into a developmental issue. Yet another view was that for the last 60 years we have not been able to abolish caste, so we need to figure out how we live with the inequalities inherent in caste. We have a huge historical baggage and with each generation, caste throws up new challenges. We should be concerned with questions such as what if caste based political parties come up; can they be Socialists?
- Development: Compared to the other BRIC countries India’s socio-economic indicators are

the lowest. When we approach the question of equality, we need to look at gender equality as it has huge implications for development. Rather than two Indias we have three Indias – the internationally networked India (Corporates, NGOs, etc.), 300 million Indian consumers, and the rest that are on the periphery. We need to concern ourselves with the third category.

- In education, government schools are closing down, private schools are coming up everywhere, and most of the schools are controlled by religious communities. In some States, the medium of teaching is the vernacular, however in private schools, the children are taught in English. The poor cannot afford private schools hence their children are subjected to inequality in education.
- Gender Issues: Sex ratio is highly skewed. Malnutrition is rampant. Issues such as right of women over their own body, migration among men leading to exploitation and abuse of the women left behind need to be addressed. To control female feticide, sonography/ultra sound should not be allowed in private hospitals. We need to ensure equality for the girl child in education.
- What we need is a secular space for people to assimilate.

Session IV: India and the World

The session was moderated by Chandra Srinivasan. The

theme was initiated by Dr. James Chiriyankandath and responded to by Hemant Panchal for further discussion among the participants.

Dr. Chiriyankandath began by reflecting on the importance for Democratic Socialists to maintain an internationalist perspective. He then elaborated India’s foreign policy from the perspective of Democratic Socialist core values.

Over the years India has joined several multilateral organizations -SAARC, the Non Aligned Movement and presently BRIC. India offers an example to the world of implementing democracy and innovations in areas such as decentralized local governance. Although India has progressed to pursue foreign policies inclusive of equality, social justice and solidarity with other states moving towards internationalism, in reality the national interest influences Indian behavior towards other neighboring countries such as Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, etc. It is important to always ask ourselves the question whose ‘national interest’ is India pursuing in its foreign policies? Is it in the interest of the marginalized poor or for big Indian business companies or accommodating other powerful states especially USA?

Another important task for India is to build solidarity with emerging social movements, democratic socialists in other nations and on the whole, strengthening compassionate solidarity, which goes beyond fraternity.

Hemant Panchal responded by saying that India now is a major sourcing centre internationally, in BRIC, SAARC, ASEAN in particular. The historical baggage of British interest had separated India from South and South East Asia. Due to its support to Soviet Union, India was denied technology from the West. Post-cold war, India was forced to approach other developed countries for technology in energy sector. He suggested that BRIC countries to have equal value currency, which could create equilibrium in society and promotion of South-South trade.

The floor was opened for discussion the following are the highlights:

- We need to periodize India's foreign policy: pre globalization and post globalization to understand the changes that happened from a non-aligned position to the present pro-corporate, US domination under geopolitics, and exploitative interests of Indian business companies in African countries. Every foreign policy is the extension of national interest, which in reality means helping trade of big business. India unethically supports the junta of Burma, oppressive Bhutan, instead of supporting democratic aspiration of the oppressed people over there.
- Nationalism and internationalism are inversely proportionate. We as Democratic Socialists look at the world from internationalism. Are we ready for reduction to sovereignty-less nationalism? Globalization is inevitable and in this changed scenario as Democratic Socialists we need to promote internationalism by moving away from nationalism.

We are opposing MNCs which are talking internationalism. We need to democratize MNCs, rather than opposing MNCs in India. Democratic Socialism can bring equality even through MNCs.

- Material interests should be based on ethical and moral values. Without freedom Union of India will not exist.
- Some participants believed that states wither away gradually but others felt that states remain as has been proved historically; however, social responsibility of the state is withering away by letting repressive dimension of the state with its draconian laws suppressing civil societies, rights of the people.
- The role of state in relation to MNCs is to provide regulations without affecting core values of equality and social justice. States mutate or change but not wither away.

Session V: Land and Agriculture

The Session was moderated by Dr. Sarala Gopalan. According to her, all over the world, today, the most critical issue is land. It is an agitational issue. About agriculture, there is a paradox – as a proportion of GDP, the contribution of agriculture has come down from 52 percent to 12-15 percent but at the same time, employment in agriculture has gone down from 75 percent to only 55 percent. This is the bane of our economy. The high burden of employment has shifted but productivity has not increased. So, how do we change agriculture?

The initiator was Shri Sunder. He gave a historical account of the land system in India and the

role played by Indian Socialists in the land reforms. He then moved to the present scenario. He started with some statistics – India has 328 million hectares of land (arable), of which 185 million hectares is agricultural land and 65 million hectares is forest land. The composition of the agricultural land is as follows – 13-14 crore own land (i.e. 12-13 percent of the population); more than 50 percent of India's population is dependent on agriculture; 80 percent of the land owners own less than 2 hectares of land and 20 percent own 70 percent of the land. He listed certain issues for discussion –

- The contribution of agriculture to GDP is coming down and that of other sectors is growing
- It is felt that more and more agricultural land is taken away from agriculture. This is not true. It has come down to 185 million hectares from 187 million hectares, which is not much
- It is also felt that forests are dwindling, in fact forest area has increased
- The productivity per acre might be less in India but if we look at the overall production over a period of time, it is not stagnant. It is increasing.
- India is number one in production of fruits and vegetables, so also fishery and dairy products
- In India, there is no longer a fear of famine, there is no shortage, India does not even import grains any more
- If land acquisition is happening for infrastructure projects and

industry, it is not affecting agricultural land

Dr. Anil Thakur responded to the above by raising a few questions:

- Income and land should be distributed equally; only in Kerala and West Bengal land reforms have been implemented properly. What is the Democratic Socialist thinking on agriculture and land reforms?
- Green Revolution brought us food sufficiency but has brought in innumerable ills. How do we deal with them?
- What is our view on the SEZs?

The floor was then opened to discussion. The points that came up were:

- Agricultural productivity will increase when we pool land and then cultivate. Cooperative farming alone will improve productivity and bring alive the third value of Democratic Socialism i.e. Fraternity
- We need sustainable growth. Everyone talks of the Kerala growth model; in Kerala health and education dominated and agriculture got zero attention and today Kerala is totally dependent on imports (vegetables, grains, etc.)
- Along with land, we need to address the issue of water
- There is inequality between nations. The developed countries have patented genetically modified seeds, which we are forced to buy at high prices. Landless are pushed out.
- We have a man made political drought in Maharashtra today. Agricultural land is turned in to concrete jungle. There is no

water to even drink in rural areas; in 10 days they get one bucket of water. What we need is interventions such as small dams, linking of small rivers, etc. We need to research this,

come out with a position paper and send it to all Ministries

- Need to reduce the rural-urban dichotomy; we need to go back to Ashok Mehta's model.

(Concluded)

Justice J. S. Verma

When I was posted to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) as its Secretary General in 2001, most fellow officers advised me to seek a change, stating that serving under retired judges would be unpleasant, and at best, terribly tedious.

It turned out to be one of the most rewarding assignments of my career. Due mainly to the fact of being given the opportunity of serving under its Chairman, Justice J S Verma, and more importantly, getting to know him as a human being.

Meeting him for the first time was not without trepidation, since he had the reputation of great strictness, together with a mercurial temper, and his height, large frame, grey hair and severe countenance only served to reinforce this.

However, within a week I found working under him a pleasure, for he was swift and bold in taking decisions, always accessible, and though uncompromisingly strict with himself and others, once he trusted you, warm and considerate.

Years spent with him was a great learning experience, for his insights in most of what he dealt with, in both men and matters, was refreshingly different.

But what inspired me most was

Justice Verma, the individual.

After discussing particular issues I brought to him, he would often recall his experiences, something that absorbed me, because he was a great raconteur.

Being an outdoor man, and good at sports, he wanted to join the army. This was strongly opposed by his mother, so his father decided that he should take to law. This was, mind you, a decision, and not an invitation to discussion, since that was how choices in careers and marriages were made those days.

He did however tell his father that he was upset, since the legal profession was only for liars and cheats, so his father must have thought very poorly of him to decide that he should be a lawyer. Shortly afterwards his father sent him to work with the legendary G P Singh in Rewa, saying he will experience all of what a lawyer can be.

Though he was in G P Singh's office every day, from early morning till night, Singh never exchanged a single word with him. Months later he assigned him one petty case, and when Justice Verma proved his merit, an association developed with G P Singh, who remained his 'Guru' all his life. Justice Verma was as exacting with himself and others as

his mentor was.

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JANATA, May 5, 2013

His respect for the law was equally profound. In one case, which he was winning on the basis of a certain citation, he later found that the precedent he had quoted did not apply, so, after informing his client about what he was to do, stated before the court that the Judgment cited did not apply in the case, which as a result he lost.

Why, I asked, did he do that? ‘Because’, he said, ‘the duty of a lawyer is to assist the court in arriving at a correct decision’.

This moral rectitude, enabled him, as Chairman NHRC, to be in command of every situation, despite the fact that he was invested with no powers to punish.

Gujarat 2002 was his most glorious hour, as it was also for the NHRC. After the complete capitulation of the Administrative and Police Services, and the total indifference of the Union Government and international agencies, the one man army of Justice Verma gave voice to all those who had suffered .

Nothing however so became the man, as the manner in which he demitted office. His official bungalow was vacated that evening, and a man who was an eminently successful lawyer, Chief Justice of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, Governor of Rajasthan, Chief Justice of India and Chairman NHRC, left in a car bought by his daughters, to a house rented by them. .

After retirement, when his life style was austere, he refused to indulge in the legally permissible practice of giving opinions. In one case, Shrimati Verma told me, that when a client had brought

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When Protectors turn predators

Kalpna Sharma

This past week, “rape” is once again the topic of discussion. There has been despair and outrage because this time we also have to talk about a child, a girl, just five years old. Just as the young woman gang-raped on December 16, 2012 was not the first, and certainly not the last, this little girl sadly is also not the first, nor the last.

Even the daily list of rapes that now inhabit our news pages does not indicate the extent of the sickness that is now staring us in the face. According to a distressing report by the Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR), 48,338 children have been raped in the decade between 2001 and 2011. In these 10 years, there has been a 336 per cent increase in the number of child rapes. Yet, this is only a very partial picture because, as the report emphasises, the majority of child rapes are never reported.

The report is disturbing because it focuses on those institutions where children are supposed to be “protected” — observation homes, shelter homes, children’s homes and special homes designed to take care of children who have been abandoned, have run away or been trafficked. Yet, as the 56 pages of the ACHR report titled “India’s hell holes” details, scores of these children, girls and boys, are raped, sodomised, tortured, forced to work and condemned to live in “inhuman conditions”. The authors of the report conclude: “Child sexual abuse in juvenile justice institutions is rampant, systematic and has

reached epidemic proportions.”

Just as stronger laws have been demanded to deal with rape, there are laws to address sexual assaults on children. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2006 was enacted for this purpose. In addition, last year the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012 was brought in to specifically deal with such crimes against children. Yet, as the report illustrates, these laws have been rendered toothless with the deliberate violation of their provisions in state after state. For instance, under the law, all homes that shelter children are supposed to be registered. Yet scores of these institutions continue to function without registration or oversight and there is no provision in the law to punish them for this. In any case, even formal registration makes little difference as is evident from what happens in officially recognised institutions. The atrocities against children taking place in such places escape discovery because the mandated Inspection Committees that are supposed to carry out surprise checks either do not exist, or if they do, do not function.

As a result, all forms of abuse, including sexual abuse, are common in such “protection” homes. The report lists just 39 instances but they read like a modern-day horror story. In each instance, young children who are led to believe that they are in a safe environment end up being sexually abused by the very people tasked to look after them

— wardens, watchmen and other staff as well as older inmates. The protectors become the predators. From several of these “hell holes” children have run away, never to be traced. In Karnataka, between 2005 and 2011, 1,089 children below 14 are missing from 34 children’s homes. The story is repeated in West Bengal and other states. Where are these children? How can they disappear from places where they are supposed to be protected? What kind of torture did they experience to force them to run away?

One of the worst horror stories is that of two unregistered homes in Mansarovar and Jagatpura in Jaipur. On March 12, the Rajasthan State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, accompanied by local activists and the media raided the homes and rescued 51 children, 27 girls and 24 boys. Of these, 21 were from Manipur, six each from Nagaland and Uttar Pradesh, four each from Assam, Nepal, Rajasthan and Punjab and two from Delhi. The homes were filthy, the food had fungus and the children said they had been locked into the homes. But that was not all. The girls spoke of sexual abuse including being forced to sleep with the man running the home. A 17-year-old girl from Nagaland said she had been repeatedly raped from the age of 11. The children had been lured to the home with a promise of good food and education. Instead, they were served inedible food and educated in sexual torture. This is only one story. The other 38 documented in the report are equally horrific.

So if children are not safe in these “protection homes” and they are not safe in their own homes, what is the answer? It is evident that just having stronger laws is not enough

of a deterrent. At the same time, the demand for instant solutions, even if it is understandable in the face of the daily deluge of such atrocities, will solve little.

The significance of so many more people feeling incensed and angry at this state of affairs is that it will turn the spotlight onto the dark corners,

(Continued from Page 2)

government. On the flip side for the government, there was also the contretemps involving the attorney general Vahanavati and the additional solicitor general Harin Raval which ended with the latter’s resignation on Tuesday. All in all, a dark day in the life of the UPA II!

Will the PM ask the minister to quit? Will the Supreme Court assume responsibility for the further

(Continued from Page 14)

a perfectly tenable opinion for counter- signature, with a blank signed cheque, he was turned away.

When I sought to know the reason for this, Justice Verma, stated ‘Probir, you are aware that Judges, after retirement cannot appear before Courts they presided over while in service; therefore what cannot be done overtly, should not be done covertly’.

What, I asked him, was the secret of his strength? He replied, ‘not seeking the conferment of any favour’.

While Justice Verma will always be remembered for his Judgements - Vishaka and Hawala and others - and the Report on an incident of rape, which the Commission he presided over, completed in a

like these protection homes where child sexual abuse has been part of the system. Even if we have woken up to the horror of child sexual abuse because of one atrocity, we must recognise that this malady is not skin deep. It has afflicted the entire body.

—*The Hindu*

investigation into Coalgate scam? Will the court set a new agenda for the CBI’s independence and autonomy since it has said that the agency must be liberated from political interference? These were the questions that have risen from the unfortunate episode concerning the government’s many scams and the CBI’s role as a national investigating agency. The court may provide some answers, but the government will only try to cover itself with excuses and alibis.

month, without an office and staff, in these days of rampant ostentation, chicanery and corruption, it is important to remember his strict adherence to the Gandhian ethic.

Which leads me to recall what Einstein wrote about Gandhiji: “Generations to come, it may well be, will scarce believe that such a man as this one ever in flesh and blood walked upon this Earth.”

When one has reached the age of three score years and ten, it is difficult to retain mentors. Justice Verma was, and will always remain one the five I am fortunate enough to possess.

—*Probir Sen*



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Congress lucky in Karnataka

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Ram Puniyani

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The BJP's southern bastion has fallen. The Congress has recaptured Karnataka. The verdict in the May 5 assembly poll is not so much in favour of the Congress as it is against the BJP. The verdict delivers an appropriate message to both the parties. The BJP frittered away its goodwill. It had the good fortune to open its account in South India through the 2009 victory in Karnataka. Massive corruption, total misgovernance and infighting have taken their toll. The party deserved to lose and it has lost. It has been decimated not only in Karnataka but it has lost its chance to win another state in the south. The Karnataka voters have taught the BJP a bitter lesson. They have shown that they are not as much impressed by ideology as by good performance, clean administration and a people-oriented action programme. Ironically, the BJP's fall in Karnataka has been brought about by the kind of shortcomings and misdeeds and corruption which the Congress is being accused of at the Centre. Whether it is large-scale corruption, or non-performance or misgovernance, the misdeeds of the Congress (UPA) at the Centre find a parallel with those of the BJP in Karnataka. The Congress is being given a message

that the party can suffer the same fate as has the BJP in Karnataka if it does not mend its ways. The Congress has very little time to improve its image and performance, but it is still worth making an effort if only to prevent communal-minded parties from seizing power at the Centre. The Karnataka victory has come as a small morale booster for the Congress after a long stretch of bad times at the Centre. One can only hope that the Congress government that will succeed the BJP's outgoing Shettar-led establishment will not go the way of the BJP. It has to set good examples in governance and reassure those who have helped it to come to power that whatever it does it will have only the good of the people at heart. A good Congress government in Karnataka will stand the party in good stead in Andhra Pradesh and Kerala in 2014 when the Lok Sabha polls will be held. God knows, the Congress needs a morale booster in virtually every state where it is in power. It is interesting that on the day the Congress received good tidings from Karnataka, the UPA establishment at the Centre was on test. Two of its Cabinet ministers are under the scanner, and the Centre's conduct in the coalgate scam is being probed by

Between the lines

the Supreme Court. Law Minister Ashwani Kumar is already at the heart of controversy over his sending for the status report of the CBI and making vital changes in it. On Wednesday, the Court made it clear that while ministers had the right to ask the CBI the status of any investigation they had no right to examine the document much less edit it. The court also wanted an assurance from the Centre that it will bring forward legislation to make the CBI truly independent. Right now, it said that the CBI was doing "collaborative investigation" along with the government. Instead of interrogating the government it was interacting with it. This situation, it warned, was unacceptable. If the government did not take steps to liberate the CBI from official control, the court would itself intervene. It remains to be seen how far the Centre will go in freeing the CBI from political control. However, the point of immediate concern is the government reaction to the court's view on ministers and officials interfering with the CBI. In particular, the role of Law Minister Ashwani Kumar. His continuance in the government is untenable. If Dr. Manmohan Singh is sensitive to public opinion, he will immediately ask the minister to quit office. The prime minister's failure to do so will lead to interpretations not flattering to Dr. Singh's superb record of probity and integrity in public life. The second minister whose continuance in office has also become unacceptable is the Railway Minister Pawan Kumar Bansal. Enough evidence has piled up in two days to implicate him in a case in which his nephew has been arrested by the CBI on bribery charges. The Congress has been shielding both the ministers. It can

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An opportunity lost

Kuldip Nayar

Believe it or not, the Supreme Court gave the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) an opportunity to be independent in one of the matters before it, asking the agency why it was not independent. Yet the CBI failed to grab the chance with both hands. It had a foolproof case against Law Minister Ashwani Kumar when he amended the report on the coal blocks allotment scandal. The government's blatant interference resulted in a "corrected draft," exactly the way the Law Minister wanted the report to be.

The Supreme Court said that the CBI had "shaken the system" and it expected the agency to give its independent verdict on the probe. But it did not - because the agency realized that it would have meant opposing the government. Apparently, it was the failure of both the CBI and the government. They could have seen to it that the agency would have its own say. Now that it has lost the chance to be viable, the way out for the government is to make the CBI independent.

The present bill pending before Parliament falls short of giving the CBI independent character. It looks that both major political parties, the Congress and the BJP, do not want the agency to have teeth. I do not know how far other parties want the agency to be independent. In any case, the CBI has lost the opportunity to become viable.

Corruption still gets most attention in Indian politics. The present government at the centre

beats all records in scandals. Never before did the CBI have so many eyes riveted on it and what comes out again and again is the inadequacy of its powers. The reason, simply put, is that the CBI realizes the extent of independence it can exercise in the present set up. The law minister's argument that he has not committed any wrong by vetting the report as his ministry has been the authorized legal adviser of the agency sounds hollow.

However, every time a scam tumbles out of the government's cupboard, there is a familiar exercise that follows. The CBI is asked to conduct a probe. But when the agency remains a department of the government and part of the system, doubts about its functioning cannot be brushed aside. Several former directors of the CBI have written articles and books to show how they were given instructions from above to decide a case in a particular way.

In the entire scenario, it is difficult to say whether or not Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had been briefed. Because of his clean record in public life, we come to infer that he did not know. It is probable, if not possible, that such a situation did obtain and that Manmohan Singh knew what was happening under his nose. But then you expect some heads to roll when the scams come to light and particularly when you can spot out the officials in the loop. Why has no one been punished till today and why has nothing concrete emerged after practically every investigation?

This doesn't surprise me at all. The ruling party has confronted with several such situations before and had weathered them all without much ado or damage to its existence. Yet what the Ashwani Kumar and, of late, Railway Minister Pawan Kumar Bansal, episodes have brought to the fore is that even before one controversy dies down, there is another one waiting to catch the administration on the wrong foot. No government since independence has been as badly battered and shattered as Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's has been.

But there is a certain pattern to the CBI-law minister controversy. As was to be expected, the Congress first dismissed the accusation and then issued a perfunctory explanation before finally admitting that the law minister did go through the report and suggest some changes to it. But for the three-judge bench, which ordered CBI director Ranjit Sinha to file an affidavit, the actual behind-the-scene activities would not have come to light, although we know the agency always functioned under the influence of the government of the day. Hence, the confession by the CBI director before the Supreme Court that "the investigation agency does not exist in isolation" is no revelation.

However, Sinha's admission has let the cat out of the bag. We knew that institutions like the CBI have been devalued over a period of time. And it is the government which has its last word on a charge-sheet because of political power. Even with the Supreme Court breathing down its neck, there have been several instances where the CBI's investigations have remained questionable. In fact, political parties have their own views and positions on ways and means to improve the

(Continued on Page 6)

Unequal distribution of demographic dividend

K. S. Chalam

The final census figures of the country are officially released now. The size of the country has not substantially changed except that a population of 376151 are added to the provisional figures of 1210193422, announced about a year ago. But, we have different categories of demographic data sets that are useful to analyse the impact of population on development and vice versa. We may remember here the internationally reputed scholar and former Union Minister of Health and Family Planning Sripati Chandrasekhar (born in Rajahmundry), for his contribution to demography and population control. However, his generation of demographers did never look at the numbers as an advantage as do the present scholars who consider that the opportunities created by globalisation are beneficial to the populous third world countries like India. The country is beaming now due to demographic dividend with increased number of young people. India is shining!

Demographic dividend is a position where the decline in fertility rates would help reduce the dependency ratios in a country that benefit a generation through 1. Increase in the productive labour supply, 2. Increase in savings due to less dependents, 3. Opportunity to invest in human capital (education, health etc.), 4. Increase in domestic demand due to the rise in GDP, and 5. Foreign remittances of young migrants. This thesis has been made popular by scholars ever since the

idea of market globalisation and the active involvement of India in the process vis-a-vis China. Generally, the projections given by IMF and the US census bureau are cited indicating that India would surpass China by 2025 with young working age population. India would reach 1.692 billion by 2050. Some of our economists are trying to convince people that we need not worry about the Malthusian challenge as we will have more openings through market and global advantages as the largest supplier of labour in the World. Is it true? How the dividends are distributed and who are the beneficiaries?

The euphoria about the dividends reminds us about the phase of chattel slavery introduced by the colonialists and the export of humans from Africa to USA and other European nations during 17-18th centuries. Repeat of this phenomenon in the British colonies, particularly in the India through the method of shiploads of so-called indentured labourers to other colonies was found to be not involuntary. This flight of people was not just a chance factor as it involved the exodus of the so-called socially and economically depressed castes who suffered indignities at home. But, the modern body shopping in the name of ICT jobs to the Anglo-American and other countries is considered as dividend, may be due to change in our attitudes or the composition of the emigrants (castes). In fact, if the country boasts of its diaspora and its Pravasi Bharat, it was due to

the first generation of migrants. But we do not recognise this. We have observed recently that the Telugu pride is paraded in Malaysia without the representatives of Kalingadhra from where they migrated.

The UNDP has published figures relating to the educated migrants in its Human Development Reports and found that India was ranked as number one in certain indicators. It is noted that the largest number of migrants are in USA (28.4 lakhs). Interestingly, equally good number of migrants is in the Muslim countries like Malaysia (24 lakhs) and Arab Emirates (about 45 lakhs). The remittances from NRIs are estimated to be \$ 66 billion in 2011-12 raised from 8.8 per cent in 1996 to 22 per cent out of \$294 billion invisibles. Though the remittances have never crossed 5 per cent of our GDP, they were considered as crucial for our dependent development. In fact, China has the highest amount of foreign reserves amounting to \$3310 billion and our reserves are the lowest amongst the BRIC. The Middle East contributes 33 per cent, North America 30 per cent, Europe 20 per cent and the rest of our reserves are derived from others. The remittances received in Kerala are equal to 22 per cent of SDP (about Rs 59000 crores). In other words, the so-called benefits from Anglo-American globalisation are not as large as that of the low paid workers contributing from the Middle East. It may be due to the high per capita value of remittances from USA that our scholars call it demographic dividend. In fact, our outmigration to the Middle East took place before 1990 and from relatively backward regions like Telangana in Andhra Pradesh, Kerala. We are referring to NRI remittances here though the active population could contribute to the domestic economy also. But,

much depends on their productive use in employment and the present relation of Democratic Dividend re-counts remittances, made us to comment in relation to the external sector.

Let us look at the 2011 demographic details. Most of the states particularly the South Indian states have passed the third phase of demographic transition where the birth rates dropped due to use of FP methods, increase in wages and impact of reform movements. There is a clear shift in the transition from the year 1981. The trend seems to have influenced the age structure of the productive age group of 15-59. The proportion of population in the group was 54.1 per cent in 1981, 58.1 in 2001 and 62.5 in 2011 and it would go up to 65.2 per cent if the working age is raised to 64. The rate in the urban areas is little higher at 66.6 per cent under 15-59 age group.

We have different nomenclatures to call the same phenomenon differently with the change of ideology or power structure. We used to call the outmigration of educated labour force as "Brain Drain" just before globalisation as all of them were educated by the state. Now we call the same group as "Brain Gain" as they send remittances. In fact, the opportunity cost of the educated labour force for the development of the country is not taken care of in the estimates of dividend. The monetary value, mostly the devalued rupee is taken to estimate the gains and not the damage done to the nation (brain crippled) and its independent future? Scholars like C. P. Chandrasekhar warned that the employment figures indicate the absorption of youth into the labour force is not as high as one would expect (2006). This can be seen from the work force participation rates given by census.

It was 39.1 in 2001 and marginally changed to 39.7 in 2011 and female rate dropped from 25.6 to 25.5. How the jobless growth with the surge of informalisation of labour at 85 per cent and reduced TFP in Agriculture, would result in dividends?

Studies by scholars have indicated that the rate of growth of employment in the service sector is not very promising as it has already reached its optimum. The manufacturing sector is in trouble and in certain months of the year we have seen negative rates of growth. The savings and investment ratios are becoming a cause of concern for policy makers. Then where do we get the jobs for the growing and frustrated youth? This may lead to several movements and street fights. Already the civil society activities in metros witnessed swelling of youth brigades. Some of the activities as alleged by some, might be utilised by vested corporate interests, but they would soon become portend of disquiet for the state. The epithets like dividend, hidden wealth etc, would further hasten the crisis. We have already witnessed turmoil in the so-called social democracies in Europe (not yet subsided) that have subscribed to globalisation and yet not liberated from economic hegemony?

Further, the NRI remittances and favourable age structures are confined to few states. Bihar, Jharkhand, M.P, Odisha, Rajasthan, U.P and even Kerala do come below the national average of favourable working age population 15-59. The advantages of high savings and GDP growth as theorised by demographers are now shattered. The savings as proportion of GDP has substantially declined from 36.8 in 2007-8 to 30.8 in 2012-13 and growth rate plummeted at

pre-liberalisation period at 5 per cent. Liberalisation has facilitated growth of urban agglomeration with 25 per cent of urban population living in slums, with the highest concentration of it being 54.6 per cent in Mumbai, 32.48 in Kolkatta, 18-20 per cent each in Delhi, Pune and Hyderabad. What kind of dividend do they enjoy?

The management and policy experts in their contributions to this debate consider that every individual is a customer and he/she needs to be exploited to the optimum level to reap dividends when they are in active age group. There seem to be subtle allusion that the productive population of the third world countries like India should serve the old and dying advanced countries that live on the pension funds invested in a globalised world. But, there is no guarantee that the dividend that the third world gets out of their service would evenly be distributed in a democratic state where individuals at a particular age are considered as citizens with different needs. They want remunerative employment to make use of their human resource and not doles. It is also necessary to look at the exploitation of resources in the native country with western levels of consumption (income) and the depletion of resources with pressure of population. This would gloss over both the natural resources and the hard earned savings of the nation that might land the next generation in perpetual underdevelopment. The data sets made available by the census might be useful for some experts to demonstrate their theories in select regions of India but, may not help to substantiate the thesis of Demographic Dividend as of now.

Human Rights Activists and Death Penalty

Rajindar Sachar

The morality of death penalty has again come up in the forefront by the latest Supreme Court judgment rejecting Bhullars plea for mercy. I am against death penalty as such for anyone. But politicians like Badal, Karunanidhi, Jayalalithaa invoke mercy only to suit their political exigencies.

Badal, obviously is feeling pressurized by S.G.P.C. and extremist elements in Akali Dal – if, not why does he not also ask for mercy for all prisoners on death roll? If Badal is genuine and his plea to Centre is not a political ploy why does he not amend Penal Code and abolish death penalty in Punjab by invoking Article 254(2) of the Constitution? The result will be no more hangings in Punjab including that of Bhullar. The same course could be followed in Tamil Nadu, where for a change. Jayalalithaa and Karunanidhi, sworn political enemies, are asking for mercy for the same set of accused. This legislative initiative alone will show the genuine concern of Punjab and Tamil Nadu legislators against hangings.

Bhullars plea was rejected first in 2005. But the file was sent to President Abdul Kalam, who sent it back to the Home Ministry seeking some clarifications. The matter however remained smugly in the Home Ministry till Chidambaram the Home Minister sent it to President in 2011 – this long gap did not however result in presidential mercy. The Supreme Court has affirmed President's decision though many feel that because of some of the

earlier judgments and the number of cases which may be affected by this judgment, it would have helped in better clarification of the law, if the matter had been heard by a Constitution Bench.

The court while accepting that long delay in hanging may be one of the grounds for commutation of death sentence to life imprisonment, has held, however, that the same cannot be invoked for offence under TADA or similar statutes – because these person “do not show any respect for human lives, the terrorists do not think even for a second about parents, and dear ones of the victims ... the families of those killed suffer the agony for their entire life”.

The court has rightly condemned the beastly and dastardly acts of terrorists, which must evoke anger and condemnation in every person. But then the court went on to make observation against the human rights activists by ignoring the self-imposed rule of restraint wisely imposed – the rule of “not making any remarks or observations with regard to those who are not before them” and further cautioning that “sweeping generalizations defeat their own purpose”. The judgment went on to say, “Many others join the bandwagon to espouse the cause of terrorists involved in gruesome killing and mass murder of innocent civilians and raise the bogey of the human rights” (emphasis added). The judgment, unfortunately, seems to have ignored the concern of Human Rights defenders and possibly did not have the relevant

material before it when it repeated the usual bazar gossip that those who advocate abolition of capital punishment by observing that they were doing so to raise “the bogey of human Rights.” With respect, these observations ignored that established human rights bodies like Peoples Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) have unequivocally condemned the killing and taking of hostages by terrorist, whether in Jammu & Kashmir or by the Army under Armed Special Forces Act in the northeast, or the Maoists though at the same emphasizing the culpability of the State agencies. Every activist feels the pain and anguish of the family, friends of victims of the terrorists – all will agree in calling terrorists the worst specimen of humanity. But then State which is the ultimate repository of law can not deviate from the path of civilized and humane conduct.

Certain principles of humanism, legality, even in the cases of worst excesses by terrorists have still to be dealt with under law. It may be relevant to note that notwithstanding that in U.S.A. which is also the target of terrorists, there is no move to restore death penalty in various states which had abolished it long time back.

The Judgment also ignored the previous decisions of the Supreme Court which expressed its anguish even while upholding TADA against violation of Human Rights thus: “It is heart-rending to note that day in and day out we come across news of blood-curdling incidents of police brutality and atrocities alleged to have been committed in utter disregard and in all breaches of humanitarian law and universal Human Rights as well as in total negation of the

constitutional guarantees and human decency.....” Similarly the Court had reiterated its concern even when upholding POTA “The protection and promotion of human rights under the rule of law is essential in the prevention of terrorism. If Human rights are violated in the process of combating terrorism, it will be self-defeating..... the lack of hope for justice provides breeding grounds for terrorism. In all cases, the fight against terrorism must be respectful to the human rights. Our Constitution laid down clear limitations on State actions within the context of the fight against terrorism.”

It needs to be emphasized that when Human Rights activists oppose death penalty it is on larger principle of Human Rights, which must be applicable to all cases. In support of Human Rights activists’

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no longer afford to do so after the Supreme Court’s observations. The prime minister must free himself from all pressures and order both the ministers to put in their papers. High time the PM enforced the principle of accountability. If there is no accountability in a government in a democracy, that government becomes illegitimate.

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efficiency and accountability of the CBI. But no government has been ever willing to give up its administrative controversy over the agency.

Take the case of the BJP, the main opposition party. It did create a ruckus in parliament over the issue, demanding the resignation of Ashwani Kumar. So did the other parties with their leaders baying for his blood. But we have not seen

plea against death penalty let me remind every one what some of our greatest leaders of the country have said. Gandhiji said “I cannot in all conscience agree to anyone being sent to the gallows, God alone can take life because he alone gives it”. Similarly Dr. Ambedkar the architect of constitution said, “I think that having regard to this fact, the proper thing for this country to do is to abolish the death sentence altogether”. Similarly the socialist leader Jayaprakash Narayan said that, “.....death sentence is no remedy for such crimes.”

All that is suggested is that instead of death penalty, let all such killers be sentenced to whole life and even without parole – many discerning persons would consider such life term to be more severe than even death penalty.

anybody making concrete proposals to insulate the CBI from government interference. In a way, it is good that the apex court is seized of the entire matter and is determined to liberate the agency from the clutches of the government. But it remains to be seen what structure it would recommend to give the CBI full freedom.

Unfortunately, the government does not seem to be even sorry for what has happened to revive faith in governance. Some ministers try to explain things “in proper perspective.” Yet what the Manmohan Singh government does not realise is the yawning trust deficit: none of its claims is accepted, none of its explanation is considered credible and none of its action is taken seriously. It is thus the loss of faith which has put a question mark against every segment of the administration.

Have the nuclear weapons compromised our security?

Sandeep Pandey

When India tested its nuclear weapons in 1998, we were told that we need not worry about our security as we had the most powerful weapon in our arsenal. Some right wing political leaders challenged Pakistan to declare a time and a place of war. Some said now India could even take on US, what to talk about Pakistan?

However, half the enthusiasm subsided with Pakistan testing its weapons even before the month got over. Theory of deterrence was floated. Since we had the nuclear weapons no enemy could attack us. We talked of building a minimum credible deterrence. But this minimum keeps going up because the enemy, in this case Pakistan, is building more and more.

First we were involved in a conventional arms race now we are also involved in a nuclear arms race with Pakistan.

However, the irony is that when Pakistan intruded in Kargil we could not use our nuclear weapons. Neither did it prevent Pakistan from entering our territory, i.e., it didn't act as a deterrent as we were made to believe it would. In fact, famous Pakistani physicist Pervez Hoodbhoy says that Pakistan could intrude because it knew that India would not engage in a full fledged war because of danger of nuclear weapons being used in it. Hence the Indian nuclear weapon had an opposite effect. Instead of subduing Pakistan it emboldened it to carry out an intrusion. And when Kargil war broke out we had to go around the world to shop for the same conventional weapons that are normally used in wars. This proved

that the impression created by the government the nuclear weapons would provide us security was a false one.

The Kargil war established one more fact. That is, nuclear weapon is not a weapon of war. It is a weapon of total destruction. And in a war in which both sides possessed it, it was a weapon of mutual destruction. Such a war has fortunately not taken place so far on earth.

Now Pakistan has employed the strategy of killing our soldiers in ones and twos, like the recent beheading of two soldiers. Sarabjit's killing in jail is also a part of this strategy. It knows that again because of above-mentioned logic we will not be able to respond aggressively. It is taking advantage of the presence of nuclear weapons which it knows we would not like to use to avoid retaliation. In any war between India and Pakistan, India knows that most likely Pakistan will be in a more desperate situation to use the nuclear weapon first as India has a stronger army and more conventional weapons. It will cause unacceptable damage to India. In such a situation the most India would be able to do is to cause unacceptable damage to Pakistan. It is ironical but, actually, India, by testing nuclear weapons, has lost the conventional military superiority over Pakistan. The nuclear weapons testing by both countries has acted as an equalizer and Pakistan is in a neck-to-neck race with India in terms of nuclear weapons, both possessing about a hundred each presently.

In an estimate by some arms-control scientists in 2001 it has been

predicted that between 1.5 to 5 lakhs people will get killed in each of the ten major cities of India and Pakistan, namely, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Delhi, Faislabad, Lahore, Karachi, Rawalpindi and Islamabad if a Hiroshima type bomb were to be dropped on them. Many more would get injured. Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev had said that in a nuclear war 'the living would envy the dead.' In reality the casualties would be much higher as cities have become more densely populated with high rise buildings and probably the size of bombs are much larger than what was used in 1945 over Hiroshima.

So, Pakistan had gained a certain advantage because of the nuclear weapons. It can continue to provoke India by organizing terrorist attacks like it did in Mumbai, beheading of soldiers, killing prisoners like Sarabjit without inviting any major retaliation from India. Pakistan's nuclear weapons are acting as a shield for them. It knows fully well that India will never engage in an all out nuclear war with it.

And now China has also adopted the same tactics. It intruded into the Indian side and made us feel helpless. For the time being the crisis has been averted but we should realize that because of the same logic as given above India now will never be able to engage in a full fledged war with China. China, incidentally is much superior in terms of conventional as well as nuclear armaments than us.

It is time to reflect as to what have we achieved with our nuclear

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Stop Rape

Men should change their mindset and habits.

Pannalal Surana

On 16th December 2012, at about 8 p.m. a young medical student along with her friend boarded a local bus. There were six young men inside. While the bus was moving, the men started eve-teasing. The girl's friend protested. Thereupon the men, including a boy of 17 years of age, hit the friend with steel rod, thereby disabling him from resisting. Then the men, one by one, raped the girl and threw the girl and the friend out from the bus and went away. A few passers-by took both the victims to a hospital. While the girl, whom the people gave nickname of "Nirbhaya", was struggling for life, the police started hunting for the offenders. The media started publicising the event 24x7. There was loud protest all over the country. A high-pitched cry was raised to punish the guilty with death penalty. There were all-night vigils in the national capital and candle-light processions in a number of cities across the country. Nirbhaya was flown to Singapore for advanced treatment but in vain. It was a great shock.

Verma Committee

The Central Government appointed Justice Verma Committee which submitted their report within 28 days. They declined to endorse the popular demand for prescribing death penalty for the offence of rape; but made various suggestions for making stringent provisions for bringing to book those who committed one form of violence or other against women. The committee, after taking serious note of the fact that the personnel of

police and various security forces, including the Army, were prone to commit violence against women, recommended that the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) be repealed immediately. It is observed that the army personnel, while deployed in the border areas of the North-East states and in Jammu-Kashmir to fight insurgency, had indulged into shameful acts of violence against women. Hence loud demand from those border areas for repeal of AFSPA. Justice Jeevan Reddy Commission, appointed by the Central Government had recommended repeal of AFSPA in 2005. And yet the authorities did not do so. Now, the Verma Committee has come down heavily on the obstinacy of the rulers. Public opinion should also pressurize the Government to listen to the wise counsels of the Verma Committee. According to a report published in the Hindu (26th December, 2012), "there were 24,206 cases of rape registered during the year 2011 out of which in 4072 cases only, the accused were convicted and punished. Investigation was going on in 13,221 cases for more than a year or so'. Progress of investigation and of prosecution is very slow. Let us hope it will be accelerated in the wake of Nirbhaya episode and report of the Verma Committee.

It was expected that after the expression of strong popular sentiments on the issue of violence against women, incidence of such crimes will be lowered. But we have to witness the sad spectacle that rate of rapes has not in any

way declined. We have to learn a pertinent lesson that enacting more and more stringent laws, or focusing attention on the law-enforcing agencies is not enough. The malaise has deep roots in the mentality of our males and also perverse customs and approaches of the society at large which are to be identified and treated carefully.

After the Nirbhaya episode, Mohan Bhagwat, the RSS chief, said that rapes take place mainly in (westernized) India as against (traditional) Bharat. But many objective observers feel that rapes have been committed in this country since times immemorial, when there were no cities worth the name. Rape is not an imported phenomenon; it is very much indigenous. Some commentators said that rape is committed generally by a stranger. But the records show that in majority of cases, the offender is generally an old acquaintance/neighbor - and sometimes relatives as close as paternal or maternal cousins or an uncle or even a father. It has been observed that in 22,500 cases out of 24,000 cases in 2011, the offenders were old acquaintances.

To be fair, not all men are prone to commit such heinous crimes. Majority of them are normal, well-meaning persons. It is also a fact that a number of men had taken, and are taking, lead to ameliorate the miserable conditions of womanhood. It is, however, a sad fact of life that perpetrators of this crime are men, and sometimes instigated and/or encouraged by women belonging to

different and/or hostile sect, race, caste, religion, etc.

Extracting pleasure forcibly

Why does a man commit rape? Broadly speaking, there are two reasons: either to satisfy his sex instinct or to punish the woman or her relatives/clan, caste/community, etc.

By nature, human beings, both men and women, on attaining maturity of the body, have strong sex instinct. It is as powerful as hunger. But satisfying that instinct is not only a physical act or process. It is both physical and psychological. Sexual intercourse can give immense pleasure only when a man and a woman enter into a union of body and mind. Particularly for a woman, intercourse is pleasant only when her mind is willing. There are various circumstances, physical and psychological, due to which she may not want intercourse. If a man does it forcibly, it leaves scars on her body or even more on her mind. That is why every civilized society has evolved a code that sexual intercourse may take place only with the willing consent of the woman. If it is done without her consent, it is held to be an immoral act and also a punishable offence as under the Indian Penal Code. This provision applies even to sexual intercourse by the husband, who, by virtue of marriage is entitled to conjugal cohabitation but does it, at a particular point, without her consent. Law says that a woman has full control over her body. Nobody can touch her or sexually handle her without her willing consent. Hence an act of sexual intercourse is called “rape” when it is done without the woman’s willing consent.

When a man forcibly does sexual intercourse with a woman, it (1) may

cause injury to her body or (2) make her pregnant, or (3) inflict traumatic shock to her body and mind or (4) cause great damage to her reputation in society making it difficult for her to lead a normal respectable life. If it results into pregnancy, and if she is not the wife of the man committing that heinous act, her progeny also has to suffer a lot. The child is labeled as illegitimate, spoiling its future. That is why heavy punishment is prescribed for the offence of rape.

Attitude should be changed

It is a great irony that a stigma is attached to a woman who is raped, but not to the man committing the crime of rape. This social attitude is highly objectionable. Why should woman be treated as dishonourable for no fault of her? In some communities a person committing rape is considered as a hero of sorts. This is perverse and obnoxious. Societies, particularly

the menfolk should radically change their mindset. Justice demands that the victim of rape should get sympathy and support of the people and the man committing the offence must be punished legally and be ostracized socially. It must be clearly understood that the raped woman is not basically incapacitated. It is a sort of accident for her. A person, male or female, is not supposed to be invalidated if he/she is found to be a victim in an accident he/she is not held responsible for causing accident. If the person is injured, everybody tries to help her/him get recovered soon. Similar must be the attitude of the relatives and neighbours and other persons towards the victim of rape. Sushma Swaraj, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, while speaking in the House, had said, before Nirbhaya succumbed to the injuries, “Even if she survives, she will be a living corpse”! Why? If no injury

In an era where social media has lured young and old, it is no surprise that online abuse too has unfortunately trailed into the society. Online abuse, particularly aimed at women is ever-increasing in the country.

Online threats are reportedly the most typical provocation to violence against women. A study by Internet Democracy Project (IDP) “An exploratory study of women and verbal online abuse in India” confirmed the increase in online abuse of women. It said that to be a woman online is just like “to be a woman walking the streets of an Indian city, town or village - is to transgress an unwritten law of patriarchy; to cross over into a space that isn’t meant to be yours,” as reported Saira Kurup for TNN.

The IDP study found that women faced being called names and abuses online, getting their defaced pictures posted online and receiving threats, etc. The trigger however could be anything from a tweet on rape, to a blog on a politician or a peace process, or even on inoffensive issues and pictures.

Anja Kovacs, director of IDP in India, says, “Threats are being used to silence women. Online abuse of women is increasing in India because more people are coming online.”

– *SiliconIndia News*

is caused or if a lady recovers from the injuries/trauma caused by rape, she can very well lead normal life. Her husband, and everybody else, should treat her well because she did no wrong. She can behave like a normal person, as well as she used to before the incident took place. And it is foolish to imagine that she has been polluted. Nothing of the sort happens.

A few days ago, a lady working as an officer in an establishment, was raped in the morning when she was alone in the office. She went to the police station, lodged a complaint, informed her parents and brother about the incident and resumed her duties at the office. Her brother rang back and said, "You come home immediately". She asked: "why". The brother said "You have been raped. So don't sit in the office. Come home." The lady replied, "Look Sanju, it was just an accident. I did not suffer any injury. I can very well continue with my routine work. You don't bother. And tell mama and papa to remain calm. I will come home in the evening." The worry of the parents and the brother is understandable. But if the lady is confident that she can carry on her normal activities, nobody should bother her about it. What would the people say? Actually, it might help transform the attitude of the society at large. People should be persuaded to be reasonable and think and behave rationally.

No man has a right to extract pleasure for himself by doing something forcibly, undermining fundamental right of other persons. He may plan his behavior in such way that he may get pleasure without encroaching upon the basic rights of other persons and in particular of women who are vulnerable in so many ways. That is the civilized

way of behaving in the society. Our Constitution also ordains that kind of code of behaviour. Men should exercise restraint even if the sexual instinct becomes overwhelming. Not to commit any act of violence towards the fair sex is the basic tenet of orderly life.

Family, very useful institution

For regulated satisfaction of sexuality of both man and woman, it is highly desirable to accord due respect and importance to 'family', the basic unit of society. It is a natural institution for human existence. There can be a proper arrangement for satisfying elementary physical and psychological needs of husband-wife, children and old parents. Everybody can get loving care. If a man lives in a congenial atmosphere of good family, he would not need

extra arrangement for satisfying sex instinct. Family should be run on rational, accommodative spirit. Gender equality must be nurtured

Male organ, a weapon?

Another reason behind committing rape is that man considers his sex organ as a weapon with which he can punish a woman belonging to enemy or hostile clan, race, caste, religion, etc. As it is, man is physically stronger than woman. In addition, in the act of sex, his organ penetrates female vagina, and she is below him while he is above her. So, to assert his personal superiority, and, by perverted logic of superiority, that of his clan, race, caste or religion, etc. man used to rape women as a part of warfare or its aftermath. Unfortunately it has not become a thing of the past. In

Dalit minor raped in Bhiwani - The Tribune

<http://www.tribuneindia.com/2013/20130408/haryana.htm#3>

Four posing as cops gang-rape Dalit girl - The Hindu

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UP police put 10-year-old rape victim behind bars - Zee News

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<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/dalit-girl-allegedly-raped-by-forest-guard-in-bihar/article4611311.ece>

Inquiry begins into attack on rape victim - The Times Of India

http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-04-12/jaipur/38490653_1_police-station-police-officer-gujjar-community

Class X Dalit minor girl kidnapped, raped - The Tribune

<http://www.tribuneindia.com/2013/20130414/haryana.htm#5>

olden days, it was a regular feature of war that the winning-side soldiers used to rape women of the defeated side. The soldiers, individually, might be deriving some physical pleasure. Along with looting wealth of the defeated side, raping would also continue for a few days. The Rajput women, to avoid that kind of ignominy, used to offer mass suicide by jumping in fire-pit a few feet below. It was called Johar. All over the world, wars were associated with that kind of inhuman treatment meted out to women.

In the Indian sub-continent, after the partition of the country, mutual mass killing as between Hindus and Sikhs on one side and Muslims on the other were accompanied by mass rapes of women. And the families of those unfortunate women did not receive them back. Rehabilitation of those women was organized by great freedom fighters like Mridula Sarabhai, Maniben Patel and others. In 1970, soldiers of West Pakistan, deployed in Dhaka, raided ladies' hostels of various colleges and abused young girls there. Both the girls and the soldiers belonged to the same religion. But that could not help the hapless girls. When the Pakiistan Army surrendered and Bangladesh was liberated, Banga Bandhu Shaikh Mujibur Rehman appealed youths of the country to come forward to marry the raped girls, who numbered about 2.5 lakhs. It was a great noble spectacle that all those girls were honourably rehabilitated. Mass ignominy was repeated at Surat in the aftermath of destruction of Babri Masjid at Ayodhya in 1992. There, Hindu women openly rejoiced on getting the news that Hindu men raped Muslim women. Similar passions were exhibited by Hindu females during the Gujarat pogrom of 2002. When mass frenzy grips the minds

of the people, no religion remains noble!

It is both foolish and satanic to consider male sex organ as a weapon. It is totally irrational to impute a motive to nature which, in its scheme of things, gave a particular shape to male organ and different one to female organ. It is expedient to explain all this to the boys and girls at proper time that male sex organ is instrumental in keeping the body hygienically clean. It is also an organ to enjoy greatest pleasure in human life. And it is helping reproduction of human race. So the minds of the teenagers must be cultivated scrupulously and painstakingly. The whole humanity has to develop proper attitude so that women are treated with dignity in all situations.

Capitalist values and role of media

Capitalism is no doubt an advanced stage over feudalism. But its emphasis on the principles of 'one is for oneself' and 'maximization of profits to be the sole guiding principle of all economic activity' is wringing havoc on humankind. Being self-centred very quickly degenerates into becoming insensitive to other's needs, conveniences and rights. Using force to extract selfish goals is only one step ahead. With the advent of Free Market Economy all over the world sensitivities are being wiped out from the psyche of common man. Media is being used more and more for vulgar advertising. All norms of decent behaviour are thrown to the wind. Sex and crime have become staple food of the media. It must be held responsible for galloping rate of crime in general and of rape in particular.

Because of the doctrine of the Freedom of Expression we cannot ask for State action to bring the media barons to book.

Responsibility of the citizens

If serious efforts are to be made to prevent the epidemic of rape, common citizens must take courage in both hands and prevail on the media to see reason and mend its ways.

Proper attention be paid to the task of inculcation of moral values in the minds of the teenagers and teach them norms of decent behavior.

Some orthodox people of every religion are saying that women should dress properly. They should not cross the Laxman Rekha. Why put all the onus on the females? Men should be made more accountable for their misdeeds.

The parents should not spoil their wards by giving them hefty pocket money. If a teenager is found joining a rave party, the parents must be penalized. There should be no overindulgence by the grown-ups also.

All crimes must be dealt with expeditiously at both the investigative and the trial stages. More promptness must be exerted in cases of violence to women.

(Continued from Page 7)

weapons? The security environment in South Asia has worsened. We are not safe from external or internal terrorist attacks and provocations by our neighbours. It appears that because of our nuclear weapons our hands are now tied.

The elusive path of peace goes through dialogue, genuine efforts towards friendship, disarmament and giving up the ambition to become a military power. This would necessarily mean disengaging from military partnerships with US and Israel.

Chronicle of a rape foretold

Gautam Patel

Without comment:

Times, 5/2/2009: 18-month-old raped by neighbour. Times, 4/10/2010: Woman gang raped in Khar by neighbours. Times, 9/10/2010: Stepfather held for raping 9-year-old girl.

Times, 12/10/2010: Not only father, uncle had also raped minor girls in Nagpur. Mirror, 7/11/2010: Teacher held for sodomising 9 kids. Times, 6/11/2010: DU girl abducted, gangraped by 4.

Times, 26/11/2010: N-E woman gangraped in moving tempo in Delhi. Times, 29/11/2010: Tantrik arrested for raping 3 SoBo teens. Times, 6/12/2010: Six-year-old girl abducted, raped. Times, 10/12/2010: 19-year-old arrested for raping minor friend. Times, 12/12/2010: Woman tied naked to tree, thrashed. Outlook, 12/12/2010: 18-Yr-Old Gangraped in Delhi; Four Youths Held.

HT, 13/12/2010: Neighbour held for raping 16-year-old. Times, 13/12/2010: Youth held for raping minor neighbour in Juhu. HT, 16/12/2010: Cop accused of raping niece. Times, 30/12/2010: Man arrested for raping daughter at Dadar chawl. Times, 2/1/2011: Seniors rape schoolgirl in moving car. HT, 5/1/2011: Man held for raping 15-year-old sister-in-law.

NDTV, 19/1/2011: One held for raping six-year-old girl. Times, 22/1/2011: Tutor rapes minor for days, arrested. Times, 22/1/2011: 10-yr-old girl raped in Ghatkopar. HT, 13/5/2010: Eight-year-old girl raped by 10-year-old boys. HT, 24/1/2011: 18-month-old girl raped at Antop Hill. Times,

8/2/2011: Guard rapes 3-year-old in Kalina school. NDTV, 12/2/2011: 17-year-old girl gangraped in Delhi for over a month. NDTV, 20/2/2011: Youth gets 12-year jail term for raping minor.

Times, 23/2/2011: Man held for raping teen daughter for two years. Times, 5/3/2011: Tests indicate rape of mentally challenged girls. Times, 5/3/2011: 3 raped in Thane, Navi Mumbai.

Times, 5/3/2011: 19 mentally-challenged abused in shelter home. Express, 19/3/2011: 19-year-old gangraped in Faridabad. HT, 19/3/2011: 9-yr-old raped in Vikhroli. Times, 26/3/2011: Kalyan housewife gang-raped, robbed. Express, 6/4/2011: Father gets life term for raping 4-yr-old daughter.

Times, 7/4/2011: Boys aged 10 to 12 held for raping 7-year-old girl. Times, 11/4/2011: Delhi girl escapes rapist kin, raped again by cabbie. Times, 19/5/2011: Girl kills father as he tries to rape her at knife-point. HT, 17/5/2011: 18 year old raped by 2 cops.

Times, 20/5/2011: 3-year-old girl found raped, murdered. Times, 4/6/2011: Schoolgirl gang-raped by six over a month. Times, 15/6/2011: 22-year-old confesses to raping minor on train. Times, 20/6/2011: 13-year-old resists rape, eye gouged out in UP.

NDTV, 20/6/2011: Minor girl sexually exploited by nearly 100 people in Kerala. Times, 5/7/2011: Man held for raping teen. Times, 5/7/2011: 3 men rape girl in moving car for 6 hrs. Times, 5/7/2011: Man rapes teen, makes MMS to blackmail her.

Times, 5/12/2011: Teen raped thrice on empty trains. NDTV, 18/1/2012: Three-year-old raped and murdered, three arrested. Firstpost, 28/2/2012: 5 women raped in 3 days in Delhi, India's 'rape capital'

NDTV, 3/3/2012: 12-year-old raped, murdered; body dumped in gunny bag. Tehelka, 10/4/2012: The rapes will go on. Times, 21/5/2012: Woman gang-raped in south Delhi.

Times, 26/5/2012: Teenager gang-raped in Navi Mumbai; 1 arrested. Times, 27/5/2012: 25-year-old raped by aunt's boyfriend. Times, 9/6/2012: Armyman's wife raped by cabbie in Kolkata. Times, 12/6/2012: Schoolgirl raped for a year by teacher, 2 others.

Times, 12/6/2012: Night of terror at New Market: Girl molested in bar, chased, pulled out of bus and thrashed. Times, 20/6/2012: Two arrested for raping, threatening 24-year-old.

Times, 20/6/2012: Girl 'raped' in taxi, dumped on road. Express, 20/6/2012: Woman raped by eight youths for six months, 4 detained. Times, 21/6/2012: Santa Cruz gangrape: 2 sent to cop custody.

Times, 5/7/2012: Woman kept in cowshed, raped by hubby, kin in MP. Times, 9/7/2012: Kalyan man holds friend's wife hostage, rapes her. Times, 16/7/2012: Teen held for kidnapping, raping minor. Express, 11/8/2012: Girl gangraped in moving car by 8 men, dumped near Delhi-Agra highway.

HT, 14/8/2012: Woman abducted, gangraped in Kolkata. Express, 30/8/2012: Girl raped in

car, dumped near police station. Times, 26/9/2012: Mother of two gangraped by intruders in Jind. Times, 27/9/2012: Now, 30-yr-old's gangrape in Jind rocks Haryana. Times, 9/10/2012: Minor repeatedly raped by 3 different persons.

Times, 15/10/2012: National Law School student raped on Bangalore University campus. Times, 18/10/2012: Man rapes 11-yr-old girl as his mum holds her captive. Times, 18/10/2012: Girl raped for 3 months, boy abducted, killed.

Express, 31/10/2012: 14-year-old gang-raped in Pydhonie. Times, 20/10/2012: Robbers gang-rape four near Viramgam.

Times, 19/11/2012: Little girl abused by grandfather; mother fights against parents in Bangalore. Times, 8/12/2012: Kerala shocker: 6-year-old sexually abused by father after giving her alcohol.

NDTV, 22/12/2012: Woman stripped naked, gang-raped in Tripura. Times, 22/12/2012: Amid protests, 1 more gangrape in Delhi. NDTV, 22/12/2012: 12-year-old girl allegedly gang-raped by minors in Tamil Nadu.

Times, 23/12/2012: Woman raped by 3 men, including husband's friend. Times, 23/12/2012: Women raped thrice in Mumbai in a day. Times, 23/12/2012: Dancer hired for event gang-raped in Bhubaneswar.

Express, 23/12/2012: Two minors raped in Halol, Dahod, two held. Express, 23/12/2012: Arrived on Friday, raped thrice till Saturday: Woman. Times, 26/12/2012: Woman gangraped in Cuddalore.

Times, 27/12/2012: Tribal raped by 15 men for 12 days in MP. DNA, 27/12/2012: 19-year-old gang-raped in Ahmedabad. 2013, January through April: 182. And counting.

The rarest of the rare. Pick one. Any one.

– *Mumbai Mirror*

The Truth about Women in Gujarat

from an open letter to "Dear Madams of FICCI" from Ila Pathak

From reports in media we have understood that our Chief Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi has impressed you all with his hard-hitting eloquence. On reading and hearing report of the speech, we, the women of Gujarat were wonderstruck! Was he speaking of women in Gujarat? Was he revealing the whole truth? Certainly not. So we thought that we could enlighten you all about the reality in Gujarat. In Gujarat's population the number of women has gone down. In 2001 there were 921 women against 1000 men. In 2011, three more were lost per thousand, 918 were counted in the census. This is the ten year period during which nine other States recorded increase in the number of women, from 45 in Delhi to 4 in Rajasthan. Gujarat kept losing. Mr. Modi was speaking of female foeticide, an old 18th century practice. In Gujarat the sex ratio in the age group of 0 to 6 years in 2001, was 886 girls as against 1000 boys. In 2011 it was 883 girls as against 1000 boys. Difference of only 3 gained over ten years! It was only in late 2011 that the news of the government having closed 101 sonography clinics was heard; thereafter a few were reported closed in 2012. In 2013, so far, no penal action under PCPNDT Act is reported. That is the governance in Gujarat! Does the Government care? Latest surveys (2006) concerning married women's health note that 55.5 percent women were anaemic in the age group of 15 to 49 years of age. In the same age group 60.8 percent pregnant women were malnourished and anaemic. In 1998-99, 74.5 percent of dalit and

tribal children in the age group of 6 months to 35 months were reported as malnourished. In 2005-2006 the number of such children increased to 79.8 percent, 49.2 percent children have not developed to normal height, 41 percent do not have the weight normally children of their age group could have. During the last election this issue was taken up and the minister in charge had rushed to find out where the fortified food packets had gone! That is Governance in Gujarat! Maternal mortality rate and Infant mortality rate do not come down; mothers and children keep dying in Gujarat or continue to survive as weaklings. To refer to women as mothers all the time is pretentious. We have noted how young mothers die of malnourishment. Lack of treatment (because no government dispensary, block or district hospital has a gynecologist appointed, large city hospitals provide such facility) is one more obvious reason.. No wonder that many women deliver babies in the ambulance like buses known as 108 service. Governance of Gujarat's government does not seem to follow any policy for saving young women's lives. Even young men's lives. Very recently, a resident doctor died of Dengue fever in Ahmedabad's large Civil Hospital and many more are now dying of Swine flu in Gujarat. The deaths seem to argue absence of good governance.

Education for girls was free. In last couple of years the government has stopped encouraging continuation of such schools and colleges. Now girls have to pay hefty fees if they

choose to get 'good' education. That is the Governance in Gujarat. Mr. Modi spoke of the Bill for 50 percent women members in Local-Self Government which, the Governor of Gujarat, Dr. Shrimati Kamalaji, despite being a woman herself did not sign. The Governor of Gujarat did not sign it because the provisions in the Bill were mixed up with another issue, that of compulsory voting. The Bill was returned by the Governor asking the Government to separate the issues, get the Bill for 50 percent reservation for women passed again and then she would be prepared to sign it. The Governor is found fault with which is emphasised by adding 'despite being a woman herself'. This is Modistyle. The details of why she did not sign it are not spoken of, so the listeners are led to believe that the Governor of Gujarat is insensitive towards women's rights despite being a woman herself. Half-truth is the hall-mark of Modyism.

...Increase in crimes in Gujarat is phenomenal during last decade. Robberies and murders of old people, including women are reported every other day. 235 rapes were registered in 2001 in 2011 the number is 413. Kidnappings have increased from 731 in 2001 to 1329 in 2011. All other crimes appear to have gone down. The police stations do not want to register crimes because they are reprimanded if the number of crimes increases. Gujarat has to be shown as Crime Free State so less registration is better from governance point of view. We are aware of circulars that ask the policemen down the line not to register women's complaints in the first instance, they take 'applications'. Reduced crime rate could vouch for good governance in Gujarat. It is followed by possibilities of less punishment / justice and freedom to commit crimes.

Whither Annihilation of Caste?

Ram Puniyani

Caste has been the major marker of Indian, particularly Hindu, society. While world over the serfs were under the bondage of feudal lords, we had religiously ordained system of Varna-Jati (Caste). Many theories of caste prevail, the racial theory, superior Aryans versus the natives, now stands debunked. The hypothesis of Morton Klass argues that it was a way of adjusting of tribal to the system of production, which generated surplus. This understanding indicates towards the understanding that caste evolved with the particular system of production in India. Kosambi looks at origin of caste as being due to the continuous process of fusing of tribal into general society. The major contribution to the understanding of genesis of caste comes from Ambedkar as per whom caste-varna came into being due to ideological-religious factors. According to him caste system came into being as the result of ideologies of Dharmshatras, which was part of Brahmanism.

In Indian society the interesting point is that caste is prevalent not only amongst Hindus, it also prevails in other religious communities. The difference being that amongst Hindus, the caste is prescribed in the holy books, while in other religious communities; it is a social phenomenon, like Ashraf, Ajlaf and Arzal amongst Muslims and different denominations amongst Christians and Sikhs. The first challenge to caste system came from Lord Gautam Buddha, who talked of Samta, equality. This concept of Samta, equality became very popular and was accepted by large number of people till Buddhism was attacked and wiped out from India in eighth century by those who wanted to restore the

varna-caste. During medieval period the Bhakti saints in particular talked against and questioned the system of graded inequality, but their voice though a powerful articulation of the plight of the low caste, remained just an expression of pain and sorrow of the poor, and was strongly opposed by Brahmin clergy.

The rule of Muslim Kings and British did not change the social structure of the subcontinent, though during British rule due to the industrialization and introduction of modern education, the caste system started being questioned, opposed and socially challenged. The edifice of caste started loosening up. During the rule of Muslim kings the social structure remained intact. With the British rule the half way process of industrialization and modern education came in. At the same time the caste-varna also continued on the side, though its legitimacy started being questioned in a more serious way. In the changed situation starting from Jotirao Phule the movements for caste abolition found grounding in society, though they were not able to uproot the phenomenon of caste in the full measures as the feudal production system ran side by side with the process of modernization. The process of secularization, abolition of the hold of landlord and clergy, remained incomplete and so the process of caste transformation remained half way through.

All the struggles started by Ambedkar aimed for social justice, social equality and democratic values. He led the movements like Chavdar Talab, for right to have access to public drinking water, Kalaram Mandir, right to enter temples and also the

burning of Manusmriti, as symbolic of the rejection of religiously ordained caste hierarchy. The resistance to these led to his conclusion that he had to leave the Hindu fold, which is dominated by Brahmanical values of Varna. The social political base to his movements was provided by the national movement, which was aspiring for throwing away the British colonial power and also struggling for democratic values. Here Ambedkar rook off from this movement, but the national movement was not adequate to give him total social justice as this movement also had upper castes in good measure. So here we see the dilemma of Mahatma Gandhi versus Ambedkar. Gandhi was not able to go beyond the limits posed by the participation of all castes in freedom movement. He kept talking of varna system in a more refined form while taking up cudgels against untouchability.

Gandhi also opposed the separate electorate, provided by communal award of MacDonald in 1932. The Poona pact between Gandhi and Ambedkar led to the reserved Constituency and the provisions of reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Ambedkar's vision was that reservations and inter-caste marriages will be steps towards annihilation of caste. Today both these face serious obstacles on social ground. The rigidity of caste is increasing and inter-caste marriage is facing serious obstacles from conservative forces. While freedom movement led by Gandhi was half way conceding to the needs of dalits, the other ideology, the one of religious nationalism was waiting in the wings with the concept of Hindu Rashtra, Hindu nation. Ambedkar did realize that acceptance of religious nationalism, formation of Pakistan on that ground will be a disaster for dalits as it will pave the way for Hindu Rashtra, the slavery of dalits.

Today while most of the commentators are attacking Gandhi, they need to focus more attention to the impact of the politics and ideology of Hindu religious nationalism, which is a major obstacle to caste abolition today.

The reservations for dalits led to newer caste equations. On one hand the section of rising middle class stood to oppose these reservations, tooth and nail. The anti reservation violence has been witnessed in the Gujarat in particular in 1980s. Also since the overall development process is not accommodative of all, the inner competition for reservation has led to a strange situation where different communities are vying for status as a particular reserved category. The overall future for the youth is dismal and it gets reflected in the form of movements for particular castes getting recognized in this or that category. The other major obstacle to caste transformation is the politics of Hindutva. On one hand it talks of Samajik Samrasta (social Harmony), that all castes should have harmony amongst them. The Hindutva's concept of 'Integral Humanism' emphasizes on different castes continuing their professions for smooth social functioning. The social engineering by religious political forces is co-opting the low caste through various mechanisms, to the extent of using them as foot soldiers of their anti minority violence. A section of dalits also is influenced by the process of Sanskritization, aping

at upper caste and imitating them for their future trajectory. As a logical corollary; the cultural mechanisms, the TV serials, the preaching's of hoards of God men are promoting the values of Manusmriti in a more sophisticated form.

At the same time a serious layer of progressive and dalit intellectuals are trying to restore the core values and principles of struggles against caste-varna. The situation today is very complex and caste as a social phenomenon is far from extinct. Today's political scenario is a conflict between the values of democracy on one hand, and the values of religious nationalism; the politics representing the defense of caste and gender hierarchy; on the other. The process of social equality; caste annihilation and values of democracy need to be brought in through a fresh series of multilayered struggles for a truly democratic society. That alone will be a tribute to the life and work of the legend of this great visionary, Bhimrao Babsaheb Ambedkar.

Peoples Media Advocacy & Resource Centre- PMARC has been initiated with the support from group of senior journalists, social activists, academics and intellectuals from Dalit and civil society to advocate and facilitate Dalits issues in the mainstream media. To create proper & adequate space with the Dalit perspective in the mainstream media national/ International on Dalit issues is primary objective of the PMARC.

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Historic election

S. Viswam

Nawaz Sharif on trial
Kuldip Nayar

**Politics even in
the tragedy of death**
Rajindar Sachar

**When North East
Came Calling!**
Shah Alam Khan

**FDI in Retail –
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From Evasive to Decisive**
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The triumph of democracy in any part of the world is always cheering news for India. More so is it in the case of Pakistan. From all accounts, our neighbour has had a historic election, and the people of Pakistan deserve three cheers for their massive participation in a game-changing poll despite the threats of violence and suicide bombings from Pakistani Taliban. It has been a smooth transition from one elected government to another. And, particularly encouraging for India is the fact that for the first time in Pakistan's chequered electoral history, neither India nor Kashmir featured in the campaign. Even for the Pakistanis this was certainly a welcome change.

There were other reasons also why India should be happy over the election. India experienced the phenomenon of sudden and deep interest of the youth in elections some years ago. Pakistan has had that experience in the just concluded election. There was an unprecedented voter turn-out—a welcome factor in itself—and importantly, a third of the electors were first time visitors to the polling booths. Equally important, the army was a spectator

and not a influencer as in the past. Unsurprisingly, the campaign was dominated by economic issues indicating that the ruling Pakistan People's Party was being put in the dock for mismanaging the national economy. The overwhelming vote for Nawaz Sharif and his Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) reflected the popular backing for the new prime minister's promise of economic reforms and liberalization.

Like in India, the electorate of Pakistan can be said to have come of age. Voters nowadays kick out non-performers. The outcome of the Karnataka assembly polls testifies to this. No more can the voters be taken for granted. They wait with extraordinary patience for five years and when the polls come, they mete out just punishment. Nobody is shedding a tear for the BJP in Karnataka, and we are sure nobody is bemoaning the ouster of the PPP in Pakistan. So unpopular obviously the PPP had become that it was relegated to the third position. Even the fledgling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) led by the former cricket star Imran Khan secured more votes than the PPP.

Between the lines

Nawaz Sharif on trial

Kuldip Nayar

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was accurately reflecting public opinion in India when he welcomed the triumph of democracy in Pakistan and offered to work with Nawaz Sharif to normalize bilateral relations. The consolidation of democracy in Pakistan is a factor of stability and peace not only for India-Pakistan relationship but for the politics of the sub-continent. Improved India-Pakistan bilateral relations can influence the politics of the entire region in a positive and constructive way.

The bilateral perspective is bound to change with the induction of the Nawaz administration in Islamabad. In his public postures and statements, he has been consistent in wanting to normalize relations with India. Indeed, Indian public opinion regards him as a sincere advocate of improved bilateral ties. His first comment after winning the elections referred to the 1999 Lahore Declaration following Atal Behari Vajpayee's visit. He said he would like to start from "where we were interrupted in 1999." The reason why he and Vajpayee were interrupted was the secret military operation (or should he call it misadventure?) by Musharraf in Kargil. Kargil adversely affected bilateral ties, but it also led to the ouster of Nawaz by Musharraf. India has no reason not to respond favourably to the revival of the 1999 spirit by Nawaz, but much depends for the success of the revival attempt on Pakistan's military establishment also. The military has been both unpredictable and imponderable in the past. Nawaz can push through normalization with India only to the extent that he is serious in tackling terrorism within Pakistan and the

It was an emotional expression, that of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, after winning at the polls in Pakistan. By inviting Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at his oath-taking ceremony he fulfilled the desire to strike real friendship with India. But it should not come as a surprise. Nawaz Sharif had fought and won an election against Benazir Bhutto on the plank of friendship with India.

Unfortunately, New Delhi's response was tepid. I wish there had been an Atal Behari Vajpayee to travel by bus from Amritsar to Lahore. Then the two prime ministers advocated a new path of normalcy which they were trying to pave. Alas, the amity did not last long. Nawaz Sharif is not to blame for the Kargil misadventure. It was General Parvez Musharraf, then the chief of the army staff and later military dictator, who thought that he could occupy the strategic heights to harass India. Nawaz Sharif did not know about the infiltrators. Musharraf even today claims that "all were on board." But this is not true. Nawaz Sharif is being unnecessarily dragged into a war which Musharraf waged, fought and lost.

Now that Nawaz Sharif is the Prime Minister he has done well to order an inquiry to find out what happened at Kargil. I believe that Nawaz Sharif took up the matter of Pakistan forces' withdrawal from Kargil with the help of America to sustain the morale of the armed

forces. He placed before President Clinton the case of Pakistan forces although both knew that Kargil was Musharraf's doing. However, an inquiry will put an official seal on the mistakes committed and on the person who was responsible. A similar kind of probe into the militants' attack on Mumbai (26/11) will be in order. Nawaz Sharif has assured that such an attack from across the border will never take place in the future.

Elections in Pakistan are noisy, somewhat disorderly and *tamasha*-like. Even the kidnapping of former Prime Minister Yusuf Reza Gilani's son did not come as a surprise. Yet the political parties were particular about arranging their candidates' contest in a manner which would make them winnable. Parties were calculating and knew their strength. Even before the polling, it was known that Nawaz Sharif, representing his Muslim League, was strong in Punjab, Pakistan People's Party (PPP) under Asif Ali Zardari in Sindh and Imran Khan's Tehrik-e-Insaaf in Khyber Pakhtankhwa in the north-west. The results are more or less on the same lines, although Nawaz Sharif's victory is convincing, winning both urban and rural seats in Punjab.

One slogan which has been there but was never reckoned with is Pakistan's friendship with India. All political parties asking for good relations with New Delhi was an important plank in elections. I

(Continued on Page 6)

am not surprised because I have always found the common man on both sides wishing good relations. The governments play politics. They realize that hostility with India or Pakistan does not sell any longer. It is no more a rewarding electoral slogan. Still they emphasize differences, not common points.

I recall the sweep of Nawaz Sharif on his stand of friendship with India. Why political parties have woken up so late is something to introspect. Nawaz Sharif has said that he would pick up the thread from where he had left off with Atal Behari Vajpayee. This is a positive development because it means the supremacy of liberalism over parochialism.

The heavy turnout of polling goes to the credit of the electorate because the Taliban had threatened the voters. The blasts all over Pakistan were another impediment. Yet the people were determined to sustain the democratic process. Nawaz Sharif occupies the position of prime ministership for the third time. This speaks volumes in favour of Pakistanis because they have elected a person who has said that the PM is the boss of the army.

Nawaz Sharif has his task cut out. He will have to undo most of what the previous government did. The first and foremost would be to meet the poll promises, including providing uninterrupted power supply, to the people. The unemployment problem in Pakistan has made a number of misguided youth an easy target for the religious and radical outfits. Sharif's government will have to address them to the satisfaction of the people who voted his party to power. He will have to attend to the problem of rampant corruption in political parties and the bureaucracy,

the main worry for the people. Another onerous job at hand for him is to strike a balance between his civil administration and the military against which he has nursed a long grievance.

Sharif will be well advised to strengthen the institutions and build up people's faith in them. That is the only way to keep the military out. It has extended its stronghold even on trade and commerce. Corporations by ex-military hands dominate 70 per cent of Pakistan's business and the real estate. Government contracts first go to them. No democratic government can be witness to this state of affairs. The military's rule is to defend the country, not to administer it. The polls have shown the sign of maturity in Pakistan. This is the first election held by an elected political party since the country's independence. The army has had a centre-stage so far. Probably, it still has. Fragmented political scene suits the army which still gives a message of normalcy in an otherwise unstable country.

Zardari will remain the president until September. Soon after the PML

(N) leader will have to look for an acceptable president who will not meddle in the affairs of Sharif's day-to-day functioning. Similarly, Sharif will have to keep his eyes open on the judiciary which has, of late, been over-reactive. Pakistan's chief justice Iftikhar Chaudhary is due for retirement in December and Sharif will have an interest in who replaces the long-serving incumbent. All this will matter for Sharif to keep a tight leash on his government so that he can function independently before he sorts out things one by one.

Institutions are important for a democratic polity. Musharraf demolished them to establish his personal rule. No doubt, this election proved that democratic forces have won yet again. People have made sure that democracy which had begun to take roots some years ago in Pakistan was not uprooted again. One only hopes this does not turn out to be a pyrrhic victory. It is up to Nawaz Shariff to live up to the people's expectations and keep their faith intact. The comment of *The Economist* should help Nawaz Sharif.

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Politics even in the tragedy of death

Rajindar Sachar

Many great men sickened by the way the contemporary society behaves have been exasperated to give vent to their harshest feeling. Author Samuel Johnson remarked “Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel”.

I had thought that Johnson was unfair to overwhelming number of ordinary citizens who were, in true sense, patriots. I was willing to concede that if he had used the word “Politics” instead, I might have gone along with him, especially when I read what V. I. Lenin said: “There are no morals in politics there is only expediency. A scoundrel may be of use to us just because he is a scoundrel”. Colloquially scoundrel conjures up a ruffian type of a person, but scoundrel is defined in Oxford dictionary to mean an “a dishonest or immoral person” which could apply at any level of hierarchy in the society. Crises, however, arise for us in India (and especially for the older generation) who have lived with Gandhiji’s teaching “that politics without morality is a sin”. The ugly manifest of Johnson’s thinking is the way how Sarabjit’s death in Pakistan has been so cynically used by politicians ignoring completely the damage that has been done to future Indo-Pak relations.

The undoubted facts are Sarabjit, who according to his family while inebriated, strayed into Pakistan territory in 1991 was however arrested as being Indian spy. He was tried by courts in Pakistan and the Supreme Court there rejected his appeal. He was sentenced to death,

but before the sentence could be executed relations between India and Pakistan eased somewhat, and attempts were being made to persuade Pakistan authorities to commute his sentence with the welcome efforts made by especially the indefatigable by Pakistani lawyer Awais Sheikh and Pak human Rights activists. And then this sudden tragedy happened – his being beaten by co-prisoners resulting in his death. It was natural to expect that this would cause anger and disappointment in India and lead to some protests. But vested interests or small time politicians thought that it was a fertile moment to spread anti-Pakistan hatred. So some TV channels, newspapers and politicians with vested interest went amuck shouting treachery by Pakistan, and even suggesting India should break off diplomatic relations with Pakistan. The result has been a near crazy sentiment being fuelled up against Pakistan. Some reckless politicians even provokingly spread the reckless news that Sarabjit had been deliberately got beaten at the instance of Pakistan authorities.

And then started the cavalcade of big circus: Prime Minister of India described him as a brave son of India obviously accepting that he was a Indian spy (what more delicious news could Pakistan have hoped than that India admits it sends spies to Pakistan?)

The Punjab government to score a point against Central government and to claim that it was more patriotic announced a reward of Rs. one crore

for Sarabji to his family. He was also given State funeral – a rare honour reserved normally for army men who die in battle field, further giving material to Pakistan to blame India for sending spies. But so much was reckless thinking that Punjab irrespective of party affiliations of MLAs, completed the farce – when Punjab Legislature unanimously passed a resolution terming Sarabjit as a national martyr.

Such was the atmosphere that Congress flew Rahul Gandhi specially to attend the funeral in the purported belief that not to do so would be electorally damaging. Alas what small thinking. Please do not misunderstand. Full sympathy to Sarabjit’s family at his unfortunate death in the circumstances is natural. But what is worrying me is that behind this was the jingoist political symbolism against Pakistan that is being highlighted as if patriotism in the country has to be judged by the extent of how anti-Pakistan you project yourself. What an ill-fated policy and lack of sense of reality!

And then when the political parties were bathing in this short-lived limelight nature struck a blow. We had the unfortunate incident of a Pakistani prisoner Saninullah in Jammu in jail being seriously injured by an Indian co-prisoner – his condition being such that he had to be flown to Chandigarh PGI for further treatment. This exposed our hollow chant which Indian politicians were making that in Lahore jail Sarabjit could not have been beaten by Pak co-prisoners on

their own but must be at the instance of Pak officials. Would the Indian politicians apply the same logic at what has happened at Jammu and blame Indian officials. If not, why the double standards. It is puerile and politically dishonest to ignore the loud condemnation of Pakistan government of Sarabjit case by Human Right Commission and other intellectuals, of Pakistan.

Rajasthan Congress Chief Minister facing State elections has carried jingoism to the limit by publicly forbidding Pakistan pilgrims to visit the holy shrine Ajmer Sharif, as he expressed his inability to maintain law and order in the aftermath of Sarabjit case. If this is his mind, nothing but his resignation is called for.

Both the Central and Punjab government by their shortsighted partisan manner of handling Sarabjit case have done immeasurable harm to the intelligence agency of India. The extraordinary blow up of Sarabjit case by the government has led to large number of Indian spies who had come back to India after having spent 20 to 25 years in Pakistan Jail, go public and complain as to how they have been neglected all these years and they have not been given their dues which were promised them when they were recruited. I hope their public cry will now at least reach the ears of Central government.

There are in both countries large number of prisoners who continue to be in jails even after their sentences have been completed. Can one hope that in the sober sequel to Sarabjit and Saniullahs case, both the countries will take immediate steps to send back these prisoners

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When North East Came Calling!

Shah Alam Khan

When I got an invite to speak at a conference in Imphal, I was excited. I had never been to the North East India and therefore saw this as an opportunity to explore. My wife thought that Imphal was the capital of Mizoram while I was sure it represented Meghalaya. When we, on an individual, furtive basis, found that Imphal was the capital of Manipur, both of us decided to ignore the subject. Well that was the best I knew North East as an “integral” part of mainland India! But yes, I knew Irom Sharmila (through personal web based “search” efforts) and Mary Kom (through the mainstream, national media) as representatives of this plucky, spirited state. For a country obsessed with merit and hungry for national icons of hope and courage, it was funny that even though Mary Kom could capture national imagination temporarily, Irom Sharmila was pushed into darkness till the mockery of Anna Hazare forced the media to make her a passing reference; a footnote on the pages of democracy!

As soon as I came out of the airport, my perceptions or rather misconceptions of the North East began to crumble.

The presence of gender equality was so palpable that it began to feel a bit uncomfortable for someone gone from a feudal, male dominant North India. Symbols of female emancipation were too loud to be ignored. Young women walking freely on streets in the odd hours of the evening was a sight to which my sensitivities had withered with time. For a man coming from the

rape capital, Delhi, it was a pleasant change. It was as if I felt free from the clutches of a schizophrenic, amnesic society to which I had now integrated. The schizophrenia of double speaks and double thought of North (mainland) India was suddenly replaced by liberal, honest verses of a society waiting for its time. There was a Mary Kom and an Irom Sharmila in every Manipuri. The smell of freedom rose from the stalls of Ima keithal, the all woman market of Imphal. The idea of justice and equity floated in the air like the free floating *phumdīs* (or floating villages) of the Loktak Lake. Most young students I met during my trip were full of hope.... hope for a better future, hope for an inclusive development of the state. This was in contrast to the more common lot back in Delhi - the “true” torchbearer of free India’s dream. The lot which is most, if not all the time, interested in knowing methods of flying out to the West.... exclusive agenda with exclusive hope!

Despite eternal peace throughout the city, the presence of State was too garish. Heavily armed armor cars with hypersensitive young soldiers peaking into mounted stens were a common scene throughout the city. The green camouflage of the army was a ruthless mix with the lively, vibrant colors of the city and its people. India was keeping a close eye on its democracy! My courteous hosts explained that these jawans of Assam Rifles were part of the operations to keep insurgents at bay.... although it was difficult to explain the nature and

severity of insurgency requiring such keen interest of the army. The fact that Manipur was the only land route out of India into the Far East, compounded with a growing presence of China in and around the region and a hostile Myanmar at the doorstep, insurgency can surely be a pretext for galvanizing state presence till it appears to look like an occupation. It is known since the inception of totalitarianism, that an occupier always tries and besieges the local symbols of culturalism and identity. No wonder the Kangla Fort and other local places of mass manifestation in Manipur had been under the control of Assam Rifles till recent past. In fact some vital historic places of Imphal continue to be under army/paramilitary control even today.

North East is a forgotten vision in the dream of Indian republic. They have ceased to exist in our imagination. The provocation by Mary Koms and Irom Sharmillas is too weak to arouse the psyche of the common Indian. The vision of India is complete without its outstretched arms of the North East. Their happy lives, away from the spotlight of mainland India has given them enough courage to survive. They have learnt to live without us. Whether we live without them or live to learn from them is a choice, which mainland India should make sooner than later.

(Continued from Page 2)

SIS-assisted export of terrorism to India. Much interest will be centered on his equations with the army and the army's policies in respect of both Pakistani and Afghan Taliban. India will wish him well as he takes over power as prime minister for the third time. The India and for the sub-continent.

FDI in Retail – The Game Changers

G. V. Sunder

If there is a younger sibling in a lower middle class household and if he happens also to be a little dim witted, it is quite natural that the burden of doing small chores inside and outside the house will always be on him. Since I was one such dim witted person, when I was small (in early 1970s) I had to carry the responsibility of doing the small household chores in our house. Some such chores were: getting chopped wood for heating water for bathing, weighed in the timber merchant's shop; getting it home and stacking it on the attic of the bath room or some other place; paying the monthly water and electricity bills; getting monthly provisions for the house; getting sugar and kerosene from the ration shop; getting wheat and chillies floured in the mill; getting the clothes of the elders ironed; getting vegetables etc., etc. Some times I also had to sooth the troublesome kids smaller than me.

I used to go to the shops run by Seth or Shetru to get our monthly provisions. (They were typical Telugu speaking Vaishyas running such shops in Bangalore at that time). Other community people hardly had such shops. Then, that is, around the '70s, there were hardly big grocery shops in the extensions of Bangalore city. Most of the shops were of the size of a car garage. A bigger shop would be about the size of two car garages. There were bigger shops near the City Market, or Malleswaram or Gandhi bazaar. But in the extensions of the city only such small shops were there. I had to arrange for bags and baskets, stand in front of the grocer for hours together when he

was attending to other customers, watch very carefully when things were weighed, get them packed and run between the shop and the house at least three or four times to get all the groceries required home, and after all this, when I had my hands and feet paining, complaints would start one after the other.

Once, 'there are only stones in the rice, dirt and broken rice is more, I am tired of sifting the rice', and at other times, 'oho, he has given new rice, the cooked rice is more a gruel', and still again, 'the lentils do not boil at all, all the kerosene in the stove was over getting these boiled', the complaints galore. My fussy sister's complaint, 'I am getting kerosene smell in coffee' was the nadir.

If some one got a stone while eating food and it said 'katam' against his or her teeth, all would look at me as though I was the one who had committed the 'original sin'. Elders would order me to take it back and get it exchanged. When I would return to the shop to return such lentils or fermented coconut, or other items, the shop keeper would stare at me and grumble, 'you buy such bad things in some other shop and come and foist it on us'. The shop keeper would not take it back, the house elders would not have it. Poor I was the victim in this seesaw battle.

On one Sankranti day – the day of the transition of the sun into the constellation of Capricorn in his celestial path – a sweet dish had been prepared at home. It was very tasty. Every one enjoyed eating it. But by afternoon everyone had dyspepsia

and dysentery. The reason came to light a little later. The grocer had mixed the seeds of papaya with black pepper berries. Once again everyone stared at me. Thus I was the target for all such adulterations, underweighing and all the grumbings of the elders at home.

When I was struggling like this cursing my fate, an 'Ahmed Stores' was opened in our extension. Though there was some hesitation to begin with because of the name, every one in the shop looked like a Keralite 'kaka'. It was a bigger shop than many other shops. Though the people in the shop did not know Kannada language, they would patiently talk to the customers. Items were cleaned, properly weighed and neatly packed. Hence I started to buy groceries from that shop every month.

Earlier I used to wait till all things were packed and then would come home with the boy from the shop carrying the bag with the groceries on his head. However, later on, I would give the list of groceries to the shop and once the boy from the shop brought the groceries home, would check if every thing had come and then pay the boy and send him.

Those days there was always shortage of small denominations of money. We had to struggle with the change in shops and hotels. But there was no such problem in the 'Ahmed Stores'. Even if I buy something worth only two rupees and give him a hundred rupee note, he would count and return 98 rupees without grumbling. In the same way, for a thing costing 50 paise, even if five rupees are given, the balance would be counted and paid. Every one used to wonder where he was getting all those small denomination coins. Some would even say that he was getting the coins from the 'hundi'

of Tirupati Temple. Even when I returned something, he would take it back again, without grumbling, and would give whatever I wanted or else would return the money. And then the shop would be open from morning seven to night ten o'clock. It would be open even on Sundays. Only on Fridays it would be closed for half a day in the afternoon.

When the business in 'Ahmed Stores' picked up, some smaller shops in the vicinity had to close down. But some others changed their attitude towards the customers and started selling cleaned groceries. Now in Bangalore, whether a small or a big shop, every one is giving 'free' home-delivery of the groceries. They have also started selling 'cleaned and packed' grocery items.

These days a big debate is going on in the country about Foreign Direct Investment in retail trade in India. Some large establishments like Walmart are ready to invest huge funds in India and some people are expressing their concern about the same. Many Indian giants like Tatas, Birlas and Reliance have already invested thousands of crores of rupees in retail trade in India and have been running hundreds of multi-brand retail malls for the past several years. But all these are running under losses from the beginning. It is very difficult to understand as to why, even then, these multi-national corporate giants want to invest money in retail trade in India.

If we look at it from another angle, our country is in the forefront in growing fruits and vegetables. But the unfortunate part of it is that almost 40 percent of these products rot for want of proper cold and other storage facilities during transportation to the consumers. Only 60 percent of the products

reach consumers. Our farmers are suffering from such high amount of losses. And also in this middle-man infested system of marketing, many experts feel that the farmers are not getting proper prices for their products and proper returns on their investment. According to one estimate, only about one fourth of the price paid by the consumers reaches the producers.

When such is the pathetic state of affairs, some people feel that these foreign companies will bring their vast experience and huge capital investment and provide the facilities required by our producers and consumers and liberate them from the clutches of the middle-men and get better prices for both the producers and the consumers.

If these foreign companies are going to change the ground rules of marketing which will benefit our small farmers, producers and consumers, shall we hope that these big malls will become the *game changers* like the 'Ahmed Stores'?

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Democracy: From Evasive to Decisive A view from West Bengal

Sandip Das

Once Gandhiji said “Politics has encircled us with the coil of a snake, unless we fight the snake there is no respite”. He felt that abandoning politics was not possible. But at the same time he opined that politics should be elevated from the existing level of moral or spiritual level. But, in the present context, what do we find? No doubt, politics have become all-pervasive of human activities including cooperation or non-cooperation and in colliding with economics of production and distribution. Since politics has become closely associated with privileges, which makes the privileged tend to cling to power, thereby interweaving hypocrisy and power-mongering for self and family, party or any other sectarian interest. So, the images of politicians, in most cases, are not bright. H. V. Kamath, a front ranking socialist and a close associate of Netaji Subhas often rightly said to us that “there is no politics in the country, there are politricks and partytickngs. No doubt, the basic problems of our society, with colossal poverty and unemployment, miserable state of health for the have-nots and unrealistic and directionless education system, ecological disaster, pervading trends of violence and counter-violence by the state power and the protestors have become current trends. But, all over the world both political theorists and activists considered politics as the medium of transformation of individuals and institutions and not necessarily confined to government alone. In the

West many political thinkers thought that civil society should perform a greater role. Some of them also felt the need for devolution of power.

India is a vast country with huge number of people, with diverse language, ethnicity and religious faith and distinct cultural identity. Our predecessors from the beginning of the last century were of the opinion that India should have a decentralized polity. They were inspired by the Panchayat system prevailing in the country from the ancient days. When Dadabhai Naoroji raised the demand for Swaraj, he meant people’s participation and not complete independence. Then Tilak awakened the nation with thundering assertion: “Swaraj is my birth right”, Pal elaborated it. Annie Besant’s Home Rule League enthused many young men. Deshbandhu C. R. Das in co-operation with Dr. Bhagwan Das formulated a Swaraj based constitutional framework for independence.

While Gandhi was in South Africa, an autocratic regime sought to de-franchise Indians in South Africa. He went to England and submitted a memorandum to British Parliament where he narrated the democratic tradition of India from the ancient days, which was appreciated by the MPs and the press. Coming to India, he sought to redirect the national movement for the all-comprehensive achievement of Swaraj, Swadeshi and Swabhilamban. Besides Gandhi, almost all propagators of decentralized democracy, including

M. N. Roy, wanted that prevalent pyramidal structure should be inverted. Gandhi in his unique way wanted to replace the pyramid with an oceanic circle. As in the case of ocean the first wave would be a small circle then it would be an ever-expanding series of circles. The basic first circle is village. As this circle begins to expand, it would encompass gradually a greater zone (say Panchayat samiti), then sub-division/district, province, the whole country and later on, the whole world.

In framing the constitution of India, the drafting committee sought to accommodate the ideas of Swaraj and decentralized polity. Many members of the constituent assembly, notably H. V. Kamath, J. Prakashan, Ananta Swami Ayengar, Lakshmikant Moitra voiced their protest on the lapse of Panchayat raj. The president of the constituent Assembly Dr. Rajendra Prasad sought to refer back the draft to the advisor of the drafting committee. But the chairman of the drafting committee Dr. Ambedkar claimed that at that stage it would not be possible to redraft. Then Santhanam, an important member of the Assembly placed a compromise formula to include it for the time being in the Directive Principles of the state policy. So, in this form it was accepted. During this period, the Congress Socialists had opted out of the Constituent Assembly. But, later on it was JP, who played the most vital role in generating public opinion for a decentralized

democracy, that is Panchayati Raj. Through JP's initiative several conferences on Panchayat Raj took place in different places of which Jaipur event was the largest, at least it was reported. So Gandh's Gram Swaraj, Vinoba's Gram Swarajya and JP's Communitarian Democracy were popularized. Another person who was a pioneer of decentralized development was S. K. Dey. His experiment at Kurukshetra was admired by Prime Minister Nehru. Then Nehru government constituted Balwantraji Mehta committee to initiate Panchayat raj. On the basis of its report, Panchayat raj came into being. However, rather than empowering people at the grassroots, the bureaucrats got more power. Although it was not satisfactory, JP welcomed the beginning of Panchayat raj which had become a closed chapter. However, it is well known that except in some states, Panchayat system became dormant again. Then with the implementation of Asoka Mehta committee report during the Janata party rule, Panchayats were given a new life. But the report had some drawbacks. Firstly, village was defined on the basis of population, which was contrary to the spirit of face to face community as conceived by Gandhi and JP. Secondly, elections through party symbols at the grassroots vitiated the community spirit of the villages. However, there was no compulsion for the states to introduce party symbols at the grassroots level. While states like Karnataka under the leadership of Ramakrishna Hegde and Abdul Nazir Saheb accepted partisan election only at the district level, the states like West Bengal under Marxist rule vitiated the villages with partisan fragmentation. Let me give an example. A decade earlier, in view of clashes at a village named

Keshpur in West Medinipur district, myself along with Bimal Ch. Pal, then President of State Sarvodaya Mandal and two local friends were on a visit to the disturbed areas by rickshaws. At a certain point, the rickshaw pullers refused to proceed further. On being asked about the reason for their refusal, they said that they were forbidden to move to the Trinamal area. It seems that those who have come to power in the state replacing the communists are in no mood to change the system. On the issue of ensuring Panchayat elections now, the uncompromising attitude of the state government and equally adamant attitude of the state election commissioner, might be promoted by other interests, are not conducive for healthy Panchayat system.

After the constitutional amendment of 73 and 74 Articles there has been substantial change on paper. The power structures at the state level which used to be controlled by the ministers and bureaucrats are supposed to have come under the control of the villagers. But, it is a fact that many elected members are not capable and many more are partisans and not above corruption. So there should be an authority to supervise over them. JP was fully conscious of the problem and had suggested an institution of Panchayat Raj Commission. He had specifically said that none of the members of the commission should be from any political party or from bureaucracy. We should not forget that 27 subjects mentioned in the 11th Schedule have not yet come to Panchayat, besides, many of the provisions of the Amendment of the constitution of 2003, for example, promotion of self reliance, due autonomy and some provisions of financial resources have not yet come to the

Panchayats.

JP during the Total Revolution days used to say that "in our democracy there is a cracy, but not demos". It is a fact that India has been maintaining some sort of democracy, for the last sixty five years, except during the Emergency days. But let us think, can parliamentary form of democracy in its present form or its supposed alternative presidential form can ensure sovereignty of people in reality? To quote political theorist Bryce, "The sovereignty of the people is the basic watchword of democracy". It was not unnecessary when Gandhi said that "I shall fight for that India where every Indian would feel that it is 'my country and I have a role to determine its destiny'". He also said 'Swaraj will come only when a poor, humble person would raise his voice when the power is abused'. As we see today in most cases money, muscle and media dominate the political parties besides the communal and caste cards along with various other means of corrupt practices. If an authoritarian party, dynastic successors or agents of international or national capitalists de facto control the country then where does the vox populi stand? Can our democracy be described as government of the people by the people and for the people, even if it is 'of' the people. Yes, when we would speak of the empowering of the people, we would not mean that common villagers would handle the defence or the external affairs. But it may be mentioned that so-called development should not be imposed on them. We speak of improving the standard of living of the poor. Gandhi had said, "no one can decide other's standard of living from above. The persons concerned should determine the improvement of their own standard". I do not know whether the present political leaders,

particularly those who are in power arena have time to remember Gandhi except on October 2 and January 30. Can our rulers care to know what Gandhi had said to Nehru! "When you plan to implement a project, just think of the face of the poorest person you know and judge whether or not your contemplated project would bring any benefit to him". I am afraid most of the rulers might not have seen such a face at all.

We socialists cannot identify democracy with politics alone. For us democracy should encompass economic, social and cultural aspects too. Today's power-centred politics is rooted in corruption, scams and disguised accounts in foreign links. The manner in which the Prime Minister has admonished CAG Benod Rai by saying that the PAC would challenge his report is quite baffling. How could have Prime Minister taken for granted that PAC would challenge his report where the members of different parties are there? The manner in which CBI and other agencies are used by the central government to meet narrow political gains is alarming. The way in which union funds are being distributed is scandalous. And the money comes from the family assets or from the tax payers. How can the major party in power in a coalition government decide the FDI in multiple trade in food and clothing unilaterally, when previous Finance Minister had promised otherwise? The allegations of scams against some leading political personalities and schizophrenic reactions of leaders of the ruling party in defence of a 'private citizen who is not in politics' and how a honest officer was treated in this connection is bewildering. The major opposition party and some of the regional parties cannot be depended for they are also not above scams. On the

other hand in forming the policy and action programme, opportunism becomes the deciding factor for many of them. When CPI(M) was in power in West Bengal, it attempted to set up an atomic power plant at Haripur in East Medinipur district of the state. The attempt failed because of popular resistance. Not we find CPI(M) have become champion of anti-atomic power plant movement in Tamil Nadu.

Looking at the functioning of the government at the Centre and the states one may conclude that they have become arrogant of public criticisms, even if constructive. West Bengal Chief Minister, who had a humble beginning and emerged out from peoples' movement has also become a victim of arrogance. Some of the journalists, who had been supporting her, have now shifted their criticism to her personality rather than the cause. One of the press, who had extended support to Mamata till the other day has now said that her opposition to FDI and increase in petrol, diesel and cooking gas to serve her selfish end. On the other, Sonia and Manmohan's unilateral decision on FDI and increased prices of essential items prompted by the concern for national interest. The increasing trend of trade deficit is alarming. Some pro-government economists pointed out that the gaining of China through FDI, overlooking the fact that China had no deficit in international trade.

Looking at the high profile persons' zeal for so-called reforms, it appears that they understand the interests other rather than that of the poor people of India. Recently, a Delhi based economist wrote in a Bengali journal of Kolkata, run by a big house that India needs both capitalism and democracy. This is an issue, on which no socialist

can compromise. The socialists are convinced that capitalism even in the name of liberalism is destined to destroy democracy. The democratic socialists are of the opinion that democracy without freedom in economic, social and cultural spheres is evasive democracy. We should strive for democratization of the state through decentralization of political and economic power. In our vision of democratic road to socialism, the state policy should be accountable to people.

In the democratic road of socialism, there should not be any restriction on the freedom of minorities – political, religious ethnic and linguistic. Here we may refer to Mamata Banerjee again. She has feelings for the poor but her senses of priorities are not well directed. The poor, backwards including Muslims, deserve special attention. But how can special allowance for Immamy and spread of Madrasas and separate universities and hospitals would help the Muslims? She should look for involving Muslims in scientific education both physical and social and job-oriented appropriate technology.

Another problem with West Bengal Chief Minister is that she acts on her reflexes. Often she identifies her party with the government and she often usurps the power of local self-governments. Is it because of that that she has not come out of her Indira Congress legacy!

The Government of West Bengal has not yet expressed their desire to modify the state Panchayat Act at least within parameters of the amendment of the Constitution in 2003. Of course, for this it would need the co-operation of the Centre. Since there is no immediate scope for a modified Panchayat

Act, I would suggest that in the election campaign of the ruling and opposition parties they should announce that if elected they would set up a Panchayat Raj Commission (not election commission) which would help and guide the Panchayats and that the members of the commission would not be from political parties and bureaucracy. In the context of West Bengal, the ruling party should come out for a scheme of green and sustainable economy. There is enough scope for medium and small size industries under empowered zilla parishads and Panchayat Samitis. Now that the forest areas are more or less peaceful they should come out with their schemes for forest development.

The Panchayat Raj institutions alone can transform our evasive democracy into decisive democracy.

We should remember that change of societal and political structure cannot be equated with a structural change of a building of bricks, cement and steel. We need something more for transformation of men. It reminds me of one statement of Swami Vivekananda that “men making is my mission”. We feel for transformation from evasive to decisive democracy, we should concurrently strive for changing the socio-economic conditions and the change of individuals.

(Continued from Page 5)

to their respective countries. This is not only a humanitarian but a legal demand.

India and Pakistan are like Siamese twins. The pain and tribulation of each will get reflected in the other. Accept that bleeding of either will bleed the other too. In this approach only the welfare and prosperity of both countries lie.

New Social Movements, New Perspectives

Nivedita Menon

A new kind of social and political action emerged in the 1980s, that we might call citizens' initiatives. These non-funded and non-party forums came into being out of a sense of the inefficacy of mainstream political parties and their lack of concern regarding vital issues of democracy, freedom and civil rights. 'Citizens' initiatives' have been more involved in a watchdog kind of activity and are not generally characterized by mass support. While some are small, self-sufficient groups of long standing, others are broad coalitions formed around specific issues, that bring together parties and trade unions of the far left, Gandhian, Dalit and feminist groups, some of which may be funded NGOs, as well as non-affiliated individuals. The distinguishing feature of such coalitions is that all the constituents are subject to the 'common minimum programme' set collectively by the forum, and separate party/organizational agenda are not meant to influence the activity of the forum. The tension that this sets up between differing imperatives is usually also the reason for the short-lived nature of such forums, which tend to dissipate after a period of intense and often very effective interventions.

Among the first citizens' initiatives that came into existence were around civil liberties and democratic rights. Acquiring particular salience in the immediate aftermath of the Emergency, a number of such organizations came into being throughout the country. For instance, the Peoples' Union for Civil Liberties and Democratic Rights (PUCLDR)

set up during the Emergency later split into the People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR), with a more leftist perspective on 'rights' including economic rights, while the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) decided to focus on 'civil liberties' more narrowly. There was a string of such formations in the country. In many states like Andhra Pradesh (the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee – APCLC) and West Bengal (Association for the Protection of Democratic Right – APDR), the main initiative for the formation of such civil liberties and democratic rights organizations came from activists linked to the far Left groups. We distinguish such forums from what are called 'human rights organizations', many of which are funded organizations that work in tandem with internationally evolving agendas. The latter we would place under the rubric of 'NGOs'.

Such groups have continued to play an active role in the years since, painstakingly documenting and exposing cases of civil liberties and democratic rights violations. In recent years they have also been actively campaigning against capital punishment. While the initial impulse for their formation was the violation by the state of citizens' rights to freedom of expression, they have over the last two and a half decades expanded their activities to address violations of freedoms by non-state actors in the context of caste, gender and sectarian/communal violence. Some of them have also taken up questions of the worst cases of exploitation of

labour, which effectively nullify rights and liberties sanctioned by the Constitution to all citizens.

A recent significant battle fought by one such citizens' group - Committee for Fair Trial for SAR Geelani – demonstrates how effective such interventions can be. Syed Abdul Rehman Geelani, a lecturer of Arabic in a Delhi college, was one of the 'prime accused' in the attack on Parliament on December 13, 2001. Following as it did on '9/11', the incident got inserted into the stridently nationalist discourse that drew nourishment from both the Hindu-right dominated NDA government and the rhetoric of George Bush's 'war on terrorism'. A group of teachers and students of Delhi University kept up a consistent struggle to ensure a fair trial for SAR Geelani in the bleak days of 2002, when one of the worst state-sponsored carnages of post-Independence Indian history was in progress in Gujarat, and Geelani was not only sentenced to death by a POTA (Prevention of Terrorist Activities Act) court but also subjected to a blatant media trial pronouncing him guilty even before the court verdict. Eventually a national level Committee was formed, drawing in respected academics like Rajni Kothari and writer Arundhati Roy, while lawyers like Nandita Haksar and others undertook to fight the case on Geelani's behalf. Their patient and unrelenting work was successful in exposing what turned out to be a blatant frame-up. Geelani was acquitted and released. The Geelani case revealed the extent to which democracy can be subverted by the discourse on 'national security'. However, it also demonstrated that spaces for democratic intervention are not entirely closed off.

Of course, this was only a partial victory and the December 13th attack on parliament has a darker story behind it which we cannot go into now, the latest episode of which was the unjust execution of Afzal Guru for a crime the Supreme Court conceded he did not commit.

Another set of citizens' initiatives that came since 1984 and the massacre of Sikhs were several anti-communal groups in different parts of the country. One of the earliest of these was a forum called the *Nagarik Ekta Manch*, formed in 1984 itself. This was an initiative where people from different backgrounds and vocations came together to work in the relief camps – collecting and distributing relief materials, helping people file claims and so on. At about the same time, another group, the *Sampradayikta Virodhi Andolan (SVA)* was formed in Delhi, focusing primarily on public campaigns, attempting simultaneously to find a different language in which to conduct such campaigns. A wide debate was sparked in secular circles by one of the slogans evolved by the SVA to counter the Hindu right-wing campaign on *Ramjanmabhoomi*, discussed in Chapter 2. This slogan, in a radical departure from secular strategy, appealed to the religious Hindu – *kan-kan mein vyaape hain Ram/Mat bhadkao danga leke unka naam (Ram is in every atom / let not His name be used to incite violence)*.

These could be said to have been precursors to a series of new initiatives in different towns and cities of India that came into being in the 1990s, especially in the wake of the demolition of the *Babri Masjid* and the communal violence that followed. Perhaps the most significant part of the citizens' actions of the 1990s was that they took up the struggle that was all

but abandoned by political parties – whether ruling or opposition, Right or Left. Through this period groups have worked throughout India, engaging in a range of activities – street demonstrations and sit-ins to engage the public in debate and discussion, designing and implementing educational programmes, monitoring the media, pursuing cases in court, providing legal and other assistance to the victims of communal violence and making every effort to see that the guilty officials and political leaders would not escape punishment. Again, in the aftermath of the Gujarat carnage of 2002, during the long months of continued violence, innumerable individuals and newly formed groups from all over India went to Gujarat, helping in running relief camps, coordinating collections and distribution of relief materials, running schools for children of the victims – and of course, providing the legal support to fight the cases. These efforts might well comprise one of the most glorious chapters of citizens' interventions in post-independence India.

Urbanism could be said to be one of the fledgling movements in contemporary India. Prior to the 1990s issues of the urban poor, (pavement dwellers, hawkers and vendors, rickshaw pullers) were raised by Left political parties, individuals and groups in Mumbai and Kolkata, largely as questions of poverty and the 'state's responsibility' to the poor. The old Nehruvian state was also much more responsive to this call of responsibility. It was in the 1990s, with India's rapid global integration, that urban space really began to emerge as an arena of struggle. Alongside the contests over space arose newer concerns regarding

urban congestion, pollution and consequent concerns about health. The state's response – prodded by a section of environmentalists and the judiciary – was to revive the old modernist fantasy of the ordered and zoned city. It was around these issues that struggles started seriously erupting in the late 1990s.

In Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Bangalore, citizens' initiatives brought together questions of environment and workers' rights and linked them up with the larger question of urban planning. Some groups conducted mass campaigns through their constituent political groupings, but the most significant impact they had was in making urban planning a matter of public debate, drawing architects and planners with alternative visions into the debate. The question of a public transport system, road planning and such other questions came into the ambit of the debate for the first time. In some cities alternative data was generated on the availability and consumption of water, electricity and other amenities in settlements of the labouring poor as well as the affluent.

Today as Arvind Kejriwal begins his civil disobedience campaign on the inflated costs of water and electricity, we can see the historical links to earlier forms of activism.

Since the late 1980s, non-party movements and citizens' initiatives have grown and functioned in a complicated relationship with NGOs. The apprehension of being driven by funder agendas, becoming depoliticized and being co-opted by funding has kept most movements and citizens' initiatives consciously 'non-funded'. At the same time many NGOs often provide movements with vital support in terms of infrastructure, campaigns

and educational materials. Thus, while the peoples' movements fight their battles in faraway rural or forest areas, with little access to the media, it is these NGOs that set up and house the various metropolitan 'support groups' whose task it is to approach friendly and influential people in the media, bureaucracy and academia to advocate the cause of the movement concerned. Such NGOs have often also provided critical research inputs on technical details, environmental impact and other information required to conduct a credible campaign. A striking example of such a symbiosis is the Narmada Bachao Andolan.

These citizens' initiatives were rarely mass movements, but in the first decades on the 21st century we have begun to see mass movements of this new, coalitional kind, arising around the issue of land acquisition. Such movements have brought into crisis the hitherto unquestioned assumption that industrialization and economic development of a particular kind are natural stages in human history. This assumption is shared across the political spectrum from Right to Left and so these movements come into sharp contradiction with an Old Left framework that has still not understood the deep ecological crisis our planet faces and the need to rethink entirely the idea of endless growth which is in fact impossible.

Increasingly, movements against land acquisition are coming together with the movement against nuclear energy, from Jaitapur to Kudankulam. In these mass movements we see the new form of coming together of political energies. That is, around a single issue, a range of forces come together, from religious forces like the Jamat in Singur and Nandigram

and the Church in Kudankulam, to the familiar spectrum of individuals and groups – Gandhians, Dalit groups, NGOs, left groups and sometimes left parties and so on. The anti-nuclear energy movements of course, go back to the era of citizens' initiatives when groups like Anumukti, Network to Oust Nuclear Energy (NONE) and Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (COSNUP) were set up. Such citizens' initiatives were undertaken to highlight issues such as the dangers of radiation to communities located in uranium mining sites, the undemocratic and opaque nature of functioning of India's nuclear establishment, and as always, the injustice of displacing populations from their homes and occupations in order to set up nuclear energy plants. More importantly, these groups developed a critique of nuclear energy as such, asserting, along with a growing chorus of voices globally, that it was 'neither clean nor safe nor cheap.' While this work did not have a mass movement dimension until now, we see the coming together of these older initiatives with the mass movements in Kudankulam and Jaitapur.

Again, the Old Left is completely out of tune with these new developments, as in its imaginative horizon, nuclear energy is central to a strong nation state. For example, the proposal to build a giant nuclear power station in Haripur in West Bengal is a central government project, but is fully supported by the Left Front. The ecological and social consequences of building a nuclear plant in the densely populated Gangetic delta region are fearsome to contemplate, and the CPI (M)'s enthusiastic support for it is deeply troubling.

Coming now to the women's movement, it has functioned more or less in the form of citizens' initiatives of the kind I have described, with occasional mass mobilization by political parties. In the 1980s, the "autonomous women's movement" emerged from the patriarchy and control of left-wing political parties. The first national-level autonomous women's conferences were thus attended by non-funded, non-party, self-defined feminist groups. Over the 1990s, very few of these survived as non-funded organizations, and the seventh conference in 2006, held in Kolkata, referred to above, was almost entirely attended by funded NGOs. It is also important to note that many "non" governmental organizations receive funding from the government for specific projects. Thus, the only groups that were finally excluded were non-funded left wing and radical women's organizations, which seemed to many feminists to be a strange paradox. Increasingly however, in the last few years, coalitions around issues such as sexual violence and the rights of LGBT people, include political parties of the Left. Feminists also perceive the close link between movements around livelihood and ecological sustainability, and the women's movement - Nalini Nayak, who works with fisher-people's movements on these issues, terms ecological movements the "resource base of our feminism".

And so we arrive at the end of the first decade of the 21st century, a decade in which we see two kinds of new political action. One - unprecedented urban mass movements in the city of Delhi and in other cities and towns, around two issues - corruption and sexual violence.

Two - social media driven mobilizations by young upper class women around the issue of women's rights to public space.

Both these kinds of mobilizations, quite opposite in character to each other, have proved difficult for older Left and women's movement perspectives to come to terms with, for they follow none of the older patterns of mobilizing, there is no comprehensive programme of action, only one narrow slogan, and the mass character necessarily means there can be no broader agreement around large political issues.

Let me start with the second phenomenon I mentioned.

Two campaigns have caught media attention. One, the Pink Chaddi campaign. In 2009, men of a hitherto little known Hindu right-wing organization called Sri Ram Sene, physically attacked young women in pubs in the city of Mangalore. These attacks, supposedly an attempt to protect Indian culture from defilement by western values, were met with protests and solidarity campaigns all over the country, but the most imaginative one came to be called the Pink Chaddi campaign. A cheeky Facebook group was launched by Delhi journalist Nisha Susan, with the name of 'Consortium of Pubgoing, Loose and Forward Women', which called upon women to send pink chaddis (underwear) to the leader of the Ram Sene, Pramod Muthalik, as a gift on Valentine's Day, in a non-violent gesture of ridicule and protest. Over 2000 chaddis were in fact delivered to the Ram Sene office, and the organization was a butt of ridicule all over the world. It is striking that the campaign used the word 'chaddi'

rather than 'panty', simultaneously desexualizing the piece of clothing, ungendering it (chaddi refers to underwear in general, not just to women's panties), and playing on the pejorative slang for Hindu right-wingers, after the uniform of their parent organization, the RSS, whose members wear khaki shorts. At one level an undoubtedly successful campaign, it faced criticism from conservative opinion for obvious reasons, and also from the left of the political spectrum.

The latter chastised the campaign for elitism ('after all, only westernized women in cities go to pubs') and for diverting attention to such a trivial issue when for most women in India, their very survival is at stake. Is going to pubs what feminism is about, was the question such critics raised. Of course not. And nor did the 'Consortium' claim it was anything as large as 'feminism' itself. It was a specific campaign in response to a specific attack, and as Nisha Susan put it, 'for many of those who signed up, neither Valentine's Day nor pub-going meant anything. What we agreed on is the need to end violence in the name of somebody's idea of Indian culture' (2009). The campaign brazenly owned up to the identities the Hindu right-wing attributed to women in pubs - 'loose and forward' - and made them badges of pride. And it clearly touched a chord across the country, for most people understood it as defiance towards the Hindu right's moral policing in general, not merely about women's right to drink in pubs.

The other instance was the organizing of Slut Walks in Delhi and Bhopal. Slut Walks, both in European and American cities as well as in some Indian ones, must be

understood as a critique of the victim blaming culture that surrounds rape. The original Slut Walk was a reaction to a Canadian police officer's remark that if women dress 'like sluts', they must expect to be raped. However, the overwhelmingly positive responses world-wide to Slut Walks, reveal that blaming the victim is not an attitude restricted to the West.

In India, within the feminist camp, there were misgivings expressed that the English word 'slut' has no resonance at all here. In response, the organizers of the march added a Hindi phrase explaining the name, so that it became Slut Walk arthaat Besharmi Morcha, drawing on the Hindi word besharam meaning 'without shame' or shameless, often used for women who refuse to live by patriarchal rules. What was interesting about Slut Walks in India (held in Bhopal and Delhi in July 2011), was that they were not organized by the established women's movement organizations and well-known feminist faces, but by much younger women new to political organizing, who were expressing, however, an old and powerful feminist demand - the right to safety in public spaces.

If this was elite mobilization, what is the problem for the Left with mass mobilizations? It appears that the non-party Left has a deep rooted fear of the masses, which it can only see as communal and casteist, and politically regressive. Throughout the Anna Hazare phase of the India Against Corruption movement, we saw from this section, which forms our community, strident demands for absolute purity of the radical position (for example, what do these people have to say about Kashmir?). We saw a sort of aggressive self-

marginalization and self-exile to a high ground where all credentials were closely scrutinized, and we saw the absolute incomprehension of and contempt of people who are our friends, for 'the people' when actually confronted by them.

Interestingly, political parties of the Left, especially CPI (ML), were supportive of the movement and active in various ways, this sharp criticism came from individuals of the non-Party left.

What I saw was a carnivalesque celebration of the pure ideals of democracy – of the idea that 'we the people' are sovereign, that politicians are the servants of the people, that laws must originate in the needs and demands of the people.

What my community saw though, was a mindless mob of communal and casteist - and even "fascist" middle classes.

For twelve days, a city in which protest had been consigned to a museumized space, Jantar Mantar, was reclaimed for protest by a crashing tide of humanity so huge, so peaceful and non-violent, that it simply took back the city. No violence. No untoward incidents and no hysteria (except on television channels). How is this fascism? Are all large gatherings of the masses fascist?

Since many of the critics swear by some form of 'Marxism-Leninism', let me quote from Lenin who said in 1916 of the 1905 revolution:

"Whoever expects a 'pure' social revolution will never live to see it. Such a person pays lip-service to revolution without understanding what revolution is... The Russian Revolution of 1905 was a bourgeois-democratic revolution. It consisted

of a series of battles in which all the discontented classes, groups and elements of the population participated. Among these there were masses imbued with the crudest prejudices; there were small groups which accepted Japanese money, there were speculators and adventurers, etc. But objectively, the mass movement was breaking the [back] of tsarism and paving the way for democracy."

Another kind of critic speaks not in the name of revolution, but of democracy; a democracy disciplined through representative institutions with The People entering the stage every five years. The People are a continuous source of anxiety, casteist and communal as all of them are. Little wonder then that this set of Leftist and Left-liberals remained silent when the government denied permission for the protest and arrested Hazare on August 16; some even denying that there had been a violation of civil liberties.

Law-making needs to be demystified – "it's a very complex process", the experts on TV kept saying. But what the movement did was it made it legitimate to say that we have a right to the information that will enable us to arrive at a conclusion. I heard a young law student stumblingly explain before a TV camera in English, which was clearly not his first language: "They say the Parliament is sovereign. No. They should read the Constitution. The people are sovereign."

(to be concluded)

The JP Memorial Lecture Organised by the PUCL and Delivered at the Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi on 23rd March 2013



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Should CBI be an independent body?

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**New Social Movements,
 New Perspectives - II**

Nivedita Menon

**Legacy of
 Dr. Asghar Ali Engineer**

Irfan Engineer

**National Convention of
 the Socialist Party (India)**

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Choice before the voter

S. Viswam

On the morning of Wednesday May 22, (the ninth anniversary of the UPA in power at the Centre), the Prime Minister was getting ready to present a report card of his government's achievements in the last nine years of office. At the same time, the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha Sushma Swaraj and her counterpart in the Upper House Arun Jaitley were preparing to launch a direct and critical attack on the government and point out the specific areas that have suffered because of the UPA's misgovernance. Indeed, this kind of government-opposition face-off has been one of the features of the UPA's second term. The Congress-led UPA and the BJP-led NDA have had hard, ruthless and no-hold-barred adversarial relations throughout the last nine years. While there is no surprise here, the fact remains that between two alliances, there is little to choose for the electorate which will be required to vote in a new government at the Centre in 2014. The NDA is as bad or good as the UPA. However, the UPA still remains the better formation since it is secular, more committed to democracy and democratic processes and norms

than most of the parties in the NDA, and the Congress cadre is still wedded to and practices Gandhian principles and thoughts. Objectively, despite all the allegations of misgovernance and non-performance being levelled against the UPA, the Congress-led alliance is a better bet for the voter, even for the only reason that by electing the UPA to power for a third term, we will be preventing the triumph of communal forces. As we had argued in our earlier columns, large sections of our people are weary of both the UPA and the NDA but do not have the privilege and pleasure of voting for a grouping that is neither Congress-associated nor NDA-linked. In other words, what is colloquially being touted as a Third Front or a Third Force. Such a front may or may not emerge between now and the year of the poll 2014. In view of this uncertainty, what is the choice or what are the choices before the voter?

On paper, and on the basis of the accuracy of official claims, the UPA is still a good choice. The track record of the Opposition does not have much to commend itself as a

grouping that has contributed constructively to nation-building or political stability. Its strong point is that it was a recurring thorn in UPA's flesh and made life miserable for the government all through the last nine years. But that is not reason enough why it deserves your vote and mine. The BJP has yet to surrender its communal overtones and undertones and give up touting saffron affiliations whenever it needs to fall back on communal slogans and divisive sectarian politics. If marks were to be allotted for championship in disruptive politics, the NDA opposition in parliament would win hands down. But, again, is this sole "achievement" worthy of popular endorsement at the hustings? Obviously not.

The Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party are not supporting the UPA out of love for the Congress or admiration of Sonia Gandhi or because they hold Manmohan Singh in high esteem. They do so because they would rather keep a secular, democratic and liberal-minded formation in power rather than encourage the communal forces to seize power and jeopardise communal harmony and social peace.

Having said all this, it only remains to point out that in the public perception the UPA has burnt its boat and has failed to retain the public goodwill with which it started off in 2009 on a second term. Even Dr. Manmohan Singh's sterling image has taken a beating. That however does not mean that all is irretrievably lost for the UPA. There is still a year to go, and the UPA can do a great deal to transform its image through positive social welfare

(Continued on Page 7)

Should CBI be an independent body?

Bapu Heddurshetti

Recently, in the Coal scam case, a three-Judge Bench of the Supreme Court comprising Justices R.M. Lodha, Madan B. Lokur and Kurian Joseph took exception to the sharing of the Status Report by the Director of the Central Bureau of Investigation with the law officers of the Government of India, namely, the Additional Solicitor General of India and possibly the Attorney General of India and the Law Minister as also with some officials of the Prime Minister's Office and directed the Director, CBI, not to share such Reports with any of them in future. It has even asked the Attorney General G. E. Vahanvati to take instructions from the government whether a law could be enacted to insulate the CBI from extraneous influence and make it an independent organisation to ensure its functional autonomy.

The Bench even told the Attorney General that they "would be happy if a law is put in place before the next date of hearing i.e., on July 10." It appears the Judges even suggested that the "government need not wait for Parliament's approval. There are other methods to achieve the objective, like issuing of an ordinance and it would be a golden day if that happens."

These were oral observations made by the Judges of the Supreme Court during the course of the hearing and not part of their written judgement. I doubt if the Judges will dare to make these observations part of their written judgement. If the Judges are not able to make their

observations part of their judgement, they should refrain from making such observations since they carry a lot of importance in the eyes of the public. However, these observations of the Supreme Court raise two very important and serious questions. First is about the issuing of an ordinance. The second is about the independence of the CBI.

Article 123 of the Constitution dealing with the promulgation of ordinances reads as follows: "Power of President to promulgate Ordinances during recess of Parliament:- (1) If at any time, except when both Houses of Parliament are in session, the President is satisfied that circumstances exist which render it necessary for him to take immediate action, he may promulgate such Ordinances as the circumstances appear to him to require". By suggesting that the Government can issue an ordinance, the Supreme Court is presuming that the President will be *satisfied* that *circumstances exist which render it necessary for him to take immediate action* of making the CBI an independent body without waiting for the Parliament to debate the law. Do the Judges feel that circumstances exist for taking the immediate action of making the CBI an independent body bypassing the Parliament? What if the President is *not* satisfied that, such circumstances exist and that the law can wait till the Parliament meets? And then it beats one's imagination as to how the Supreme Court Judges could even think of *conspiring* with the Executive to bypass the

Parliament in enacting such an important law?

More important question is as to whether the CBI should be made an independent body? The accusation is that the governments have used the CBI for political purposes. Firstly in the sense that if a party is in power it uses the CBI selectively to investigate the offences committed by those who are opposed to it. Secondly in the sense that if the government wants to favour a person who is being investigated by the CBI, it drops the investigation and lets the offender off, the hook. In both cases, the motive of the government is questioned. But in the first case, what about the offence committed by the offender? Should he be let off only because the government had political motives in ordering an investigation? I feel that the offender should be investigated, prosecuted and punished if he has committed any offence irrespective of the motive for ordering the investigation. Similarly, in the second case, what is important is as to whether any offence has been made out rather than the motive behind the dropping of the investigation.

The CBI was constituted during the Second World War as Special Police Establishment, but was later continued under the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act 1946. It is a force constituted by the Central Government for investigating certain offences in the Union Territories of Delhi and others. While the constitution of the force is by the Union Government, the superintendence, insofar as it relates to investigation of offences alleged to have been committed under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, vests with the Central Vigilance Commission and in all other matters

vests in the Central Government.

Since the superintendence and control vests in the Central Government, the Central Government will be held responsible for any acts of commission or omission by the CBI. The CBI is answerable to the Minister concerned and the minister concerned is answerable to the Parliament. If it is revealed that the CBI investigated a case with *mala fide* intention, the Minister concerned is pulled up in the Parliament. If so, is it not open to a minister to call for the reports of investigations and examine them? After all, is he not answerable to the Parliament about the CBI? If it is made independent, it is answerable to whom? For the unbridled use of money and muscle power during elections, are we holding the Election Commission, which is an independent authority, responsible and calling for its resignation?

Lord Hewart's classic dicta, that "Justice should not only be done, but should manifestly and undoubtedly be seen to be done," is now a well established principle of law. In this case, and in many other cases, the Supreme Court has asked the investigating agencies to give their reports in 'sealed covers' only to the Judges. Are not the parties, if not the general public, entitled to know the contents of the 'sealed covers' for the contents may influence the decision of the Court? Should not the Attorney General, who is a constitutional authority, not know what is written in the Status Report because, he has to argue the case before the Court. Should not the Solicitor General of India who represents the Central Government, entitled to know what is written in the Report. Can they argue the case

without knowing what is written in the Status Report?

It is general practice that whenever any papers are filed by any party in the Court, the other side is served with a copy of the same because transparency is the bedrock of judicial proceedings. Everything must be done in *open court* and not in closed chambers, as people would then not know what is happening behind the closed doors. Secrecy, Justice Ruma Paul says, albeit in a different context, is the third sin of judiciary. What happened to the list of 16 chief justices of India, of whom at least 8 were definitely corrupt according to the former Law Minister, Shanti Bhushan, given in a 'sealed cover' to the Supreme Court more than 30 months ago?

Not that, if independence is given, the officers of the CBI will become the paragons of virtue. We have seen how an *independent judiciary* behaves. It does not want to be answerable under the RTI and does not even want to be transparent about the selection process of the Judges. Section 6 of the Delhi Police Establishment Act very clearly stipulates that the consent of the States is necessary for the CBI to investigate the offences within the territories of that State. This is because the CBI is an instrument of the Central Government and if it starts investigations within the territories of the States, it will be violating the principle of federalism which is enshrined in the Constitution.

Still in 2010, a five judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court said that the High Courts and the Supreme Court will have the power and jurisdiction to order a CBI investigation into a cognisable offence alleged to have been

committed within the territory of a State *without the consent of that State* on the ground that the Courts are the protectors of the civil liberties of the citizens and hence they have an obligation to protect the fundamental rights of the citizens. This was in clear violation of not only the law made by the Parliament, namely the Delhi Police Establishment Act but also of the Constitution of India since the subjects of 'Public Order' and 'Police' are included in the State List of the Seventh Schedule, as also of the principle of federalism. Courts must protect the civil liberties and the fundamental rights by acting within the limits of law and not by violating the law.

Dealing with the Lawyer-Police-Media persons clash in Bangalore on March 2, 2012, a Bench of the Supreme Court consisting of Justices B.S.Chouhan and Swatantarkumar said that they would want an enquiry by the CBI. When the counsel for the Karnataka Government said that "in order to protect the federal structure, the State government should be allowed to handle the issue" the Court said "don't worry about the federal structure. The process of law has to be fair and transparent. The inquiry is important". But when the government speaks about transparency in appointment of judges by the judges themselves, the Supreme Court raises the bogey of 'independence of judiciary'.

All this inspite of the recent warning by the present Chief Justice of India, S.H.Kapadia : "Judges should not govern this country. We need to go by strict principle. Whenever you lay down a law, it should not interfere with governance. We are not accountable

to people". Strangely, in a recent judgment, the Supreme Court says "The constitutional trade-off for independence is that judges must restrain themselves from the areas reserved to the other separate branches".

The Supreme Court can annul a law which is contrary to the constitution, but can they flout the law made in accordance with the constitution? Is the Supreme Court *above the law* made by the Parliament? Justice Ruma Paul's observation that 'the judges who enforce the law for others often break that law with impunity' aptly fits here. If the Supreme Court which is supposed to uphold the law can do it, what mischief can, the CBI, an investigative agency do when it becomes an *independent* agency? These are some of the questions which the people have to ponder.

The Director of CBI had rightly said that he is part of the government and takes orders from the government. But now that he has to take orders from the Judges of the Supreme Court, can we hold the Judges responsible for the actions of the CBI? One of the Judges on the Bench said that the CBI is a *caged parrot with many masters*. But by directing the CBI to obey its orders, and not of others, is the Supreme Court trying to become the *sole master*? While it does not behove the dignity of the Supreme Court to call names to statutory institutions, one wonders what others would have called the judiciary when it crawled before the Dictator during the emergency. And pray, why is the 'parrot' unleashed by the Bhushans in September 2010 that 16 former chief justices of whom eight, were "definitely corrupt" still kept in the 'cage' by the Supreme Court even

after 30 months?

Anyway, I shudder to imagine the day when an investigative agency like the CBI acts independently or takes orders from an undemocratic body like the Supreme Court and refuses to abide by the orders of the democratically elected government. Should army also be made independent? Remember Kargil when the Pakistan Army acted without even the knowledge of the democratically elected government let alone on its orders.

Even now, apart from political interference, there is corruption in CBI. For example, on 6th March 2012, the CBI arrested its own lawyer in the Adarsh case. The Outlook dated 17th September 2012 reported that the CBI arrested its own officer in a bribery case. Many such instances can be counted. Entrustment of powers has to be tested against its possible misuse. Should we entrust independent power to such an organisation? Can we guarantee that it will not abuse its powers? In case it abuses its powers, whom to hold responsible. Now that the Supreme Court has asked the CBI to report directly to it, if the CBI does something wrong, will the Supreme Court judges resign as the opposition demanded the resignation of the Law Minister?

More important is the dictum of Montesquieu that "When the legislative and executive powers are united in the same person, or in the same body of magistrates, there can be no liberty. . . Again, there is no liberty if the judicial power be not separated from the legislative and executive'. By directing the CBI to report directly to it, the Supreme Court is abrogating both executive and judicial powers to itself which

will endanger liberty and democracy.

We should learn a lesson from what happened when the judiciary wrested its *independence* from the executive. As to whether Judiciary has been able to achieve its independence, Justice Ruma Paul says: “The insulation of the judiciary from executive interference in the matter of appointment and transfer of judges is now almost complete. But the question remains, has this almost complete insulation achieved the object for which the constitutional interpretation was strained to an extent never witnessed before or after? In my opinion it has not”. On the contrary she counts seven sins of the Judiciary.

Mr. Alladi Krishnaswamy Aiyar, a member of the Constituent Assembly, had expressed fears in the Constituent Assembly that “the judiciary should not place itself as an *imperium in imperio*,” i.e., that it should not become a ‘state’ within a ‘state’, and Dr. P.Subbarayan, another member of the Constituent Assembly, had fondly expressed the hope as also the fear that “the provisions that have been made in this Constitution will not make the judiciary an *imperium in imperio*. Of course, there is always that danger also”. And the judiciary has precisely tried to become an *imperium in imperio*, “with all the interpretative tools at its command - termed by many as an *unacceptable feat of judicial activism*” as Justice Ruma Paul puts it.

We should not create a ‘state’ within a ‘state’ which judiciary has become and the CBI will become if made independent. If the political

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New Social Movements, New Perspectives - II

Nivedita Menon

And I loved the way people said to the camera – *Main Kapil Sibal se kehna chahta hoon, main Manmohanji ko batana chahti hoon* – directly, they addressed the “leaders”, the politicians, as if they have a right to. This is neither anti political nor anti political classes – it is the exact opposite. It is the insistence precisely that “we the people” are political, we demand accountability from those whom we send to Parliament.

It is by now established that there was substantial Muslim and Dalit participation despite their leaders’ disapproval. The other misrepresentation being continually purveyed is that the supporters of this movement are the middle classes. If the lakhs of people who participated in the protests over twelve days in Delhi alone, are all ‘middle class’, then India must be Shining after all! Anybody who moved around where protests were happening could have seen that the large majority of participants were lower middle class to working class people. In Delhi local protests happened everywhere, far away from TV cameras – in middle class housing societies, working class ‘unauthorized’ colonies, around local mosques in poor localities, small temples.

We also know from newspaper reports that there was growing participation of workers throughout - railway workers affiliated to AITUC; 1800 temporary-for-years Delhi Transport Corporation workers who were sacked for going

to Ramlila Maidan; dabbawalas in Mumbai who have not struck work for 140 years; sections of auto drivers; Maruti workers from Manesar in Haryana.

The other argument against an anti-corruption law is that ‘corruption provides a little shade to the poor’. As a skeptic about the law and the state, I have often written about the freedoms made possible by going under the radar of the state. But how to understand the poor and working class who throng the movement? Perhaps ‘corruption’ is precisely not to be in the shade, to be forced into engaging with **the force of Law**, but **outside the protection** of the law. Perhaps the ‘corrupt’ people protesting corruption would like to live a life in which they wouldn’t have to be corrupt just to survive every day? We need to recognize that the term ‘corruption’ as it plays out in the movement, condenses within it a range of discontents – an accumulating anger over repeated betrayals of democratic expectations over years, but especially over the last decade. The immediate trigger of the movement was the series of instances of looting of the public exchequer that came to light recently – the Commonwealth Games, the 2G Spectrum scam, the Niira Radia tapes that exposed how ministers were being fixed to benefit particular business houses, and so on. But corruption is also an everyday matter for the poor – the thelawala paying hafta to the beat constable; the labourer whose muster rolls are faked, the agricultural worker whose

NREGA payment is swallowed up; every poor undertrial in jail on trumped up charges (was it surprising then, that the undertrials in Tihar fasted in solidarity with Anna?); the farmer whose land is seized to be passed on to corporates, an issue mentioned by Anna Hazare in his speech at Ramlila Maidan (*kisanon ki zameen zabardasti chheeni ja rahi hai*); the aspirant to own an auto rickshaw costing 1 lakh, who ends up paying more than a car costs, and drowns in debt.

A young working class boy we know, falsely implicated in a theft case by the police for over four years, rang up at the height of the agitation to tell us jubilantly that the beat constable had told him that the cases were being closed – “*Anna hazare ke chakkar mein pulis saare case khatam kar rahi hai*” (All this Anna Hazare stuff is going on, so the police are closing all the cases.) We don’t know what made him think this had anything to do with Anna Hazare. But this is the Anna moment. This is what the Subaltern Studies historians drew our attention to, the multiple meanings Gandhi had for different sections of people, the ‘rumours of Gandhi’ that galvanized a variety of protests that directly addressed local issues.

But also, maybe the police were scared for an instant?

To all those who woke up to the India Against Corruption movement in April 2011 – a gentle reminder that this is the crystallization of a long process that began in the villages, initiated by the campaign around the Right to Information. The RTI Act (2005), instrumental in exposing corruption in a range of spaces from NREGA to municipal schools, was the culmination of one phase of the movement; the establishment of an

Ombudsman or Lokpal was always planned as the next stage. Corruption is tied fundamentally to the RTI Act that exposes it, so effectively that several RTI activists have been murdered.

Now of course, Arvind Kejriwal has decided to go the way of a political party, but what we see of the AAP so far, it is clearly not a conventional party with a top-down leadership, and it appears to be genuinely seeking a new way of being a party, with actual mass participation in decision making, which might change the ground rules for all parties.

The experience of the mobilizations around IAC were behind the **massive protests around the Delhi gang-rape**. This time, the voices of critique were muted, although a prominent critic was Arundhati Roy, who immediately termed the protests upper class. But again, this was not the case. The protests were sparked off by the rape of a girl on a bus at 9.30 at night. She could have been anybody – she was not in a car, or even an auto. Nobody knew her caste – later it turned out she is from a very poor family and from the Kurmi caste, which is by no means an upper caste – but the point is nobody actually knew who she was – she was Everywoman.

And again, exactly like the IAC movement, there were right-wing voices as well as left-wing and feminist voices against sexual violence. These feminist thoughts were being articulated by not only people calling themselves feminists but ordinary middle class people who may not consider themselves to be very political at all. There were thousands of submissions to the Justice Verma committee and many

of these have been made by ordinary people, resident’s Welfare Associations and so on, asking for changes in the broader patriarchal context of society – things like women’s safety and police sensitivity.

There has been a ground level shift among people reflecting decades of feminist intervention at different levels, but there is a real disconnect between the people and politicians. Feminist understandings have caught on in the ordinary public but this is not matched by the understanding of state agencies. Not only was a feminist position NOT articulated by anyone in a position of power or any political organization in a consistent way, most politicians from Left to Right came out with the most misogynist and regressive statements about women and about sexual violence.

And again, people did not have to be mobilized by any organized left wing, right wing or feminist groups. The transformation that has taken place in the last 4-5 years is that people feel like they own the city and can come out in protest on the streets – and I think this can be tracked back to India Against Corruption.

Any mass movement brings together disparate and sometimes starkly contradictory tendencies. Don’t we know that from the Indian struggle for independence? Was the Indian bourgeoisie absent from it? Or the religious right of all sorts? Or casteist and Brahminical forces? If absolute purity and a point-to-point matching of our full political agenda is required for us to support a movement, then feminists would be permanently stuck restively in the waiting room of history, for I can assure you that every mass demonstration you see anywhere

ever, is packed with patriarchal men and patriarchalized women! Nor does any movement except the women's movement ever raise patriarchy as an issue. But what is it that we take into account when we do support a movement? One – does the movement express a goal or demand that we support? Two – Does the movement as such explicitly take positions that are anti-women or anti-anything-we-stand-for? (The answers of course, should be yes and no respectively).

The huge movement in Goa that succeeded in scrapping the SEZ Bill was composed of precisely such a broad formation – from the Church to the Hindu Right, to all of the others of my community as described above. They came together, they went their separate ways once their campaign succeeded. Nandigram saw a similar formation. Many non-party non-funded citizens' forums have too. The Narmada Bachao Andolan is another broad alliance coalescing on a single issue. For that matter, at Tahrir Square there were Islamists (Muslim Brotherhood), and people and groups who stand for full-scale capitalism apart from secularists and feminists and workers and trade unions. Now it's a struggle of secularists against the Muslim right-wing in Egypt, but that is a historically contingent, not necessary or inevitable development.

It is the logic of the development of a mass movement in all its messiness that we should seek to understand, rather than look for that pure, 22-carat revolution where everything will proceed according to the programme laid down by the Left elite. From this perspective, nothing less than our maximum agenda is acceptable – from SEZs to farmers' suicides, from AFSPA in the Northeast to the murder of

democracy in Kashmir. If you will not accept even one of these points, you're out - we will have nothing to do with you. It is not "they" who say 'if you are not with us you are against us', this arrogant divisive slogan has always been ours, on the Left.

Those issues listed above are our issues too, but what if a mass movement does not raise them? What if it articulates itself around a more generalized and widespread concern? Any student of mass movements anywhere in the world knows that mass movements of this scale only arise around issues where the largest sections of the people feel affected by it. They can never arise around sectional issues – however big the sections concerned may be.

This lecture is based on material from my earlier published work, some of it singly authored, some jointly written with Aditya Nigam, in continuing conversation with whom these ideas have developed.

(Continued from Page 2)

programmes like the Food Security Bill, greater vigilance for prevention of scams and tighter administrative control. Signs of good governance in the coming months can raise the UPA from the pits again. Dr. Manmohan Singh has to assert himself and ensure that his government does not put a wrong foot forward in any nation-building programme. A third chance is difficult but not impossible.

(Continued from Page 5)

class is interfering with the investigation by the CBI, the remedy does not lie in making it an independent body. The remedy is in electing a better government and appointing better ministers. It is interesting to note that though the famous Federal Bureau of Investigation came under severe criticism in the investigation of President Kennedy's assassination,

And the question really is of the potentiality of the movement rather than what it is, at any given point. It will only be inclusive to the extent that it is able to draw in the largest number.

We will of course have to part ways at some point to fight our separate battles, but we can come together for a specific limited goal.

We stand at the beginning of a new kind of politics that has all kinds of forces within it, but one of these is certainly the potential to radically transform and rejuvenate democracy. We should be prepared to ride that potential, not undermine it.

today, the civil rights groups in the USA are demanding more democratic control of the FBI. If we want democracy to survive and thrive in India, we should ensure that no person or authority, howsoever high or benevolent he or it might be, is independent of democratic control through the Executive and the Parliament.

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Defeat the moneybags

“Our Finance Minister is going from pillar to post seeking FDI to come to India while our corporate, who have amassed more than five lakh crores of rupees are purchasing lands in Africa. How can that provide employment to the vast army of unemployed youths of our country? Capitalist structure is crumbling even in its home land and is of no use to us the developing countries of the South. The scam-infested UPA-2 must be driven out. Many people say that it is impossible to fight elections because we have no money and they have pots and pots. I say the moneybags of today are not more powerful than the kings or the imperialists of yesterday. If those could be driven away, why should we be afraid to face the crorepatists? I earnestly call upon the activists of the Socialist Party(India), to take courage in both hands, organize trained cyclists and carry on vigorous propaganda beseeching common people not to get lured by money or liquor at the time of elections and elect honest people so that their grievances can be redressed” said Justice Rajindar Sachar while inaugurating Second Biennial Conference of the Socialist Party(India) on 17th May 2013 at Mrinal Gore Nagar, Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala.

Extending good wishes, veteran leader P. Viswambharan said that Gandhi had spiritualised politics but the main political parties of today have caused great degeneration of our public life. We must endeavour to cleanse the body politic.

Former MLA Prem Nath and Ramachandra Kurup of Janata Dal(S) also emphasised the need for consolidation of Socialist forces.

In a fraternal message, Justice V. R. Krishna Aiyer alluded to the words of Swami Vivekanand that getting half a loaf of bread to a poor man was real worship of God. He urged the gathering to strive hard to realize the goal of Socialism.

In his presidential address, Bhai Vaidya said that we must discard Western Model of development and evolve Indian Model by putting full employment and eco-friendly sustainable growth as the main objectives. He also advocated adding “casteless” as prefix to Democratic Socialist Republic in our Constitution.

Calling for deferment of appointing Seventh Pay Commission till minimum monthly income of Rs. 5000 is not assured to every unorganised worker, Bhupen Paul, West Bengal HMS vice president, observed that the Sixth Pay Commission had greatly increased inequality between the upper grade Government employees and the vast multitude of working masses. The resultant Revenue Deficit has added fuel to the fire of inflation and developmental and welfare schemes are starved of the funds. After Jayanti Panchal, leader of Gujarat Mazdoor Panchayat, seconded, the motion was passed unanimously.

Moving the main resolution on “Strengthening the Socialist Party(India) to build up a strong, egalitarian India”, Dr. Abhijit Vaidya demanded that remunerative prices be assured to the agricultural produce and irrigation, power and credit be supplied to the farmers on reasonable terms. He also called upon the youths to extend dignified treatment to women and wipe out vices like drinking, gambling, etc. All citizens, particularly the Government

employees should develop good work culture. People get government they deserve. If we want good government, we must strengthen moral fabric of our polity. The resolution was seconded by Nurul Amin (Hyderabad), Onkar Singh (U.P.), Dr. Prem Singh (Delhi) and Chandra Srinivasan (Mumbai). Referring to a query by some journalists as to why picture of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was printed on the poster along with Gandhi, J.P. and Lohia, Pannalal Surana said that “we do regard Dr. Ambedkar as a socialist mentor because he had criticized in 1920s the imperialist policy of the British vis-à-vis the cotton-growing farmers and particularly because he made Herculean efforts to bestow human rights on Hindu women by replacing Manusmriti by a comprehensive egalitarian Hindu Code.

On second day, conferences of Socialist Yuvajan Sabha and Socialist Mahila Sabha were held. Dr. Niranjana Mahato narrated various activities of the SYS including fighting elections in the Delhi University and dharaana to protest against Formule-A car marathon. Dr. Vaidya, in his presidential address to the SYS said that the youths of Latin America and Middle East and Africa had played great role in the democratic movements there during the last decade or so. SYS will organize our youths for strengthening democratic socialist movement in India.

Seven resolutions were moved by Manju Karketa (Assam), Renu Gambhir (Delhi), Jayashree Panayanchery (Kerala), Vishakha Khaire (Pune), Sadhana Patil (Kolhapur) and others about women’s problems of security,

education, health and employment. In her presidential address to the Socialist Mahila Sabha, Varsha Gupte, (Pune) said that instead of starting one separate bank for women, it is necessary to make

available necessary banking services to women through all branches of the banks all over the country.

Delegates from all over the country expressed their thanks to Raj

Shekharan Nair, chairman of the reception committee and his colleagues for making excellent arrangements.

-Pannalal Surana

Discard the Western model and adopt an alternative Indian model based on the true spirit of the Constitution.

The biennial National Convention of the Socialist Party (India) held at Trivandrum on 17-18 May 2013 in its National Council deliberated upon and adopted the following resolution:

We the people of India have made a resolve in our Constitution that we will establish a Sovereign, Secular, Democratic, Socialist Republic. Provisions in its chapter 4 enjoin the Indian State to provide adequate means of livelihood to every able-bodied man and woman to prevent the concentration of wealth in a few hands, to develop agriculture, handicrafts and small industries, etc. This should be done through decentralisation i.e. through Panchayats, Municipalities and the District Planning Committees and not through the development authorities of the various states/cities. These development authorities should have been dissolved after the Seventy-third and Seventy-fourth Constitutional Amendment Acts through which Institutions of Local Self Governments are created. What should be the model of development can be decided by the people themselves at the local level. It is in the compatibility of the concept of 'Four Pillar State' (*Chaukhamba Raj*), envisaged by Dr. Rammanohar Lohia just one month after the commencement of the Indian Constitution. The rulers-that-be and all political parties would do well to remember all this because they are taking oath in the name of the Constitution.

After taking note of the ill effects of the privatization-liberalisation-globalisation policies, it has become imperative to discard the Western model of development and adopt the Indian model by keeping in mind the fact that two-thirds of our population are engaged in agriculture. Full employment, protection of environment and lessening the gap between various classes and regions should be accepted as goals of our development policies. The government's policy to reduce dependence on agri-sector from 70 per cent to 50 per cent is misguided. Proper infrastructure facilities like communication, water, power, credit, research and marketing should be provided to producers engaged in agriculture, forestry, dairy, fishery, etc. Cooperative societies should be strengthened. Production of daily use commodities like cloth, oil, soap, medicines, etc. be reserved for cottage and small scale industries and their location be decentralized in the direction of achieving self-reliance. Remunerative prices to their produce should be ensured.

Use of fossil fuel be minimized. Nuclear energy, looking at its hazardous nature, should not be used. Instead, renewable sources like solar, wind, gobar be harnessed. Capital

goods industries and all-India services like railway, banking, and insurance must be in the domain of the public sector. The Reserve Bank of India should exercise a diligent control over financial transactions, particularly on capital account.

On environment

The Western model of development has posed a serious threat to the environment world over. Since this model of development sustains itself upon indiscriminate exploitation of the natural resources, the call of its propagators for 'sustainable development' or 'development with human face' is hollow. The Socialist Party has constituted a committee to find genuine solutions to the present climate crisis. The committee will examine the threat posed to the ecosystem by the capitalist model of development and suggest alternatives based on the thoughts of thinkers who advocate harmony between nature and men and differentiate between need and greed.

No to FDI and WTO

The Socialist Party opposes UPA government's decision allowing 51 per cent FDI in the retail sector and

suggests that the retail trade should be reserved only for the domestic sector. Not only the foreign MNCs, but even the big Indian corporate/ industrial houses should be kept away from retail trade. Retailers, particularly vendors and road-side shopkeepers should be protected from the extortion by the local body officers and the police. A well thought-out plan should be made by the government to strengthen and modernise the retail sector which involves 5 crores of population.

India should oppose the WTO which pushes FDI into Banks, Insurance, water, electricity and defence matters. Efforts should be made to steer Indian economy from being dependent upon, and being geared to benefit, corporate capitalism. India must not rush into signing Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and other bi- and multi-lateral trade agreements that would jeopardize access to essential and affordable medicines, seeds and adversely impact other sectors of small and medium scale enterprises.

The Socialist Party believes in sustainability at local level as envisaged by Mahatma Gandhi's Gram Swarajya and Dr. Lohia's 'Four Pillar' model. Opening markets internationally does not provide equal level playing field to domestic players. We have seen how big industries (whether domestic or multinational) are given undue benefits and promotions to help protect their markets and domestic players are dealt with a heavy hand making it all the more difficult for them to survive.

No to seventh pay commission

The seventh pay commission should not be constituted for the next five years to put a break on increasing

disparity of income between organised and unorganised sectors.

No to privatisation/ commercialisation of education

Education is the responsibility of the state and it should be met with utmost commitment and sincerity. The state should provide free, equal and quality education from KG to PG. It should be through CSS (Common School System) and in Indian languages as medium. This goal cannot be achieved unless privatisation/commercialisation of education in any form including PPP (Private Public Partnership) is scrapped. The Indian university system should be strengthened, not only to provide quality education and research to the youth but to accommodate all the aspirants as well. The Socialist Party opposes the entry of private and foreign universities. The private players in the higher education should not be allowed in any manner because they are profiteers and reduce otherwise talented students merely to skilled labourers for the benefit of MNCs.

PDS must be strengthened

With a view to ensure adequate regular supply of food grains, sugar, kerosene, etc. at reasonable prices for the poor and lower middle income groups, PDS structure must be buttressed. Pilferage be eliminated. System of cash transfers proposed by the government should not be adopted as it is fraught with immense potentiality for misuse and fraud.

Labour

Legitimate rights of workers, particularly to collective bargaining and peaceful collective action, must be protected. Social security, in the form of life and health insurance and old age pension be provided to all

workers in the unorganized sector. The State should ensure common, qualitative and free education and health services to all members of the working class.

Honourable treatment to women and their empowerment

State should ensure that there will be no female foeticide, honour killing, bride-burning for dowry and sexual harassment. Violence towards the female citizens at home, workplace or on the streets must stop. Men folk should radically change their mindset and habits as suggested by Dr. Lohia long back. Popular pressure should be built up to prevent obscene and vulgar display/expressions printed or televised in media which is generally controlled by the profit-hungry corporate houses.

Not just cosmetic gestures like introducing an exclusive bank for women, but the channelling of adequate flow of banking services towards women, from all the branches of the banks, should be promoted and monitored.

Maintenance of communal harmony

Effective communal violence law must be enacted soon and implemented ardently. Innocent Muslim youths should not be rounded up in combing operations nor should they be made to linger in jails for indefinite time. Persons responsible for terrorist acts must be brought to book with no loss of time. But ordinary people must not be unjustly harassed in the process.

The Socialist Party has made a demand that the mortal remains of Bahadur Shah Zafar should be brought back to India from Rangoon (presently Yangon), Myanmar, by the

government of India. The party has submitted a memorandum to this effect to the President of India. Zafar was the leader of our First War of Independence against the colonial powers and a symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity. The Socialist Party, at its national convention, launches an all India movement in favour of the demand. The people of India should collectively support this demand of the Socialist Party while enjoying the fruits of freedom.

Promotion of social equality

All-out efforts must be put in to eradicate the caste system and offer special opportunities to the dalits, adivasis and backward castes in the field of education, employment and other walks of life. Forest Rights Act 2006 must be implemented within a reasonable time-span in the best interest of the tribals.

Defence of the Nation

The Socialist party considers the jawans of the Army, Navy and Air Force as the backbone of our defence system. These jawans, who render sterling service to safeguard the borders, should be treated well by their superior officers. Trained jawans should not be deployed as orderlies to serve their officers. This legacy of old days of colonialism should be stopped immediately. Their families back home must also be looked after with care and honour.

India has earned a bad name as the largest single big purchaser of military hardware in the world market. Lakhs of crores of rupees go down the drain as commission. This must be stopped. No more purchases should be made from Western producers. Let our scientists, engineers and technicians, who have put satellites in the sky,

develop and produce heavy armaments and vehicles for our armed forces. India is not a military state and should not indulge in the arms' race which hampers the welfare schemes. There should be no stockpile of nuclear arms. No nuclear plant should be commissioned e. g. Kudankulam, Jaitapur, Gorakhpur etc. or built in future.

North-eastern States and Jammu-Kashmir

The terrain in these Border States being so difficult, greater priority should be accorded to providing rail and road facilities there. As insurgency is fast receding in those areas, the military may be withdrawn or at least AFSPA (Armed Forces Special Powers Act) be lifted with immediate effect. Issues in these states should be resolved peacefully with due regard to the rights and aspirations of the people. The Socialist Party expresses concern, particularly over the terrorist attacks and assaults aimed at those who have been participating in the democratic process in Jammu and Kashmir.

People in other states where the citizens of above states happen to stay for education, employment, and self-employment etc. should accord brotherly treatment towards them.

Foreign policy

Maintenance of world peace and cooperation and Protection of Human Rights should be the guiding principles of our foreign policy. Bonds of friendship with the neighbours and other countries of East Asia and Africa should be strengthened while taking due care and caution about the security concerns of our country. The foreign policy of the country should be free of the neo-imperialist pressures/interests. For example, the

treaty on gas pipe line between India and Iran was dropped due to the US pressure. Sincere diplomatic deliberations should prevail upon direct military action because war brings havoc to humanity. India should pursue the policy of peaceful co-existence with the neighbouring countries. But it should not be done at the cost of land and people of the country. A fitting reply must be given to a neighbour if there is a genuine threat. However, jingoistic rhetoric serves no purpose. On the contrary, such verbosity exposes hollowness of their real commitment.

In the light of the recent Chinese intrusion into 19 kms of Indian Territory, the Socialist Party will initiate a movement to stop all imports of Chinese goods into India so that China does not repeat the practice again. The party does not support direct military action in such incidents and believe that all such disputes should be resolved through bilateral negotiations. But the party does support and demand policies which would protect our local markets, small and middle scale industries and local craft artisans across the country. Such a resolve will strengthen our economic power. Banning imports from China and promoting domestically produced products will give double boost to our economy and put more pressure on China to respect international borders including India's.

The Socialist Party firmly demands that the Indian land occupied by China in the war of 1962 must be vacated and calls upon the Indian government to review its position with regard to Tibet, particularly in the light of persistent Chinese intrusion throughout the Indo-Tibet border. The Party expresses its deep concern over the unabated violence in Syria,

Iraq and Afghanistan. The same imperialist forces, that are responsible for the havoc in these countries, are playing with emotions of the Muslims by circulating objectionable materials in various forms. These forces, in their lust for profit, are not ready to allow peace and harmony a chance to prevail in the world.

Efficient work culture

There should be time-bound clearance of citizens' applications in govt offices, banks, electricity, judicial courts, etc. Officers and employees in government and semi-government establishments should be asked to clear citizens' matters in a given time-frame. Instead of English, officials should use Indian languages and extend courteous behaviour to all citizens. An efficient work culture at the government and semi-government offices is a must to dispel privatisation.

Banish VIP culture

There must be a drastic downsizing of facilities and security provided to VIPs. This legacy of feudal and colonial ages must go from Democratic Republic India. The political and bureaucratic bosses should not be allowed to interfere in the working of various departments including the police. They should learn to live and behave like common Indians while performing their responsibility with utmost commitment and honesty.

Bharat Ratna should be given to Savitri Bai Phule

The Bharat Ratna award should be given to Savitri Bai Phule, the first woman teacher of modern India.

The goal : an alternative politics

It is a matter of utmost concern for the Socialist Party that politics of

hate, violence, conspiracy, rumour and servility is prevailing upon politics that is value based. Most of the mainstream political parties and leaders openly indulge in corruption, communalism, casteism, parochialism, money-power, muscle-power and family lineage tactics. They despise and suppress Indian masses but happily and readily bow

to the dictates of the US controlled neo-imperialist regime. The Socialist Party aspires to create an alternative political culture based on the socialist philosophy and fundamental Constitutional values while opposing this anti-Constitutional and anti-people character of mainstream Indian politics.

Rapid Radical Advance

The Socialist Party has received messages of good wishes and encouragement from several eminent scholars, writers, artists and journalists for its National Convention held at Trivandrum on 17-18 May 2013. These includes Justice Krishna Ayer, educationist Prof. Anil Sadgopal, Advocate and human rights activist Ravi Kiran Jain, PUCL national president Prof. Prabhakar Sinha, economist Prof. Kamal Nayan Kabra, political scientist Prof. Peter Ronald de Souza, theatre director Ram Gopal Bajaj, Janata Weekly editor Dr. G.G. Parikh and journalist Qurban Ali. Justice **V.R. Krishna Ayer's** message :

“India with its ancient civilization and sublime spiritual culture is still a backward country materially, with crores of poor people belonging to the acutely have-not sector of humanity. If the right to life is a guarantee of Swaraj, dignity and welfare are necessary conditions of life as Vivekananda put it:

Feel, my children, feel for the poor, the ignorant, the downtrodden; feel till the heart stops and the brain reels and you think you will go mad.

We talk foolishly against material civilization,. The grapes are sour..... Material civilization, nay even luxury, is necessary to create work for the

poor. Bread; I do not believe in a God, who cannot give me bread here, giving me eternal bliss in heaven. Pooh; India is to be raised, the poor are to be fed, education is to be spread, and the evil of priestcraft is to be removed.....more bread, more opportunity for everybody.....

The resources of the Indian nation have been robbed by imperialist Britain and other foreign nations, the deprived millions suffer from a capitalist system exploited by the wealthy rajas and maharajas. To add to these misfortunes are the gender injustices, lunatic casteism, communal discrimination and the pariah wretchedness which are the lot of the illiterate, under-developed subject classes. The only way of securing dignity of life, decency of existence, basic social justice for the vast masses is by making Swaraj ensure minimum conditions by making available basic needs of life. Such a transformation is possible only by making Bharat a socialist society, free from theological chaos, rituals and superstitions and illiterate frustrations of life. A socialist society abolishing backward material conditions and exploitation is a must if humanism is the rule of life and the die-hard deep poverty, misery and sufferings are to disappear. True equity and equality, gender justice

and the right to health can be possible for the people only through socialism where the resources of the country are distributed fairly where employment and fair wages, child care and old age concern are a fundamental feature of society. It is these obligatory mandates, not prisons and harsh sentences, that make India and its people's life just. If the present injustice continues a violent radicalism will overthrow society. Therefore, the guarantee of socialism and secularism are mandatory in our Republic. Horror and terror are the alternatives. There is no option for Bharat but to become socialist. The present corruption is a pan-Indian vice. Our Constitution using eloquent rhetoric cannot diminish the despair to which people are driven. A socialist society, political and economic sans which Indian culture will be sold to barbarity and primitivism and chronic backward condition will come to stay. By socialism I mean more than mere economics. It implies spiritual mutation of the structure of society. Socialism in its profound value is integral to the sacred trust which humanity has made with its sublime destiny.

I wish the Socialist Party of India rapid radical advance all over the country take place and justice, social, economic and political become a fundamental duty of the State. As Vivekananda put it; 'I am a Socialist because half a loaf is better than none'. The youth of this country must be inspired by the socialist exhortation of our vedic seers and Swami Vivekananda who in an address to the Brahmins of Madras accusing him of teaching Vedas to the heathens of America retorted: "Aye, Brahmins", if the Brahmin has more aptitude for learning on the

(Continued on Page 15)

Legacy of Dr. Asghar Ali Engineer

Irfan Engineer

A storm has destroyed everything in my life. I am not even beginning to come to terms with the loss in my life. Death, like storm, is in God's hand and you are so helpless. Never knew that death would snatch my very loving father Dr. Asghar Ali Engineer from us. I was not prepared yet for this colossal loss! But let me remember what he has bequeathed to me. My sister Seema rightly told a reporter that our father wanted us to inherit his legacy equally – legacy of his teachings. In the lull after the storm I am trying to reflect on his legacy to gather some pieces of my inheritance.

What is the legacy that I have inherited from my father?

1) The discipline and the punishing schedule that he followed.

He never budged from his daily routine which included morning walks to maintain his health; working from morning 8:00 am till 10 pm in the night with a small nap in the afternoon until he was hospitalized on 13th February; divided his day into four segments – administrative work, responding to e-mails, reading and writing, and followed the time schedule meticulously. Office staff was not allowed to violate. Visitors from outside city would be entertained even in violation of the time distribution, but visitors from within city were requested to seek appointment, but even then he would be considerate if they came from far. Even on Sundays and holidays, the schedule would hold for him and even if he had to sit in the office alone. Sunday evenings sometimes

was a time for a little stroll or a drive. Frequent travels deprived us, his family members, from his company. However, he did not distinguish between the groups that invited him. His commitment once given, he would honour it even if later some more important invitations arrived on his table. Even his ill health would not force him to change his mind. He has conducted his peace and conflict resolution workshops when sick. This discipline and long day enabled him to contribute so much to the world but perhaps contributed to shorten his life. How organized and disciplined can we be?

2) Nothing except the values of justice, equality, love, dignity, and diversity were sacred for him. No rituals and no traditions and no cultures. Cultures were only media through which humans made a sense of the world. All cultures, all faiths were to be respected. Except the values, everything else should be subjected rational scrutiny and reformed, reinterpreted, re-understood and refashioned to serve the sacred values. His lifelong search for truth knew no limitations and was checked by no sacred symbols, rituals, traditions, language or culture. Truth could be achieved only through relentless and fearless pursuit. No cost was high enough to attend truth. Truth required only an honest inner search dictated by conscience. He paid a price for his search of truth - transferred often and promotions delayed when in service of Bombay Municipal Corporation as a civil engineer for his honesty and for leading Engineer's Association, took voluntary retirement to work full time

for the cause, suffering great loss of income, socially boycotted by Syedna's establishment which meant being cut off from his mother, brother, sister and other near and dear ones, his house and office was attacked and completely destroyed by Syedna's fanatical followers in February 2000, was physically attacked 6 times by Syedna's fanatical followers with sharp weapons in order to kill him, often abused and threatened, but nothing deterred him from his search for truth and no sacrifice was too high a price to be paid for his principles. How honest and relentless can we be in our search for truth?

3) If one realized any dimension of truth, it should be shared with people and without fear of consequences and in language that people understand. He often told me that the difference between a prophet and philosopher was that prophet communicated his message in language that people could easily understand whereas often philosophers spoke in language comprehensible only to a privileged few. The latter make careers, the former bring about social change and leave a lasting impact and legacy. As an activist scholar, Engineer always talked in simple understandable language through his writings and oratories. He consciously chose that! He had begun writing in academic language initially, but soon checked himself, for he wanted to work for social change! How passionate can we be in our quest for social change? Will we walk the talk?

4) Dr. Engineer often said that search for freedom required enabling environment. It required freedom and democracy and free dialogue. Three Ds, he would say – Democracy, Dialogue and Diversity. All were necessary for honest

understanding and knowing each other and more facets of truth in all its complexity. One had to be a patient listener and open minded before we strive for truth. The differences between two individuals and two or more groups can be made a bridge to reach out each other and to enrich everyone's understanding through dialogue with those with whom one had differences.

Diversity was important as different cultures represent different systems of meaning and visions of good life. Since each realizes a limited range of human capacities and emotions and grasps only a part of the totality of human existence, it needs other cultures to help it understand itself better, expand its intellectual and moral horizon, stretch its imagination, save it from narcissism to guard it against the obvious temptation to absolutize itself, and so on. This does not mean that one cannot lead a good life within one's own culture, but rather that, other things being equal, one's way of life is likely to be richer if one also enjoys access to others, and that a culturally self-contained life is virtually impossible for most human beings in the modern, mobile and interdependent world. No culture is wholly worthless, that it deserves at least some respect because of what it means to its members and the creative energy it displays, that no culture is perfect and has a right to impose itself on others, and that cultures are best changed from within.

5) For a person who has realized truth, it was absolutely necessary to be humble. More than anything, Dr. Engineer was a very very humble human being. While returning home from office (when he could walk home), often he would be stopped on road by a stranger and the

insignificant stranger would discuss or ask his doubts and even argue with Engineer on various issues. He would passionately argue with the stranger his opinions for, sometimes, hours. My leg would ache standing with him but until the stranger was fully satisfied or decided to quit, Dr. Engineer would passionately keep discussing with him. Later when I would inquire why he invested so much time, he would reply, everyone was important. He was highly approachable and anybody could contact him anytime of the day and night with their queries. He would reply to abusive e-mails, and he could patiently reason with every opponent. His humility influenced even the most indoctrinated cadre who passionately opposed his views. His patience in arguing with them and making them see reason was remarkable. No case was beyond redemption for him. Each human being could be made to see reason and convert her to be justice and peace worker. Humility was very natural for him and was the other side of coin of truth, but it was also his tool to win over worst opponent! He has conducted his peace workshops in challenging conditions that the organizers can afford. Sometimes in conditions that would appall any decent person. People were important to him and not luxuries and comfortable situations. He would easily trust people and particularly those who were needy. Compassion for those needy, suffering and victims of injustice was an important value for him which he followed lifelong.

6) Peace with justice was another value to which Dr. Engineer was absolutely committed to. There could be no peace without justice and justice meant not only restorative justice where violators of one's rights were brought to justice and punished

and the victims had the right to reparations. Justice for him also meant distributive justice where class based inequalities were not tolerated. In order to work for peace, he studied communal conflicts in depth and understood the roots of the conflict were in economic, social and political inequalities. He wrote extensively on major communal conflicts and explained that though religion was used as a tool to promote conflicts, religion was not the root cause of the conflicts. The real nature of conflict was competition between elite to control socio-economic institutions, including the state and establish one's hegemony over the other. Religion was used as a tool to mobilize large number of gullible people. Communal conflicts would not be possible without wide spread prejudices against the minorities. Prejudices against the minorities was the foundation on which the infrastructure of communal conflicts were built. Dr. Engineer painfully gathered facts and data to counter the prejudices against minorities convincingly. Many people have approached this author to recall how the workshop and sound arguments and facts placed by Dr. Engineer changed their attitudes towards minorities. One Haryana police officer by the name Sharma met me while Dr. Engineer was in ICU to tell me how attending Dr. Engineer's workshop was life changing moment for him. He never hated minorities from that day onwards and, more important, would never believe in stupid propaganda like Aurangzeb would eat only after gathering 20 men of sacred threads of Brahmin.

7) One truth that he arrived through his search was that liberating religion from the clutches of the priestly establishments and restoring agency to a common

follower would rejuvenate the religion, but more importantly, reveal the hidden meanings that we had failed to understand hitherto. Religion would become true moral power in the hands of the oppressed to fight injustice and change the oppressive status-quo. To him religion was not religion if it didn't inspire to question status-quo and established understanding and interpretation and teach the followers to be rebels. He challenged the understanding of the left ideologists for whom religion was opium of masses. He would quote Marx to also point out that even to Marx religion was not frozen into single role of opium. Marx also argued that religion was sigh of the oppressed.

8) Gender justice and equality in general and for Muslim women in particular was a great passion for him. He pressed his entire knowledge of Islam and understanding of Quran, Islamic history, study of Islamic jurisprudence to service for the cause of Muslim women. Quran, according to him talked only of rights of women and not of men in Surah An-Nisa and reference to men was always with respect to their duties and not rights. That was to set the social imbalance right where women only had duties and no rights. He argued that during medieval period, as Muslim rulers conquered territories and spread, and

(Continued from Page 13)

ground of heredity than the Pariah, spend no more money on the Brahmin's education, but spend all on the Pariah. Give to the weak, for there all the gift is needed..... Our poor people, these downtrodden masses of India. Therefore, require to hear and to know what they really are. Aye, let every man and woman and child, without respect of caste

became an empire, patriarchal culture snatched the rights given to women by Quran. Muslim Ulema seldom could counter his Quranic arguments and would respond with defence of patriarchal cultural values on the basis of morals. He instructed me to give his daughter and my sister her share in his property after him. He of course struggled for equality of all and was part of struggle for implementation of Mandal Commission Report much before we all knew about it.

9) Mission of Asghar Ali Engineer was to liberate religion from religious establishments, make it a tool to question established interpretations of religious scriptures and make it a inspiration to search for truth and change the oppressive social reality; to embrace diversity and learn to co-exist through dialogue of cultures and equality, particularly gender equality and rights of Muslim women and bringing scholarly works to bear to achieve these objectives was the mission of Asghar Ali Engineer expanded the horizon of knowledge and values and opened up many avenues for us to achieve the goal of equality, justice, peace, dignity for all and diversity. Asghar Ali Engineer was an institution in himself. Are we ready to carry forward his mission with the discipline and dedication that he had? We will strive!! May his soul Rest in Peace.

of birth, weakness and strength, hear and learn that behind the strong and the weak, behind the high and the low, behind everyone, there is that Infinite Soul, assuring that infinite possibility and the infinite capacity of all to become great and good. Let us proclaim to every soul: 'Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached.' Arise, awake!"

-Dr. Prem Singh, General Secretary, Socialist Party (India)



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The Maoist challenge

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**Ambush by Maoists in Bastar
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**Oppose Market Oriented
Reforms in Higher Education**

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Many innocent lives have been lost in an episode of domestic terrorism, probably one of the worst of its kind in India's political history. Twentyeight people, among them some top Congress leaders of Chhattisgarh, were killed when the vehicles they were driving back to Raipur drove over mines set by the Naxalites and triggering blasts. Many were injured among them former Union Minister Vidya Charan Shukla who is in a critical stage in a hospital in Gurgaon. The incident took place in the Darbha area of Bastar district. It is perhaps the only recent event of its kind, the reaction to which has been non-partisan and honest. To begin with, instead of prevaricating and going on the defensive, the Chhattisgarh chief minister Raman Singh has frankly acknowledged that there was a serious security lapse that led to Saturday's incident. What is more, in another welcome step he has constituted an inquiry into the tragedy by a high court judge. This inquiry will be held in tandem with a more comprehensive probe by the National Investigative Agency ordered by the Centre in consultation with the state government. Every act of violence against the state and the people is always marked by a security lapse, caused either by

carelessness or by overconfidence. In the instant case, it is being pointed out that the Maoists planned their attack following the Congress' stupidity in announcing the travel plans of the top Congress leaders in violation of standard operating procedures in a conflict zone. It is reported that the plan to target the Congress leaders and their retinue was strategised only after the itinerary was known. But for the timely action of V.C.Shukla's driver who told the Moists about to shoot at them that his master was a businessman and not a politician, Shukla would have been also shot at. He is undergoing treatment for bullet injuries in a hospital and he is stated to be in a critical condition. But those killed included the hard core leadership of the party which sits in the opposition in the state assembly now but which has had good experience of dealing with the Naxals themselves. Indeed Mahendra Karma who was killed was the creator of the volunteer force called Salwa Judum, the controversial force which was tasked with combating the Naxalites. The Naxalite movement has had a long and chequered history in India. At one stage, this armed force of volunteers had established sway in as many as 13 states. The Centre

Between the lines

Naxalism versus corruption

Kuldip Nayar

My liberal friends tell me to understand the Naxalites, not to condemn them. I wish I could follow their advice. But, how do I reconcile the difference between the Nexalites, who killed this week some 25 Congress leaders at Chhattisgarh, and the two Nigerians who beheaded a British soldier a few days ago at London in public. For me, both are terrorists, fundamentalists, the first from the left and the other from the right. And, does the ideology mean anything when the brutalities of one are no different than those of the other? Probably, it happens when ideologies lose their content and purpose. The followers do not know the way it has happened at Chhattisgarh, the Nexalite Bastar belt. But what right do they have to call themselves pro-people, the protector of the oppressed when they kill the innocent in the same way as any criminal does.

What I have not understood, after following the Nexalites' activities for several decades, is the point they are trying to make. True, they do not have faith in democracy, although they cry hoarse in its name. But, when they kill at will, they convey the mentality of dictatorship and do not in any way help the egalitarian thesis they expound. Their massacres and acts of oppression suggest only terrorism. A set of committed people have come together and want to dictate the nation's fate according to their belief. They do not care for the people's wishes and have taken upon themselves the task of leading the nation using the gun.

The ballot box has no meaning in their life. Whether some families at Chhattisgarh were dictatorial in their dealings or whether the tribals were killed by the non-tribals, are important considerations to reach the conclusion that they contributed to the deterioration of the atmosphere. But the point at issue is to find a solution to the wrongs committed. Violence cannot find it. A democratic way is far better and more lasting.

It is strange that some people still believe in the archaic philosophy of violence. The world is moving towards conciliation, and is trying to rule out the use of weapons altogether. The Naxalites, whatever their commitments to a welfare state, have first to win people to their point of view. They cannot shoot their way through the opposition. The defence, which they have offered for their carnage, does not in any way mitigate their crime.

The Nexalites will continue to proliferate when disparities are blatant and the state oppression unrelenting. But violence cannot act as magic wand. It aggravates the problem as has taken place over the years. The menace has to be eliminated. All political parties and the right thinking people have to come together to end violence as a method to rectify the wrongs. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has rightly said that Naxalism is a challenge to democratic way, India's ethos. Violence will weaken faith in democracy and the rule of law.

and many state governments have conducted campaigns against the Naxalites but have not succeeded in persuading them to return to the mainstream politics. Some governments, particularly the Andhra Pradesh establishment held talks with Naxal representatives but without convincing them to shed arms and violence. The Supreme Court had strongly expressed itself against the continuance on a private basis of the Salwa Judum but those involved paid no heed. Salwa Judum has created problems for both the law enforcement machinery and the government, not to mention political parties. A mercenary force whose existence is not approved by the state assembly, the source of whose funding is not known, cannot work in tandem with the police or counter terrorism operatives. The latest Bastar tragedy is more or less patterned after the Maoists' attack on CRPF personnel in 2010 in Dantewala. The action claimed the lives of 76 CRPF men. The Maoists did not target politicians that time. This time they seem to have advantage - and how well - of an opportunity to "punish" Congress politicians that accidentally came their way. However, the fact remains that the Maoists are in a position today, as they were in 2010, to inflict severe damage on the polity in the areas under their control, despite all the police bundobast. The police administrations in the affected states have held a number of joint conferences to map out a workable viable strategy to bring the Maoists under heel. But, either because the implementation of the strategies is faulty or because there is no political will to tackle the movement, the Maoists have gathered a lot of strength in the last few years. The lack of political will in dealing with

(Continued on Page 4)

The Chhattisgarh incident has renewed the debate on the futility of violence. The subject is so important that the nation, absorbed in scandals and scams, has diverted its attention and has started talking about Naxalism apart from corruption. The sacking of two chief ministers Pawan Kumar Bansal (Railways) and Ashwani Kumar (Law) has eclipsed other things and brought integrity to the fore.

Congress President, Sonia Gandhi wanted a concrete, convincing action. After winning the state election in Karnataka, where the Bellary mines scandal became an issue, she has adopted honesty as the plank for the Congress in future. She does not want to do anything, which would lessen the image of being an honest party. Rahul Gandhi too has announced that the Congress will not put such candidates who are tainted in any manner.

It is comical that the two central ministers wanted to resign when they heard about their dismissal. But, Sonia Gandhi wanted the message to spread that the party would not compromise on corruption and would even go to the extent of sacking its ministers. And she did.

Both ministers were reportedly close to the Prime Minister who is said to have assured them that he would let them quit if the alternative was dismissal. Apparently, the Prime Minister who is known for his personal integrity, failed to prevail upon Sonia Gandhi. She was right in her thinking that the dismissals gave a sterner message than the resignations would have.

And there is no doubt that it is having a chilling effect on the party.

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Killings of Congress Party leaders, their PSOs and Ordinary Villagers by Maoists

The PUCL strongly condemns the ambush of a Congress party election cavalcade by the dalam of the CPI(Maoist) party at Dharba Ghati area in Sukma district of Chhattisgarh on Saturday, 25th May, 2013, resulting in the death of 28 people including Congress party leaders, their personal security officers and ordinary villagers of the area. PUCL denounces as totally unacceptable, the abduction, kidnapping and subsequent killing in cold blood of the Congress party President of Chhattisgarh, NK Patel, and his son Dinesh. The Maoists also killed Mahendra Karma, the founder of the dreaded Salwa Judum, and his security guards.

What is particularly reprehensible is the killing of unarmed political workers of the Congress party by over 200 gun-wielding members of the Maoist party which ended up killing a number of innocent bystanders also, who accidentally happened to be in the spot. Particularly reprehensible is the fact that armed Maoists cadre also killed people who had surrendered and were in their custody.

It is the PUCL's understanding that under no circumstances can acts of brutality be justified, even if they be in response to equally heinous and brutal acts unleashed by the security forces, as we are seeing presently in Chhattisgarh, as recently as the killing of 8 innocent tribal villagers in Edasmeta village of South Bastar on 17th and 18th May, 2013; or in response to the brutalities committed by the vigilante Salwa Judum founded by the deceased Mahendra Karma.

We equally stress that whatever the circumstances, the security forces must act within the bounds of law. Our apprehension that the present incident will be used by both the Central as also State Governments to launch a brutal counter-offensive engulfing local tribal communities amidst greater state violence springs from the already grim human rights situation that prevails in the area. Complaints abound of state security forces committing, with impunity, torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, secret detentions, abductions, arbitrary, prolonged and incommunicado detention, unfair trials, and enforced disappearances, and worse in the wake of Operation Greenhunt.

A Fact Finding Team of PUCL Chhattisgarh had recently, on 21st May, 2013, released its Report titled, 'Guilty until proven Innocent – A Report on Unlawful Police Activities in North Bastar, Chhattisgarh' which detailed the atrocities committed by the security forces in 2 villages in Chhattisgarh.

While PUCL firmly condemns the violence of the Maoists and acknowledges the constitutional duty and responsibility cast on the Governments to protect the life of all people, PUCL nevertheless asserts that all counter-measures adopted by the Government should adhere strictly to the rule of law, including the core principles of criminal and constitutional law and the specific standards and obligations of international human rights law, and, where applicable, humanitarian law. It should be noted

that these principles, standards and obligations, as constantly affirmed by the Supreme Court, define the boundaries of permissible and legitimate State action against extremism and terrorism. It is however very important that the revolting nature of extremist acts cannot serve as a basis or pretext for the Governments to disregard their national and international obligations, in particular in the protection of fundamental human rights. We would like to point out to the caution highlighted by the International Council of Jurists in its **Declaration on Upholding Human Rights and the Rule of Law in Combating Terrorism, The Berlin Declaration**, 28 August 2004

PUCL would like to point out that it is important to strengthen civil society, not weaken it so as to effectively tackle political violence. An effective strategy to preventing the downward spiral into lives filled with violence, fear and repression is to genuinely acknowledge, respond and respect the key issues faced by tribals and local communities in Chhattisgarh; this will deny the basis for real or imagined grievances from supporting violence. The best way to strengthen democracy is by integrating human rights, equity and social justice considerations into all government policies, plans and programmes.

The spirals of violence and counter-violence in the troubled areas of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and other states is grim and life threatening. The PUCL, through this appeal, is therefore giving a national call for a '**HUMANITARIAN RESPITE**' and appeals to the Central and State Governments, the security forces and also to the Maoists, to agree to

an immediate ceasefire, stopping of armed engagements and engage in talks.

Prof. Prabhakar Sinha
Dr. V. Suresh
 National President
 National General Secretary
 People's Union for Civil
 Liberties

Berlin Declaration, 2005

"A pervasive security-oriented discourse promotes the sacrifice of fundamental rights and freedoms in the name of eradicating terrorism. There is no conflict between the

(Continued from Page 2)

the violent movement has caused the country dear. A new strategy which includes dealing with the tribal populations in a more humane way by making them economically

duty of States to protect the rights of persons threatened by terrorism and their responsibility to ensure that protecting security does not undermine other rights. On the contrary, safeguarding persons from terrorist acts and respecting human rights both form part of a seamless web of protection incumbent upon the State. Both contemporary human rights and humanitarian law allow States a reasonably wide margin of flexibility to combat terrorism without contravening human rights and humanitarian legal obligations".

better while at the same time takes care of the military aspect of dealing with the armed cadres is called for. We cannot afford to have tragedies like the Bastar killing every now and then.

It is reported in the press that an Indian manufacturer Ranbaxy has pleaded guilty in U.S. to pay 500 million dollars for defective medicines manufactured by at Paonta Sahib and Dewan facility in India. The medicines mentioned are;

- a. Sortret
- b. Galiapentin
- c. Ciprofloxacin

Is it not ironic that these very medicines have been available in the Indian market and Drug Controller India has allowed them to be sold. They are available even today. Could we Indians expect protection from deadly medicines. How is it that U. S. Authorities find them unfit for use – but our whole set up in government continues to permit it. Is it inefficiency, collusion or worse – I do not know.

Surely the Minister of Health and Controller of Drugs have much to answer to the public for endangering their lives.

Rajindar Sachar

Ambush by Maoists in Bastar Increased Militarisation No Solution

Once again in the ongoing politics of offensive and counter offensive between State and Maoists, adivasis have lost their lives. In an ambush on the convoy carrying Congress leaders, Maoists have reportedly killed 27 people and injured several others including senior Congress leader, V. C. Shukla. On the intervening night of May 17-18 too eight villagers, including three children, and a personnel of elite CRPF Cobra battalion were killed in a gun-battle near Edasmeta village in southern Chhattisgarh. Adivasis caught in the armed conflict have been the worst victim of this war of control over resources, territory and sovereignty. That this happened during the Parivartan Yatra, a programme of the Congress party to reach out to the people, is indeed unfortunate.

National Alliance of People's Movements condemns this ambush leading to loss of precious lives. Life of those in power and leadership are important and so are the lives of common adivasis who are being tortured, jailed and killed by Security forces and Maoists alike. In the ongoing conflict both claim to represent the interests and work for Adivasis but their stance and means has only alienated them and perpetrated injustice on them. Their rights have often been violated resulting in large number of adivasis in jail on false trumped up charges. In the same Durma valley where the attack by Maoists have killed Congress leaders, state administration violated all the existing laws and procedures to facilitate land grab for Tata Steel.

Salwa Judum, an armed Sena of the young and adolescents worsened the scenario. It has been termed as illegal and directed to be disbanded by Supreme Court, but State government responded by making them part of the regular police. Even, as Salwa Judum burnt houses, raped women, maimed and killed adivasis, the State supported it and failed to provide justice to adivasis and continued to brand them as Maoists and their supporters. A democratically elected government in Chhattisgarh or at the Centre can't use the dictum of 'you are with us or against us'. Its allegiance is to the rule of law and its duty is to protect the rights of its citizens.

Even while, politicians across the political spectrum are terming this as an attack on democracy, let us not forget that every time an adivasi is jailed, killed, their houses burnt, women raped and their schools occupied to facilitate resource grab or termed as collateral damage in the 'Operation Green Hunt', democracy is attacked and the faith of citizens in the State's ability to uphold justice and rule of law, shaken. Violence on both sides is condemnable and should be avoided forever.

We fear that this latest ambush will now be used by the state to justify further militarisation in the region and make lives of Adivasis more difficult. There is an urgent need for political intervention and

dialogue. The guns of State or Maoists, will not solve the problem. Politics of violence and counter violence will only make lives of adivasis and others in the region more difficult, which will ultimately have an impact on the democratic norms and freedom of citizens elsewhere in the country, as seen in shrinking spaces for non-violent, democratic movements and arrest of activists. Soni Sori, Lingaram Kodopi and many others are braving brutality as a result of the war promoted by the state and Maoists, both. Mahendra Karma, openly supported Salwa Judum, a violent outfit and the same violence has killed him. This is tragic, yet a telling fact.

The swiftness with which the centre has promised all help in this regard and dispatched a large number of security forces, if the same urgency was shown for providing justice to the victims of Salwa Judum in all these years, Indian state would have won a bigger political battle by now. Awards, compensation and martyrdom will be bestowed on those killed by Maoists but Adivasi victims of this collateral damage and those languishing in jail need justice too. There is an urgent need to address that otherwise situation will only deteriorate. We demand that political dialogue in all sincerity be initiated to arrive at a political solution rather than increased militarisation.

–**Medha Patkar, Prafulla Samantara, Dr. Sunilam,
Arundhati Dhuru, Gabriele Dietrich, Gautam Bandopadhyay,
Ramakrishnan Raju, Sister Celia,
Maj. Gen (Retd) Sudhir Vombatkere, Vimal Bhai, Krishnakant,
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Corporate cultivation a la cooperative farming

K. S. Chalam

India being a third world compliant country for experiments of the advanced nations, is targeted for innovations in the farm sector. There seem to be a proposal, may be a policy decision, to introduce corporate farming in the country if it is not already in force in a different garb. It is not only in agricultural sector - all areas of economy and society, including political process, are now under the direct ideological manoeuvring of liberalisation. Therefore, one need not be surprised to get a regime of corporate farming in the country when the government is in crisis. It seems, during the last two decades important administrative resolutions were taken up in the country whenever the governments were in disorder. If the past record of events is of any use for prediction, corporate farming seems to be certain.

There are farm and business lobbies with intellectual inputs from experts in the field to substantiate the need for corporate farming. Why not? It is demonstrated by scholars and management experts that small farms and fragmentation of holdings are a bane of Indian agriculture as they are unviable and economically disastrous. This is supported by data that the marginal holdings of less than one hectare of land on an average have remained at 0.4 at the national level and in Andhra at 0.44 ha. The proportion of such holdings in the total holdings in Andhra has slightly increased from 61.59 to 63.59 during 2005-2011. Therefore, it is sensible to go in for corporatisation

of farming in states like Andhra Pradesh where the proportion of marginal holdings is very high. There is also an argument that the marginal farmers have failed to bring in technology and innovations to improve the productivity of agricultural operations and as a result the farmer remains poor and underdeveloped. What is the harm if the small bit of holdings is given to a corporate body that brings technology, investment and remunerative prices through access to international market?

The above argument seems to be not supported by productivity data. For instance, the productivity of rice was 3011 KGs per ha in 2003-4 and has increased to 3148 by 2011-12 in Andhra. The productivity of Jowar, an important crop in the state, was 1102 KGs in 2003-4 and has substantially risen to 1749 in 2011-12. If the farmer is not getting remunerative prices, it is not due to the unviable nature of his holdings but other economic and policy related constraints. In fact around a century ago, some economists had reminded that it is not the size of the holdings but the amount of investment made on the piece of land that is to be taken into consideration in measuring productivity. Arthur Lewis, later Ranis-Fei, Hayami and other economists have reasoned that the supplies of food and labour to the sustenance of industry are important that would not only create demand for the industrial goods but also in getting foreign exchange through agricultural exports. India is not USA or Japan to reduce the

role of agriculture to less than 5 per cent of GDP as 60 persons out of every hundred depend on it. The role of industry in creating jobs is not encouraging (NSS survey) to throw away the babe along with the bath water.

Notwithstanding the arguments of some economists, the policy makers and economic managers have introduced sufficient policy packages to encourage corporatisation of cultivation in a phased manner. We should never doubt the intelligence and planning of some of our policy makers as far as their commitment to privatisation is concerned. Therefore, it is well planned starting with contract farming, FDI in retail trade, rescinding tenancy reforms, allying with political class and crony capitalists to introduce policies that would help make corporatisation in farm sector imminent. In fact, a variant of the commercialisation of agriculture was already in place in the form of contract farming. This is a kind of vertical integration of farmers to supply a given quantity and quality of products at an agreed price to the buyer, mostly involving the corporates in retail trade. There are 10 top corporate houses like Tata, Ambanis, Bharati, Agrigold (AP), IEEPL apart from MNCs that are in this business for quite some time. They are very powerful and are lobbying for corporatisation of farming and linking it with FDI and international cartels.

Let us look at the experience of contract farming, a prelude to corporate farming. Harish

Damodaran in one of his reports in *Business Line* in June 2012 reported that the corporate ventures in agriculture are failing. He has given a case study of Tata Chemicals in the area of fresh fruits and vegetables in Malerkotla, Punjab where it shut its operations for non-achieving the planned scale of operations. Economies of scale are a prerequisite of corporatisation.

The intriguing part of the policies of the government is that while corporate farming is implicitly encouraged, the macro management and legal provisions in the form of licensed cultivators in states like AP are made. They work at cross purposes. Further, XII plan approach paper hinted that leasing out of land to “others” be permitted for inclusive growth. A cursory look at the subsidy and support schemes of the Government show that there are around 13 categories of subsidies for mechanisation that add up to Rs 30000 per unit. Some schemes are processed through NABARD and the subsidy goes up to Rs 40 lakh for seed production, compost creation, etc. The traditional institutions like share cropping have been discouraged and in Andhra it is confined only to 7 per cent as majority are leasing out land on cash rent. Yet, crisis prevails in the farm sector. A recent study on impact of a half-baked Act (of licensed cultivators) in AP shows that the stake holders are unaware of it and the land owners do not trust the lessees. In other words, most of the so-called reforms in the farm sector are not reaching the so-called beneficiaries but the budget allocations are exhausted. What could be the secret behind this?

In this context, we may for a moment look at the ideology of cooperative farming whose

ideological genesis rests with Robert Owen and the subsequent Cooperative Credit Society Act 1904 in India. The ideal behind the movement was to develop the spirit of mutual help and social harmony, equity and empowerment. Though it was confined to credit and later on expanded to sugar, milk and a few other areas in the agricultural sector, it has provided the necessary impetus for the development of innovations under the guidance of the state. It is reported that there are 5.5 lakh cooperatives (PACS) with a membership of 22 crores. We may attribute the limited success of the so-called First Green Revolution to the spirit of public interest imbibed by the cooperative spirit. Interestingly, the central government has brought the 97th constitutional amendment and added 43B to promote voluntary formation, autonomous functioning and democratic control of cooperatives. The government has also enacted the multistate

(Continued from Page 3)

There is the realization that whatever have been the acts of omission or commission in the past, the party has generally turned a new leaf and would not tolerate any more of the scams which have been tumbling out of government’s cupboard at regular intervals.

In fact, many Congressmen, who are out of office, are now putting pressure on Sonia Gandhi to “clean up” the stables in the states. In such a scenario, some allegations are bound to be exaggerated but on the whole the development is healthy. The problem she faces is whether she can open the Pandora’s Box and keep the fallout within limits so as not to allow further smearing on the face of the Congress.

cooperatives Act in 2002 to facilitate interstate operations of agricultural cooperatives. We have yet to see the impact of the initiatives of the state on the economic efficiency and social uplift of the farmers. Billions of rupees are invested in the development of infrastructure, including public irrigation, technology, KVS, etc. Then why the sudden shift in the policy towards privatisation and corporatisation of the farm sector? Whether the subsidies would decline or go in to the coffers of corporates?

If private sector and FIIs are considered by some experts as efficient, why should they be allowed their operations in areas not covered by cooperatives and low technology zones. Let them bring capital and technology without encroaching on the public resources and improve the welfare of farmers without repeating what they have done in Brazil, Ethiopia, Sudan, Tanzania and other third world countries.

That the matter ultimately rests with the Congress high command (the same is the case with other political parties) has a reassuring effect. Personal animosity will not count. Yet the fact remains that it is ultimately Sonia Gandhi, the all powerful, will decide. This may not turn out to be a bad idea. She has kept away herself from the government’s scandals. However, the morale of Congress leaders may be low; they may not have the kind of self-confidence, which they had before the dismissals of Pawan and Ashwani Kumar. A proposal whispered around is that some type of standing committee should be constituted, so that Sonia Gandhi is armed with all the information available to her, and could embark upon a fight against corruption.

From Bofors to 2G, the same fate

Arun Kumar

The current political situation brings back memories of 1989. The Prime Minister then was under a cloud in the Bofors scam. Many of his close associates like Lalit Suri and Ajitabh Bachchan were accused of wrong-doing. Today, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and many around him are under a cloud. The Congress president has been weakened by allegations against her son-in-law. The Joint Parliamentary Committee report on Bofors was rejected by the Opposition. It resigned en masse from Parliament forcing national elections. Presently, the JPC draft report on 2G has been rejected by the entire Opposition.

In 1989, Rajiv Gandhi was protected by the ruling party members in the JPC. The Opposition felt that some key people associated with the Bofors deal were not called to depose or had not been adequately questioned. Now too, A. Raja has not been called to depose, even though he is the key accused in the 2G scam, lest he should implicate the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister.

As in 1989, governance has taken a beating today with the government getting caught in one scam after another. In an attempt to brazen them out, the government is committing mistakes and compounding its problems. The mess created by the former Law Minister vis-à-vis the Central Bureau of Investigation and the Supreme Court, in an attempt to save Dr. Singh (who was also the Coal Minister when the scam

took place), has embarrassed the government.

As the Bofors scam unravelled in 1987-88, India's international standing plummeted. The GATT Uruguay round of negotiations was at a crucial stage with India acting as the leader of developing countries in negotiating with the advanced countries. India's stand softened perceptibly at that time. Consequently, in 1999, in Seattle, India was not trusted by other developing countries. Today also, India's stock has declined and its neighbours are taking advantage of the situation.

In 1987, it was the Swedish radio that brought to light the payoffs in the Bofors deal. In Parliament, Rajiv Gandhi denied any wrong-doing. His government argued that Bofors was a good gun but investigators in Sweden revealed that payoffs had been made. The UPA government, too, has denied wrongdoing in the various scams that have come to light and argued that its actions have furthered policy and helped keep prices down. It is the intervention by courts that has led to progress in investigations into scams like the CWG, Hasan Ali case, Liechtenstein disc, 2G and Coalgate.

In the Bofors case, the true beneficiaries could not be identified because of manipulation at the highest levels. This became clear soon enough but the matter was nailed when Madhav Singh Solanki passed on a note to the Swiss Minister — to slow down the case.

This led to a furore in Parliament but rather than reveal the content of his note, he preferred to resign. Who sacrifices one's career unless the stakes are very high? Ottavio Quattrocchi escaped from India and has been repeatedly helped by our agencies (which weakened the case) so that he does not return to India to face trial and questioning.

The Congress has accused the Opposition of playing politics with the Bofors scam saying even when the Opposition was in power, it was not able to unravel the case and find the ultimate recipient of the Bofors money. This is a pointer to how important cases are spoilt so that it becomes difficult even for an Opposition party to solve it when it comes to power. The system works like a mafia — in secrecy and silence. The institutions that should help expose scams are unable to do so because of the silence of those who know. The selection of people for key posts is often based on their pliability. IAS officers like Arun Bhatia or Khemka are marginalised. Some honest individuals who do get to the top typically keep their counsel and avoid ruffling the system much. They become the fig leaf behind which the system can hide its true nature.

In the Coalgate scam, it has emerged that the CBI is not independent of the political authority which it is supposed to investigate. It has now been confirmed that cases against politicians are activated or put on the back burner depending on the needs of the ruling dispensation.

It is the Supreme Court that placed the CBI under the Central Vigilance Commission to introduce a degree of autonomy in its functioning. But it has now been proved beyond doubt that the administrative machinery under which the CBI personnel function can twist its arms, undermining its autonomy.

In India, Parliament is the ultimate watchdog to check wrong-doing by the authorities. The increasing number of scams is a testimony to its failure. JPCs are an instrumentality of Parliament and an analysis of their inability to make a dent is a pointer to what is wrong in the system. Their lack of success is due to their inability to pinpoint responsibility in the issues they have investigated, and this is largely due to the partisan attitude of the members of the JPCs. They have acted to protect the powerful. The JPC of 1992 on the stock market scam in which Harshad Mehta was the key player is a case in point.

Mehta played havoc with the financial system, including the RBI. He was the blue-eyed boy of the Finance Ministry at that time. In October 1991, when in spite of the crisis confronting the economy — high inflation, declining growth rate, and the BoP crisis — the stock market kept rising, concerns were raised in Parliament. The then Finance Minister replied that “he would not lose sleep” over the matter. A clear signal to people like Mehta that the government would not check their speculation in the stock market. However, when members of the JPC wanted this to be recorded in the report, the Congress members resisted and the report did not incorporate it. Clearly, accountability could not be established.

The Finance Minister met Mehta a few days before the budget in 1992 and accepted his demand that shares should be exempted from wealth tax. The markets rose sharply on the day of the budget and Mehta made a killing because he had advance information. Mehta was raided by the Income Tax department that day because of the huge amount of funds he had been moving around for some months but the Minister stopped the raid a few hours after it started. So the source of funds could not be traced and the scam could not be prevented. It was never revealed in the JPC who stopped the raid and why, because the officer concerned did not appear before the JPC. Again accountability could not be established.

The Janakiraman Committee report on the scam estimated a loss of Rs.3,128 crore to the public — huge compared to the Bofors scam of Rs. 64 crore. Today, the Coalgate and the 2G scams dwarf all other scams. It is clear that stock market scams have continued because accountability was not fixed in 1993. A large number of people lost their lifetime savings (as in the Saradha chit fund scam). Now again, accountability is not being established in the 2G scam.

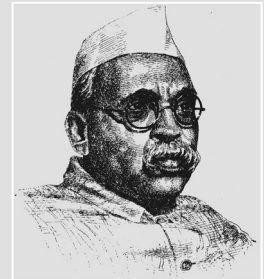
Waves of scams have occurred in the stock market. Timber companies, granite companies and dotcom companies were floated only to disappear with the public money. It was estimated that 2,500 companies disappeared in the 1990s, leading to huge losses to the public. No one was prosecuted and that emboldened the scamsters. The collapse of the UTI had much to do with the manipulations in the stock market and the pressures from the Ministry of Finance but no responsibility was

fixed. The problem is not peculiar to the Congress. Since 1989, almost all parties have been in power but the system has hardly changed. The rot of unaccountability runs deep and is visible in all institutions, including hospitals and universities where the most literate and conscious population of the country works.

Herein lies the lesson for the nation facing an increasing number of scams and breakdown of systems. Those in power are unaccountable since they operate in a system of silence and surround themselves with sycophants. Since little has been learnt on this score since 1989, the scale of disruption has grown manifold. When will we learn to fix responsibility?

—*The Hindu*

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Asghar Ali Engineer

Asghar Ali Engineer died on May 14, 2013. He was 74. At an inter-faith meeting at Amritsar, he fainted and then his hospital rounds started. He was in Lilavati and then Raheja. The treatment did not avail, he had multiple infections and the end came, not expected.

The press has described him as an Islamist reformist. Rightly so, but his value system was universal. He was for social justice and equality and wanted to promote communal harmony and gender equality and what he said and did was not addressed merely to his community (Bohra) or his religion (Islam). However, he chose to achieve his aim by interpreting Quran in a such a manner that approximation of different religions will become possible. But as far as his own Bohra community is concerned, he led a rebel group.

No wonder, he was not popular in his community. One is reminded of the oft repeated remark that when Yusuf Meherally died, people of his Khoja community closed their windows when his dead body was being taken on the road below to the kabrastan. But Yusuf Meherally was an atheist, Asgar Ali Engineer was not. To reform a religion, you have to belong to it and it is this he practiced. All religious reformers are not popular in their communities, though some of them lead a sect of their own.

Secular to the core, the country has lost a great intellectual, a great scholar of Quran, and a great humanist. Though not there now, such people always blaze a path and many, who wish to change their communities, take inspiration from such lives.

Janata published his articles almost regularly. He was a prolific writer and he derived his immense energy from his commitment to the cause. He came to his cause, the cause of communal harmony, early in his life when he was a student, thanks to the immense trauma of communal riots. Many had become bitter and taken to adding fuel to the fire in such situations, he reacted otherwise. It inspired him more firmly to take to promoting communal harmony and he pursued his dream relentlessly. The recurring communal riots did not make him despair. With every riot, he became more firm in his resolve. Some study should be done to find out why he reacted this way. There are examples of people of his type whose commitment to communal harmony gets shaken when riots take place. Perhaps, he was made of a different stuff.

His rebellion against his Bohra community brought untold hardships on him and his family. He suffered them stoically. He was ex-communicated, his mother ordered to live separately and he was not allowed to be a part of his brother's funeral. And the rebels – a small team – are persecuted and the political class has stood by their religious head, and not with the reformists. The latter, perhaps, he expected and he took it in his stride. It is perhaps his belief that common persons are not communal, only they are led astray by politicians, helped him to retain his faith in what he was doing and made him work harder, and tirelessly to achieve his goal. For him this formulation was like a religious tenet.

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Not biting the bullet

Harsh Mander

Cries of bitter weeping echoed in the court, matched by surging rage outside, after District Judge Aryan acquitted Congress leader Sajjan Kumar, absolving him from grave charges that he instigated and personally led murderous mob attacks against Sikhs in the national capital 29 years earlier.

Bibi Jagdish Kaur, the ageing feisty prime witness who saw her husband and son slaughtered by the mobs and also lost her three brothers, angrily declared that she had 'lost all faith in the judicial system', but still added that she would appeal against the decision in the high court.

The consistent failure of the Indian judicial system to punish even a single senior political leader for the massacre of Sikhs after Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her two Sikh guards in 1984, is a festering, open wound on the psyche of the Sikh people.

Only 29 persons have been punished in as many years, and these are only foot soldiers in what is widely believed to have been an organised massacre, which officially took 2,733 lives in Delhi alone (although unofficial estimates are closer to 4,000).

My work with the survivors of mass violence in Nellie, Delhi, Bhagalpur and Gujarat confirms that healing and closure is impossible for survivors unless they see justice done to their tormentors.

But instead of justice, institutions of Indian democracy have established

impunity, or the assurance that those who organise and unleash mass crimes that target people because of their religion (and indeed caste) will never be punished. This culture of impunity fuels the next massacre, and the next.

I am convinced that if justice had been done after the forgotten Nellie slaughter in 1983 (for which not a single person has been pushed to date), or after Delhi in 1984, then the subsequent massacres in Bhagalpur in 1989, Mumbai in 1992-93 and Gujarat in 2002 may not have occurred.

The Gujarat carnage convinced me finally that without legal justice, communal incidents would continue to recur, destroying the precious legacy of India's age-old pluralism.

We therefore resolved to pursue several hundred criminal cases in the courts of Gujarat. The same realisation came to several other fine and brave organisations as well, which is why the gang rapists of Bilkees Bano and the mass murderers of Naroda have been punished, including for the first time senior ruling party leaders.

However for the survivors of the 1984 violence, hope of legal justice ever against the mass killers is dying. In a study by the Centre for Equity Studies, we secured through the Right to Information records of most of criminal cases registered after the 1984 carnage.

We find a pattern of cover-up chillingly similar to that perfected

later in Mumbai and Gujarat, in which both police complaints and statements made before the police are typically sketchy, deliberately leaving out names of the accused and witnesses. Bail is freely granted and witnesses intimidated.

Many accused persons are declared 'untraceable' although they are sometimes well-known persons, the investigation is deliberately shoddy, the prosecution acts as though it is the defence, and courts typically watch impassively the deliberate demolition of the cases before them by the police and prosecutors.

Robbed of all hope of justice in the individual cases in which their loved ones were killed, the attention of the survivors has shifted entirely to a few iconic 'test cases' involving senior political leaders Sajjan Kumar and Jagdish Tytler, who are widely believed to have led the mobs to slaughter.

The fate of these cases has come to represent 'symbolic justice' for all victims of the butchery, and indeed for the entire community. Yet both politicians have thrived in their political careers, and have consistently managed to evade the unsteady arm of the law.

In the Sajjan Kumar case, the judge discounts Jagdish Kaur's evidence against him on the ground that his name is not mentioned in the 1984 police complaint.

However, as the Supreme Court has held on many occasions, courts

must be mindful of the circumstances which prevail typically after a communal carnage - the fear, intimidation and open police bias - before dismissing witness statements on grounds of delay.

The judge explicitly affirms that Kaur is a reliable witness, and relies on her evidence despite delays to convict other accused persons in the same case. But there are clear double standards when he considers the same evidence against Kumar, despite collaborative evidence from two other witnesses.

The testimony of several Delhi police officials absolving Kumar of participating in the crime only add to the impression of official cover-up.

That the case against Sajjan Kumar is not based only on rumour and hearsay is evidenced by the fact that he was indicted by three official committees and commissions - Jain-Banerjee, Jain-Aggarwal and GT Nanavati - all of which recommended action against Sajjan Kumar.

At least 7 FIRs mentioned Sajjan Kumar as an accused person, but the cases were closed as the accused - a leading politician - was incredibly declared 'untraceable'.

Even in the current case, in May 2010 Sajjan Kumar was not produced in court by the CBI and only after the metropolitan magistrate threatened to summon the director of the CBI in person and considerable media attention was given to this case that Kumar appeared in the lower court after securing bail from the Delhi High Court. In 2012, the CBI told the court that Sajjan Kumar had organised the anti-Sikh carnage, which had his 'patronage'. Even so today he walks free.

Justice in the Sajjan Kumar case is not just important to heal the wounded soul of the Sikh community. It is critical if we are to prevent further mass crimes, and

indeed to defend secular democracy in India, and redeem its promise of equal treatment of all before the law of the land.

Dear Comrade Prakash Karant,
General Secretary, Communist Party of India (Marxist)

As you are aware, it is now one year since T.P. Chandrashekhara, a Left leader, and former CPI (M) member, was brutally hacked to death in Kozhikode, Kerala. Since the gruesome killing, there have been allegations that cadres of your party were involved in the conspiracy to eliminate TPC, a political opponent—a charge that has been robustly denied by you and your party. Whilst your Party has maintained that CPI (M) cadres are being framed to malign the Left generally and CPI (M) specifically, there are also reports coming out from Kerala that the party leaders are pressuring witnesses to retract their statements made before the judicial magistrate in order to save cadres and leaders of the Party.

It is also a fact that the wave of disgust that the killing evoked forced you to constitute an internal enquiry to investigate the possible role and participation of CPI(M) members in the killing. That report, however remains secret. This reluctance to make the report public naturally creates suspicion and anxiety that there is an attempt to shield those guilty of TPC's murder.

As well wishers of the Left movement, we urge you to make public the report of the enquiry conducted internally by the CPI (M) into the murder. This gesture would be appreciated not only by TPC's widow, KK Rema, who is fighting the legal battle for justice, but also by a wide section of Left and democratic forces.

- Abhijit Kundu, Ahmed Sohaib, Anivar Aravind, Antara Dev Sen, Dhananjay Tripathi, Dunu Roy, Gautam Bhan, Harish Wankhade, Harjeet S. Gill, Harsh Kapoor, Indranil Chowdhury, Jay N. Jayaram, Jairus Banaji, Jyoti Punwani, Kiran Bhaty, Kumar Sundaram, Mahtab Alam, Maidul Islam, Manisha Sethi, Mathew Jacob, Mohammad Imran, Mona Das, Nabanipa Bhattacharya, Nandini Chandra, Rohini Hensmani, Sanghamitra Misra, Satya Sivaraman, Shohini Ghosh, Shamshul Islam, S.R. Darapuri, Srinivasan Ramani, Tanweer Fazal,

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Oppose Market Oriented Reforms in Higher Education

The UPA Government implemented the 'Right To Education Act' from 1st April 2010. The result, as everybody can see, has been the weakening of public education system and big hikes in fees in private sector. The Right To Education Act, as it is under implementation is only creating further stratification in school education against the long cherished goal of Common School System. However, the Ministry for MHRD having destroyed the school system, has initiated market reforms in higher education for the last three years. If enacted, these Bills will make higher education an unprotected prey for both domestic and foreign corporations. The academic consequences of such 'reforms' will be catastrophic. The privately-borne high cost of education will put a premium on disciplines and courses which are directly linked to the demands of domestic and foreign markets that currently generate some jobs and the biggest salaries for few. Fundamental research both in social and natural sciences and pro-people research and democratic syllabi will suffer an inevitable decline. As a consequence, the critical and transformational purpose of institutions of higher education will recede into the background, as they are rapidly turned into 'providers' of a commodity called 'knowledge'. No need to say that both the 'merit' and 'social justice' will be replaced by money.

New Bills:

'The Foreign Educational Institutions (regulation of entry and operations) Bill, 2010', which was introduced in 2010, opens flood gates for foreign trade in education sector. 'The Educational Tribunals

Bill, 2010' seeks to establish a draconian grievance redressal system in conditions in which unionization and collective action, and even recourse to the courts, would be denied to all sections of the University community. The Prohibition of Unfair Practices in technical educational Institutions, Medical Educational Institutions and Universities Bill, 2010 defines only those exorbitant demands for fees that have not been announced at the time of admissions as constituting 'unfair practice' and thus legitimizes the rest of all unfair practices! 'The National Accreditation Regulatory Authority for Higher Educational Institutions Bill, 2010', which was introduced again in 2010, is intended to set up an Accreditation Authority, has the declared objective of maintenance of quality. Yet its main purpose is not academic; it at the best can function as an aid to students to decide where they should 'invest' to get the best 'returns' from the system. These accreditation agencies can, even, misguide the students on facts and figures about the colleges they give accreditation to. In an educational environment as historically, regionally and socially diverse and unequal as contemporary India, it would seriously compromise those courses and institutions that would in fact merit the most support. In the new regime, if established, private agencies will give accreditation to private and public Universities.

A 'National Commission for Higher Education and Research', is proposed to be established through 'The Higher Education and Research Bill, 2011' as the 'single-window' entry point, so favored by corporate capital, to replace bodies like the UGC, MCI, AICTE, NCTE which have been regulating

diverse academic streams. Now these are seen as hurdles in the onward march of trade in education. The important point to be noted here is that the World Bank suggests to and the World Trade Organization imposes on their member countries to set up a single and 'independent' regulatory authority in every service sector. These independent regulatory authorities will be independent of democratic pressure from the people and regulate trade in favor of corporate houses. Again, the proposed 'Universities for Innovation Bill' empowers the central government to establish new or 'elevate' the existing universities and go for collaboration with foreign universities on trade lines bypassing all existing norms including reservations, procedures of appointment of teachers and admission of students with the only condition that they enroll 50% students from within the country. These Universities will bypass all other rules of recognition. There is an all round attempt to push for implementation the project of the so-called Public Private Partnership - a euphemism for siphoning public funds to private agencies.

Since the 1990's it has become very well-known that 'reform' in any sector only means privatization, globalization and liberalization of trade regulations. The current agenda of HRD Ministry is to bring these 'reforms' into the education system and convert it into a market for domestic and foreign corporate capital. That is why the singular purpose behind all the higher education bills is to bypass regulation by the legislative, judicial and executive systems and clear the path for unrestrained trade in education.

The crisis in the educational system

Corrupt practices under the pressure of profit oriented private institutions on the one hand and the failure to invest public funds in a sustained manner, on the other, contributed largely to dereliction of duties in existing regulatory bodies. What is required at this stage is to bring about genuine reform - to ban trade in education on one hand and decentralize and democratize regulatory bodies on the other. Again, the expansion of the system (only about 12% of young people in the relevant age group are in higher education institutions) and ensuring greater access to students from marginalized and weaker sections of society must form the basis for improving and reforming higher education. However the corporate guided reform process is going in the opposite direction. Commercialization of education and concentration of regulatory powers are aimed at restricting entry into this sector only for the wealthy elite and with the onset of global trade in education, the Indian education system will lose whatever democratic nature it has been able to retain till date. Public Private Partnership will result in dissolution of public institutions and establishment of a few elite institutions and many 'teaching shops' in the private sector. Public money will be siphoned off and public facilities and assets will be transferred to private agencies while, the poor and disadvantaged will have to spend their prime period of life for poor quality education which will neither beget knowledge nor jobs for them. Public Private Partnership is said to be a project for inclusion of disadvantaged but, it actually is designed to benefit corporate houses.

The NDA government had already 'offered' the higher education sector as a tradable commodity to be regulated by General Agreement on trade in Services (GATS) under World Trade Organization (WTO). The UPA is continuing the 'offer'. In fact, the Higher Education Bills introduced in the Parliament are aimed at putting in place the legal structure that would facilitate implementation of the regulations of the WTO. If the offer is not withdrawn before the completion of the Doha Round of trade negotiations, Indian higher education would be governed, in perpetuity, by multilateral trade regulations under WTO. This would pose a grave threat to academic independence and national sovereignty.

A People's Alternative

It is high time for students, teachers, educationists, democratic organizations and activists and for all progressive people to stand up against commercialization and commoditization of education and wage a determined struggle for

Common School System and public-funded democratic and egalitarian education from 'KG to PG'. Clearly, no pro-people higher education system can be built without laying its foundation firmly in a public-funded Common School System. This would ensure equal opportunity to all young people after Class XII to participate in higher education. A fully public-funded higher education system is also a pre-condition for promotion of courses and research aimed at disseminating and creating knowledge in wider social interest, rather than in the interest of global capital alone. It is time for all to struggle for a truly democratic education system that excludes inequalities and includes diversities, an education system that liberates human creativity and an education system that builds egalitarian, secular, scientific and humane values and, at the same time, strengthens society to stand against any threat internal or external to the democratic rights and freedoms of the people. Let us all unite and resist higher education Bills.

—All India Forum for Right to Education

Studies in Socialism

By

Ashok Mehta

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Western Ghats

Dear Dr. Kasturirangan,

JBS Haldane, the celebrated 19th century scientist and humanist who quit England protesting its imperialistic invasion of Suez to become an Indian citizen has said: Reality is not only stranger than we suppose, but stranger than we CAN suppose! I could never have imagined that you would be party to a report such as that of the High Level Working Group on Western Ghats, but, then, reality is indeed stranger than we can suppose!

In our report to the Ministry of Environment & Forests, based on our extensive discussions and field visits, we had advocated a graded approach with a major role for grass-roots level inputs for safeguarding the ecologically sensitive Western Ghats. You have rejected this framework and in its place, you advocate a partitioning amongst roughly one-third of what you term natural landscapes, to be safeguarded by guns and guards, and two-third of so-called cultural landscapes, to be thrown open to development, such as what has spawned the 35,000 crore rupees illegal mining scam of Goa. This amounts to attempts to maintain oases of diversity in a desert of ecological devastation. Ecology teaches us that such fragmentation would lead, sooner, rather than later, to the desert overwhelming the oases. It is vital to think of maintenance of habitat continuity, and of an ecologically and socially friendly matrix to ensure long term conservation of biodiversity rich areas, and this is what we had proposed.

Moreover, freshwater biodiversity is far more threatened than forest biodiversity and lies largely in what you term cultural landscapes. Freshwater biodiversity is also vital to livelihoods and nutrition of large sections of our people. That is why we had provided a detailed case study of Lote Chemical Industry complex in Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra, where pollution exceeding all legal limits has devastated fisheries so that 20,000 people have been rendered jobless, while only 11,000 have obtained industrial employment. Yet the Government wants to set up further polluting industries in the same area, and has therefore deliberately suppressed its own Zonal Atlas for Siting of Industries.

Your report shockingly dismisses our constitutionally guaranteed democratic devolution of decision making powers, remarking that local communities can have no role in economic decisions. Not surprisingly, your report completely glosses over the fact reported by us that while the Government takes absolutely no action against illegal pollution of Lote, it had invoked police powers to suppress perfectly legitimate and peaceful protests against pollution on as many as 180 out of 600 days in 2007-09.

India's cultural landscape harbours many valuable elements of biodiversity. Fully 75% of the population of Lion-tailed Macaque, a monkey species confined to the Western Ghats, thrives in the cultural landscape of tea gardens. I live in the city of Pune and scattered

in my locality are a large number of Banyan, Peepal and Gular trees; trees that belong to genus *Ficus*, celebrated in modern ecology as a keystone resource that sustains a wide variety of other species. Through the night I hear peacocks calling, and when I get up and go to the terrace I see them dancing. It is our people, rooted in India's strong cultural traditions of respect for nature, who have venerated and protected the sacred groves, the *Ficus* trees, the monkeys and the peafowl.

Apparently all this is to be snuffed out. It reminds me of Francis Buchanan, an avowed agent of British imperialism, who wrote in 1801 that India's sacred groves were merely a contrivance to prevent the East India Company from claiming its rightful property.

It would appear that we are now more British than the British and are asserting that a nature friendly approach in the cultural landscape is merely a contrivance to prevent the rich and powerful of the country and of the globalized world from taking over all lands and waters to exploit and pollute as they wish while pursuing lawless, jobless economic growth. It is astonishing that your report strongly endorses such an approach. Reality is indeed stranger than we can suppose!

With warm personal regards,

I remain,

Yours sincerely,
Madhav Gadgil



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Social welfare politics

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Fast at Rajghat**

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Ever since three test cricketers were arrested for corrupt practices, the national media, both print and electronic, have chosen to inflict saturation coverage of the developments, some of them undoubtedly newsworthy, in the world of Indian cricket. The coverage helped expose much of the seamy side of cricket, which enjoys a cult status in India and many English-speaking nations of the world. The expose touched not only the players but many of those who run, manage and control that sport in the country. Even while the media was obsessively engaged in pursuit of wrong-doing in cricket, another interesting and equally newsworthy story broke. The return of N. R. Narayana Murthy to Infosys as executive chairman was a development that sent a message to the IT industry of the perils that face a company which fails to retain its supreme position two years running. The IT industry is verily a player in a highly competitive field.

However, the massive coverage given to these two major newsbreaks conveyed the impression that the country had virtually come to a standstill and nothing else of any national importance or significance

took place during the weeks that cricket and Infosys dominated the news presentation! “ Aur bhi gham hain duniya men,” Mirza Ghalib wrote years ago, “ muhabbat ke siva.” It is unfortunate that some important newsbreaks did not receive the kind of coverage they deserved. Two of these deserve special mention, since they need to be debated at a wider and national level. The first was the exit from the National Advisory Council of the civil rights activist Aruna Roy. The second was the law minister Kapil Sibal’s announcement of government’s decision to do away with the collegium system in the appointment of judges for the high courts and the Apex Court. Both developments are of immense national significance and consequence.

Aruna Roy has often complained that the government did not take the NAC’s recommendations seriously. However, her resignation - or her decision to part company with a body to whose deliberations she had made much contribution - caught everyone by surprise. The immediate provocation was her disappointment over the continued ideological differences between the government, as represented

Between the lines

Bangladesh has lost its way

Kuldip Nayar

by Dr. Manmohan Singh and the Congress party, represented by the NAC chairman and party president Sonia Gandhi. Specifically, Aruna Roy decided to quit when the PM continued to refuse to pay statutory minimum wages to workers under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. He has maintained that the project was in the nature of social security guarantee for the really poor and needy, and not a regular employment scheme requiring minimum wages. Clearly, the government-party divide has been a point of reference and agitation within the NAC for some time, since some state governments have approached the respective high courts for clarification.

Aruna Roy's letter to Sonia Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi's letter to the Prime Minister provide interesting sidelights to the episode. Obviously, it is a question of interpretation of the law as it stands in MGNREGA, to be read together with the Minimum Wages Act, 1948. Minimum wage, according to one interpretation is a payment that is the minimum required to live. Hence, it ought to be the least payment that has to be paid to a worker regardless of the nature of the scheme he is employed in and regardless of the wage structure in that establishment. Aruna Roy has explained that there are two thought-processes in the NAC, one believing in market growth and processes for nation-building and the other advocating socialist measures. This kind of divide is basic to the issue of the ideology which a government in power pursues to achieve growth. The PM can argue he has the right to choose the instrument of growth, and so can Sonia Gandhi. However, considering the background of the ideology that

(Continued on Page 5)

When revolutions are in quest for freedom and justice even after four decades of their happening, it means that they have gone awry. If hartals and demonstrations are staged with the same frequency, the scenario becomes all the more somber. This is what has taken place in Bangladesh.

Kamal Hossain, the country's first foreign minister, has written a book to give an account of it. I wish he had said more about the birth of Bangladesh and the failure to sustain the spirit of secular democracy it had evoked. This was a rare revolution which rose above fanaticism and factionalism and beckoned a democratic structure without the pull of religion. Hossain's story is inadequate and does not tell why a country which fought against bigot so resolutely caved in when extremism reared its head.

Not long ago, when Bangla people freed themselves from Pakistan in 1970, they rose as Bangladeshi. A Muslim nation fought against Muslims to make religious appeals meaningless. Unfortunately, after the liberation, the Bangladeshis got lost in religious warfare and parochial assertion. Hossain should have underlined the fact that the dream got shattered because religion had the better of secularism. Today's Bangladesh scene seems to suggest that extremism is nearly indelible and very few people rise above it.

To trace the movement for liberation is to applaud, the Bangladeshis' triumph over

passion and prejudice. It was an ideology which conquered petty considerations. Yet the story of independence was not that of a struggle alone to liberate oneself from the distant Rawalpindi. It was the birth of an ideology of egalitarianism and a society which would fight against sectarianism and religious divisions. The nine months of operation by the Pakistani Army tore all tiers of administration and the machinery of governance and imposed a dictator-like rule. There was also an element of hatred towards the weak and poor Bangladeshis who dared to assert their identity. The only way they had was to revolt. "What could we do when the Pakistan government" as Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rehman, father of the nation", said "They tried to kill every Bengali and destroy Bangladesh"? Destruction-wise, 2.44 million of the nation's 14 million farmers were ruined and the rest lost bullocks, ploughs or seeds. Fifty-six million dwelling units, from pucca houses to thatched huts, were demolished. In addition, according to Mujib, "Pakistani soldiers destroyed 12,000 trucks out of the 18,000 we had. They burnt currency notes and took away all our foreign exchange. Our food godowns were demolished."

Disruption on such a scale made restoration of normal life impossible when Mujib took over. He explained that it would take time to set things right. But his appeal had little impression on the people who wanted the revolution to show results. They

had seen one miracle happening - the liberation - but wanted another - economic prosperity. Building takes time. But the public had no patience. Also, the fire of freedom that burnt fiercely in the hearts lessened as days went by. On the other hand, many anti-liberation elements that had been silenced became active to prove that the liberation had never taken place and that the link with Pakistan should have never been broken. The more radical among the liberators also expected improvement from those in power.

The country had too many guns. The radicals were not the only ones to find them useful. There were others of different shades of political colours and there were plain brigands without any politics. They did not give up arms. Mujib's personal magic worked up to a point. According to one estimate, 100,000 to 200,000 arms were never surrendered. Violence lay latent in the land and it appeared with a vengeance when the liberation was over.

However, the most disconcerting development for the Bangladesh leaders was an incipient anti-India feeling. "I wish I could die now because relations between India and Bangladesh are so good today that I do not want to see them deteriorating," Tajuddin, once Prime Minister, told me.

But Mujib was not worried when I met him. He said "I know that some elements assisted by international interests are indulging in a whispering campaign against India. But they cannot sabotage the relationship between your great country and Bangladesh. A Bengali does not forget even those who give him only a glass of water. Here your

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Does group interest promote social good?

K. S. Chalam

It is widely discussed in our media that around 30 leaders belonging to different political parties of the country were united as spectators of a spectacle of a business game. It is called IPL and was sponsored by BCCI, the champion of Indian cricket. The total value of the cricket business is around \$3 billion, in rupees 15000-20000 crores. The benevolent government has given tax exemption on the revenue earned. Interestingly, all the political parties including the opposition that rip in the ruling coalition recently on the issue of different 'gates' in Parliament remain quiet on the issue of Match fixing and Spot fixing. Thus IPL has emerged as symbol of group interest. The fixing drama as unfolded for the last one week might continue till the parliament session as there are no issues to feed the media, which has cunningly avoided asking questions as to why do we need IPL?

It is reported that the BCCI present chairman (Srinivasan) is alleged to be the one who is involved in the match/spot fixing through his son-in-law - it is not new to such operations. The people of Andhra Pradesh knew about the antecedents of this man as his name prominently figured in the YS Jagan Mohan Reddy quid pro quo case of CBI. He is alleged to be involved in the India cements land acquisition and related scams in A.P. There may be more such characters in the IPL/BCCI and they might be maintaining low profile or the media mischief of highlighting those that are not related anyway with media houses and down playing others

who are kith and kin or business partners is a well-known 'press fixing' drama in India quite for some time. Therefore, it is very difficult to obtain the truth about some issues reported in our media. As someone has rightly remarked, it is through the manipulation of the three Ms - Money, Mafia and Media - the present system operates.

The economic benefits of operations like IPL/Casinos/Gambles, etc. are being discussed by experts as to how one can make legal earnings and the state can gain by imposing taxes on these operations. There are informed discussions in a section of the print media as to how we can copy the processes in Las Vegas in USA to curb mafia activities and at the same economically gain from it. It is estimated that the betting trade in India is about Rs 3 lakh crores and the government would get around Rs 20000 crores as Tax revenue. Thus, we have very brilliant ideas how to make the so-called illegal activities as legitimate with Legislative action. Perhaps, there may be already a readymade private bill to be introduced in the parliament soon. The experts are trying to convince us that it is all part of a game and nothing to be worried about the ethical dimension of it. But, the matter of the fact is that the operations of Hawala, match fixing, real estate boom, etc. are symptoms of black money transforming as white and legitimate. How can they be curbed? The kind of innovations introduced by our indigenous business intelligence is so vast and deep, we are sure that they will

find some other method to avoid taxes and accumulate. Further, we have some political leaders from traditional business communities involved in many of the operations which indicate how deeply the system is entrapped. Therefore, the group interest of IPL leaders is only a part of what has been happening in the country for centuries. There is a definite record of such happenings during the British India in the form of speeches of Edmund Burke indicting the East India company officers in the British Parliament.

The group is pursuing their interest in a democratic country that guarantees individual freedom to take up any profession or carry on any occupation, trade or business guaranteed under Article 19(g). If you ask any legal luminary or public intellectual, they might support the activities of the BCCI/IPL and could add that they are serving the nation by providing entertainment if not sports among the interested public. What is the harm or problem if they follow their group or private interest? In this context, two schools of thought namely, 'social choice' and 'public choice' have addressed some of the issues relating to private interests and the calculus of consent in a state to make decisions on policy, are worth mentioning here.

Perhaps our friends in the profession might be ready with theoretical formulations to substantiate why we need IPLs and how they help create wealth. Economists have long been arguing that any individual activity that does not involve loss of welfare of others can be promoted. The libertarian scholars cite the so-called Pareto optimality, a condition to frame that it is impossible to make some one better off without making somebody

else worse off, to formulate policies of welfare and development. This principle advanced by the Italian scholar who was said to be close to Mussolini, the fascist leader, is parroted by every scholar to substantiate activities like the IPL, as they do not disturb this optimality and promotes individual liberty.

Another group of scholars have claimed that no voting rule that satisfy decisive, consensus, non-dictatorship and independence is possible given the social choice (Arrow impossibility) under Pareto conditionality. Buchanan who developed a similar public choice theory has also examined the rent-seeking actions of bureaucrats while formulating public policies. His arguments have been used by World Bank economists to annihilate 'state' authority on the ground that public choice decisions do not necessarily promote welfare. 'Politics', Buchanan said, 'is a process with which individuals, with separate potentially differing interests and values, interact for the purpose of serving individually valued benefits of cooperative effort'. Thus, he was critical about the American politicians and bureaucrats as rent-seekers (an activity through which companies gain through lobbying without benefit to society) but very appreciative of the institutions promoting liberty. We are citing these theories (mostly technical) here as it is under their illumination most of the policies in government today are formulated everywhere in the so-called free world, including India.

The private interests of the IPL group or some other activity tomorrow like using the tonnes of smashed ganja (cannabis resin) of the Customs and Excise Department

profitably to create wealth etc, are issues to be debated. Both Ganja and IPL with all kinds of support structures provide entertainment and simultaneously create wealth and why not we promote them? Are we not deriving revenue by sponsoring IMFL?

The libertarians had a strong foundation in Positive Economics that does not speak about normative issues as values-based economics is "dreadful thing to accept" (Hicks). One might still question the above cynical proposition saying that policy makers are not chumps to accept such plans that involve public morality. But, we had proposals like making corruption a legal activity with the market forces deciding the worth, etc. Now IPL is in force. Though, the issue raised here appears to be simple and silly, they are in fact the concerns that are being confronted by the common man every day. We do not have competent people to counter the elegant arguments of experts to outwit them so that the scarce resources are used for the benefit of the deprived or social good (clean air and water, for example). The civil society, public intellectuals, media, etc have a role to play here rather than leaving it to the 'paid Intellectuals' to think, reflect and formulate policies on our behalf. You may not possess the abstract reasoning of mathematics, a language and not an ideology, to hoodwink common man. But your active involvement in public reasoning and participation in alternative exercises would definitely provide solutions to TINA (there is no alternative).

There is in fact a long tradition in social sciences to counter the arguments formulated by the

libertarians from the time of Hume. Sismondi, Marx, Ruskin, Hobson, Schumacher in the past, Amartya Sen to some extent in contemporary world have been articulating resolution to respond to these challenges. Sen has resolved the impossibility riddle of decision making through the process of interpersonal comparisons. Addressing the problems of rights and liberties of the minorities and weaker sections with social goods that satisfy basic needs, capabilities and information broadening he said that “a state can be Pareto optimal and still be sickeningly inequitable”. We may also consider how the policy makers have banned the concept of public good (common good that provides utility to every one without rivalry) in their quest for creating wealth and auctioned even natural resources like rivers. Interestingly, the policy makers have used select theories like the above that have fascist tendencies with Western values of market significance. The institutional structures of other societies that have promoted welfare to people have no relevance in their formulations and are covetously determined to annihilate if some are found to have survived.

The IPL episode is only a small hunk of a large mass of rapacious aggrandizement of chosen few from traditional business groups who care less for human values except money. The group interest in the form of IPL so far has not shown any proclivity of helping the disadvantaged? Further, they keep on inventing institutions that facilitate exploitation, corruption and distribute spoils. Fascinatingly, they are the ones who use liberty as a value to exploit for their own benefit or group with a minimalist state to ensure enforcement of contracts and nothing else. Even the Aristotle's

Nicomachean Ethics that define human good as happiness acquired through the virtue of justice seem to be not in the reckoning, if not evoking the ideals of a welfare state

(Continued from Page 2)

has dominated Congress thinking for several decades, it is surprising that differences should crop up in a body chaired by the Congress President herself. It is possible that the story of Aruna Roy's disassociation with the NAC is still incomplete and we have yet to hear the full version.

Meanwhile, the proposal to abolish the collegium system and allow the government a say in the appointment of judges is a retrogressive move. It portends interference of the officialdom in the judiciary. The Chief Justice of India must be the sole authority to decide on the judicial appointments if the system is to be kept transparent and fair. The government needs to re-think over this issue.

(Continued from Page 3)

soldiers laid down their lives for my people. How can they ever forget your sacrifice? You fed ten million refugees for more than ten months. Even now you are giving us food and other assistance. I can assure you that my people are not ungrateful. Therefore, those who are trying to foment trouble will not succeed in their designs”.

Dacca's Foreign Office is still peeved over the remark of foreign countries that the policies of Bangladesh are “New Delhi's carbon-copy.” A Foreign Office man told me: “If only we could oppose you somewhere so that we project an image of our independence” He betrayed a small-nation complex

buried few decades ago. Is it not a situation that needs the attention of informed citizens to discuss about the various dimensions of the goings on in the emerging India?

and it appeared that to prove their country's separate identity, officials are tempted at times to adopt an anti-Indian posture.

India's size looks large. Many civil servants, suddenly becoming conscious that they were employees of a small and yet not prosperous country, indulge in anti-India talk. “Your country is too big,” they say. “Whether your neighbours like it or not, they have to be subservient to you.” Was this the assertion of old parochial sentiment or a complaint against their country's inadequacy?

All this is missing in Hossain's book, the feeling of elation and the frustration after its failure. There is not any disclosure as such books promise. Hossain tells something about Mujib, but skips the much-talked weakness in his capacity to administer. Hossain should have also confirmed or denied the rumour that the Sheikh was sentenced to death by Pakistani's military rulers and spared due to the intervention by Zulfikhar Ali Bhutto, Pakistan's popular leader. Maybe, Kamal Hossain has yet to publish the Bangladesh's untold story. We should wait for it.

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Notebook

Parties frightened by RTI

Balwant Singh Kheda, veteran socialist leader of Punjab, has been campaigning for the cause of bringing political parties within the ambit of the Right to Information Act. He had met leaders of various parties but the response was lukewarm. He had raised the issue in a few meetings of Socialist Front and, later on, of the Socialist Party. The National Committee had passed a resolution calling on the Chief Information Commissioner to act on it. As time passed on, Khedaji was getting irritated. "Why does not our party do something about this?" We were feeling a little guilty. Some of us had raised the point in some public fora.

On 5th June came the news. The Chief Information Commissioner had ruled that since the five big

parties - Indian National Congress, Nationalist Congress Party, Bharatiya Janata Party, Communist Party of India (Marxist), Janata Dal (United) and Bahujan Samaj Party - are to abide by the provisions of the RTI Act because those parties have received great benefits, in the form of cheap lands, free time on DD and AIR during elections, etc. So they are on equal footing with public bodies and so come in the ambit of the RTI Act.

Strange as it may look, the Congress, the CPI(M) and JD(U) have come out very exasperatingly against the CIC. The Congress says that it would lead to unnecessary harassment, while Sharad Yadav says that a political party is not a shop and hence RTI should not apply

to it. Only the BJP has welcomed the decision of the CIC.

Actually, as far as this point is concerned, a political party is much more liable to RTI than a public body because the former professes to give lead to the latter in being more transparent and responsive. Why are the parties so afraid of giving replies to the queries from citizens who would take so much trouble to ask for specific information about functioning of a particular party? Functioning of a party must always be like an open book. There should not be anything secret.

Well, earlier the named parties revise their stand and look more honest and responsive to public glare, the better.

Chattisgarh massacre

The Naxalite attack on the yatra of the Congress Party in Chattisgarh in the last month is highly condemnable. About thirty innocent men and women have lost their lives for no fault of theirs.

There might be some security lapses on the part of the Chatisgarh administration. It is a matter of great concern that the intelligence agency is generally found wanting. Like with other anti-social happenings, the IB fails in gathering relevant information about the conspiracy plans of terrorists of any variety. The IB owes an explanation to the nation as to how sophisticated weapons and so much funds reach those groups who are doing everything clandestinely. If the IB cannot

penetrate the supply lines, why should the nation bear heavy cost of maintaining it? The Home Ministry, including its political head should put in pretty hard work to cut supply lines of the Naxalites and other terrorist groups.

One is constrained to say that the Prime Minister, so suave and well-composed a person, had overreacted when he said that "the nation would not bow down before the Naxalites." They do not really pose such a grave challenge to the nation. It is an unwarranted hype indulged into by some media men and a few politicians when they say that one-third or one-fourth of the country is in their grip. It is high exaggeration. Take example of Gadchiroli district

in Maharashtra. They have base-camps in four or five taluks out of eleven. And those camps occupy hardly a few hundred hectares of land that are impenetrable hilly and forest spots. Most of the people of the district are carrying on their day-to-day activities quite openly and in a normal way. Naxalite activity often consists of only stoppage of developmental activities like preventing construction of a few school buildings or bridges for a few days. But when the security people move in to give protection to construction workers, they carry on their activities quite fearlessly. People may get frightened when armed onslaughts are launched by

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Egyptian Social Democrats

D. K. Giri

The Arab spring has thrown up many surprises like the power of the Civil Society, mass mobilisation through New Media, different political ideologies. A political suicide that triggered off spontaneous, massive protest on Tunisia quickly spread to Egypt. On 25 January 2011, tens of thousands of Egyptians took to the streets and converged in Central Tahrir square where they camped vowing to oust Hosni Mubarak. The winds of protests blew across the Middle East and knocked off many dictators. The 'cry for freedom' rent the air of the entire Middle East.

In Egypt, out of the revolution of 25th January 2011, known as the "day of rage", a social Democratic Party (ESDP) was born. The party was formed in March 2011 and was given official recognition on 3rd July 2011). ESDP, thus, represents the aspirations of 25 January revolution and those of all Egyptians, young and olds "built on a deep confidence in humanity and faith in the future, Egyptian social Democrats protect and defend fundamental human rights and "the rank of law", ESDP subscribes to the core values of International Social Democracy: freedom, political, economic and social justice. The party has added a growth and development value to its list, perhaps to reflect the current situation. It says along with justice, it will "create jobs and entrepreneurship".

ESDP's Seven Principles

ESDP's party programmes are driven by seven principles. These principles, of course, could be of any

social democratic party anywhere in the world. But, given the recent political history of Egypt, these principles sound bold and ambitious: (i) Human rights - ESDP guarantees political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights; (ii) Citizenship - a modern civil state in which all individuals are equal in rights and duties; (iii) Democracy - a government elected by the people that protects minorities, ensures the rule of law and the independence of the three branches of the state; (iv) Social justice - guarantees basic rights and a decent standard of living, such as minimum wage, access to health care, housing and education; (v) Economic development - ESDP commits to a free market economy that is committed to a social justice agenda. A free market economy encourages investments, abolishes monopolies, eradicates all forms of corruption, strengthens education and scientific research, and above all, places employment and job creation as the most critical priority for all economic policies; (vi) ESDP aims at preservation of natural resources for future generations, as well as working for a better environment; and (vii) ESDP works to stop the armament race and to abolish all weapons of mass-destruction both regionally and globally. From these principles, the Egyptian Social Democratic Party is perceived by many to be a liberal party with social democratic principles, straddling a fine line between free market and social justice.

The Party Organisation

The party has a Board of Trustees consisting of five prominent

members: Daoud Abdel, a film maker; Dr. Aazim EL Beblawi, a politician, former Finance Minister, renowned economist; Dr. Mervat Tellansy, the first female Egyptian Ambassador and former minister; Dr. Makram Mehanny, CEO of a pharma company and Dr. Mohammed Farahat, an academic, a constitutional expert, and a human rights activist. Thus the Board consists of five distinguished people from business, politics, and civil society. Founding member Farid Zarha once said, "I cannot have a social democratic party without having a businessman and union representative side by side". Party members insist that Egyptian Social Democratic Party combines the reform-minded leftists and market-oriented liberals. They also suggest that the party is modelled after social democratic groups found in Scandinavia.

Dr. Mohamed Aboulghar as the president of the party heads the ESDP organisational structure. He is supported by the Advisory Board, Board of Trustees (who registered the organisation), and the Higher Committee. The President is also backed by a secretary general, five Vice Presidents and the Secretary of the Higher Committee. In fact, the Higher Committee and the President share a consultative relation, and most of the actions of the President have to be endorsed by the Higher Committee. This is to check the authoritarian tendencies in a president. Vice-presidents are supported by a number of secretaries representing different regions and carrying out

various tasks. Then, there are front organisations like women's bodies, youth, professionals, farmers and so on.

Parliamentary Elections

The parliamentary elections were called on 28 November 2011, after the ouster of Hosni Mubarak. Egyptian Social Democratic party formed a coalition called Egyptian Bloc, which included two more parties - Free Egyptians Party, and Al-Tagammu. The Egyptian Supreme Court dissolved the parliament of 2011-12, although, the Shura (Consultative Council), the upper house of the Egyptian bi-cameral legislature remains intact, Following was the formation before the dissolution: there are 508 seats in Egypt's People's Assembly for 91 million Egyptians. Out of 508 seats, 498 are elected by the people, and 10 are nominated by Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), which ran the interim government. Out of those seats, Democratic Alliance consisted of four parties - Freedom and Justice Party (216), Al-Karama (6), Al-Hadara(2) Labour Party (1), the Islamist Alliance consisted of three parties - Al-Nour (109), Building and Development Party (13) Al-Asala(3). Egyptian Bloc comprised ESDP (16), Free Egyptians Party (15), Al-Tagammin Party (3). The remarkable thing to note is that ESDP, more than any other party, had women members, and members of the minorities. The upper house, Shura Council, has 264 seats, out of which 180 are elected and the rest are appointed by the President of Egypt. ESDP has 6 seats out of 8 secured by the Egyptian bloc.

ESDP's Internationalism

In August 2012 the party was admitted to Socialist International as a consultative member. The party was also accepted into the Party of European Socialists on 18 February 2013. PES president, Sergei Stanishev said, "I am proud to welcome ESDP into our progressive family. This is a big step in improving relations between progressive forces on both sides of the Mediterranean. The ESDP has contributed to political change and is a credible and strong voice in defence of our common progressive values. The party has become a rallying point for democratic change, social justice and human rights". PES was concerned that Egypt may relapse into authoritarianism, and the Egyptian revolution may be in danger. Since the onset of Arab Spring, PES has been active in the Middle East to promote progressive democracy. It had organised four major national conferences in Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan to support the democracy movement. Granting of membership of PES to ESDP is yet another step in extending its support for legitimate demands of democracy.

ESDP advocates a just peace between Israel and Palestinians based upon the internationally agreed resolutions leading to the creation of Palestinian state. It supports the right of self-determination of all peoples, and stopping the arms race between regions in the Middle East and making the region free of weapons of mass destruction. The latest position of ESDP on Syria reflects its approach to Arab politics. It condemns the atrocities by Syria's current ruling Baathist

party and killings by some factions of Syrian Opposition in the name of revolution.

In a press release on 10 May, ESDP said it suspected a conspiracy to fragment the Arab world after successful division of Sudan, and attempts to divide Iraq and Syria. ESDP favours a consensual political solution by all factions. That is the only way to preserve the unity of Syria and the Arab world. ESDP called for an immediate international campaign to stop the ongoing violence, negotiate the exit of Bashar Al-Assad's regime and prepare the next stage for peace and democracy. ESDP vows to eradicate, in collaboration with progressive social democratic forces, sectarianism and dictatorship from the Arab world which pose a great threat to peace and democracy.

Conclusion

As Egypt's democracy revolution continues to evolve, the "talks in the town" are about nation building party formation, political ideology and so on. At the same time, there is a lurking fear of a relapse into dictatorship. It is true that democratic transition has taken place, but not the democratic transformation. For instance, on 11 May, Dr. Emad Gad, vice-chair of ESDP Foreign Affairs, and Amina Shafik, a prominent writer, and a member of ESDP were stopped at Cairo airport as they were returning from a seminar in Beirut, on "building a modern State in the context of Arab movement". They were led to headquarters of the National Security on a flimsy ground of similarity of a name with a suspect. This instance warns

(Continued on Page 15)

Hugo Chavez is Dead, Long Live Chavismo

Y. V. Reddy

Hugo Chavez who breathed his last on March 5th, 2013. was a “defining figure” in Latin American politics for 14 years.

A Lt-Col. In the armed forces, Chavez led a coup in 1992 and failed. He was imprisoned, released after two years, and pardoned. He then formed a political party and contested election in 1998. He was duly elected President. George Bush administration engineered a coup in 2002. The “right-wing putsch” failed and a wave of popular protests including that of the army put him back in place within couple of days.

He got Constitutionaid two-term limit removed, in a referendum. He contested for a further term of six years, fourth time, in November 2012, which he won with 54 per cent vote. The swearing-in, scheduled for January 10, 2013 had to be postponed due to cancer which killed him on March 5.

His voting strength, however, for the fourth term, took a plunge to 55 per cent from the high of 66 per cent in 2006. He did tell the voters that he had been cured of the disease. Whether that was the right thing to tell is not within the realm of practical politics. More basically, it is arguable if Chavez “considered life-long rule his Messianic destiny”. He would have been in power, non-stop, for twenty years, if he had lasted through the incumbency. But then, it is easy to pick holes in a revolutionary leader who bristles with enemies, conspiracies and problems galore, and cannot go always by the book in dealing with them. A revolutionary, nevertheless, owes it to humanity that his responses should be such as to blaze a trail for those that follow.

All said and done, Venezuelan society before and after Chavez came to power, is a study in contrast: Prior to 1999, business elite ruled the roost, economy served the interests of the international banking institutions, and oil-wealth “went into the lives of the rich” and the “profits of oil-corporations”. Under Chavez, the whole scenario changed: Business leaders and wealthy Venezuelans were at the receiving end; he kept the oil-wealth within the country and within Latin America; he supplanted the international banking institutions, including the IMF and the World Bank and spent the oil-wealth “on giving social hand-outs to the poor” and “helping socialist fraternal countries”. True, Chavismo was not all perfect. There were a few patches like excessive charity, unsustainable social spending, neglected infrastructure, budget deficit and inflation. Warts and all, “Millions of Venezuelans enjoy better life today”.⁽¹⁾ People are not likely to forget this make-over of theirs for quite some time. Not that he was elected for the fourth time as President without run-off, but also that his party and allies won 20 out of 23 governorships in states’ elections held in December 2012, though he did not campaign a sure sign of his immense popularity.

Anti-Americanism

The anti-Americanism of Chavez is proverbial. The U.S had long dominated Latin America “through brutal dictatorships and oligarchical democracies. Chavez with his ‘Chavismo’” as his approach is called, stood four-square against this loot and overlordship that had gone on for almost a century, following in the footsteps of Bolivar, Che-Guevara, and now Fidel Castro

whom he virtually carried on his shoulders politically as well as personally

When the Soviet Union’s largesse stopped in the nineties, Chavez started supporting Cuba economically from out of his oil-wealth, treating Cuba as the shrine of all revolutionaries and hailing Castro as his friend, philosopher, and guide. Castro himself claimed Chavez as his ‘spiritual son’. In contrast, America kept Cuba under severe sanctions for over fifty years, and even tried, in vain, umpteen times to physically liquidate Castro. No wonder, Chavez was its *bête-noire*, as he turned Cuba into a land of pilgrimage to all Latin American revolutionaries and its leader Castro into a living God.

After the collapse of Soviet Union, Cuba would have been crushed by American sanctions, if Chavez had not come to its rescue. Bolivia, Ecuador, and even Argentina were “fragile economies” and Chavez supplied them with subsidized fuel shipments. It needed a lot of courage to provide refined crude to Iran and Syria, when they were under “unilateral American sanctions”. Was it not a bit too crazy on his part to supply gas and petrol, gratis, to poor neighborhoods in the U.S, in harsh winter months? Only for a few, it was charity, and for many, it was a show-off. What else is doling out freebies to the denizens of a super power, however indigent they might be?

Chavismo and Venezuela

Venezuela is the biggest oil producer, overtaking even Saudi Arabia. It has 18 per cent of the world’s total proven oil resources.

The U. S. Department of Energy puts its oil reserves at 1.36 trillion barrels, the world's largest. Chavez nationalized the biggest domestic oil company, Petroles de Venezuela, PDVSA, from foreign hands. In place of 1 per cent earlier, he collected 16.6 per cent royalties on heavy crude from foreign oil companies. He stopped parking their petro-dollars in U.S and Western banks.

To understand the U.S role in the Middle East or Latin America, two cardinal truths must be kept in mind: 1. If Chavez could spend # 772 billion dollars, in a decade, to uplift his peoples' lives, it was his country's oil wealth. 2. To loot this oil wealth and more is the sole objective of any neocolonial power like America in the Middle East or Latin America. And when native leaders like Chavez, Castro, Correa, Saddam, or Gaddafi, call a halt to such a loot, conflict in some form or other is inevitable.

To be a little more concrete Saddam, Gaddafi, and Chavez were very important players, at one time, in OPEC.⁽²⁾ They could not only make the West pay higher price for petrol, but also collect far more royalties from Western companies. Saddam and Gaddafi are, now, no more. American forces in Iraq and NATO intervention in Libya drowned them in blood. The Western cunning is such that they got them killed by their own people. Chavez was spared only by chance. If military intervention had not happened in Afghanistan and Iraq, Chavez would have met a similar fate. In his book "Confessions of an Economic Hit Man" John Perkins writes: "...and Chavez was saved by Saddam Hussein. The Bush administration could not take on Afghanistan, Iraq, and Venezuela all at once...."⁽³⁾ It is nothing new to America. The same author cites

another instance: "Jaime Roldos has brought to Ecuador a hydrocarbon law increasing the royalties charged to foreign companies, and shortly after that, his plane went down".⁽⁴⁾ Chavez, on death-bed, vented that it might not be a coincidence that five South American heads of states were down with cancer, all at the same time.

In People's Service

Chavez brought the giant oil company, PDVSA, under government control; he made the Western oil companies conform to stringent terms. He stopped parking their petro-dollars in U.S and Western banks. He nationalized the electricity industry. He nationalized telecom industry. He distributed 3 million hectares of land to tens of thousands of farmers. Chavez goes down as the leader who had put his country's oil-wealth at the service of his people. He gave them subsidized food, subsidized housing, free education and free health clinics. He affected wage increases to them. His social programmes have certainly benefitted the poor. "Millions of Venezuelans enjoy better life today".⁽⁵⁾

Unemployment dropped from 14.5 per cent in 1999 to 7.6 per cent in 2009; per capita GDP went up from # 4401 to # 10801 in 2011; and the BPLs shrunk from 23 per cent to 8.5 per cent. Between 2000 and 2010, he spent a whopping amount of some # 770 billion on providing these social benefits to the common people of his country. During this period, social programmes reached 20 million people, pensions paid to 2.1 million senior citizens, infant mortality down from 25 to 13 per thousand, and the country now has 58 doctors per 10,000 people as against 18 in 1996. Even more important, 96 per cent people have access to clean water and school attendance is 85 per cent, while

one in three has free education till University level. According to a U.N report, "Venezuela is the least unequal society in Latin America".⁽⁶⁾

If anything, he is slammed for overspending on giving social handouts to the poor besides helping socialist fraternal countries, without building suitable infrastructure for the country with all its oil-wealth. It seems, Venezuela's infrastructure is decaying with its roads and bridges in a bad condition, hospitals ill-equipped, power-cuts frequent, and handling of ships taking an unduly long time at the ports. The blast that took place in Amuay refinery killing 42 people, 6 others missing and several injured, is being cited as an example of inefficiency and poor management under socialism. So much so, it is said, the Venezuelan economy is in a bad shape with inflation as high as 18 per cent a year, growth only 5 per cent, budget deficit 14 per cent of the GDP and the Venezuelan currency fast losing its value from the official rate of 6.3 Bolivars to 23 a dollar. The deterioration is attributed to excessive public spending in a milieu of too many elections and referendums without respite.

Surely, Chavez with so much of oil-wealth could have developed social and physical infrastructure, cracked down on corruption, checked violent crime Caracas having earned a dubious distinction of being the most lawless city in Latin America. He could not have also "alienated investors with waves of take-overs". Finally, one wonders—and this is, what, after all, defined him—if he had overstretched himself in helping other countries and other people.⁽⁷⁾

A lesson that could, probably, be learnt from the fiasco of Soviet experiment is that communism will not last long until people become more responsible, and the

country builds solid and elaborate infrastructure (like roads, railways, ports, airports, stadiums, schools, hospitals etc.) even while cutting on immediate social benefits, voluntarily, for some time. Chavez could have concentrated on building solid and durable infrastructure throughout his country. It is this lack of balance that led critics to point out that he squandered his extraordinary oil windfall and that he did not use his country's oil-wealth as an "economic development engine".⁽⁸⁾ John Perkins called him "economically inept Chavez". The Bolivarian revolution to prosper, the balance will have to be restored by his successor.

But the compulsions of a multi-party state may not ensure smooth and uninterrupted journey for his Bolivarian revolution which can only be implemented by fits and starts in a constitutional democracy. Spearheading as he did, a radical movement of socialism and Latin-American unity, Chavez faced this dilemma and hence his impatience, at times, with its checks and balances, which he tried to skip through populous gimmicks like referendums and so on.

Inspired Acts

In place of 1 per cent earlier, 16.6 per cent in royalties on heavy crude was collected by him from the foreign companies dealing in the fantastic oil wealth of the country. The mega-proceeds thus accrued were placed at the service of his people and to bring succor to long neglected slums (barrios). He was, at once, their demy god to the country's poor. They were full of praise for his "guts, heart and mind".

It needed real guts for the president of a small country to brace himself against a super power, least mindful of consequences. The US warned him against visiting Iraq in

the wake of the Gulf war; his reply was typical—his was a sovereign country! He lambasted the US not only for its invasion of Iraq, but also for invading Afghanistan, demanding that the U.S. President be tried by International Court for violation of human rights in those countries. He evinced the devil-may-care attitude when he declared before the General Assembly in New York, referring to President Bush "yesterday, a devil spoke here, and the sulphur is still smelling it after he left". Iranian President, AhmedNezad was effusive in his praise, "Chavez was not really dead; he will come back like Jesus Christ". After its invasion of Gaza in 2008, only Chavez could withdraw its Ambassador from Israel, and say in utter disgust, "There is no point in dealing with that country". He laid bare the "change of regime" strategy hatched by western powers in Libya and now in Syria when much of the world virtually thought, discretion is the better part of valor. These were indeed inspired acts which even UN, Russia and China "feared to tread".

Chavismo in Latin America

The new resurgent left-leaning leadership that greeted Latin America at the dawn of the 21st century, as nowhere else, had two objectives before them: One was to be rid of the "Washington Consensus" which meant deregulation and privatization that were introduced by their predecessors, as neo-liberal reforms, under pressure from the international financial institutions. They were reversed. Royalties from Western companies were hiked, the Ecuadorian President, Rafael Correa leading the pack by putting up from 18 to 80 percent, the increased revenues of which were used on social spending to improve the living standards of their people. China turned out to be a major investor as also a big buyer of their oil. They were careful not to

mortgage the country in the name of foreign investments. Not more than one percent of GDP was set apart for clearing national debt.

The second objective was to replace two-century old Monroe doctrine with the Bolivar doctrine. The former was the claim of U.S. hegemony over the Southern hemisphere, while the latter was its counter-claim of more equality and autonomy among nations, so that the peoples of South America would be free from the hegemony of the U.S. and start living like equals. At one time, it looked like a false hope, a chimera, or distant horizons, "ploughing the sea", as it were, in Tariq Ali's words. Latin American leaders, Simon Bolivar, Che Guevera, Fidel Castro and Antonio Jose de Sucre, had been successively leading movements against the U.S. hegemony right from the 19th century. Chavez carried their legacy, with more verve and vitality, into the twenty first century. He seemed to have come closure to the realization of that ideal.⁽⁹⁾

Ready help

When newly awakened countries in Latin America tried to assert themselves in fulfillment of the above objectives, they were choked, in retribution, by U.S sanctions and withdrawal of support from world bodies like the IMF, World Bank etc., Chavez rushed to their rescue by extending financial help to them, when it was most needed. Chavez extended crucial financial help to Argentina when it was in trouble from international financial institutions, during the presidency of Nestor Kirchner. Venezuela purchased Argentinean bonds when they were worth nothing in international market. Nestor's wife Christine Kirchner, the current Argentina's President recalled this life-saver, the other day in Havana,

when she visited before his death, along with Peruvian President Ollanta Humala.

Cuba was in a terrible crisis in the mid-nineties, when the Soviet Union's enormous aid suddenly stopped, with its break-up. Chavez stepped into the breach by the supply of cheap oil Cuba was able to breathe again after Chavez's annual aid of \$6 billion in an ostensible swap to a slew of doctors, nearly 29000, and other personnel – which is on-going till now. Fidel Castro poured out his gratitude to his disciple, in a letter before the latter's death: "When the socialist camp collapsed, USSR disintegrated, and imperialism with its sharpened knife tried to drown the Cuban revolution in blood", wrote Fidel on Feb 18, "Venezuela, relatively small country in a divided America was capable of preventing that".⁽¹⁰⁾

A wave of leftist Presidents were elected across Latin America – Lula da Silva of Brazil in 2002, Eva Morales of Bolivia in 2005, Rafael Corros of Ecuador in 2004, Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua, Jose Mujica of Uruguay and a host of others. All these progressive minded Presidents were inspired and emboldened by the presence of Castro-Chavez duo who were their standard bearers. When Ecuador's Rafael Correa, for example, was elected, third time in February this year, with 58 per cent votes, he dedicated his victory to Chavez, "the great Latin American leader who has transformed Venezuela". It is this President Correa of Ecuador who gave sanctuary to the founder of Wikileaks, Assange, in Ecuadorian embassy in London, cocking a snook at the U.S, U.K and Australia. He was firm in giving asylum to Assange, telling the Swedish prosecutors that while they are free to examine Assange for alleged offence in Ecuadorian embassy,

they can't take him away to hand him over to CIA. Rafael Correa, economist-turned-politician, elected for third time as President of Ecuador could well be the one to take on the mantel left behind by Chavez in leading the Bolivarian revolution in Latin America. As for Lula of Brazil, though a moderate, he was full of admiration for Chavez's role in political and economic integration of Latin America.

Towards Unity

Chavez had taken concrete steps towards the realization of the unity of Latin America. In fact, that was the substance of the Bolivarian Revolution and in the process he became, at once, the symbol of the "economic and cultural sovereignty of the continent" and also the "bulwark of anti Americanism in Latin America and Caribbean islands". In 2004, ALBA OR "Bolivian Alternative for the Americas" with Cuba, Ecuador, Bolivia and Nicaragua to play the role of a lobby with in regional organizations, in 2005, PETRO CARIBE an energy Cooperation Agreement through which Venezuela supplies crude oil on concessional rates to 18 Latin American nations, in 2008, a vibrant political grouping "UNASUR" of all South America, and Southern Common Market "MERCOSUR" which is a customs union between Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay to which Bolivia also applied --- were all formed and began functioning in mutual cooperation among the nations of the region, free from U.S interference, much to its chagrin. To crown it all, Chavez convened in December 2011, the first summit of the "Community of Latin American and Caribbean states", the widely known CELAC of 33 states including Cuba, specially avoiding the U.S and Canada. Cuba's President Raul Castro is currently chairing the CELAC, which means Cuba is

fully integrated into the region as its honored member. These are no mean achievements, and though he did them all with the active support and cooperation of the like-minded heads of state, without Chavez, these were inconceivable. Lula de Silva, the popular Brazilian leader who was twice its president and whose model differed from that of Chavez, complemented him thus: "History would record", Lula wrote, "Chavez role in the political and economic integration of Latin America... when the leaders of NAM and of Global South capitulated to the hegemony of the West after the cold war, it was Chavez who blazed the trail of his own, championing anti-imperialism"⁽¹¹⁾

Not a dogmatic dictator

Had he lived, he would have completed 20 years of un-interrupted rule over Venezuela. He was elected in a duly fought election, every time held in a free atmosphere. Yet, his reign was variously described as "firebrand reign", "heavy handed governance", that "bitterly polarized his country's electorate". Tim Padgett makes a point in his comment that "though Chavez was democratically elected repeatedly, he did not govern all that democratically. It is easy to dismiss him, Padgett continues, as a retro-revolutionary messianic whose country's vast petro-wealth bankrolled his Marxist nostalgia"⁽¹²⁾

The context in which he came to power may, to some extent, explain the somewhat precipitate character of his regime: when he was elected in 1998, it seemed as though he found himself on an enemy territory, all across the region where free market reforms, steep economic inequalities and the "Empire" overlordship in the name of Monroe doctrine were holding sway. They were treated as 'given' and nobody dared question them. Chavez took those official premises, as it were, head on. He

burst upon the scene with “his social spending at home” and “his petro-diplomacy abroad” which were lavish. Following from them, his political prescriptions too were not in accord with liberal ethos or democratic spirit, though there was formal compliance with the letter the law. When the written law did not suit his agenda, on occasions, he freely resorted to the populist device of referendum, which more often than not, favored his proposals.

In the 2010 parliamentary election for the 165 member single chamber National Assembly, his United Socialist Party and Communist allies managed to annex nearly 100 seats with 5.4 million votes, as against only 65 seats with 5.7 million votes of the Opposition, by a rather devious means of gerrymandering and removal of proportional representation. In the same year, he got passed an Enabling Act by the captive legislature, giving him powers to rule by decrees for 18 months, without the legislature. He got the constitution amended by means of referendum for removing the two term restriction on holding the President’s post, and for extending the tenure of the President from 4 to 6 years, so that he could context and win 3rd and 4th terms for extended periods of 6 years. Sometimes, his critics like Raul Baduel were not spared though they had been his political allies earlier⁽¹³⁾. On the other hand, opposition too did not play fair with Chavez: they staged a coup in 2002 that failed, in cahoots with the CIA. In the following year, the entire technical staff, mostly American trained, of the country’s Oil Company PDVSA, went on a General Strike for nearly an year.

Then to call the Army “Chavista” is also objectionable. It defies the primary principle that the army and the civil service should be strictly neutral in a multi-party

state. His sweeping declarations that if he wins he would make the revolution irreversible and put his concept of 21st century socialism into practice, would have made the Opposition’s fear of heading towards “majoritarianism” real. His policies had in them the potential for dividing the nation into two uncompromising camps between whom “dialogue and discussion” may not be possible. As against these it must be admitted that the Opposition had a racial streak besides being plutocratic and hence some of his seeming excesses.

For all this, Chavez was not, at the core, dogmatic. He would not have gone on with such a hard ball mindset, if he had sensed that the nation was heading for a crisis, provocations from the Opposition camp notwithstanding. For, he was not a Communist of classical type. “I don’t believe in dogmatic postulates of Marxist revolution. I don’t accept that we are living in a period of proletarian revolutions. All that must be revised”, he told Tariq Ali. He was wise enough to know that Communism could not be implemented in full. “I am not for abolition of private property or of class society... I am only interested in helping the poor. The rich should pay the taxes. And some redistribution of wealth may be necessary,” he clarified.⁽¹⁴⁾

Besides, Chavez was an avid reader. In weekly appearances, on Sundays, over TV “Alo Presidente”, he used to counsel his people to read books like Cervantes’ “Don Quixote”. He believed that cultivation of art could change the people’s mindset. He got a million copies of that novel distributed among his people. In a defiant speech at the UN General Assembly, at the time when Bush invaded Iraq, he asked the delegates to go through Noam Chomsky’s book “Hegemony or Survival”, as probably a panacea for inordinate

war mongering gripping the world at the time, though it may sound a bit quixotic, no doubt. He was an insomniac like Castro with whom he used to discuss books, on line at length. His was not, anyway, a closed mind. He could possibly have liberalized his views, and reached out to more people, if he was spared a few more years. Before he could look back on his ideology and take his adversaries on board, he was snatched away from his people by pre-mature death.

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Delhi University FYUP : Fast at Rajghat

The three-day fast observed by Dr Prem Singh, Professor Delhi University, in protest against the undemocratic implementation of FYUP in Delhi University, came to an end on June 7 evening. The famous Hindi writer, Rajendra yadav, ended Dr Prem Singh's three-day fast by offering him fruit juice.

A number of members from civil society of Delhi and teachers from Delhi University came to lend their support and solidarity to the protest. Justice Rajendra Sacchar, who had written to the Prime minister earlier on the issue of FYUP, was present on the all three days of the fast. Amar Dev Sharma, (President DUTA), Harish Khanna (Vice President DUTA), Abha Dev Habib (Member Executive Council D U), Saswat Mazumdar (Ex President,(DUTA), Dr Sandeep Yadav from Central University of Jharkhand, many teachers from other central universities and various other DUTA activist participated in the Protest. Udit Raj, political activist also came forward to support the cause.

At the end of the fast a meeting of prominent citizens of Delhi and Delhi University teachers was held and all the members issued an appeal to the authorities to intervene in the matter and defer the implementation of the FYUP. Further it was resolved that all efforts would be made to oppose the hasty implementation of the highly debated FYUP in D U this year.

Dr, Prem Singh had issued the following note at the beginning of his fast: "Coming from the rural outskirts of Delhi during the early 70's, I had joined Delhi University (DU) as a Hindi literature student.

I had felt completely awed by the ambience, the intellectual and the creative warmth prevailing in the campus. Alongside the broad lanes and the shady trees on the ridge, one had experienced the power of the J.P. Movement, the trauma of the Emergency, the horrific killing of Mrs. Gandhi and the shame of communal riots. There were no grilled enclosures in the campus then, to shut out the pulse of the nation and such 'out side' concerns and influences. They were a part of the unwritten curriculum integral to the students' learning process.

One has seen much water, waste and wishes flow down the Yamuna these forty years, first as a student of the DU and then as a teacher. DU still stirs up a certain eagerness and expectations while interacting with new students and their tentative dreams. There can be no greater joy than to see the new order take over the old, better still, if it is in a direction different from the past, and in accordance with the present reality, needs and circumstances of the new world.

The DU has been a place where major social, academic and even political changes have been contemplated and debated upon. Despite the several disagreements, the DU fraternity has always respected the constitutional right to speak our minds and encourage healthy debate. In this sense, it has been a centre of values that have instilled a democratic mindset into its students' psyche. While stating so today, I am visited by a genuine anxiety that many of colleagues might share with me. I am stuck by the irreverent, intimidating and anti-democratic wind blowing across the university. I do not wish to enter

into the 'whys' and 'hows' of the FYUP, but would like to make two submissions in this connection.

The first is that many of our students come from families who cannot afford to send their wards to private, expensive colleges. These are the first generation learners who come to broaden their mental and material horizons. Within their limited time and resources at hand, they seek to work for the DU degree, not a diploma. The second point is that the actual and practical implementation of the citizens' constitutional and fundamental rights to speak and to be heard should happen at the university campus. Whatever the outcome, whatever the ultimate decision, the first lesson and the first 'foundation course' that our students need to believe in is that they are born into a free and constitutionally governed country.

I would like to appeal to the government, the university and the law to let good sense prevail and to ensure that the Delhi University continues to retain its reputation as a centre of democratic values and academic excellence. Mahatma Gandhi's concern for equal, inexpensive, accessible and quality education should not be forgotten. In humble remembrance and tribute to my alma mater, the Delhi University, and to Mahatma Gandhi, I have planned to observe a three day (5 June-7 June 2013) fast at Rajghat with the hope that wider implications of education, which is the mark and the strength of a democratic country like India, continues to flourish to serve Gandhi's last man in the row."

—H. Khanna

Demonstration against ADB

Peoples Front Against IFIs greeted the 46th Annual Governors' Meeting of the Asian Development Bank with a demonstration and rally at Greater Noida in U.P. on May 2, 2013.

ADB Quit India, Quit Asia, India is not for sale ... were some of the slogans shouted by the activists during the demonstration which started from YMCA, Greater Noida, in the face of continued resistance from police and administration. This protest was scheduled at Pari Chowk but the police did not allow the move towards Pari Chowk. Protesters broke the police cordon and to move forward in a spontaneous rally.

Leaders addressing the rally made the following points. Leader of the National Hawkers' Federation, Saktiman Ghosh: ADB is supporting various projects in cities which are displacing the hawkers in big numbers from roadsides. Vidya Dinker from Citizens Forum for Mangalore Development said: ADB is supporting water privatisation projects which are even opposed by the corporators. Debashis Das from NHF: in the name of urban development ADB is supporting programmes which has threatened the very existence of the marginal sections of the society especially urban poor and farmers. Irfan, Vice President of NHF: Bihar has experienced anti-poor and anti-people policies, which clearly show that we need to oppose ADB policies in a big way. Ali Baqri, NHF, Andhra Pradesh: the government has made a policy in which international investors are exempted from paying tax but the poor or middle classes have to pay all kind of taxes. Biswendu

Nanda from Bangiya Paromparik Kaaru O Bastra Shilpi Sangho, an artisans' and weavers' organisation: villages have been destroyed by the ADB sponsored infrastructure and urbanisation projects resulting in pauperisation of traditional artisans, weavers and performing artistes. Gautam Bandopadhyay of Nadi Ghati Morcha: ADB has become "Anti-Human Destruction Bank" - a bank to support private sector in order to ensure maximum profit for corporate and MNCs. Dr. Sunilam, President of, Kisan Sangharsh Samiti and a senior leader of NAPM:

(Continued from Page 6)

the Naxalites. But otherwise they don't pay much heed to what the Naxalites say or do.

What is urgently needed is improvement in work culture of the salaried people, be they officers, clerks, school teachers, bank employees, etc. They should treat the farmers and other common people who visit their offices for some works to be done. Doing it in a reasonably prompt way would help a lot.

In Gadchiroli district, a number of voluntary groups are helping the tribals to obtain individual or community pattas for the strips of lands which they are cultivating or growing forests. Many panchas and sarpanchs are engaged in joint forest management activities not minding the occasional threats held out by the Naxalites. People are bold. The politicians should follow suit. And the security personnel need to work imaginatively by taking the common people into confidence and by honouring the human rights of the people at large.

- Pannalal Surana

it is shocking to see that activists are not allowed even to protest at public places. The central government is challenging our constitutional rights to protest to please ADB officials. He further shared his experience of water privatisation of ADB projects in Madhya Pradesh which have resulted in the hike of water price four times in a span of two years. He said that in the name of reforms of water, electricity, education sector ADB is not only ensuring privatisation but also is a threat to the role of welfare state.

(Continued from Page 8)

people of the return to former regime's tactics of harassment of opposition leaders.

It is also worrying that the immediate political benefit of the revolution seems to have gone to a sectarian group called Muslim Brotherhood. A genuine democracy will have to be non-sectarian, and secular. Advocates of democracy all over the world, mainly in Europe and America will have to be very careful in reacting to the fragile situation in the Arab world. There are reports that European leaders have directly or indirectly supported the dictators for partisan gains. This will undermine a hugely successful people's movement for democracy and human rights. The international community does nothing to help the march towards democracy. Progressive parties like ESDP, now a member of international social democratic family needs all the support to promote their agenda for peace, equality, and freedom.



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Era change in BJP

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Vibhuti Patel

**Who Should
Appoint the Judges?**
Bapu Heddurshetti

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Last week's developments in the Bharatiya Janata Party, climaxing in the resignation of Lal Krishna Advani from all party posts, are in the nature of what journalists call a "developing story". At the time of writing, which is a day after Advani caught his own party and his colleagues in the NDA by a surprise, and plunged the BJP into a crisis it had not anticipated or prepared for, a fluid situation prevails in the crisis-ridden BJP. There is still some uncertainty on whether or not Advani will insist on his resignation or whether or not the Modi faction of the BJP will join in the campaign to persuade Advani to call off his protest. As of now, what is abundantly clear is that the elevation of Narendra Modi to a position of power and influence in the party and the split resulting therefrom mark the end of the Vajpayee-Advani era in the BJP. Secondly, it is equally clear that the war of attrition that is currently on in the BJP is not between Modi and Advani but between the RSS and Advani. Available indications suggest that the RSS will eventually jettison Advani and back Modi's candidature as the saffron parivar's prime ministerial candidate in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls.

Thirdly, and this is taken for granted now after the induction of Modi as chairman of the campaign committee and the exit of Advani from the party's top posts, that the NDA as it exists is in for a dramatic change in composition. Let us not forget that Advani did not choose to give up his post as the working chairman of the NDA. Right now it is doubtful whether the BJP will be the main player in the new NDA or whether the NDA itself will yield place to a federal front as proposed by Mamata Bannerjee and supported by Naveen Patnaik and Jayalalithaa.

Although the elevation of Modi to a post that has a prime importance ahead of a national election brought about a vertical split in the BJP dividing it into two factions, one for Modi and another against him, the RSS is out to ensure that Modi stays where he has been catapulted into. In other words, Modi's promotion and his projection as the BJP's possible prime ministerial nominee is not negotiable. Regardless of Advani's position, the RSS and the sections within the BJP supporting him are not likely to accept replacing Modi with Advani. In this RSS-Advani face-off, Advani will come out second best since the stakes for the RSS are

Between the lines

New push to Hindutava

Kuldip Nayar

quite high. Presently, the RSS is proceeding on the assumption that Modi is the saffron parivar's mascot as far as the 2014 Lok Sabha polls are concerned.

Advani's reaction was only to be expected. He was sidelined, ignored and humiliated. His suggestion that Modi was not the proper choice to lead the party in the polls was laughed at. He had no choice but to do something to tell his side of the story. The resignation was the best option for him. In his letter to Rajnath Singh, Advani bemoaned that most of the BJP leaders of today were now just concerned with their personal agendas. Ironically enough, Advani himself is equally concerned with his own personal agenda, namely, his own prime ministerial ambitions. Although the party (the RSS in other words) denies him this reward for his services to the Parivar from 1980 when the BJP was born till the day of his resignation. The realization that he had earned a high reward for his services was what persuaded the RSS to ask Vajpayee to make Advani a deputy prime minister. Now, the RSS thinks Advani's contribution to the consolidation of the Parivar is less than that of Modi!

Saffron politics has once again divided the polity. The RSS can be depended upon to exploit Modi's image as a strong Hindutva proponent by reviving all the Hindutva campaign issues including Article 370, the uniform civil code and the Ram Mandir issue. The RSS will consider the revival of the Hindutva slogans as the only means of ensuring Hindu votes in areas where Modi is an unknown factor. This can be the only explanation for the RSS risking the consolidation of Muslim votes against Modi and in favour of other secular parties.

(Continued on Page 4)

Politics in India may not be the same again. The Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) has charged the agenda. It has introduced pure communalism into the soft Hindutava that prevailed so far. By appointing the hardliner Narendra Modi, Gujarat Chief Minister, the campaign panel chief for the 2014 parliament election, the party has dropped every bit of ambiguity over secularism. It is stark Hinduism for all to see.

Apparently, the old leadership resisted the decision. Tall L.K. Advani had even submitted his resignation from all the posts he held in the party. Yet the irresponsible younger cadre was in no mood to accommodate the sober point of view. For them, a sharper communal politics was the minimum. Advani had reportedly warned, behind the walls, that Modi was not a proper person for India.

The atmosphere may become more bitter when the BJP propagates the Hindu Rashtriyata openly. True, the concept goes against the very grain of the constitution which wanted the country to be a secular democratic republic. But the BJP has found no benefit from it. In the future, the very word, secularism, will come under different interpretations. Parties, however parochial in outlook, will claim to be secular.

Therefore, Modi's acceptance speech was understandably vehement against the Congress, the largest political party which has come to be associated with secularism. He wants the party to disappear from the scene so that there is no confusion

between the BJP, a Hindu outfit, and the Congress, with secular credentials.

This may or may not happen but the BJP has embarked upon the task of

wiping the slate clean with no mention of secularism whatsoever. Since independence, even long before it, the freedom struggle was based on the idea of an independent India which would know no difference on the basis of community or caste.

The leaders immersed in that struggle agreed to India's partition but not to the thesis that the religion could be mixed with politics. Secularism is thus the corner stone of the structure that India has tried to raise after partition. It has not been an ideal effort. Yet it has kept the country together, with no recurring example of communal divide.

In the process, the nation has also come to recognize the distance between the communal forces and the secular elements. It has resulted into a healthy development: secular political parties have generally kept away from the BJP to stall its installation at the Centre. The induction of Modi may not defeat the process. But it will definitely confuse the Hindus who, leave some apart, are animated with cosmopolitan thoughts. They stopped the BJP winning in the last two parliamentary election because when the time for casting votes came, they put their weight behind the liberal forces

which have kept the country more or less midway, neither left or right. The danger of its going right has increased now.

RSS, which has initiated and supported Modi, sees in him someone nearer to their ideology of Hindutava and anti-Muslim. Real Modi was, however, exposed when he blessed the massacre of Muslims in Gujarat a decade ago. Not a word of regret even after years only underlines his anti-Muslim thinking. How can India have a person like him as the Prime Minister?

The repercussions of such a person at the helm of BJP, not possessing even a semblance of liberalism, can be dangerous. Obsessed with driving a wedge between Hindus and Muslims, he can vitiate the young minds. Liberalism or idealism already receding to the background, bigotry and extremism will go to annihilate what is left of the composite culture. When I was India's High Commissioner at London, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher asked me the secret of India staying together for centuries. I told her that we did not believe that the country was divided into black and white. We believed that there was a vast grey area. We went on expanding that area. That was our secularism. The idea kept the

nation together. She was reportedly impressed by my explanation and she told this to Soviet President Gorbachev. He sent a delegation to India to study the strength of grey area, secularism. Modi will make black further bleak and shut every opening for the grey area to expand. In the last few decades, the BJP has purveyed the impression that it is looking for a space that will give it an image of being right of Right, that of

(Continued on Page 7)

The logic of self-interest and its victims

K. S. Chalam

In the history of ideas, 'self' and 'self-interest' are considered as very central in the process of human progress. Anthropologists and philosophers have deliberated as to how savages became civilised through the arduous task of encounters with nature and circumstances in the long journey of humankind. But, the human beings who once lived in groups became independent and were again shackled ultimately to fight against the artificial conditions to become free. In this evolution, she/he has accumulated unimaginable depths of knowledge and experience to be used either to live without restraint or remain unfree. Philosophers and thinkers had given us abundant wisdom and institutions to dabble with. The ontological understanding of 'who am I' and the universe around us helped to generate different concepts and ideas in different civilisations depending upon their geography, history and the circumstances. One society might have called self, another soul and still others with innovative ideas to describe human experience. As humans, we inherit all the contributions irrespective of to what nation or group they belong and exchange the ideas for mutual benefit.

It was during the age of Enlightenment, a strong cultural and Intellectual foundation was laid to free humankind from all kinds of superstitions. There were intense scholarly debates by schoolmen (scholastics) on every important event giving birth to disciplinary knowledge. David Hume, Petty, Turgot, Quesnay, to name a few

leaders of the era, have contributed to human sciences before Adam Smith published his *Wealth of Nations* in 1776 few years before the French and American revolutions. It was David Hume and Adam Smith who set the fundamentals for a libertarian ideology.

Interestingly Marx had also his moorings in Smith. The present issue of how the self-interest is responsible for the development of a capitalist system has evoked debate that has become one sided due to the hegemony of Bretton Woods's institutions and stoic silence of the opponents after the fall of Berlin wall. This has enabled several states including India to adopt the libertarian policies in the name of reducing poverty and rapid economic growth. Though the rudiments of LPG were present in the early 1980s, the loud declaration was made in 1991. This has unleashed the sleeping giant to leap forward and created billionaires from India who found their names listed in the Fortune 500. Yet, several socio-economic internal contradictions including inequalities have been widened.

Though the metaphysical deliberations about the self and its liberation from temporal attractions were deeply imbedded in different societies, the elucidation of the concept as self-interest during the enlightenment period seem to have been baked in pure materialistic process. Adam Smith was given the credit for using the concept to usher in a new era in Europe using the gifts of enlightenment.

It is necessary to keep in mind the historical conditions and the uncivilized exploitation of colonies by the East India (mercantilists) company under the protection of the state that made Smith to react. He was compelled to appeal to self-interest of every individual as an author of 'theory of moral sentiments' for the possibility of enhancing the happiness of the enlightened individual and the society. He has explained how the spontaneous realization of every individual to truck, barter and exchange one thing for the other as a part of pure self-interest benefits everyone with daily bread. He has further discussed the topic with illustrations as to how it would work as an 'invisible hand' as a self-regulating mechanism that brings good to society. The concept of division of labour and how it is limited by the extent of market are broadly related to laissez-faire. The basic elements of capitalist development thus move around the notion of self-interest. However, the role of the state to moderate disharmony of interests as advocated by Smith was capriciously kept aside.

The metaphor of invisible hand of Smith like the base-superstructure of Marx has created warring groups to continue their intellectual cudgels. The application of these ideas to contemporary situations by policy makers to find practical solutions has created more problems than they resolved. In fact, the philosophical debate is taken to a newer height by scholars like Robert Nozick, the author of 'Anarchy, State and Utopia', the champion of libertarians, argued that it is within the principle of liberty and justice if a basket-ball champion like Chamberlain was given 25 cents by a million people to earn an income of \$ 250000, more than the average earnings, irrespective of how it upsets the

distributional aspects of a society. This justification countenanced business people to bring IPL in India. It is further argued that if individual talents or resources are kept idle without use, they are a waste and if they are traded in the market, they become wealth. Interestingly, most of the characters that are associated with the recent events in India are drawn from a traditional business class. What is the harm if individual players are bought and sold like commodities depending upon their demand? Does it not sound reasonable and pragmatic?

Pareto, the libertarian has developed the thesis of welfare optimization within the given system that operates under the spell of invisible hand. Amartya Sen responded to this by saying that, " a society in which some people lead lives of great luxury while others live in acute misery can still be Pareto optimal if the agony of the deprived cannot be reduced without cutting into the ecstasy of the affluent". The theories of libertarians have contributed for the expansion of globalization within the parameters of liberty and equality without qualifying the context and historical significance and identity of each nation. India along with some other third world countries was attracted towards this thesis around 1980s and that became a national policy in 1991. During the last two decades irrespective of the political party in power, they have sincerely adhered to the agenda of making self-interest as the catalyst of economic development with a quantum jump of wealth of cronies and thus GDP. This has enabled a dozen out of 120 crores of people to own almost all that was created during the period. This accomplishment was attributed to the operation of principles of

invisible hand and self-interest in every walk of life, be it income, scams, corruption, rapes, moral turpitude, demeanour of the nation, etc. No one can take the credit or blame both for the growth or decadence, except the preceptors of self-interest as a virtue.

Unfortunately, the exuberance has started dwindling and the drubbings are so pervasive that the preceptors of self interest in the West were swallowed long ago. The behemoth in India in the early part of its operation devoured in the form of Hawala and Jain dairy and now eating into the vitals of our civilization. Now, in times of acute depredation, does the Buddhist precept of seeking refuge in society (*sangham*) provide metaphysical solace?

(Continued from Page 2)

Which is why the Congress is happy that Modi is being made much of by the BJP. The Congress had better be prepared to counter effectively the saffron brigade's Hindu Rashtra campaign in the coming months. Also, the personal tirades which Modi can be expected to launch against Manmohan Singh, Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi. The level of electoral politics in India is bound to decline in the coming months if the track record of Modi is any guide.

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Tensions in the North-East

In the first week of June, 2013, there was great tension on the Nagaland-Assam border. A few days earlier, some Naga farmers had asked those in a nearby village, situated in Assam, to vacate the land which the latter were cultivating on lease. On not complying with the request, the Naga farmer, a firearm in hand, shot down an Assamese tenant. A huge crowd gathered in front of the police station concerned and demanded stern action against the offender. It flared up into a conflict between two States. Everybody in Assam was shouting against the Nagas. An M.L.A. who led one such *morcha*, asserted that it was one instance among hundreds which show how negligent the Chief Minister is in safeguarding the interests of the citizens of the state. On the Nagaland side, there was hue and cry as to how the tribals are being harassed by the plainspeople.

In Dimapur, the second largest city of Nagaland, an Action Committee Against Multiple Taxation, served a final ultimatum to the NSCN(I-M) saying that if a date within five days was not fixed for talks, the businessmen and professionals would observe Road Block on highway no.36 alias Highway Asia no.1. The word 'taxation is an euphemism for *hapta* by three or four underground groups functioning under the umbrella of the underground government run by the NSCN(I-M). It may be recalled that the National Socialist Council of Nagaland was formed by the late Naga leader M. Phizo in 1970s. It had launched an armed insurgency against the Government of India to carve out a sovereign State of Nagaland. He was staying

in London. When the Janata Party government came into power at Delhi, Jayaprakash Narayana (JP) was approached by some Naga people urging him to intervene. JP was not well at that time. After talking with Morarji Desai, then Prime Minister of India, JP deputed S. M. Joshi to go and meet Phizo. As a result of all that process, ceasefire was agreed to by the NSCN and the Government of India. Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur were carved out of the State of Assam within the framework of the Constitution of India. Elections to State Assemblies, including that of Nagaland, were held. A representative government was installed at Kohima, the capital of Nagaland. But a small faction of the NSCN under the leadership of Muivah, challenged the cease-fire and took to insurgency. Incidents of armed actions by the NSCN(I-M) are few and far between. But the newspapers are forced by the underground groups to repeatedly publish the demand for solution of the Naga problem. And nobody dares to take a public stand that since vast majority of the electorate have participated in the successive elections, there is no point in asking for talks between the Government of India and the NSCN(I-M), or in continuing insurgency or whatever of it is left. The NSCN(I-M) is running an "underground government"

and four-five underground groups claim to be that "government" and collect taxes at multiple points like purchase, transit, sale, etc. Naturally, the business community is impatient. But its threat of road block adversely affects the common people, not only of Nagaland, but also of Manipur and Mizoram, because they are dependent on N.H.36 for their supplies from Bengal and Assam of cloth, petroleum, sugar, etc. Whenever there is a road block, prices of necessities shoot sky-high. Petrol is sold at Rs. 200 per litre. And the Government pleads helplessness. A bold political initiative from amongst the local people is urgently called for.

On the same day, there was a demand for recognition, by the leaders of the Tikhir tribe. Virtually there are innumerable tribes in all those Seven Sister States. Every tribe considers itself as superior to others, though, fortunately there is no religious hierarchy like the caste system of the mainland India. How to make the people of different tribes realise that chauvinistic feelings are of no use for solving the problems of bread and butter. People will have to overcome such petty considerations and imbibe the spirit of national citizenship. Then alone the problems of development and social justice can be effectively tackled.

Prof. Vinod Prasad Singh

"Vinod was a devoted soldier in the Socialist movement. As a teacher of economics in the Satyavati College of Delhi University he used to be very methodical and endeared students by his personal rapport.

He was an activist to the core as also an intellectual and research scholar. While persuading the party comrades to be attentive to the details of building of party organization, he compiled documents of the Socialist

Doyen of Women's Studies Movement in India

Vibhuti Patel

movement in two volumes and the third was almost complete when his health developed some difficulties. It is our duty to complete it and get it published" observed Prof. Ramvinod of Darbhanga who was his college mate and close friend.

On his 73rd birthday anniversary, the huge gathering in the Gandhi Sangrahalaya of Patna, his friends, colleagues, students and admirers expressed grief and incalculable loss due to his death in the last January. Ahemed Razi, Director, Gandhi Sangrahalaya, presided. Mohammad Shahabuddin, former M.L.A. and Vinod's neighbor had organized the function in which various speakers expressed their sentiments and vouched to carry on the work that Vinod left unfinished. Ramachandra Purve, former education minister and president of Rashtriya Janata Dal, Bihar, said that when he was serving in the college of which Prof. Vinod was the secretary, he was surprised that the latter never tried to induct his relatives and friends in the college staff. Kumar Vijay narrated some of his student days memories. Dr. Somnath Tripathi of Varanasi extolled his qualities as a leader of a political party while in adversity. Alka and Rekha, daughters of Prof. Vinod, expressed their sense of gratitude to their father's coworkers. Vishwanath Bagi, Gautam Sagar Rana and others also spoke. A committee was formed, with Prof. Vinodkumar of Chapara, as president, and Shahabuddin as convener, to edit and publish Vinod's unpublished works and also to decide about the handing over of his library, consisting of eight cupboards of valuable books, to a suitable institution.

—Pannalal Surana

With passing away of Dr. Veena Mazumdar, our Veenadee, the Indian Women's Movement has experienced an irreparable loss. Veenadee personified in her a far sighted and strong willed thinker and forceful speaker and convincing debater who had faith in 'human goodness'. Her intellectual prowess did not make her ivory tower in her approach towards her colleagues and fellow travelers - academicians, policy makers, researchers and feminist activists. She always remained warm at heart, easy to approach, instant building of rapport, magnanimous in sharing her knowledge and institutional resources as Director of Centre for Women's Development Studies. Her charm lay in her electrifying persona, always smiling face conveying optimism, down to earth approach, ideological sharpness, story-telling with witty humour and, the most important, courage of conviction combined with honesty of purpose. This is what explained her commanding of agenda setting power whether she was in the decision making bodies of UGC, ICSSR, Planning Commission of India and several ministries or outside of them. She could galvanize students, teachers, researchers, women's organizations, trade unionists, bureaucrats, politicians and law makers into action as she was one of the best 'argumentative Indians' produced by 'women's studies movement'. She was very good at coining catchy terms such as 'women's studies movement' 'The Indian psyche defined by binary

'Ma' versus "Maal', dichotomy that worships motherhood and dehumanizes/commodifies the rest of women. Her contemporary powerful men in the Universities, research institutions and ministries called her 'bulldozer' while women scholars and practitioners found her the most trustworthy friend and mentor. I worked closely with Veenadee during 1981 for the I Women's Studies Conference hosted by SNTD Women's University, in 1985 for preparation of 'End of the Decade' alternate country report on Status of Women in India, in 1986 for Research Committee 32's panel discussion on 'Ante Natal Sex Selective and Abortions of Female Foetus in India' for World Sociological Conference and in 1988 for a multi-centric research project on 'Child Care as an Essential Input for women's Development'.

Veena Mazumdar was born in 1927 and completed her schooling in Calcutta. She did her honours course from Benaras Hindu University as well as Ashutosh College, Calcutta University and completed D.Phil. from Oxford University. In 1947, she went to Oxford University to complete her graduation in 1951. In 1960, once again she enrolled as a research scholar at Oxford University and within two years was awarded D.Phil there in 1962.

Veenadee taught Political Science at Patna University and Berhampur University for couple of years. After that she joined UGC. As an Officer in the UGC Secretariat she made a

mark as an energetic officer. She was also selected as a Fellow of the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Simla. In 1972, when the Indian government agreed to honour UN mandate to prepare a status report on women, Veenadee was appointed as Member Secretary of Committee on the Status of Women in India. Her unique contribution while preparation of landmark report "Towards Equality" as a researcher and analytical rigour to explain material and ideological conditions that determined women's predicament in India made her most sought after scholar-activist during 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and the millennium era.

During International Women's Year (1975), Veenadee was appointed as Director, Programme of Women's Studies, Indian Council of Social Science Research for five years (1975-80). She was Founder-Director of the Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi from 1980 to 1991, and thereafter was Senior Fellow at CWDS and JP Naik National Fellow, ICSSR, for two years. From 1996-2013, Dr. Veena Mazumdar was the Chairperson, Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi. She was a heart and soul of Indian Association of Women's Studies.

In 1974, When All India Institute of Medical Science began conducting a sample survey of amniocentesis to find out about foetal genetic conditions and easily managed to enroll 11000 pregnant women as volunteers for its research, main interest of these volunteer pregnant women was to know sex of the foetus. Once the results were out, those women who were told that they were carrying female fetuses, demanded abortion. When the young researcher of AIIMS shared this

observation with Veenadee, she mobilised women's delegation to meet the health minister to stop abuse of amniocentesis for sex selective abortions. Veenadee was a great champion of participatory action research. Her writings provided road map for developmental initiatives. Her memoir, *Memories of a Rolling Stone* published by Zubaan Books in 2010 provides vivid description of her principles, programmes, policy initiatives in collaboration with her team of 'movers and shakers'.

Veenadee will remain with us with her insightful publications:

(Continued from Page 4)

pro-Hindu but not of extremist type. Modi will stop such an ideology developing. It will be saffron all the way. The BJP has foolishly come to realize that it would have to sharpen difference with the Muslims to look different. It believes that if there is any time to play the Hindu card, it is now. This is a wrong thinking, leaving no space for even small gestures for conciliation. Advani's presence evokes hope. The greatest benefit of Modi's importance will be to the Congress. Not that it is intrinsically secular but it has the reputation of being so. The Muslim electorate, nearly 15 per cent, will move towards the Congress and adversely affect large parties like of Mulayam Singh's Samajwadi party, which has a large Muslim following in UP. The party's image is also secular. The Congress will gain because the next election is not that of state assembly but of Parliament. The Muslims, know the importance. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA), the BJP's allies, may still part company with the party. The real loss is that of the Indian nation. At a time when it looks that the various elements have found their identity within the country, Modi's

Education & Social Change: Three Studies on Nineteenth Century India. Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1972; *Role of Rural Women in Development.* University of Sussex. Institute of Development Studies. Allied Publishers, 1978; *Symbols of Power: Studies on the Political Status of Women in India.* Allied, 1979; *Emergence of the Women's Question in India and the Role of Women's Studies.* Centre for Women's Development Studies, 1985; *Peasant Women Organise for Empowerment: The Bankura Experiment.* Centre for Women's Development Studies. 1989.

image of parochialism comes in the open. The idea of India will be jeopardized. It is a pity that the country will be unsettling when it is settling down to an ideology which may not be purely secular but does not disturb people of different faiths to live a life of their own in their own way.

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Who should appoint the Judges?

Bapu Heddurshetti

By saying that the executive should have a say in the appointment of judges, the Law Minister Kapil Sibal, has once again raised the question: 'who should appoint the judges?'

The Constitution speaks of the following procedure for appointment of Judges of the Supreme Court and the High Courts. Article 124 (2) dealing with the appointment of a Judge of the Supreme Court reads as follows:

(2) Every Judge of the Supreme Court shall be appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal after consultation with such of the Judges of the Supreme Court and of the High Court in the States as the President may deem necessary for the purpose and shall hold office until he attains the age of sixty-five years:

Provided that in the case of appointment of a judge other than the Chief Justice, the Chief Justice of India shall always be consulted:

Article 217 dealing with the appointment of the Judges of the High Courts reads as follows:

(1) Every judge of a High Court shall be appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal after consultation with the Chief Justice of India, the Governor of the State, and, in the case of appointment of a judge other than the Chief Justice, the Chief Justice of the High Court, and, shall hold office, until he attains the age of Sixty-two years:

Thus the Judges have to be appointed by the President. But the President has to exercise his powers in accordance with the advice tendered by a council of ministers. Article 74 providing for the same reads as follows:

(1) There shall be a Council of Ministers with the Prime Minister at the head to aid and advise the President who shall, in the exercise of his functions, act in accordance with such advice.

Thus, under the constitution it was the President, acting on the advice of the Council of Ministers, who was empowered to appoint the judges of the Supreme Court and the High Courts. However, the President i.e., the Council of Ministers, was to 'consult such of the Judges of the Supreme Court and of the High Court in the States as the President **may deem necessary** and then appoint such person as the Judge of the Supreme Court or the High Court.

Three things become apparent from a plain reading of these provisions: First, that the President acting on the advice of the Council of Ministers was empowered to appoint the judges. Two, there was an option for the President to consult any judge. Three, what was contemplated under the article was only a 'consultation' with the judges of his choice. This system was working since promulgation of the constitution till 1993.

However, in the now famous or 'infamous' series of judgements in

1982, 1993 and 1998 the Supreme Court crossed all judicial limits of interpretation and ruled that not only was the 'consultation' 'compulsory' but also that the opinion given by the judges in the course of 'consultation' was 'binding' on the President. So by one stretch of interpretation the Supreme Court wrested the power of appointment of judges of the higher judiciary from the executive, i.e., the President of India, i.e., the Council of Ministers, and vested the power in itself, thereby virtually '**amended**' the constitution. The Supreme Court evolved 'its own' collegium, consisting of the Chief Justice of India and 'four senior-most judges' of the Supreme Court to make the recommendation as to who should be appointed as a judge of the higher judiciary.

Barrister Nath Pai, the Praja Socialist Member of Parliament, had cognised the tendency of the Supreme Court to 'amend' the constitution as long back as in 1967. When the Supreme Court ruled on 27th February 1967 in the Golak Nath's case that the Parliament cannot amend the fundamental rights, so as to abridge them, it had in effect 'amended' the constitution. This was noticed by Nath Pai who moved an amendment to the constitution to restore that power to the Parliament. Nath Pai had said in Parliament: "The Supreme Court has introduced an **amendment** (emphasis added) of the constitution. The Constitution, after the Judgment in Golak Nath's case is a different constitution. What I am trying to do by my amendment is to restore to

the people of India the Constitution, the sovereignty, which belonged to them before the Supreme Court took it away, by a slender majority of six to five.”

Recently when three Judges were to be appointed to the Supreme Court, the Chief Justice of India sent the names of three persons to be appointed as judges, to the President of India, who returned the recommendation stating that many senior judges had been overlooked in selecting the recommended persons. The Chief Justice sent back the same names stating that the ‘recommendation’ of the Chief Justice is ‘binding’ on the President of India.

Thus in the words of a retired Judge of the Supreme Court, Justice Ruma Paul, the Supreme Court, with the help of “interpretative tools at its command - termed by many as an unacceptable feat of judicial activism - by a composite judgment in several public interest litigations, virtually wrested the powers of appointment, confirmation and transfer of judges from the Executive”. This procedure does not find a place in the constitution and hence it can certainly be termed ‘extra-constitutional’ if not ‘un-constitutional’. Interestingly this feat was accomplished by the Supreme Court by using another of its “interpretative tools” namely the so-called Public Interest Litigation. Journalist Neena Vyas calls it a “bloodless revolution but with dire consequences”.

It is admitted on all sides that this system of ‘judicial endogamy’, i.e., the judges appointing the judges is unique to India and is no where to be found in the world. Even the Law Commission in 2008 examined the position in various other countries

and reported that “In all other constitutions either the executive is the sole authority to appoint judges, or the executive appoints judges in consultation with the Chief Justice.”

The students of jurisprudence have heard of what is called ‘judge made law’ where the judges while interpreting the law made by the legislature, ‘make the law’ in order to fill the loopholes etc., but that the judges do ‘amend the constitution’ itself is unheard of in the annals of law. Another interesting point is that while the constitution provides that the Parliament can amend the constitution by “a majority of the total membership of that House and by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of that House present and voting”, and that for certain amendments affecting the federal structure of the constitution, the amendment had to be ‘ratified by the Legislatures of not less than one half of the States’, by a feat of judicial interpretation, a few judges of the Supreme Court effectively ‘amended’ the constitution in clear violation of the constitutional provision itself for amending the constitution. The resultant position is that while a few judges of the Supreme Court can ‘amend’ the constitution, though not provided for in the constitution, through the instrumentality of a ‘judgement’ in a case, the Parliament can undo this ‘amendment’ by again ‘amending’ the constitution through the instrumentality of a constitutional amendment provided for in the constitution itself by a majority of the House and by a two thirds majority of the members ‘present and voting’. This is a sheer undermining of democracy.

At the time it was claimed that the Supreme Court wanted to ensure the

‘independence’ of the Judiciary from the executive. The independence of the judiciary was, for the first time in independent India, assaulted by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1973 when she superseded three senior judges and appointed Justice Ajit Nath Ray as the Chief Justice of India and as a result of which the three superseded judges resigned from the Supreme Court. Thereafter she also got several of the judges of the various High Courts transferred from one to the other High Courts. It is interesting that the judiciary which crawled before the authoritarian rule of Smt. Gandhi and legitimised the ‘Emergency’ started asserting its ‘independence’ once she was defeated in the elections and the Janata Party formed the government.

However the claim does not appear to be justified. If one looks to the history of our Supreme Court, one finds that the Judges appointed before the power of appointment was wrested from the executive have in fact been more ‘independent’. Justice Ruma Pal asks a question and answers it: “has this almost complete insulation achieved the object for which the constitutional interpretation was strained to an extent never witnessed before or after? In my opinion it has not”. It is also interesting to note that even in the new system, the ‘collegium’ has retained and is exercising the power to transfer several judges from one High Court to the other as though such transfers do not hamper the ‘independence’ of the judiciary.

Recently Chief Justice of India Altamas Kabir defended the Collegium system, saying that the appointments are made after “intense deliberations”. However the ‘intense deliberations’ are held behind the closed doors and

hence there is no transparency in the appointments. One does not know whether there are 'intense deliberations' or something else goes on behind these closed doors. One has to take the words of the Chief Justice Altamas Kabir at their face value. However, a retired Judge of the Supreme Court Justice Pal says "Consensus within the collegium is sometimes resolved through a trade-off resulting in dubious appointments with disastrous consequences for the litigants and the credibility of the judicial system". Thus the 'collegium' system of appointing the judges has neither accountability nor transparency built into it nor has it achieved the purpose for which it was evolved.

The Law Minister has said "that the collegium system has not worked to our expectations. I don't think it even worked to the expectations of the judiciary." He has suggested a 'Judicial **Appointments** Commission', consisting of the Chief Justice of India as the Chairman and two Judges of the Supreme Court, the Law Minister of the Government of India and two eminent jurists nominated by the President as members for appointment of Judges of the Supreme Court and of the various High Courts. The government appears to be open to the idea of including the Leader of Opposition in the Commission.

During a Rajya Sabha debate on August 18, 2011 even the leader of opposition Arun Jaitley, who is a noted lawyer himself said: "The system of judges alone appointing judges must now change. India needs a National Judicial Commission to appoint judges." He further said that the judiciary has been pronouncing on areas it has no business to. Chief Justice S. H. Kapadia went to the

extent of saying that the judges should not rule the country as they are not accountable to the people.

Actually, the government is not trying to do anything new. It is only trying to restore the earlier system of the executive appointing the judges but with more checks and balances and with more transparency. This kind of procedure for appointment of constitutional authorities is not new. The Supreme Court itself foisted on the government 'guidelines' for appointment of the Central Vigilance Commissioner by a committee consisting of the Prime Minister, the Home Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. In the United States the Judges appointed by the President to the Supreme Court have to be approved by a committee of the Senate after subjecting the appointees to a vigorous and intense questioning in its sittings.

When there are equally serious allegations of corruption and nepotism against the present judiciary, it would be knave to say that since the executive is corrupt, it should not be permitted to appoint the judges. At least the corrupt executive is subject to control and correction by the Parliament during its sessions and by the people during the elections whereas there is no such controlling or correcting mechanism for the judiciary. The words of the Speaker of the Lok Sabha Meira Kumar are pregnant with warning bells: "The fact of the matter is that the judiciary is the only unique institution that has no accountability to the people in a democracy. In this overall context, it is absolutely essential to involve outside elements in the process of judicial accountability."

Chief Justice of India Justice Wanchoo had said "But having regard

to the past history of our country, it (Supreme Court) could not implicitly believe...the representatives of the people, for uncontrolled and unrestricted power might lead to an authoritarian State" and Nath Pai had retorted in Parliament saying "I have got my right, with all my respect for the judiciary, to express my greater faith in the wisdom of my people; I respect the judiciary, but I respect my people more. They are dumb and they are illiterate, I know, but through their dumbness came the freedom of this country and not through the scholarship of a bunch of individuals and scholars".

The question is not a simple 'who should appoint the judges'. The question is whether we should have 'democracy' of the 'masses' or replace it with the 'oligarchy' of the 'judges'.

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No hands on the loom

Ritu Sethi, Devaki Jain

In the current context of competitive trading, it is important for India to hold on to the special features of what it produces. Product differentiation and patenting are ways in which the competition is muted to the advantage of the seller. One way in which countries can keep their special brand is to strengthen the presence of the uniquely handmade: support its survival and even subsidise it via tax relief and other measures. Therefore, it is worrying that the newly declared policy for handloom textiles in India has taken the view that for the sake of volume, the restrictions imposed on the space provided to power looms and large mechanised mills, which already have the lion's share of textile production, will be removed.

Those who are dedicated to preserving Indian traditions in production and enabling the people who fabricate them have often argued for the critical value of handmade goods to rural livelihoods. It would be a shame if we were to now shift our approach to textile production from one of shared spaces to cannibalising the handloom.

At expert committee meetings and during the six-month-long deliberations of the steering committee and working groups for the 12th Five Year Plan, there was no discussion on amending the Handloom Reservation Act, the definition of handloom, or the mechanisation of looms. The strength of the power loom and mill-owners lobby can be gauged by their

concerted efforts to bring about a change in the Handloom Reservation Act, and to alter the definition of handloom to open the floodgates to manufactured weaving production at the cost of handloom. Such a backdoor policy change bodes ill for the industry.

The steering committee offered several prescriptions for renewal and growth. Recognising not only the huge numbers gainfully employed in textiles in rural India (second-largest behind agriculture) and its home-based workforce that requires minimal capital investment, it took into account another significant aspect that cannot be quantified in monetary terms: the social and cultural significance of handlooms, the traditional knowledge associated with its production, and the entire handloom value chain that it sustains, including those who wear and value handloom. This needs to be factored in before imposing changes that will disrupt, rather than enhance, employment, production and development.

At a time when the market value of handlooms is increasing, the sector is being punished by forced mechanisation. The strength of handloom lies in its hand-skills, and any attempts to mechanise would pit it directly against power looms and mills that have been cannibalising the handloom industry by copying designs and passing off products as handmade. Over 33 per cent of handloom workers report that their greatest threat comes from the mill and power loom sector (NCAER

handlooms census 2009-10).

Handlooms offer an alternative to mass and anonymous production, based as they are on the qualities of hand, oral knowledge and tradition. The products of the loom are woven by a skilled workforce, trained and educated through apprenticeship and inter-generational guru-shishya parampara, outside the formal technical training system. The ecosystem of handloom production is well defined; its regional variations are home-grown, being indigenously and differently organised from that of the so-called organised sectors. Policies need to recognise this differently organised handmade sector and build on its advantages to create delivery systems that prioritise its growth.

While tools and looms are in need of urgent development and improvement, field work has shown how innovative changes have been introduced by weavers themselves to enhance productivity. Loom technologies represent indigenous ingenuity at its best, and are built, repaired and maintained within the village ecosystem. They are not dependant on spare parts from the city. With 87 per cent of weavers located in rural India, with limited access to continuous electricity, the new proposal of mechanising looms would be ill-considered. Mechanisation of the loom as proposed by the new policy will link the production of handloom to the power supply — which is erratic, at best, in areas of handloom production. Mechanisation will, in

the short run, result in declining productivity, as loom work will be tied to unreliable electricity supply, inevitably leading to declining production.

If, for the sake of argument, we assume there is an uninterrupted supply of power in rural weaving centres, it is counter-intuitive to expect increased production as a major bottleneck to production is yarn availability at the right price and quality. This has been and continues to be a concern. The supply is regulated, managed and controlled by the state-owned National Handloom Development Corporation (NHDC). Until the NHDC is restructured to be more effective and efficient, the handloom sector and weavers will continue to be under-served.

Over 72 per cent of weaver communities belong to the economically and socially disadvantaged SC/ST/OBC and other minority groups. Each loom provides employment to an average of six to nine workers on the pre-loom, on-loom and post-loom process. Seventy per cent of this skilled workforce is in the productive age group of 18 to 45 years. This move could result in two to four workers being unemployed, resulting in the inevitable migration to already swollen cities, the de-skilling and disenfranchising of weavers and the entire village ecosystem.

While there is an argument that India is not able to produce as much as it could and needs to, it is specious to link growth in textile production to encouraging power looms at the cost of handlooms.

—*the Indian Express*

Delhi gang rape

What prompted you to write a play based on the Delhi gang rape?

Like the rest of the world, I was deeply affected by the rape, the victim's courageous fight for her life and subsequent death. People have theorised why this one case stood out and became a tipping point for so many. What matters is that it broke the barrier of indifference and an appropriate level of righteous rage suddenly manifested itself on New Delhi's streets. The national response to her death in India made it clear that the time for change has come. As a playwright, I am attuned to the tides of what affects us as communities and societies. I believe in what I consider to be theatre's true, original intention — to show us ourselves in our raw form in order to be a healthier society.

Will this play focus solely on this incident in India?

What happened on that bus happened in India. But I am from South Africa. My native country has been called the rape capital of the world. India's sexual violence statistics are shameful. But so are America's and that of many European countries. Acid attacks are on the rise in Italy against women. I have no interest in making a piece that locates sexual violence in India alone and leaves the rest of the global community comfortable and relieved they are not dealing with the same issues. Misogyny, sexual and gender-based violence is not an Indian or a South African crisis. It is a global crisis.

The case of Anene Booysen (in a small town in South Africa)

broke around the time of the Delhi victim's rape and death. She was a teenager. Gang raped, every finger and both legs broken and disemboweled, she died hours later in the hospital. The extraordinary thing was that, at the time, I felt a strange envy of India as the streets rose in protest around its victim. But I believe India harbours the possibility for global change on sexual violence precisely because it is severe here, and because I saw the streets rise and say "enough is enough". For this reason, this project will be quintessentially Indian.

What did you make of the media coverage of the incident?

There is always a sensationalist aspect to the way sexual violence is covered in the media. The eroticisation of sexual violence causes a deep confusion about the nature of rape and sexual assault. Rape is not an act of sexual desire. It is an act of deepest violence, humiliation and hatred. Euphemisms like "eve teasing" as opposed to "harassment" are deeply problematic. Teasing is something children do in a school yard. Harassment is a frightening and vicious form of intimidation. The media defines the terms that enters public discourse. With this case, there was, however, an unavoidable shock factor to the brutality that was given the gravitas it deserved. The haunting question was why one of any number of cases each day does not get the same attention. But that is the power of a tipping point.

From an interview with the South African playwright Yael Farber

—*EYE*

Communications

Letter to the Prime Minister of India:

We write this letter to draw your kind attention to the four years under graduate programme (FYUP) being introduced by the Delhi University from this academic session. The four year degree programme changes the existing 10+2+3 structure adopted nationally. We have followed the debate over this contentious issue in the media. Several educationists and intellectuals all over the country have expressed their apprehensions about the merit of this decision. We too believe that such a basic change

in the higher education system/policy should first be considered and examined by the MHRD and the Parliament in consultation with prominent educationists of India. The Delhi University does not exist in isolation. If this change is so valuable it should be implemented on national level and there should be a national debate about its merit. Delhi University can wait for a couple of years in the best interest of the students all over India.

We further request you that the impact on the minorities/SC/ST/OBC and financially weaker sections must

be taken into consideration before such a plan is implemented. The financial burden of paying for a year more is a major concern for many families who send their wards to DU. In view of the serious apprehensions voiced by so many educationists, social workers and teachers, we plead to intervene and prevent its implementation immediately.

Signatories

- *Justice Rajindar Sachar,
Kuldip Nayar, Bhai Vaidya,
Sandeep Pandey, Ravi Kiran Jain,
Anil Nauriya.*

'Maoist sympathies'

In response to an article by Mr Shekhar Gupta 'The Bleeding Heartless' in the Indian Express, June 1 2013, I sent the letter reproduced below on 3 June 2013, which has not yet been carried by Indian Express. I try not to respond polemically to articles which disagree with my views on public policy or other issues, as these differences are perfectly legitimate in a democracy. And who is to be sure that I am right, and my critics are wrong? But this was different, because it utterly falsely described my ideological position on Maoism as sympathetic, whereas I have always been passionately and publicly opposed to all forms of violence, including Maoist violence. Moreover it linked this to my membership in the NAC, and through that by implication to the many pro-poor agendas I sought to bring into and support within the NAC in the two years that I was a member. Finally Indian Express did not check with me the full

facts reported in the opinion piece. I therefore felt I should respond formally to the report. But since this response has not been carried, and on the other hand it is being publicly referred to by others as well, I felt it would be best to place this reply in the public domain.

Dear Shekhar,

Greetings!

This relates to your article 'The Bleeding Heartless' in the Indian Express, June 1 2013.

In the article, you have mentioned that Padma, the wife of a leading Maoist Ramakrishna, managed an orphanage run by the NGO Aman Vedika with which I am associated. The facts of the matter are as follows. In several cities, my colleagues and I are helping run 45 residential homes for the education and care of around 4000 homeless street girls and boys. There are about 20 such homes for

street boys and girls in Hyderabad. For running these homes, as house mothers and home managers, it is our policy to give preference to single women, women survivors of domestic violence, and homeless and destitute women, so that the children's home also provides them a place of safety and healing. Under the name of Sirisha, a woman came to my colleagues in Hyderabad in the year 2008 saying she was estranged from her husband and only son and was in severe depression, and that she be given the chance to live among the children so that it would help her to heal. She requested initially for the chance to live in the home and volunteer her services. In time, when a position in the same home fell vacant, she was appointed as one of the home managers, because she performed her duties of child care well. No one had the faintest idea about her true identity. After more than 2 years with us, she applied for 10 days' long leave for

the first time. A few days later, we heard from the newspapers that she was Padma, second wife of a Maoist leader, and she was arrested by the police in Odisha.

On the larger question of 'Maoist sympathies', I have absolutely none. I have consistently written and spoken about my unambiguous and resolute opposition to all forms of violence, including Maoist violence. I have strongly and consistently disagreed with those, among them

my liberal friends, who in any way romanticise or even indirectly rationalise their resort to violence, and those who suggest that their violence is justified because of the structural violence of poverty, exploitation and state violence. I feel that there is no such thing as altruistic violence. Violence, even when deployed in the name of the oppressed, ultimately brutalises all, and the oppressed suffer the most. The only legitimate instruments to

fight injustice, in my opinion, are non-violence and democracy.

I would be happy to contribute a longer article to your esteemed newspaper to clarify the facts and my position on Maoist violence. Alternately, I would be grateful if you would kindly at least publish my clarification.

With warm regards,

—Harsh Mander

With due apologies, My Lords.

The Supreme Court on April 2, 2013 allowed the Sterlite Copper Smelter plant in Tuticorin to function in 'public interest', but asked the company to pay Rs. 100 crore compensation for violating the environmental laws. The court did admit that the company had misrepresented and suppressed material facts in the SLP. The Bench noted that the plant contributed substantially to copper production in India. It has about 1,300 employees and, also provides employment to a large number of people through contractors. A number of ancillary industries are also dependent on it. It generates huge revenue to the Central and State Governments. It also contributes to 10 per cent of the total cargo volume of Tuticorin port. For these considerations of 'public interest', it did not want to refuse relief to the company.

It is not clear how the fine was computed by the court. Violations are established. But there is no punishment for the company's wilful criminality, fraud and cheating. Anil Agarwal, perhaps, is different from Italian Marines.

Sterlite alone cannot be faulted for environmental degradations. The working partners in the State and Central governments who abetted/ permitted these violations are allowed to go scot free.

Despite the constitutional provisions and the notices issued by the Supreme Court, the river Ganga was brazenly polluted by many tanneries in Kanpur. The Apex Court was constrained to issue directions for the closure of the tanneries. The court was conscious that closure of tanneries might bring unemployment and loss of revenue. But it significantly ruled that, 'life, health and ecology have greater importance to the people'. Life, health and ecology of Tuticorin, probably, have lesser importance.

In the Tirupur Dying Factory case (2009), it was pleaded by the dyers, 'Tirupur is providing employment to 5 lakh persons. The country earns about 10,000 cr in foreign exchange annually. A large number of people have indulged in transport activities because of such

heavy industries'. Yet the Supreme Court ignored these pleadings and upheld the Madras HC verdict paving the way for closure of nearly 700 textile processing units. 700 dyers from Tirupur are no match to an alien Agarwal.

In the *Oleum Gas Leak* case, a five-judge SC bench unanimously ruled that "an enterprise which is engaged in a hazardous or inherently dangerous industry which poses a potential threat to the health and safety of the persons working in the factory and residing in the surrounding areas *owes an absolute and non-delegable duty to the community* to ensure that no harm results to anyone on account of hazardous or inherently dangerous nature of the activity which it has undertaken. Such hazardous or inherently dangerous activity for private profit can be tolerated only on condition that the enterprise engaged in such activity indemnifies all those who suffer on account of the carrying on of such activity regardless of whether it is carried on carefully or not." Has Sterlite indemnified all those who suffer on

account of the carrying on of such activity?

In *Vellore Citizens Forum case*, the Apex Court held that “the Precautionary Principle and the Polluter Pays Principle are essential features of Sustainable Development. The absolute liability for harm to the environment extends not only to compensate the victims of pollution but also the cost of restoring the environmental degradation. Remediation of the damaged environment is part of the process of Sustainable Development and as such the *polluter is liable*

to pay the cost to the individual sufferers as well as the cost of reversing the damaged ecology.”

Is the 100 cr compensation ordered good enough to pay the cost to the individual sufferers as well as the cost of reversing the damaged ecology? The court noted that the company’s profit before tax for 2010-11 was Rs. 1,043 crore, 40 per cent more than the previous fiscal’s Rs. 744 crore. Based on the health of the balance sheet, compensation was fixed. If the company’s balance sheet was in red, can we say good bye to the suffering people and the damaged ecology?

Last but not the least. Rs 200 crore is a peanut for Vedanta. Yet Sterlite has been allowed to pay the compensation in installments spreading over to five years. Such windfalls are denied to the farmers and other entrepreneurs by our banks. Will SC shower such mercies on the ordinary citizens of this land? Manu, the Law Giver, dictates the king, ‘Adopt any means to recover the debt in time; but in the case of a Brahmin debtor, you may recover it in installments.’ I was under the wrong impression that IPC and not Manu Smriti rules us.

- Sankara Narayanan

Electoral Battle of 2014

All truly secular-minded people in the country are anxious about the outcome of the next Parliamentary elections to be held in 2014. The issues that matter most to the electorate, as has been rightly pointed out by you, are price rise and corruption, and in the minds of most of them, the latter is the cause of the former.

Much more than ‘Congress-style opportunism’, of today the cant, hypocrisy and cynicism of the conservative leading lights of the Congress party of the post-Independence days, excluding the likes of Pandit Nehru, are to blame the most for the present plight of the Muslim minority. For the Congress patriarchs turned a blind eye to the pressing need for launching a cultural renaissance among their rank and file. Instead the insidious process

of their delivery into the moribund and scheming clutches of the Mullas and Moulavis was covertly blessed by these Congressmen, because they contrived and insinuated to act as the Congress’ plighted vote bankers. Hamid Dalwais and Ashgar Ali Engineers were condemned out of court as apostates. (May their tribe increase!). The myopic Khadi-clad netas of those days smugly ruled the roost flaunting the outward garb of democracy, without a thought to the need for assiduous nurturing of the entire citizenry in the rigorous culture of secular democracy.

In the momentous years that followed, the doctrinated helmsmen steering the ever-rising tide of petrodollars in Arabia and the Islamic Mid-East, crafted, not so slyly, the rise of vindictive fundamentalism which has contaminated the Indian

subcontinent. Here it found a hospitable soil on both sides of the Divide. That in turn has instigated once-dormant Hindu obscurantism, which when triggered into statecraft is bound to ignite a religio-fascism of such ballistic potency which the world has not witnessed so far.

Therefore, in plain terms my submission is, the electoral battle of 2014 has to be fought in the first instance, to quell the menace of religio-fascism. Gross and mulish anti-Congressism by left-of-centre and the left forces will accelerate wholesale social regression, mounting distributive injustice and toxic worship of GDP. Many fence-sitters will then become turncoats smittenly euphoric about ‘national interest’.

Arun Chavan

I have read with great interest Mr. Bapu Heddurshetti’s article on changing the electoral system in your issue of 5 May, 2013. I am very much in favour of changing the present electoral system so that the legislatures and the Governments are based not on a minority of votes but a clear majority and under a system in which every vote counts.

-Syed Shahabuddin



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India should never forget certain days in its history. One of them is June 26 when the Emergency was imposed late at night 38 years ago. Lights of personal freedom were switched off and the nation was left to grope in the darkness of dictatorship. The Constitution was suspended, the press gagged and liberty stamped out. The government became an illegal authority to harass, harm, detain and whatever went with it to silence critics. All this happened because the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, was unseated from Parliament for a poll offence and disqualified for five years. She could have appealed against what is popularly known as the Allahabad High Court judgment to the Supreme Court. But she preferred to change the system itself and appropriated power to introduce her personal rule.

A democratic country embracing dictatorship came as a shock to the liberal world. For the people in India, it was unbelievable after having enjoyed a constitutional polity for almost three decades. One remark by a close associate of Smt. Gandhi was poignant: "I can take care of enemies but what do I tell our friends?" Smt. Gandhi had no explanation to

offer except to rule more ruthlessly through her son Sanjay Gandhi who had become an extra-constitutional authority. The Emergency lasted for nearly two years. Fortunately, elections threw out the mother and the son lock, stock and barrel for democracy to return.

The atrocities which the two committed were shameful. One glaring thing was to remove thousands of people forcibly from their homes and putting them in the wilderness many miles away. This became a precedent for some extremist organizations like the Shiv Sena which some years later picked up the Bangladeshis, the people they didn't like to push them forcibly to the Bangladesh border.

In fact, Smt. Gandhi set many pernicious precedents, such as making the civil service servile and the police obedient to the rulers' whims. Today many chief ministers, not necessarily those of the Congress party, use civil servants and the police as part of their retinue to punish critics – just as she did.

The Emergency also saw how pliable the mighty judiciary had

become. Four out of five Supreme Court judges, including the so-called liberal, P. N. Bhagwati, justified the imposition of the Emergency. The only one who did not toe the line was Justice H. R. Khanna. He was superseded when Smt. Gandhi appointed the Chief Justice of India. If the judiciary still looks battered, it is because it has not yet recovered from the blows it received during those dark days.

Amt. Gandhi's father, Jawaharlal Nehru, was entirely different. He opted for the democratic republic after independence and saw to its growth. Take the example of the judiciary. Once he thought of superseding Justice Mehr Chand Mahajan because of his 'views'. Nehru had to give in when he found the entire Supreme Court bench was proposing to resign if there was supersession. Indeed, Mahajan was appointed the Chief Justice of India.

The most reprehensible thing was the forced family planning. At the instance of Sanjay Gandhi, Smt. Gandhi introduced forced sterilisation. Having less number of children was not something condemnable. But when it came to implementation, the tactics used were no different from those of Stalin or Mao Zedong. Many above the age of 65 were sterilised during the Emergency and even boys who had hardly entered puberty became victims. A policeman could even enter into your sleeping room to check whether family planning instructions had been followed.

Detention without trial was the colonial legacy. Smt. Gandhi imprisoned more than 100,000

Business Corporation as Fiefdom

K. S. Chalam

Most of the economic frauds during the last few years in the country are exhumed in the world of business enterprises. There are however, instances of other realms where such incidences are manifested like the BCCI/IPL. Though, we have inherited different kinds of business organisations through the colonial legacy, the Joint-Stock company or Business Corporation and few others are found to be very prominent. The Managing Agency System introduced by the British to run some businesses through Indian agents like the Tea gardens was abolished and it is only part of history now. The kind of business organisation that conquer commerce and trade is a very important unit of analysis for understanding the resilience of capitalism in the twenty-first century. The triumph of world capitalism is declared by experts as final, for there is no alternative (TINA) to it particularly after the Soviet and Chinese experiences.

The efficiency and the democratic space provided by the Business Corporation is eulogised by Management gurus as the most sustainable model that is beyond disparagement. In fact, we have dozens of treatises and memoirs by great innovators and entrepreneurs who became icons overnight after the 1991 economic policy. They have all used the public/private Corporation as a tool to accumulate capital and run the business. It is claimed that the company/ corporation as a registered business organisation is within the values of democracy and at the same time enjoy freedom to

do what is good for the company or corporation. This is one of the most important innovations adopted by the capitalist system to compete and outwit a demoralised totalitarian Soviet model.

Though the modern capitalist system is far ahead of what its critiques hypothesised during the nineteenth century, the intellectual and media support during the current phase has disguised most of its failures which are now discernible. The money that is invested to outsource the intellectual discourse on capitalism seems to have failed to endure the system from its moral and intellectual collapse in the form of 2008 recession and its aftermath. We have today episodes of economic breakdown everywhere. There is a serious upshot in the ethical dimension of business ventures due to the unscrupulous practices paraded as optimal outcomes. This has no doubt enhanced the economic status of some individuals and groups. But, all of them have lost the moral bearing that the accomplishments are within the norms of civilized and commonly agreed behaviour. It is here one can find that the erstwhile socialist countries are found to be more upright during the periods of collapse (plunge is drastic subsequently) than the kind of decadence we witness in the liberal societies now. The moral consequence of the recent happenings is so serious that the threats to human survival are imminent. The naked display of extreme voracity increasingly internalised by some persons and

(Continued on Page 13)

groups is so dreadful that might ultimately annul the distinction between a human and an animal. It is in this context, we may examine how the corporation has been used as tool in this process?

The evolution of Corporation as a business organisation was promoted by the Fabians and Labour party functionaries in Great Britain during the early part of the last century. Economists like A.C Pigou and J .M. Keynes wanted to use Corporation as a tool for successful nationalisation of basic industries in course of gradual transition to a socialist economy. The kind of Public Corporation that they perceived as an institution to avoid political control over public utilities and at the same time should enjoy autonomy to take prudent decisions in the day to day functioning of the business was ideal. Though, England had pioneered the concept in an ideological backdrop, the corporation has emerged differently in diverse economies. Thus, the kind of corporation like BBC in England is different from that of France, Japan, USA and others.

A corporation is a legal entity with set of objectives to run public utilities in the beginning and has been slowly adopted by the business enterprises. In fact, the Tennessee Valley Authority is an example of legal entity created through a legislative process to operate the irrigation project in the USA. Consider, in this regard, the basic legal characteristics of the business corporation. They are: legal personality, limited liability, transferable shares, delegated management under a board structure, and investor ownership. These characteristics respond to the economic exigencies of the large

modern business enterprise. Thus, the Harvard scholars examining the essential elements of corporate law maintained that everywhere law must, of necessity, provide for the above five features. To be sure, there are other forms of business enterprise that lack one or more of these characteristics. But the remarkable fact—and the fact that we wish to stress—is that, in market economies, almost all large-scale business firms adopt a legal form that possesses all five of the basic characteristics of the business corporation. Indeed, most small jointly-owned firms adopt this corporate form as well, although sometimes with deviations from one or more of the five basic characteristics to fit their special needs. In virtually all economically important jurisdictions, there is a basic statute that provides for the formation of firms with all of these characteristics. As this pattern suggests, these characteristics have strongly complementary qualities for the five core values to reduce costs of conducting business.

The public Corporation or Private Corporation in India was introduced through the Companies Act 1956 and was reintroduced in 2012 with some modifications. The difference between the private limited and public limited is that the former needs seven members and the latter can be registered with a minimum of two and with limited liability. The latest amendment to the Act has provided for one man company/corporation. There are other provisions like voting rights, election of chairman, nomination of auditors, etc. But, there is also a provision through which the board can amend the articles and memorandum making the provisions trivial. The interesting part of the functioning of the company or

corporation is that it can allot its shares (Art. 42) to private party and can call it public offer and allot shares to its directors and employees, read family members. The corporation can buy back its own shares when it grows strong through different means to make it a pure family affair. Thus, the capital marketization through the corporations is one and halftimes that of our GDP or Rs 13541699 lakh crores is under the rule of few families.

The foremost issue of the corporate world is that we have so far 1289229 registered companies including the suit case companies. Interestingly, only 872957 are in operation and majority of them are in Finance, Banking, Insurance, Real Estate, Service sectors and only 22 per cent are registered as manufacturing firms. Does it convey the anarchy or a native grown pattern in our economic operations that reflect our society?

It is difficult to convince some of our activist scholars that feudal characteristics prevail and sustain in an advanced capitalist system. But India, according to R. S. Sharma (and others), had feudalism during 300-1200 AD. But he has qualified that his study ‘does not consider its impact on social and cultural life’. There are other scholars, who claim that India had a different kind of Asiatic Mode of Production that does not necessarily correspond to that of European feudal category. However, it is relevant here to understand that feudalism as a form of governance or mode of production is related to land and the fief of a lord. The landlord under the fiefdom controls everything and exploits the workers and may develop an ideology based on faith or social bond to keep

them under his control. It seems the characteristics of fiefdom sneaked into our corporate world. This is manifested openly during the last few weeks when BCCI chairman openly accusing his detractors as harbouring a bias against the South. A popular weekly has made an observation on a much touted corporation and the promoter as "...missed a trick by mechanically passing the baton on to each of the founders. The firm effectively closed the door to outside talent which could have taken it to the next level of success" (Semi-capitalism 17, June, 2013). There seems to be some kind of a bias against the South from the time of Satyam in the media as the episodes of billions of rupees of scams in other parts of the country are given tepid treatment till they overflow under their gravity and not otherwise.

Thus, all the support structures and the ethos of liberalisation in India did not show any evidence of conflict with the feudal institutions like fiefdom, caste, joint-family, guild, etc, in applying the Corporate Law. This warrants a critical reflection and debate for an enhanced engagement on the situation.

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Whither Justice: Fabricated Cases and State

Ram Puniyani

Rihai Manch, a forum for getting justice to the falsely implicated youth in the cases of acts of terror has currently (June 2013), a protest Dharna (sit in) to demand the arrest of police and IB officials responsible for the death of Maulana Khalid Mujahid, to implement the R. D. Nimesh Commission report and to release the innocent Muslim youth implicated in acts of terror. This campaign is getting broader support from more human rights groups and affected community. This is the major effort by a civic society group to democratically protest against the insensitive and biased state machinery, to pressurize it to come to the path of justice.

The Samajvadi Party-Akhilesh Yadav Government in UP, had earlier claimed to be the major champion of the cause of Muslims, to the extent that the main leader of this party Mulayam Singh Yadav was derogatorily called Mulla Mulayam. But as he came to power last time also during his regime many a communal episode of violence took place under the very nose of the Government. Currently also Akhilesh Yadav's regime is marked by over 27 episodes of major riots. On the top of that this Government in its election promise had said that the innocents, implicated in the acts of terror would be released. On the contrary, the death of Maulana Khalid Mujahid in the police custody has raised sufficient doubts about the intentions of the Government. Even R. D. Nimesh Commission report was kept in the cold storage

since the last one year, and now when it has been released finally, the government is refraining from taking action, hiding behind the argument that it will be discussed in future Assembly session before action is taken on the report. As such Government has full prerogative to take action at Cabinet level. People fear that this commission report may also face the same fate as the other commission reports, which are generally put on the backburner or put in the cold storage.

Ashsish Khaitan, one of the journalists with dogged determination, sensitivity and honesty, has floated a portal, Gulail (Slingshot) to highlight the investigative reports related to the framing of innocents by authorities. Many an officer have falsely implicated innocents, despite knowing the truth, to enhance their own career prospects or due to the biases which have gripped the large sections of the law enforcement agencies. These agencies regard that only youth from one religious community are responsible for the acts of terror. Khaitan also opines that putting forward the truth of such cases is also not of much use; as in such cases reports of honest investigations are overshadowed by the biased reporting and opinions in the print, T.V. and social media. He is pinning his hopes on judiciary and the people's campaigns for getting justice. The ongoing dharna in UP is drawing the attention of the social groups and is being sustained for over two weeks by the

social activists and the pained and anguished community, whose young ones are being incarcerated and have to suffer not only the future career prospects but have also to get the blame, which ostracize them from social life. In this direction various efforts have been undertaken in the past but after temporary response and restraint the investigation agencies lapse into their usual prejudiced actions.

Not only can this be seen in the case of UP, but overall one sees the wide gulf between the promises and actual actions of the so-called 'secular parties'. While in Maharashtra the Congress coalition came to power with the promise of implementing Shrikrishna Commission report of 1992-93 riots, after coming to power on this promise it put forward the usual excuses and the guilty police officers and political leadership continued to be in their positions of power despite sufficient proof of their involvement in instigating and participating in the riots. As for as justice to the victims and action against the guilty is concerned Samajvadi Party seems to be no different. The R. D. Nimesh Commission has given the full truth based on which it can proceed to punish the guilty police officers, but that's what is being avoided. The credentials of so-called secular parties are more or less similar, be it the Congress or be it the Samajvadi Party. They have very opportunistic attitude as far as the justice to minorities is concerned. While communal parties are out to do away with the rights of minorities and deny them justice through and through, these so-called secular parties have dual character. They promise and are unable to deliver as their calculations are built around the vote bank politics.

This is due to multiple factors. One is that these supposedly secular parties are also being trapped by the considerations other than the values of secularism. So, controlling of communal violence, which is possible if there is adequate determination to do so, is not being done effectively. The second reason is the communalized state machinery, the investigating agencies, police and bureaucracy. How to investigate the cases, how to frame the innocents is an easy enough job, which the authorities do and their Khaki uniform empowers them to do it with ease. It is precisely due to this that the fate of inquiry commission reports has not been significant one. Starting from Madon Commission of inquiry into Bhiwandi riots, to Shrikrishna Commission and Liberhan Commission reports, the outcome, taking action based on the report, is close to zero as the implementing authorities that is political leadership is opportunist and lacks the strength to stick to principles.

So where do we go from here? While the communal forces are out to proactively browbeat the religious minorities, the secular formations do not have the spine to ensure justice and equity. It is here, that the social activism which has prominently come up during last two decades in particular, needs to be strengthened. The activist groups have taken up these issues seriously and the initiatives by social activists is a major landmark in this direction. One wonders, why are the left parties, which should be principally secular to the core are shunning these efforts. Their joining these efforts to get equity and justice to minorities will put pressure on the parties like Congress and Samajvadi to try to become sincere in their efforts.

The intensification of efforts through judiciary and popular protests has to be intensified. The rot set in our democratic polity due to the infiltration of communalism through different mechanisms has been a very dangerous one to the values of our Constitution. It is time that we as a nation introspect and get over the biases and prejudiced behaviors towards weaker sections of our society. The path to social progress is paved through amity and justice. Professional attitude in investigation of acts of violence, communal amity and justice for all are the prerequisites of social progress, progress of society in the real sense.

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Social Justice vs. Maoists Violence

Rajindar Sachar

The recent murderous attack by Maoists in Chhattisgarh resulting in death of 28 persons, including Congress leaders, their security officers and ordinary villagers of area, has to be treated as a diabolical act by the self-styled leaders of the “revolutionary movement”, CPI (Maoist), who delude themselves that they are struggling for bringing about a revolution of workers and peasants. One of the seriously injured persons, senior Congress leader V. C. Shukla, died on Wednesday, June 12. In fact, I would describe the activities of these “revolutionaries” a massive mad act which has damaged greatly the cause of tribals. It is also most foul as Maoists have tried to stop political activity they do not agree with through violent means. Their politics is as evil as those they claim to be fighting against and should be rejected outright by all those who stand for democratic norms in political struggles for peace with justice.

If people expected that the two major political parties will, realising the urgency of the situation, forget their petty public posturing, they were mistaken. While Union Home Minister Sushilkumar Shinde and Chief Minister Raman Singh issue a statement that they are going to work together, state Congress leaders have announced that they are boycotting the all-party meeting called by the Chhattisgarh Chief Minister. Even within Congress high-ups there is now a sharp division – while one Central minister, who used to take a somewhat humanitarian approach to the Maoist problem, now calls them

“terrorists”, a Central tribal minister has rightly warned against this approach and reproached the state government for having encouraged Salwa Judum’s sinful strategy, and which was also commented adversely by the Supreme Court.

Even the normally conservative Planning Commission has suddenly thought fit to suggest universal coverage and to away with the BPL test in 22 most backward of 82 IAP districts. Did we need these murders to face the reality of the total deprivation of the tribals and their desperation which provides easy catch to Naxalite groups.

Naxalite leaders have made no secret of their aim. They feel (though in my opinion they are disastrously mistaken) that by spreading terror and trying to keep some areas outside the civil authority, they would one day be able to launch a fierce onslaught to capture political power in Delhi even if they are said to have a strong presence in 185 districts out of the total 607 districts. This is because the Indian state, however weak, will never be so weak as to allow itself to be taken over by such rump groups, even if it is able to equip itself with some arms – the fire power of a modern state is too overwhelmingly superior to Maoist groups. The real reason for Maoist presence is the indefensible antipathy of the government to follow the policy of development with justice to the tribals, which alone will make Maoist influence wither away.

But that requires taking on the corporate sector which is ravishingly exploiting the mineral wealth and denying to the tribals even their modest share. Why does the government not accept the suggestion of human right organizations, including the PUCL, to hold public discussions on this vital matter in the presence of tribal leaders, among others? Is the reason the presence of many mine owners belonging to the ruling party at the Centre? This charge finds support from the continued detention of Soni Suri, a social worker among tribals, on a fake charge of being a conduit for passing money to Maoists on behalf of a mining company given to her by company’s contractor – inexplicably he has been denied bail, but the contractor or the owner has not been arrested. One is pained to see this strange nexus between the ruling party and the corporate sector.

Of course, I accept that the Maoist act of brutality and terrorism can never be justified, even if they be in response to equally heinous and brutal acts unleashed by the security forces, as we are seeing presently in Chhattisgarh. This situation no doubt poses a knotty question and the Supreme Court has answered thus:

“Indeed, we recognise that the state faces many serious problems on account of Maoist/Naxalite violence. Notwithstanding the fact that there may be social and economic circumstances, and certain policies followed by the state itself, leading to the emergence of extremist violence, we cannot condone it. The

state necessarily has the obligation, moral and constitutional, to combat such extremism and provide security to the people of the country.

“However the primordial problem lies deep within the socio-economic policies pursued by the state in a society that was already endemically and horrifically suffering from gross inequalities. Our Constitution provides the guidelines within which the state is to act, both to assert such authority to transgress those guidelines is to act unlawfully, to imperil the moral and legal authority of the state and the Constitution.”

It is, however, very important that the revolting nature of extremist acts cannot serve as a basis or pretext for the governments to disregard their national and international obligations, the caution highlighted by the International Council of Jurists in its Berlin Declaration on August 28, 2004, namely that “both contemporary human rights and humanitarian law allow states a reasonably wide margin of flexibility to combat terrorism without contravening human rights and humanitarian legal obligations”. Warning has been given in a report titled “Development Challenges in Extremist Affected Areas” by an expert group constituted by the Planning Commission of India in the following manner: “In the case of tribes in particular it has ended up in destroying their social organization, cultural identity, and resource base.....which cumulatively makes them increasingly vulnerable to exploitation.”

And yet, all that the government does is not to face the causes of the rage and despair that nurture such movements. Instead, it considers the matter as a menace, a law and

order problem that is to be rooted out with the use of force. This cycle of mindless violence and counter-violence may continue unless the

state honestly acts in the interest of the poor and the tribals, and does not connive with corporate mine owners in their exploitive acts.

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A Homage to Asgar Ali Engineer

Niranjan Haldar

Those who read 'Twenty Years of Babri Masjid Demolition' by Asgar Ali Engineer in the December issue of IRHA Newsletter, did not imagine that he would pass away so soon. He breathed his last, on May 12, 2013 in Mumbai, at the age of seventy-six.

He was born in a Dawoodi Bohra family in Rajasthan, studied Engineering in Indore, worked in Bombay Municipal Corporation, as an engineer. Here, he replaced his family surname by his adopted surname 'Engineer'. Very soon, he left the job, to work as a social activist.

While he was a student, he witnessed an anti-Muslim riot in M.P. after the rape of a college-student in Jabalpur in 1960. Afterwards, he started a youth organisation, to fight against communalism. For some years, he had worked with Sampradayikata Virodhi Manch, led by Subhadra Joshi, of C.P.I. Soon, he realised that authoritarianism in a community affects the freedom of the individuals much more than class. In the Dawoodi Bohra community, everyone has to sign a letter of loyalty to the religious head, known as Syedna, have to pay the donations when demanded. If he, or she said anything against the Syedna, he would be expelled from the community, and his/her relationship with parents, brother(s), sister(s), wife, son(s), and daughter(s) would cease automatically. This is against human rights of the individuals, against fundamental rights as mentioned in the Indian Constitution. Justice M. C. Chagla

of Bombay High Court declared that the loyalty-letter to Syedna was against the Indian Constitution, but the then Congress Government of Bombay restored the rights of the Syedna.

In 1970, Asgar Ali Engineer started a movement against the anti-human rights practices in the Dawoodi Bohra community. His movement was supported by Humanists like V. M. Tarkunde, Prof A. B. Shah and others in Maharashtra. His bi-lingual fortnightly, *Bohra Chronicle* became the mouthpiece of the movement. Pro- Syedna groups did not sit idle. Engineer was physically attacked in Cairo. He could not hold meeting in Calcutta, due to pressure from the Bohra businessmen in Calcutta. The Muslim Institute cancelled the booking of the hall.

In 1978, on behalf of Citizens for Democracy, J. P. Narayan and V. M. Tarkunde set up a Peoples' Bench, presided over by a former Justice in Ahmedabad. Dr Moin Shakir, a historian, became one of the judges, But Syedna-loyalists attacked the place of Peoples' Bench and the police had to rescue the judges.

In 1982, he attended a seminar in Madras. He and Balraj Puri of Jammu used to visit the Muslim areas in the evening, and discovered that the Urdu-speaking Muslims of Tamil Nadu belonged to the national political parties, while the Tamil-speaking Muslims belonged to any of the two main Tamil political parties. The three of us visited the office of the Chief Minister Ramachandran, to deliver a letter,

requesting him to withdraw the case of sedition charge against Chandralekha (Bhartnatyam dancer) and Sadanand Menon (journalist) - both of them were active in training the social communicators of Tamil Nadu.

In 1984, we met again in South Gujarat University campus in Surat, in a seminar on Caste and Communal Riots in Gujarat. Later on, he sought donations from his friends, to conduct a study on *communal and caste based riots in Gujarat*. Myself, and Dr Hussanur Rahman (historian), were the two donors from Calcutta. He established the Institute for Islamic Studies in 1980 and the Centre for Study in Democracy and Secularism, in 1983. He interpreted the Quran from the modern as well as humanist viewpoint. He was the opposite face of Jihaadi Muslims. His activities spread to other Asian countries. He was the Chairman of Bangkok-based Asian Resource Centre, with Abdus Sabur from Bangladesh as its Secretary. I had the opportunity to attend their workshop on Human Rights Education, in Thonburi, Thailand, in 1993.

He was a believer in God. A question may arise 'Why would atheists and humanists would pay homage to him?' The answer is: we fought on the same platform with him against communalism, for Democracy, Secularism, and Human Rights. Considering the areas of agreement, we consider him as one of us. We salute the life-long fighter for Human Rights, and Peace.

Craziness about FDI

The Finance minister and his officers have become panicky. There has been persistent withdrawal of bond money. Reasons seem to be twofold. Rupee is falling. So, earlier the withdrawal, lesser the loss. Secondly, multinational companies need more liquidity in the American market because the Federal Reserve (Central bank of the USA) is rolling back the policy of advancing stimulant money initiated in the aftermath of the 2008 recession. The announcement was made by its chairman Ben Bernanke a few weeks ago.

The flow of both FII and FDI is narrowing down for the last 3-4 years. Our planners are anxious because they feel that the rate of growth of GDP, declining for the last two years, may take a further dive. Allowing more foreign participation may be helpful. So they are contemplating of raising the present cap in the fields of Telecommunications to 74 percent, defense to 49 percent, Retail to 74 percent, banking, pension and insurance to 49 percent. In case of defense, its ministry has already

aired its opposition on grounds of security. Employees in the banking and insurance sector have been holding demonstrations against foreign participation. About the retail, all the major political parties and organizations of traders are up in arms. In a pre-election year, it is near impossible to sell that policy.

Important point to ponder over is that importing more foreign capital will not help to narrow the gap between huge imports and limping exports. That would defer, for a while, the obligation of clearing the credits to those foreign sellers from whom we are purchasing the goods imported. The foreign capital is certain to go back, after a few years, to the parent countries along with sumptuous profits. CAD (current account deficit in foreign trade) today is 6.7 percent of the GDP. It can be narrowed down either by increasing exports or cutting down imports. Because of the turmoil in some European countries like Spain, France, Italy as also in the USA, which are our main purchasers, there is little scope to

expand exports. It would be wise to curtail imports particularly of oil and petroleum and gold. Imports of oil can be curtailed if determined efforts are made to curtail its domestic consumption. The Government can decide to put all the vehicles of the political office-holders and the bureaucrats in the garages once in a week. Private small cars be discouraged to ply on roads of metro centres. Public transport should be revamped. Secondly, policy of import substitution must be pursued vigorously. Thirdly, steps must be taken to increasing purchasing power in the hands of the 73 percent of working population whose daily income is less than Rs. 35 per day per head. If the unemployed and the underemployed are provided with meaningful employment, the demand in the domestic market will enhance and stimulate investment in the manufacturing sector. That would also help raise standard of living of the vulnerable sections of society. Shri Chidambaran and Shri Ahaluvalia would do well to listen these wise counsels and avoid flirting with the foreign capital.

—Pannalal Surana

Himalayan watershed disaster

Advocates of indiscriminate urbanization, industrialization and tourism must restore the ecological integrity of the Himalayan watershed and comprehend its geological reality to prevent such occurrences in future. Both Indian and Chinese agencies are myopically mutilating the

watershed with mere monetization in mind.

Devotees of all ilk are callous about Himalayan watershed and are grossly anthropocentric in their behavior. Ecological heritage must be conserved for coming generations. This principle applies to all places

of worship. No agency should be allowed to build permanent structures in ecologically fragile zones. Development fundamentalism combined with religious tourism is eroding ecological heritage.

In the aftermath of these disasters if lessons are indeed learnt then

all ongoing development projects must be reviewed and revisited and their carrying capacity and cumulative impact on Himalayan ecosystem should be assessed and the ecological integrity of the Himalayan watershed must be made non-negotiable.

It must be understood that the entire Himalayan watershed is an eco-sensitive zone and deforestation in this zone has led to landslide and floods. Huge increase in building of dams, tunnels, roads and townships along with religious tourism has gone beyond the carrying capacity of the Himalayan watershed.

Meanwhile, operations at the 1,500 MW Nathpa Jhakri project in Himachal Pradesh, India's largest

hydroelectric plant has been stopped due to high silt content in the turgid and fast-moving Sutlej river. SJVN Ltd's Nathpa Jhakri project is a joint venture between the Union and Himachal Pradesh governments. The 1,000-MW Karchham Wantoo project has also been shut due to heavy silt in Sutlej. These projects feed the northern grid. The disaster seeks answers from the project proponents of such projects as to whether they had factored in their adverse consequences on this ecologically fragile watershed.

Studies done by Chinese Academy of Sciences in Kunming and University of Delhi on the impact 292 of the planned Himalayan dams have underlined that "about 1700 square kilometres of forests

would be submerged or damaged by dams and related activities." Stage managed and faulty environmental and forest clearances in Indian and China contribute to the colossal crisis that is staring us in the face.

Both in India and China, massive land use change in the watershed has made its ecosystem fragile causing increase in incidence of landslides and disastrous floods.

If people destroy something replaceable made by mankind, they are called vandals; if they destroy something irreplaceable made by Nature, they are called developers. This mindset is the cause of Himalayan watershed becoming disaster prone.

—Gopal Krishna

Telangana Agitators

Andhra Pradesh is in turmoil once again over the demand of a separate Telangana. The struggle for a separate Telangana has been ongoing for a long time now. The central and state governments as well as the major political parties in the state have played opportunistic and partisan political games with people's sentiments. Exploiting people's emotions for vote bank politics, parties have supported formation of unholy alliances and politics of divide and rule. The uncertainty over the demand for a Telangana state must end now so that people can carry on their occupations and work without anger, ill-will and anxiety.

The formation of smaller states in the Indian Union is, in general, a significant step towards bringing the locus of political power closer to the

people. Small states in India, given the population size of the country, will still be big by international standards. With a population of about 3 crores, Telangana, if and when created, will be viable as a state of the Indian Union. Demands for making governments responsive and accountable, need for redressing administrative inefficiency, and popular aspiration for a better life have set the stage for a new phase of states' reorganization.

The people's movement for Telangana has reached new heights in recent years. People's struggles and sacrifices have made it clear that the demand for a separate state of Telangana now represents the aspirations of an overwhelming majority of the people in this region.

The Andhra Pradesh Assembly convened on 10th of June has remained paralysed on the issue of Telangana. It's unfortunate to see the extraordinary measures that have been taken up by the government to suppress the 'Chalo Assembly' call, given by the Telangana Joint Action Committee, an umbrella organisation of several pro-Telangana groups

National Alliance of People's Movements believes that while it is necessary to maintain the law and order situation, suppression of democratic people's protest by mass illegal arrests of activists, threatening the people of Telangana, and cancellation of monthly pensions and essential commodities through fair price shops to people participating in Telangana agitation, is totally unacceptable.

NAPM, no doubt, has always supported the demand for smaller states, whether in Jharkhand or Uttarakhand but has also warned that without change in the paradigm of development and system of governance, there can be no fundamental change in the politics or relations of power in favour of the toiling masses. We repeat this warning in the case of Telangana, having witnessed the continued injustice and exploitation in the newly formed states. NAPM,

however, supports the popular demand for Telangana which will benefit not only the agitating people from the Region but all in the present State of Andhra Pradesh whose lives and livelihood are continuously affected due to keeping the issue burning with struggle as well as oppression becoming an unending politics to be faced by common people.

Hence, NAPM calls for an immediate political resolution on

the issue of Telangana. In spite of widespread support in Andhra Pradesh for the Telangana cause, there seems to be an impasse over statehood for the region. The Telangana movement offers credible hope of changing the iniquitous structures of power and control in the state and its failure could see the forces of lawlessness acquiring new strength, with disastrous consequences for the common people.

—Medha Patkar, Ramakrishnam Raju, Prafulla Samantara

Naxal menace just an excuse

This refers to ‘Rs 1K—cr Package for Naxal Dists’. It is not a fact that only extremist affected tribal areas remain underdeveloped. Tribal areas in toto are deliberately neglected since decades. Who prevents the governments from developing those tribal areas free from extremist violence? Why not the rulers do it on a war footing so that ‘the misguided’ Adivasis in the troubled areas will realise their folly and stop ‘the popular support enjoyed by the Naxals’? The 1000 cr package now proposed by the Planning Commission will only flatten the purses of the Neta-Babu-Contractor trio leaving the tribals high and dry as it had happened in all these years. The rebellion in the Central India is not due to lack of development. Tribals have been putting up with our utter contempt and injustice since ages. Rather the unrest is due to the neo-liberal development model being pursued vigorously by the rulers of all hues since 1991. This development is socially divisive, economically exclusive, politically undemocratic,

ecologically unsustainable and ethically immoral.

After the recent massacre in Sukma dist, Ramachandra Guha (noted historian and one of the petitioners in the case against Salwa Judum in SC) in a well written article called the government’s bluff thus: ‘The CG government had neither tackled the extremism nor sincerely implemented the constitutional provisions guaranteeing the land and tribal forest rights of the adivasis and improved the delivery of health and education services. Instead it granted a slew of leases to industrialists, over-riding the protests of gram panchayats and handing over large of tribal land to mining companies. It promoted a vigilante army, distributing guns to near illiterate tribal youth. These goons then roamed the countryside, in search of Naxalites real or fictitious. In a series of shocking incidents, they burnt homes (sometimes entire villages), raped women, and looted granaries of those adivasis who refused to join them. In the first decade of this century Maoists presence

dramatically increased. The tortures, the renditions, the displacement of thousands upon thousands of civilians — in all these respects, Dantewada seemed to me to be a micro version of Iraq or Afghanistan. Placed between the Maoists and the vigilantes, the adivasis are being squeezed from both sides. Orissa, a state once completely free of Naxalites, has seen them acquiring considerable influence in several districts. A first step here would be for the top leadership of the present government to reach out directly to the adivasis. The Prime Minister and the Chairperson of the UPA should together tour through the strife-torn areas of CG, Jharkhand and Orissa, promising the full implementation of the Forest Rights Act, a temporary ban on mining projects in Fifth Schedule Areas, and a revival of the powers of gram panchayats. That would be a far more effective strike against Naxalites than sending in fighter planes or massed battalions’. Let us hope wiser counsel will prevail.

—Sankara Narayanan,

Domestic Workers Day

16 June is observed as the International Domestic Workers Day all over the world to celebrate the adoption of the International Convention on Domestic Workers by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2011.

The AP Domestic Workers Movement, Montfort Social Institute-Domestic Workers Forum India, AP Migrant Forum Asia and the AP State Domestic Workers Union celebrated the day with a large gathering of domestic workers at Indira Park, Hyderabad on 15 June, 2013.

On this day, the domestic workers demanded:

A comprehensive National Legislation for Domestic Workers

Ratification of ILO Convention -189 on Domestic Workers by the Government of India

Activation of Andhra Pradesh State Social Welfare Board to

extend Social Security measures for domestic workers

Inclusion of domestic workers under the ESI and Maternity Benefit Act of the Central Government

A national campaign has been launched in the country to achieve these demands under the banner of National Platform for Comprehensive Legislation for Domestic Workers.

A signature Campaign has been launched to build support for these demands. Twenty five lakh signatures that will be gathered from all over the country will be presented to the Prime Minister in Delhi on 30 July.

Even though India is home to the largest number of domestic workers in the world, making it the largest sector of employment of women workers in urban India, they are not brought under the labour laws of the country. Given the large number of workers and their special conditions of work, they need to be

protected under a special Act of the Parliament.

Even though India is the largest country sending domestic workers in the world, the country has not still ratified the ILO Convention -189 to protect domestic workers. Nor are there sufficient measures by the government to protect impoverished women immigrants abroad, particularly in the Gulf Countries, who go for domestic work. Andhra Pradesh is among the largest states sending domestic workers in the country.

Andhra Pradesh constituted the State Social Welfare Board more than a year ago. But the Board is yet to meet to form rules and come to the rescue of workers, especially domestic workers.

Similarly suitable amendments have to be brought to the Maternity Benefit and ESI Acts of the Government of India to include domestic workers for availing these benefits.

—Bro. Varghese Theckanaths, S. Lissy Joseph, VijayaLaxmi

The future of democracy in India

As political parties make plans for rolling out their campaigns for the next Parliamentary elections, Its time for citizens to revisit our beliefs before we decide who to entrust the next five years of our future.

The only way a nation can progress is if every citizen, regardless of his or her religion, caste, tribe, or social status feels included in shaping the future.

Diversity breeds a creative society. On the other hand homogenization of cultures leads to complacency and chauvinism. While diversity makes a society vibrant, homogenization makes it lethargic.

A key role of people's representatives in a democracy is to negotiate for equitable distribution of resources.

Just as mother earth provides an environment conducive for co-

existence of diverse elements of nature, a democracy must provide egalitarian environment for a vibrant, confident and innovative society of diverse cultures and ideas to evolve.

A leader will fail if he or she begins to let his individual will and vision to prevail over the collective interest of a diverse society.

In a society where resources are limited and claimants to the

resources too many, corruption is bound to creep into public life. It is important therefore to remember that "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty". Every time an election is announced the voters must defeat the representatives who use political influence to amass personal wealth. Only then people's power will prevail over ambitions and greed of leaders.

Free flow of information decentralizes power, education empowers people with knowledge and imagination, and technology gives them the tools to co-create a better future. Rather than depending

on the information dished out to them by political parties and broadcast media, people must depend on their own social networks.

My earnest request to India is, please do not be swayed by the promises of a powerful leader, no matter which party he or she belongs to- When people mobilize on the streets for a cause they have greater power than leaders who pull strings from the comforts of their palatial bungalows. A leader is more likely to succumb to a corrupt system. On the other hand, mobilization scares corrupt people in the administration.

Do not believe anymore in promises made in manifestos or TV campaigns of political parties. They are worth nothing more than marketing materials of corporations. Do not vote for someone because you or your parents have voted for him or her- they have become a part of the system. Rather look for someone who is angry at the system, has a passion for a cause and a positive outlook to the future.

In essence leaders have failed us. Its time to take charge, demolish the system, put new people in, and participate in the democracy with fresh ideas.

—Uday Dandavate

(Continued from Page 2)

people without trial. The tragedy today is that the Home Ministry is copying those very methods. The ministry is restricting the democratic space in the name of curbing terrorism. The unlawful activities act can detain people without trial in an open court of law. Such cases have to be okayed by the government-appointed advisory committee and the trial had to be held within the jail itself. Dr. Vinayak Sen, the famous doctor-activist, was first detained under this act. Subsequently, the BJP-ruled Jharkhand government charged him with sedition for having "contacts" with the Maoists.

I often wonder why we haven't learnt a lesson from the Emergency and why the rulers of different political parties pursue more or less the same path that Smt. Gandhi had taken to derail democracy. I believe the reason is that nobody, who was found

guilty of committing excesses during those days, was punished. It is comical that some of those found guilty are today at the helm of affairs in Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's rule.

The failings of Smt. Gandhi's successor government of the Janata Party brought her back to power in less than two years. As the Prime Minister, she not only shelved cases requiring punishment but also appointed the same tainted officers to ensure that the spirit of Emergency stayed even if it had not been imposed. The loss of democracy has been more or less forgotten. The youth does not know what the country went through. The elders who recall the period sound too wishy-washy. It was a bad dream which was meant to be forgotten. But when today the steps taken during the Emergency have been adopted in the name of security and peace, there seems

little difference between now and then.

There has to be accountability without which none in power will be afraid of using authority that he or she likes. The Lokpal Bill, under discussion, is necessary to find out who are guilty and how they can be punished. The government's attitude is uncompromising. If the Lokpal cannot look into the charges against the Prime Minister, the judiciary, or the MPs indulging in corruption even on the floor of the house, what is the use of having such an institution? The control by the government of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) makes any action by the agency meaningless. It looks as if we are in for anxious days. Thank God, another Emergency cannot be imposed because the very measure requires a two-thirds majority in parliament and a similar strength in state assemblies.

Our Shallow Democracy

Jawaharlal Jasthi

It certainly goes to the credit of the party in power at the center – Indian National Congress – that they have allowed the parliament to pass the Right To Information Act (RTI). Having got it passed, it seems, they are regretting it.

The purpose of the Act is to make the public affairs transparent so that the citizens could know how the various organisations, that have a bearing on their lives, are functioning. Nobody could say that political parties do not have any effect on our lives. But unless there is some legal provision to make them answerable, they will naturally refuse to answer. In order to escape from this legal responsibility, it is being argued that the RTI Act applies only to public organisations or to organisations that receive substantial aid from government. It is a patently wrong argument. The Act is clear when it states that the information referred to in the Act “includes information about any private party which can be accessed by a public authority under any law in force.” The right includes the right to inspect, take note and to get certified copies in any form.

“Public Authority” includes any authority or institution of self-government established under the constitution, law of Parliament or state legislature and includes non-government organisations financed by government. It is true that the political parties in the country are not financed by the government and are not covered by this clause. But they are the organisations “which can be

accessed by a public authority under law.” The Election Commission is a constitutional body. It is given right of access to the finances and accounts of each and every political party that is recognized.

Each one of the political parties has to get itself registered with the Election Commission under section 29A of the Representation of Peoples’ Act. Surprisingly, this provision is added into the Act by an amendment in 1989. Till then, from the date of passing the Representation of Peoples Act in 1951, there was no provision under any law to insist that the political party shall be a recognized institution. It has to be considered to be serious lapse when our democracy is supposed to be based on political parties. There is no mention of political parties even in our constitution until 1985 when the X Schedule is introduced by the 52nd amendment. There is no mention of political parties even under Art.120 or Art.191 wherein disqualifications for membership of central and state legislatures are enumerated. They are accepted only under freedom of association. As such, political party has no legal sanctity when it was brought into the constitution through the X Schedule. This was rectified by amending the Representation of Peoples Act in 1989, wherein organisations claiming to be political parties are required to get registered with the Election Commission. Formats and processes were announced by the Commission to get the parties registered. Apart from all the organizational and functional requirements to get eligibility to

register, the one important condition is that the parties have to get their accounts audited by an auditor on the panel of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India. The audited accounts are to be submitted to the Commission within six months from the date of closing the accounts. This provision is analogous to the one applicable to the government companies under the Companies Act. The Commission is not concerned whether the accounts are approved by the members of the party.

But, when the accounts are prescribed for audit, it is absolutely necessary that the accounts are complete and reflect the true picture of the organization and its activities. If not, the auditor cannot accept the accounts. When Jagdeep Chokkar, one of the founders of the Association of Democratic Reforms applied for information regarding the sources of their funds, every political party considered it an affront and raised a hue and cry. They started to claim that the parties in India are not funded by government and so are not covered by the RTI Act. The petitioner approached the Central Information Commission and they made a ruling that political parties must disclose the information required by the petitioner. It is a real shock to see that none of the political parties are willing to accept the decision of the Commission and opposed it tooth and nail.

But, there appears to be some opportunity for a different opinion unfortunately. The Commission

adopted the principle of ‘substantial funding’ by government so that the parties are deemed to be ‘public authorities’ and so they are covered by the RTI Act. This funding is supposed to be indirect by way of privileges and exemptions under the taxation laws leading to financial advantage to the parties. The main advantage is by making the political parties on par with charitable organization to get exemption from taxation and the contributions by the donors made eligible for exemption from tax. It induces contributors to contribute more and avoid tax. Even the Companies Act is amended to facilitate contributions to political organisations. It is also possible that the parties are provided with land and utilities at concessional rates to political parties, directly or indirectly. The influence that they could wield in administration, even when not in power, is obvious. NCP, one of the major national parties, conceded that the value of such sops and supports to them comes to about 1.4 percent of their funds. But we do not know the actual amount as we do not know the total of funds. Political activity is a charitable activity for tax purposes – that is how we value our democracy!

But a private organization cannot be considered a public authority just because it receives funds and support from government. It is doubtful whether we can bring the political parties under the purview of RTI Act by virtue of this argument. But they are the organisations that can be accessed by a public authority under a law in force. The Election Commission has the right to access the accounts of the political parties under the Representation of Peoples Act. The rules may provide that names of contributors of amounts less than Rs.20,000 need not be

disclosed. It does not mean that the total amount need not be disclosed. It also implies that all contributors giving more than Rs.20,000 must be disclosed. We do not know how far this condition is being complied with as the audited accounts are not made public either by the parties or by the Commission. The auditors must be knowing it. So it cannot be claimed that it is a private information to which public has no access.

According to some of the reports of the Election Commission, the Congress party has received a total fund of Rs.1660 crores during the year 2011–2012 out of which Rs.330 crores are stated to be from companies. The funds of BSP amounted to Rs.1226 crores whereas that of BJP was Rs.852 crores. CPI(M) is reported to have got Rs.67 crores every year from companies! In view of the lavish visible expenditure incurred by the various parties and the amounts spent by the contesting candidates with support from their parties, it is highly unlikely that the figures reported represent the total funds of the respective parties. That is why the Association of Democratic Reforms felt it necessary to get true information using the rights made available under the RTI Act.

We are expecting transparency in functioning of government. When none of the major political parties are willing to disclose source of their funds, it is futile to expect that any law encouraging transparency will be passed in the legislature. Whatever may be the legal provisions and whatever may be the decisions of Commissions and courts, they are of no consequence when the executive is determined to ignore the same. There are many judgments

also that are not implemented by the government. We flatter ourselves that our constitution has balance between the various branches of the government. When all those branches are in concert, if not collusion, it is not the constitution alone that fails. It is the democracy that eludes us. Our credentials for democracy are very shallow. Let us not boast that we are the biggest democracy on earth.

Indian Socialists
In dialogue with
Gandhi and Ambedkar

by
Bapu Heddurshetti

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Man-made tragedy

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Slide of Rupee

Modi virsus Rahul ?

Building New India

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No organization, official or private, neither the Union nor the state governments of Uttarakhand, nor the residents of the Himalayan foothills who also have been the victims of the man-made tragedy that has overtaken the Garhwal region have come out in flying colours in the assessment of the role each of them played as Nature's fury asserted itself last week. Even a week—and it has been a loooong week—after Mother Nature decided to punish the humankind for playing with the Himalayan ecology, neither the tragedy's dimensions in its fullest range has been understood nor have all its victims been evacuated from the danger zones. Meanwhile, typically for India, politicians have converted flooded Garhwal as a playground for games of competitive rivalry and one-upmanship and those out to make money have landed in the Himalayas to make financial capital out of the misery of the victims. Overall, the story unfolding before our eyes day after day these agonizing days is a repetition of what usually happens in India when unlearnt lessons inflict more tragedies on a hapless citizenry.

Uttarakhand chief minister Vijay Bahuguna has said that he and his officials estimate that at least 1000

people have perished in the floods. Others, from within Uttarakhand and outside, place the number far higher. Thousands are missing and hundreds still to be accounted for. The people of the region are in fear that the second instalment of the tragedy will unfold this week when it begins to rain again. The meteorologists had predicted heavy rains from Monday June 23. Luckily, nobody is sorry that they have been proved wrong again. For, it is doubtful if Uttarakhand can absorb the shock and trauma of continued ecological turbulence and manifestations of Nature's wrath. Bahuguna estimates that three years' of development have been washed away. This means that Uttarakhand will have to start again from where it was in 2010, and unfortunately it was not among the highly developed states in India even then. And the loss in financial terms? His figure is Ra. 3000 crores. The prime minister was perhaps advised that the loss would exceed Rs. 1000 crores, which is why he sanctioned what he felt was the minimum that needed to be doled out in the initial stage. But experience tells us that the ultimate demand for compensation by the state will scale higher to ten times the amount projected now.

Between the lines

Loss of national sensitivity

Kuldip Nayar

Six decades after independence, our disaster management techniques are still primitive. Indeed, we as a nation have yet to imbibe the modern-day culture of disaster management, of any kind, caused by natural causes or modern-day provocations. The country set up a National Disaster Management Authority half a century after freedom, and that organization is still learning the ropes. The Garhwal Himalayan tragedy was the first test that confronted the NDMA, and it failed to measure up to the challenge. It is not to be fully blamed in any case because it has still to comprehend the nature of the challenges of many forms it will be called upon to combat. It is still formulating its plan of action in reference to various kinds of disaster. In this particular tragedy it was not the only official agency to get caught unawares. The Centre and the state government both ignored the CAG's warning that the NDMA had no plan of action yet for the Garhwal region leave alone other parts of India. However, no special warning was necessary. It is not a secret that this particular Himalayan region has always been prone to natural disasters thanks to its geographic location and the high-range tectonic activity there.

Unfortunately, the country has totally neglected domestic tourism. Tourism is not regarded as a remunerative portfolio by politicians who think they have been punished if the prime minister allots them the tourism portfolio. Had we paid half the attention to domestic and international tourism and had we developed India as a hot tourist destination for global travellers our infrastructure would have benefited immensely. The absence of tourist shelters and guide

(Continued on Page 3)

Not long ago, a disaster in any part of the country would elicit national response. People would go door-to-door to collect money, clothes, utensils, medicines and many other things of daily use to transmit through agencies which were voluntarily engaged in relief and rehabilitation work. The attitude has changed in the last few years. People are, no doubt, concerned and sympathetic. But there is no countrywide effort to organize help. The atmosphere is no more animated with the zeal which, as I recall, used to be there.

Take the example of Uttarakhand. The devastation has been on a massive scale. More than 5,000 people have reportedly died and the material loss runs into hundreds of crores of rupees. Yet the reaction has been tepid. Efforts are visible on individual scale. But the nation as such is not concerned. Particularly, the states in the south and the east have shown less involvement.

The governments, both in the hilly state of Uttarakhand and at the Centre, were too late to respond and had no clue what to do. Even after 10 days of the disaster, 20,000 people were stranded at different places. What dominated the discussion was not the scale of assistance but whether it was man-made or the nature's fury. Of course, it was man-made. The reasons are obvious.

The trees to accommodate the ever growing bureaucracy were cut.

The de-silting of river is out of any government's agenda. The National Disaster Management Board was tried for the first time and found wanting. Political parties have done nothing concrete except politicizing the tragedy. The official appeal to contribute to the Prime Minister's Relief fund has been issued as a matter of routine.

Surprisingly, no foreign country has offered help to evacuate the stranded people, much less any material assistance. Pakistan has missed a golden opportunity to befriend the common Indian. Islamabad should have sent trucks of food and medicines to the Wagha border. New Delhi would have lost face if it had stopped the aid.

If one were to analyse the tragedy, one would come to the conclusion that the nation has lost sensitivity. Different states have over the years become islands by themselves and there is hardly any tragedy which transcends the border. When it came to rescuing the victims, states like West Bengal and Gujarat preferred to evacuate the habitants of their own area.

The absence of national feeling may well be the reason that every state is putting up dams in catchment areas. They think that the consequential loss is to other states not to them. And so many dams have come up that they are counterproductive. Of course, the money spent has enough leeway for

corruption at political and official levels. The land and timber mafias have played havoc at the expense of the nation.

The countrywide coordination is possible at the level of environment ministry. It can also ensure that ecology is not disturbed. But the ministry is so much under pressure from different lobbies and state governments that it has become only a signing authority. The area around Uttarakhand is so fragile that the central government did not want to disturb the ecology. But both political parties, the Congress and the BJP, joined hands to have the proposal scuttled.

And the behavior of the people in Uttarakhand itself was inhuman. There are instances to show how shopkeepers charged exorbitant prices for things of daily use. A biscuit packet was sold for Rs. 200. A loaf of bread was priced at Rs. 100. There are instances of looting and even molesting of women. One woman required medical help. But her gold chain was pulled from her neck and she was left bleeding. Even sadhus and sants made most of the situation, robbing money and ornaments from the deceased.

The only bright side is the work done by the army and the air force. They evacuated thousands of people stuck at different places. The survivors in fact narrated the difference between the government which did not do anything and the army and air force which rescued them and gave food and shelter. One air force helicopter, engaged in rescue operation, crashed because of bad weather. Twenty lives were lost.

India is a heartless state. Over the years, it has deteriorated in

values. There is not a semblance of idealism left to talk about social justice or to lift the lower half to the level where it can lead a viable living. Poverty, unemployment and malnutrition, signs of a decaying society, are increasing day by day. We are, almost back to the Hindu growth rate of 4 per cent. A dollar fetches Rs. 60. In fact, the rupee is in shambles.

Today's spectacle of poor growth and the dismal future is because political parties have catered to their fiefdoms without keeping before them the picture of India on the whole or the growth of every sector or every area. Unfortunately, the parties have not realized that their politics may feather their nests but would not take the country forward.

Both the Congress and the BJP, the two main parties are most to blame. They have seen to it that they do not compromise even though a bit of cooperation would have done wonders. Parliament has been more or less at standstill. No business has been transacted session after session, creating a new record of inactivity. The parties admit this and some leading members have no hesitation in saying so in private. Yet they do not cross the line even word-wise in the house lest it should harm them.

India does not have much leeway. The speed with which we are going down the hill indicates a ruin of great magnitude. There is every reason why the two main parties should come together to take the country further. They should at least have a joint action on the rehabilitation of victims. But that would require a stand above party line.

In today's approach to occupy the kursi, it is difficult to imagine

that any political party would place the national interest first. Even several disasters like the one at Uttarakhand cannot change the thinking of political parties. It is tragic, but true.

(Continued from Page 2)

posts and amenities and facilities which the victims of the Garhwal tragedy experienced would not have been felt. At least there would have been some roads. Now there are neither roads nor any other facilities. India may be in the 21st century but it is still in the primitive stages of development. The people are paying a high price for the politicians' refusal to learn from mistakes, and their greed to enrich themselves first before tending to the needs of the country. A great pity this.

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CAD and Crisis in External Trade

K. S. Chalam

The RBI officials are at pains to explain to the layman as to how they are constrained by the CAD in importing more gold into our country. There are two items in which international trade transactions are expressed, one current account and the other capital account. CAD that is Capital Account Deficit is an outcome of more outflows than inflows in the capital account. The concept of trade deficit is a measure of balance of trade in which imports exceeds exports. This has an impact on the outflow of domestic currency to foreign markets. There is an interesting issue here as most of the countries in the world keep US dollars as the reserve currency and the continued trade deficit did not affect USA. The recent fall in the prices of gold due to deliberate operations of the US treasury appears to be an act to strengthen US dollar as reserve currency in place of gold. Is it an exception? Critics say whenever a country wants to do away with US dollars it is in trouble. Economists do not touch this fact and leave it to political economists to comment.

The availability of foreign capital depends upon the external sector and the rules of the game. Those who were arguing for full capital convertibility a few years ago are silent now due to the anticipated troubles in the external sector. The enormous grit and gab shown by our RBI Governors in arguing with the lobbies against convertibility and the need to maintain restraint should be appreciated now. The common woman/man is angry that the price of gold has come down but there isn't enough to buy under the

price volatility. The middle class and the neo-rich people have prospered through real estate, bribes and black money are restive as they know only gold as the source of concealing their wealth unlike their counterparts in capital market.

CAD is directly related to the problem of Balance of Payments (BOP). It is defined as "a systematic record of a nation's total payments to foreign countries, including the price of imports and the outflow of capital and gold, along with the total receipts from abroad, including the price of exports and the inflow of capital and gold in a year". As per the double entry accounting, the two accounts are automatically balanced with a balancing item. It is $\text{current account} + \text{financial account} + \text{capital account} + \text{balancing item} = 0$. The current account consists of all transactions in goods, services, investments overseas and transfers while capital account captures all inflow and outflow of capital. The current account deficit can be met if there is surplus on the capital account. This elementary understanding of foreign trade is essential to appreciate the significance of current account deficit (definitions vary between IMF and others). Interestingly, we have a current account and a capital account deficit. CAD is worrying our policy makers due to its long run implications for the economy.

CAD consists of direct capital transfers including FDIs such as takeovers of domestic companies by foreign countries. The investment inflows include overseas investment in our government bonds and assets and the 'hot money' flows into

banking and other capital market transactions. The Foreign Exchange Management Act 1999 freed all the transactions which were once regulated and the capital is now given an automatic route. It was thought that we would have an advantage in getting more FDIs and also takeovers outside so that the health and vigour of the economy could be doubled. It is difficult to judge whether it was a good decision or a manipulated push in view of the current crisis. In fact, the IMF experts have studied the trends of various countries and have come to the conclusion that a CAD between 1.5 and 2.5 per cent of GDP is sustainable. We had such comfort zones in the early part of our liberalisation scene. But now it has become a big worry as the rate has reached the highest level at 6.7 of GDP during 2012-13 (Survey) due to fall in invisibles. Even the much pampered IT services did not come to the rescue and in fact they are undergoing a crisis as seen from the happenings during the last few weeks. The sign of strain on BOP was indicated in the Economic Survey 2012-13 when the moderate growth in net services coupled with lower net inflows under income account resulted in decline in net invisibles.

A dispassionate discussion on international trade is always delicate, from the time of Adam Smith, due to the possibility of putting the argument either way is possible with the economists' tools of short run, long run and the two hands. However, CAD is considered by the experts as a boon to the LDCs as it improves productivity through the imports and

the technology associated with it. But, the experience of India in this case is different. The exports are increasingly overtaken by imports creating tension in our external sector for quite some time now though there is no possibility of a crisis situation like that of the 1991. It is due to the NRI deposits and FDIs that provided a comfortable situation in foreign reserves. But, remember, they are all debts and the country needs to repay sooner or later. Therefore, policy makers and regulators like RBI are worried about the trends.

There has been a change in the composition and direction of our international trade during 1991-2013. Our share in the world trade has increased manifold during the period and it stands at 2.1 per cent of the world total (China stands at 11.2 per cent in 2012-13). Interestingly, manufacturing goods constituted 64.5 per cent of our exports and primary sector exports were 16 per cent, of which 87.5 per cent are agricultural items. The contribution of manufacturing sector to GDP is declining and is a cause of concern. The trade surplus or deficit has its repercussions on our domestic economy. The current and capital account deficits indicate the transfer of our aggregate demand outside the country and we will have little control over it through our policy packages. As indicated in my earlier articles, UNCTAD report has warned that free trade has widened inequalities across and within the countries. This can be seen in terms of our items of imports. The RBI and Government experts are pointing out the high proportion of 38 per cent of oil and 10.5 per cent of gold in our imports as the real problem since they consume most of our earnings and create CAD. How far is it true?

The country has emerged as a

trade dependent in terms of gross exports and imports both ways reaching 108 per cent of GDP in 2011-12. Most of our policies have helped to link India with the world in order to reap the opportunities and are vulnerable to international crisis. The kind of stakes played by big players in the world gold market in terms of physical demand and speculative demand is a very intriguing matter that is beyond our competence to engage. The issue is, why should a common man who is not helped by these policies, except the state doles, accept this crunch?

The crisis seemsto be much alarming in recent weeks as the RBI policy reveals. It is reported that FDI withdrawals have increased during the third week of June signalling a 1997 South Asian situation. Yet, there are several hidden stories behind the crisis. In an inadvertent mood, the Minister for Petroleum has said that he was under threat in the process of importing oil from abroad. There were stories and front page headlines when some of our corporates have acquired assets and acquisitions and joined the club of Trillionaires. What are the implications of these on our balance of payments?

The RBI knew more about our economy and the hidden agendas as most of the transactions of the exporters and importers including the Mining mafia transactions are bound to have been processed through them. It is not gold and silver imports that constitute just 10.5 per cent of our imports that put strain on our foreign exchange and CAD. But, the payments made for import of oil that is processed and sold at the cost of our natural reserves and exchequer and the free flow of capital of the corporates that are serious issues to be looked into. It is perhaps beyond the brief

of our RBI and therefore up the creek to express anxiety. The RBI data sheet on outward FDI of 500 Indian companies investing abroad has shown that \$ 104758.30 million (\$104 billion) was capitalised by the end of April 2012. The liberalisation of FERA allows corporates to hold FCA accounts and use the resources to the extent of 400 times the net worth of their company abroad (rules apply). Even mutual funds of SBI can be invested outside. Though RBI prohibits real estate abroad, there are companies that are in construction business. It is found that most of the firms are in the well-known tax havens like Mauritius, Singapore, Cayman Islands etc and we do not know what kind of transactions they are making until ED enquires in to such transactions. But, have they not used the scarce foreign exchange abroad and contributed to the CAD?

Some experts might say that they are creating opportunities abroad and providing jobs to natives. But, this is not reflected in the inflows. The pressure on domestic currency is increasing and the decline in the value of rupee has not lifted our exports as expected since our goods would be cheaper abroad. One of the papers by RBI noted that 'unlimited out flows for our outward FDI could have significant implications for sustainability of external debt profile'. Some IMF experts might say that it is a reflection of our investment over savings. But the fact of the matter is that we have reached the peak of savings at 37 per cent of GDP in 2008, and is now 31 per cent, s contributed by the household sector. Is it possible to raise the savings when real incomes of the people are declining? Why the experts are not revealing the real factors behind the CAD and targeting only gold imports? In fact, all of

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A layman's economics

Slide of Rupee

Our economists as well as our government are seriously worried about the slide of the value of rupee against the US dollar. Rightly so. However, the solution that is overwhelmingly popular is 'chase more dollars'. Everyone knows, we should say those who offer this as the main solution, know that hot money can go out of the country anytime, the FDI cannot go out as easily, but still can, and therefore, going round with a begging bowl for dollars to foreign countries is, to say the least, a meaningless exercise even if it is to tide over a crisis. We should remind ourselves repeatedly that this sliding has been precipitated by the news that the US Federal Reserve is going to withdraw the stimulus. The US economy is picking up and the country's economic managers have concluded that there is no more need to pump in more dollars in their economy. We cannot determine what the US does, but what we can certainly determine is what we can do. What our state is doing, seeking more dollars to stem the slide, is not the solution. The one good thing our government did is that we have started discouraging gold imports. It is a step in the right direction and it should be pursued more vigorously. But there are quite a few more things of this type that we could, the most important one could be reducing our need for dollars. And like the US Federal Reserve, we have to just announce what we intend to do and the slide will stop dramatically. They say an energy unit saved is an energy unit generated. This can usefully be applied to reduce our dollar demand.

We need dollars to import crude and its demand is increasing every year. It is very easy to decide and declare that we will do our best to

ensure that the need for crude does not increase at the rate at which it is increasing. And we can work out a slew of steps, nothing new or novel, such steps are there in the air for years. We talk of discouraging cars as a mode of personal commute in the context of pollution and congested roads and advocate popularizing public transport. We talk of car pools, walking, cycling, etc. in one or the other context like the global warming. The urban road commuters who suffer delay because of VIP movements, cry out for reduction of the number of vehicles that go with the VIPs, not a difficult thing to do. The government can decide that its officers will take a train if the destiny can be reached in a few hours or by spending the night in it.

We need dollars to buy our defense needs. We can announce that in view of the sliding rupee, we will postpone our defense purchases that require foreign exchange, and instead, we will strengthen our defense preparedness in such a way that no foreign exchange will be required.

We need dollars for setting up import based industries. We can advise our industrialists to invest in such industries where the foreign exchange component is low and get them to voluntarily announce compliance. We can tell them to postpone their plans to take over foreign units or setting up industries in foreign countries or buy land (we are emerging as land grabbers) for planting Jetropa or roses or whatever.

And we can decide – it will be no sacrifice, not to get tempted by the offers of loans to beautify our cities, to build big dams, etc. The ADB loan to popularize khadi is

an example of a stupid decision demeaning khadi and the country. An appeal to citizens to save khadi could have worked much more effectively, if the government wanted to promote khadi.

We need dollars to build airports, sea ports, power plants, etc. or at least that's what we are brainwashed to believe. We call this infrastructure. But we can decide to build them ourselves – just announce. And we can redefine infrastructure. It can be for us, rural roads, education, health care, watershed development, a citizenry committed to green economy and the very announcement of this type will stop the slide.

Then there are economists who talk of competitiveness. What it means is simple. We compete with our neighbours to increase our exports to the rich countries. We increase our productivity of per unit labour, in short, exploit our people, more and more. We do everything to buy our natural resources cheaply. Or we subsidize exports which we are doing. We do not realise, again we can say, we are brainwashed to believe that this is our salvation. Export or perish was once a popular slogan. No one talks of it, because it has been internalized. But we have to learn that the rich countries will import our goods on their terms and sooner or later, there will be a demand for patronizing the local goods to save jobs. We should take note of the finding of sociologists and others who have studied the stress levels of workers in call centres. They suffer abuses, four letter words are commonly used to describe them. Should our youngsters be exposed

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Uttarakhand Catastrophe

We cannot ignore the climate crisis anymore!

The India Climate Justice collective notes with deep anguish the devastating loss of life, livelihoods, and homes in Uttarakhand and beyond. The death toll is likely in the thousands, way beyond current official figures. We extend our deep condolences to the families and friends of those killed, and our support to those still fighting for survival, and to local populations whose livelihoods will take years to rebuild.

This tragedy was triggered by extreme unseasonal rains in North India, 2-3 weeks in advance of what is normal for this region. The Director of the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), Dehradun, said that 340 mm fell in a single day at Dehradun, a record not seen for five decades. Such extreme and unseasonal rainfall seems to us to indicate a global warming induced climate change phenomenon. Warmer air due to global warming has the capacity to hold more moisture, leading to more intense bursts of rainfall. The natural monsoon cycle in India has already been badly disrupted, and a new cycle of extreme rainfall events and prolonged droughts have been reported from all over the country in the recent past. Thus, contrary to statements by senior politicians, the Uttarakhand disaster is not natural: it is no less man-made than the other contributors to the tragedy. And if it is indeed induced by global warming, similar catastrophes could recur with increasing frequency and intensity anywhere in the country in the coming years.

In Uttarakhand, a chaotic process of 'development' that goes back many years exacerbated the effects

of this extreme rain. Extensive deforestation of mountain tracts, by the state and more recently due to 'development' projects, led to soil erosion and water run-off, thus destabilizing mountain slopes and contributing to more intense and frequent landslides and floods. Unchecked hill tourism has resulted in the huge growth of vehicular traffic, spread of roads not suitable to this mountainous terrain, and the construction of poorly designed and unregulated hotels and structures, many near rivers. Sand mining along river banks has intensified water flows into rivers.

Most of all, the construction and planning of hundreds of small, medium and large dams across the Himalayan states from Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand in the northern Himalayas to Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh in the east, have destabilized an already fragile ecosystem and threatened biodiversity. A staggering 680 dams are in various stages of planning, or construction in Uttarakhand alone! These dams have a direct connection with the extent of the damage that can be caused in such flooding events, in that the tunnelling and excavation in the so-called run-of-the-river projects cause huge and unregulated dumping of excavated debris into river basins, leading to increased siltation, and in turn aggravating the flood situation. The electrical power generated by these dams will be consumed by urban elites elsewhere. It is ironic that these dam projects, while adversely impacting people's access to their river commons, claim to be climate change solutions in the guise of renewable and green energy, and

have already made huge profits by fraudulently claiming CDM (clean development mechanism) status. In 2009, the CAG had warned the government of Uttarakhand that the "potential cumulative effect of multiple run-of-the-river projects can turn out to be environmentally damaging". Like many other warnings by environmentalists and local community groups in the past, this was also ignored. And now we are facing one of the biggest disasters that the country has seen in decades.

The central government of India and various state governments, including the government of Uttarakhand, have prepared action plans for combating climate change. Any such plan ought to include the establishment of a disaster-prediction and warning mechanism. The Uttarakhand government has taken no measures to prepare for this kind of eventuality, though it has paid lip service to climate action plans over the last three years. In the present case, the IMD issued inadequate warning, which was disregarded by the state government. An urgent prior warning could have ensured that pilgrims don't move forward and retreat to relative safety, that locals reduce their exposure to risk to the extent possible. Thousands of pilgrims from different states, locals, workers in hotels and dharamshalas, and transport animals have been killed. Cars with people inside them were washed away. Those who have survived had to go without food for several days. Thousands are still stranded at different points, or in forests, and we are still counting the dead.

There has also been extensive devastation of local lives and the regional economy. Serious devastation has been reported from over 200 villages, so far. Innumerable locals, including agricultural workers, drowned in the raging waters or were submerged under mud and debris. Houses have collapsed or been washed away. Tourism and the local employment it generates have been hit indefinitely at the peak of the tourist season. Floods, landslides and debris have devastated agriculture along the rivers. Irrespective of whether these extreme rains are due to climate change or not, this is what a climate change world in the Himalayas looks like. This devastation is a glimpse into a climate uncertain future.

We see this tragedy as a result of cumulative and widespread injustice and wrongdoing: not only against the Himalayan environment, but also against mountain communities whose survival depends on that environment. This tragedy is also a crime, because our policy makers and administrators are also part of the larger climate injustice at a global scale that threatens, displaces and kills the marginal and the poor everywhere. On another plane, they

simply let it happen. We believe that adaptation to disasters does not just mean desperate rescue work during and after the event, but also reducing vulnerability and risk before. Effective adaptation involves a series of measures that need to be adopted on a war footing. The sustainable development of a hill economy, and equity – not profit for a few – should be at its core.

India Climate Justice demands:

- That the governments at the central and state level retreat to a low carbon pathway of development that has equity, decent employment, and sustainability at its core.
- That the planning and construction of dams in the entire Indian Himalayas be reviewed, and all construction be halted until such a review is carried out.
- That the use of explosives in all such infrastructure development works is completely stopped.
- That, given the likelihood of extreme rainfall events and other climate extremes in the future, extensive and sub-regional warning systems are put in place urgently across all the Himalayan states, the coastal areas and beyond.
- That a proper assessment of the carrying capacity of specific ecosystems is carried out.
- That the eco-sensitive zone measures be implemented from Gaumukh to Uttarkashi and eco-sensitive zones be established in other river valleys.
- That a river regulation zone be enforced such that no permanent structures are allowed to be constructed within 100 metres of any river.
- That the residents and their organizations are thoroughly consulted in a democratic plan on climate change, in the revival of the local hill economy, and the generation of decent employment.
- That all working people be compensated for the loss of life and livelihood, and that urgent plans are put in place for the revival of local livelihoods and agriculture.
- That the central government learn from the Uttarakhand catastrophe to put in place prior adaptation measures not just for the mountainous regions but beyond, for coastal and the drought-prone interiors as well.

Endorsing Organizations

All India Forum of Forest Movements; Pairvi; Beyond Copenhagen; South Asia Network of Dams, Rivers and People; National Alliance of People's Movements; Himalaya Niti Abhiyan; New Trade Union Initiative; All-India Union of Forest Working People; Chintan; Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha; Toxics Watch Alliance; Nadi Ghati Morcha, Chhattisgarh; Rural Volunteers Centre, Assam; Vettiver Collective, Chennai; Himal Prakriti, Uttarakhand; Maati, Uttarakhand; Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti; River Basin Friends (NE); India Youth Climate Network; Intercultural Resources; Kabani, Kerala; Human Rights Forum, Andhra Pradesh; National Cyclists Union, India; Equations; Posco Pratirodh Solidarity, Delhi; Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives; Science for Society, Bihar; Nagarik Mancha; SADED; JJBA, Jharkhand; BIRSA; Jharkhand Mines Area Coordination Committee; Adivasi Mulvasi Astitva Raksha Manch; National Adivasi Alliance; Bank Information Centre; Focus on the Global South; Jatiyo Sramik Jote, Dhaka; Jharkhand Jungle Bachao Andolan; People's Union for Democratic Rights; All India Students Association; All India Progressive Women's Association

Individuals

Badri Raina, Kamal Mahendroo, Benny Kuruvilla, Subrat Sahu, Arun Bidani, Saurav Shome, Amitava Guha
India Climate Justice is a collective comprising social movements, trade unions, other organizations and individuals. It was formed in 2009 to respond to the growing climate crisis, from a perspective of justice and equity.

India Climate Justice

The untold story from Uttarakhand

Ravi Chopra

It is one week since Uttarakhand's worst disaster in living memory. Flash floods resulting from extremely intense rainfall swept away mountainsides, villages and towns, thousands of people, animals, agricultural fields, irrigation canals, domestic water sources, dams, roads, bridges, and buildings — anything that stood in the way.

A week later, media attention remains riveted on the efforts to rescue tens of thousands of pilgrims and tourists visiting the shrines in the uppermost reaches of Uttarakhand's sacred rivers. But the deluge spread far beyond the Char Dhams — Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath — to cover the entire State. The catchments of many smaller rivers also witnessed flash floods but the media has yet to report on the destruction there. Eyewitness accounts being gathered by official agencies and voluntary organisations have reported devastation from more than 200 villages so far and more affected villages are being reported every day. Villagers whose homes, lands and animals have been swept away by the floods are in a state of shock trying to imagine day-to-day survival without their basic livelihood assets.

The national media's focus on the plight of tourists has grossly distorted the true nature of the tragedy even in the Char Dham area. It has not reported on the fate of the thousands — almost all male — who come from the villages in these valleys (and elsewhere) to earn a major part of their families' annual income on the yatra routes during

the tourist season. They help run the dhabas that line the entire 14 km trek route from GauriKund to Kedarnath; they sell raincoats, umbrellas, canes, walking sticks, soft drinks, water bottles, home-made snacks and other supplies. On their backs, they carry children, the old, the infirm and tourists who are simply unfit and out of shape to walk the entire route. They run along the path with their ponies or horses carrying yatris.

Local residents tell of village after village in the Mandakini valley below Kedarnath resounding with wails from homes whose boys and men have not yet returned and are now feared dead. One village near Guptkashi alone counts 78 missing.

The tragedy of the families dependent on religious tourism for much of their annual income is compounded by the fact that the yatra season is over for the year, and is unlikely to resume even next year given the destruction of the roads and bridges in the upper reaches. Several thousand Char Dham valley families will now fall below the poverty line. Till the revival of the yatra, what will be the alternative sources of employment for the newly unemployed? Most likely we will see increased male outmigration from the region.

Last week's disaster not only spelt doom for thousands of household economies but also dealt a grievous blow to Uttarakhand's lucrative religious tourism industry. With the media focus almost exclusively on the fate of pilgrims, the scenes of the deluge and its aftermath will linger

on in public memory, making the revival of tourism doubtful in the foreseeable future. The abject failure of the State government, political leaders and the administration is therefore likely to impoverish the State coffers too.

The scale of participation in the *kaanwar* festival that starts in July — when about a million people throng to the banks of the Ganga at Haridwar over a couple of weeks and take back Gangajal to their homes — will be revealing. The pressure on the State government will continue through September when the Nanda Devi Raj Jaat (yatra), a once-in-12-years event, is scheduled. A detailed discussion on the future of Uttarakhand's tourism industry is not possible here but it is clear that it requires a radical overhaul. With the ineptness of the State government now fully exposed, new policies for the revival of tourism in Uttarakhand must follow an open debate.

The impact of the floods on Uttarakhand's tourism leads to larger questions of what kind of development Himalayan States should pursue. Before delving into that, it is important to understand the nature of the rainfall that deluged the State. Already several voices are arguing that the deluge is a random, 'freak' event. Odisha's super cyclone in 1999, torrential rains in Mumbai in 2005, and now the Uttarakhand downpour constitute three clear weather related events in less than 15 years, each causing massive destruction or dislocation in India. These can hardly be called 'freak' events.

Several reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have repeatedly warned that extreme weather incidents will become more frequent with global warming. We are already riding the global warming curve. We will have to take into account the likelihood of more frequent extreme weather events when planning for development, especially in the fragile Himalayan region where crumbling mountains become murderous.

In the 1990s, when the demand for a separate State gained momentum, at conferences, meetings, workshops and seminars, Uttarakhandi people repeatedly described the special character of the region. Consciousness created by the pioneering Chipko Andolan raised the hopes of village women that their new State would pursue a green development path, where denuded slopes would be reforested, where fuel wood and fodder would be plentiful in their own village forests, where community ownership of these forests would provide their men with forest products-based employment near their villages instead of forcing them to migrate to the plains, where afforestation and watershed development would revive their dry springs and dying rain-fed rivers, and where the scourge of drunken, violent men would be overcome.

Year after year — in cities, towns and villages — they led demonstrations demanding a mountain state of their own. Theirs was a vision of development that would first enhance the human, social and natural capital of the State. Recalling the tremendous worldwide impact of the Chipko movement, Uttarakhandi women dreamed of setting yet another

example for the world of what people-centric development could look like.

But in the 13 years after statehood, the leadership of the State has succumbed to the conventional model of development with its familiar and single-minded goal of creating monetary wealth. With utter disregard for the State's mountain character and its delicate ecosystems, successive governments have blindly pushed roads, dams, tunnels, bridges and unsafe buildings even in the most fragile regions.

In the process, denuded mountains have remained deforested, roads designed to minimise expenditure rather than enhance safety have endangered human lives, tunnels blasted into mountainsides have further weakened the fragile slopes and dried up springs, ill-conceived hydropower projects have destroyed rivers and their ecosystems, and hotels and land developers have encroached on river banks.

Yes, wealth has been generated but the beneficiaries are very few — mainly in the towns and cities of the southern *terai* plains and valleys where production investments have concentrated. In the mountain villages, agricultural production has shrivelled, women still trudge the mountain slopes in search of fodder, fuel wood and water, and entire families wait longingly for an opportunity to escape to the plains.

Last week's floods have sounded an alarm bell. To pursue development without concern for the fragile Himalayan environment is to invite disaster. Eco-sensitive development may mean a slower monetary growth rate but a more sustainable and equitable one.

- *The HINDU*

(Continued from Page 6)

to them? What we are doing under their watch, here 'their' means the ruling elite of rich countries, is re-enslaving ourselves, re-creating the old imperial relations.

Basically, it is a fight for our soul, our freedom to determine our fate. The rupee slide is exposing as nothing else our vulnerability, the vulnerability of our economy. Our ruling elite, instead of deciding to reduce, end this vulnerability, is bent upon adding to it. The people of this country have to warn the rulers that it will not allow their rich — the rich of the rich countries — to rob our poor via our rich, helped and egged on by our government. This has to end and we have to regain our freedom. The road block will be our rich, our government flattened corporate sector, our rulers. But they can be taken care of by our masses, our people. Our people will have to decide that they will not buy foreign goods, not invest in the private corporate sector, not get tempted by the ads and buy more than required of any goods. We will have to reinvent, re-popularize the instrument of boycott, that we used during the freedom movement. The state is pathologically powerful enough to help our rich, but is shamefully supine to prostrate itself for the glory of the rich. No more. We the people of India are the rulers, not its creation — the state.

—Gunesht Prasad

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Let us build a new India

The UPA Government recently celebrated the completion of its nine years. It was highlighted that this government has the distinction of the longest tenure since 1977. If the period of Emergency is not counted in the tenure of Indira Gandhi (1966-77), soon Manmohan Singh will become the longest serving prime minister of independent India after Jawahar Lal Nehru. It is an irony that the most corrupt and anti-people government of India is going to complete its second term and there has been no serious political challenge to it. It is also ironic that the person democratically ruling over the country for the second longest term is the one who does not have an independent personality or ideology, who has not been able to win a single direct election and who can not deliver a good speech in public meetings. His Job is to implement policies of World Bank-IMF-USA in India. He can be reasonably called their agent.

This serious and pitiable state of affairs has arisen due to the decay of Indian politics. All the mainstream parties have become almost similar. There is not much difference in their policies, character and style of functioning. All of them are promoting the policies of capitalist globalization. The present political system has no real alternative. Not only BJP but other parties and leaders such as Nitish Kumar, Jaylalitha, Mayawati, Navin Patnaik, Akhilesh Yadav, Omar Abdullah have also disappointed the nation. The two personalities being projected as future prime minister of India, Rahul Gandhi and

Narendra Modi, do not have any new vision. If elected, both will serve the interest of the business corporations and US imperialism, not the Indian people. Their development models are almost the same, the one which has already played havoc with the nation and its people. It is also clear that mere new blood in politics will not make any difference. What is needed is a new and radical vision, a leadership emerging from the people and dedicated to the people, and a mass movement for change.

Also needed is a new political culture and new style of functioning. Politics of existing mainstream parties is conducted from the top, it is detached and away from the people, and full with opportunism, dynasties and defection. It is devoid of any values or principles. These parties and their leaders use money, (mostly black money), muscle, caste and communalism to win elections. That is why the grip of capitalists and criminals over politics is increasing. It has become a vicious circle. Candidates spend crores of rupees in elections. When they get elected they try to earn many times more or favour those who have invested money in their elections. Elections have become a business and a gamble. Without breaking this vicious circle, Indian politics cannot deliver anything good. This vicious circle can be broken only with the mobilization of the masses, their organized power and big movements dedicated for change.

The great downfall of Indian Politics is indicated by a recent example. On the occasion of

Parshuram Jayanti, all the political parties of Uttar Pradesh, the BSP, SP, BJP and Congress, organized grand Brahmin conferences. All the parties seemed to vie with each other to eulogize the Brahmin community. It is a pity, since BSP was originally established by Kanshiram as a movement against Brahminism and Manuism. Socialist Leader Ram Manohar Lohia was one of the chief exponents of the war against caste system.

The newer parties are no different. Loksatta Party was formed recently by an ex-IAS officer. One of its candidates in the recent Karnataka Assembly election wrote against dalit reservation on his Facebook page. He also expressed his opposition to certain IPC sections which criminalized cruelty against women. Another candidate of the party expressed her fascination for RSS. A third candidate praised Narendra Modi in her Facebook update. When the updates became matter of embarrassment for the party, its president Dr Jayprakash Narayan removed the first candidate and asked the other two candidates to remove the objectionable contents from their Facebook profile. Thus merely bringing together different people with different ideas cannot create new politics. Rather a mutually consistent progressive ideology is required. No revolution can take place without an ideology.

Same is the case with the anti-corruption movement and the party emerging out of it. Corruption is a serious problem. But corruption is actually a symptom of a grave

disease afflicting the society. We cannot treat a disease by merely treating its symptoms. It is really surprising that the leaders and the exponents of the movement never felt it necessary to discuss and debate the roots of corruption. They did not organize even a single seminar on the issue. They are yet to take a clear stand on the issues of class and gender inequality, caste system, globalization or modern development model.

The Rise of the Middle Class

The rise of middle class is a matter of discussion these days. It is said that they will play a decisive role in Indian politics in coming days. The middle class has shown its strength in the anti-corruption movement and surge against 16 December gang rape incident in Delhi. Samajwadi Jan Parishad welcomes this new consciousness of the middle class. It indicates that the people are finally getting disillusioned with globalization. The crisis is getting so much widespread that even the middle class cannot remain silent and indifferent and they hit the streets.

SJP has maintained that a big revolutionary change cannot happen without the participation of the middle class. This class will be a source of many dedicated comrades and supporters. But few facts have to be kept in mind in this regard:

Firstly, the class that is labeled as middle class is actually not in the middle of the population. 75% of the country's population lies below it. Hence statistically speaking, this middle class is actually a part of the upper class.

Secondly, it is a 'virtual' middle class and largely dependent on

Internet for its mobilization. But 90% of Indian population is still outside the reach of Internet. The discussion on Internet has its own limitations. 95% of these discussions are in English. They are often full with caste and class prejudices. Still this new medium of communication has its own importance among the youth, and it should be used keeping in mind these limitations.

Thirdly, rise of middle class is mostly visible in the Metropolitan cities. Although the population of metropolitan cities has swelled considerably in recent times, but still it constitutes less than 10% of the country's population. The conditions, circumstances and issues in the metropolitan areas, middle cities, small cities, towns, villages and tribal areas are quite different.

Only if the rising consciousness of the middle class aligns itself with the concerns and problems of farmers, workers, tribals, dalits and poor, it can serve as an agent of change. Today possibility of such a thing to happen is quite high but conscious effort is required. Further it is also clear that the major forces of change lie in the organization and struggles of the havenots, dalits, poor and other depressed classes. In absence of these forces the change will be incomplete and superficial.

Human Face of Globalization is not Possible

Recently UPA has started a chain of propaganda in the name of 'Bharat Nirman'. It reminds us of a similar campaign of 'India Shining' by NDA government. Perhaps the UPA government is destined to a similar fate.

Central Government is projecting MNREGA, ICDS, Kasturba Kanya

Vidyalayas and certain laws like Right to Education, Forest Rights Act, Right to Information Act, Domestic Violence Act and proposed Food Security Bill as its achievements. These programs and the laws may have achieved something. But even those who conceptualized and campaigned for them are getting disillusioned. This is indicated by the recent resignation of Aruna Roy from National Advisory Council headed by Sonia Gandhi. In fact, the problem is that the basic policies of the government are severely anti-people. The faulty development model combined with the capitalist globalization has promoted inequality, impoverishment, malnutrition, unemployment, inflation and displacement, besides destroying the environment. It has also taken the corruption to a new height. The ill effects of the LPG policies are almost clear after the experience of the last two decades. Still the Government of India has refused to learn any lesson and is progressing on the suicidal path. To cover the ill effects of these policies and to give a human face to globalization such programs were launched. But the damage is so high that such small measures could provide no relief. It is very obvious that the capitalist globalization cannot have any human face. Change in the basic policy of globalization is the only solution.

Capitalist Globalization and the development promoted by it is causing havoc to the lives of the people. The people are forced to struggle for their existence. Farmers are forced to commit suicide due to crisis in agriculture. People are fighting at Naiyamgiri, POSCO, Narmada Valley, Kundankulam, Lower Suktal, Chutka, Manesar and many more places. The Governments

are also supporting the companies to exploit the workers and crush them. The greatest evidence is the recent incident at Maruti Factory. The impact of so called labor reforms, outsourcing and contracting is that the real wages have actually decreased rather than increasing. The case of MNREGA is a typical example where the government itself is paying less than the statutory minimum wages. This is the real face of capitalism.

Ironically the ruling class of India which includes the leaders of the major national parties, bureaucrats and intellectuals are running after capitalism at such time when the countries lying at the top of the capitalism themselves are facing severe crises. The crisis that started in USA has now gripped Europe. Millions of people are protesting in these countries against the system. Innovative movements like 'Occupy Wall Street' are taking place. The Latin American countries that were once considered as backyard of USA are today protesting against globalization and American imperialism. The new experiments of socialism are taking place there. The important point here is that such changes are coming through ballot, not the bullet. Various ex-guerrilla leaders have today become elected members of the Government and are implementing policies in favor of the people. There may be some lacunas in the Latin American Model and due to differences in the circumstances, it cannot be replicated easily in other countries. But the important thing is that they raised new hopes and struggle for alternative to capitalism has gained new strength.

The Limitation of Democratic Revolutions

There were successful uprisings

against dictators in Arab Countries like Tunisia and Egypt in recent times. But the newly elected government in Egypt is also clashing with the people. There has also been news of clash from Turkey. The most unfortunate condition prevails in South Africa where a number of mine workers were killed recently by the police. South Africa got its independence after a long struggle against apartheid. But situation remained almost the same even after independence. Inequality, poverty and exploitation still prevail in South Africa.

The condition of Bangladesh is not very different. The factories manufacturing apparels for export are having accidents one after the other, killing hundreds and thousands of workers. The working conditions in these factories are very pathetic. In order to provide cheap goods to European countries and America the companies are involved in severe inhuman exploitation of the workers. In Bangladesh in the form of Sahbad Movement the Youth is rising against fundamentalist forces. They are demanding to put the convicts of 1971 Mukti Sangram to trial. But on the other side the common poor people of Bangladesh are showing support for Jamaye Islami. Awami Leag, the party in power in Bangladesh is like Indian National Congress of India. Both pretend to be a secular, but are surrounded by corruption and their economic policies are increasing the misery of the people.

Most of the South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Nepal, Myanmar) is facing a similar dilemma. People fight for independence, they revolt against dictators, they remove anti-people governments, but still

their miseries do not end. In such circumstances, they sometimes side with reactionary and fundamentalist forces.

In fact, democratic revolutions are important, and a step forward, but they are not enough. Along with these democratic revolutions, the socio-economic structure and development model must also change. Then only the people will be liberated from misery and democracy will get stabilized. To bring such a change the revolution has to fight against the forces of globalization and imperialism. The governments of Bangladesh, South Africa or India instead of opposing these forces act as their agents.

Socio-Religious Reform Movements

The rise of fundamentalism at the global level can also be seen in this context. When Western culture, capitalist globalisation and imperialism hurt the people, their identity and their culture, and progressive ideology and movements fail to provide a way out, then people seek refuge in religion and tradition. Fundamentalist forces use this opportunity. These forces are promoted by the vested interests, but it is also a failure of the progressive movements.

For a long time, the leftist groups have criticized and rejected religion considering it reactionary. Something like religion is a need of the human society and its role is not always reactionary. Human beings cannot cut themselves from their tradition. That is why religion, tradition and culture should not be outrightly opposed, but their progressive elements and streams should be encouraged. An attempt is needed to purge them

from hypocrisy, superstitions, obscurantism, communalism and inequalities.

In other words, today there is a need for a socio-religious reform moment which will be part of the wider overall change.

Women and Caste

The incident of gang rape of a young lady in Delhi on 16 December 2012 gave rise to a new awareness on issues of crime against women and gender discrimination. Samajwadi Jan Parishad welcomes this. Perhaps for the first time women's issues have become part of the mainstream discourse. But the feminist movement has to mobilize and involve women at the lower stratum of the society and join forces with the other movements of the poor and oppressed to carry forward this movement.

This is also true of the movements of Dalit and backward castes. Caste system is becoming more entrenched rather than weakening. Caste atrocities continue even today. The difference is that now depressed castes are organizing themselves (individually, rather than collectively) to bargain for electoral tickets and posts in governments or at best reservation for their caste. When such depressed caste leaders reach the top, they imitate Dvija leaders in amassing wealth, living a luxurious life, self-glorification and personality cult. Their style of functioning is no different.

The original idea of Dalits, backwards, minorities, poor and women joining forces to break the stranglehold of the Brahminical system and the caste system has been lost somewhere. There is a need to revive it and to strengthen

a holistic movement to build a new egalitarian society.

Language Question

Samajwadi Jan Parishad supports the six months long agitation by Shyam Rudra Pathak to demand that the High Courts and the Supreme Court function in Indian languages. It is shameful that after 66 years of independence, a foreign language, language of our masters, is still ruling our country. The dominance of English has increased further in recent times. That is a cause of concern. Samajwadi Jan Parishad believes that English should be replaced by Indian languages, including those called dialects, the languages people really speak. Then only there will be true participation and empowerment of people and meaningful education. There are many movements and campaigns for recognition and promotion of these local languages and dialects. SJP calls these groups to come together to strive to build a new India.

The privatization and commercialization of education, health and water has played havoc in the lives of the people. The opening of each and every aspect of our lives to the global market has caused grave problems and distortions. The IPL fixing scam is a recent example. Sports, education, knowledge, health, social service, religion, politics, nature, all are becoming victims of the forces of profiteering. People are fighting against them at various places and levels, but it is high time that they struggle jointly against the capitalist globalization.

The Time Is Now

Samajwadi Jan Parishad believes that this is a delicate and

crucial moment for our country as well as the world. The crisis in capitalist civilization and the subsequent disillusionment has created an opportunity for working towards a new, better and egalitarian society. There are two important requirements for using this opportunity. One, clarity of thoughts and direction of the alternative: Due to the lack of the ideological clarity and a clear vision, many big movements have deviated from their goals and disintegrated. Secondly, all people's struggles, organizations, campaigns, groups and individuals should join together to build an all-India movement. They are agitating on different issues or campaigning or doing constructive work. If they want their goals to be achieved, then they have to join forces to create a new system.

In the context of India, drawing inspiration from our independence movement, but at the same time going ahead of it, we have to launch another sort of independence movement, so that a new India can be built. This new India will be based on a new development model and values of equality, liberty, simplicity, democracy, diversity, plurality and decentralization. This struggle will necessarily be multi-dimensional, involve the participation of diverse groups at the grass root level, and will be broadly non-violent and democratic. Samajwadi Jan Parishad calls upon all patriotic and humanitarian individuals and groups to join together towards this goal.

(Political Resolution adopted at the National Conference of Samajwadi Jan Parishad, Varanasi, 11-12 June 2013)

Modi virsus Rahul ?

Thomas Kocherry,

BJP is projecting Modi and Congress is projecting Rahul as their leaders. As far as the majority of the people are concerned what is the difference? As far as the Globalization and Capitalism are concerned both are in the same boat. Both are competing with each other on the issue of free movement of Capital to make profit at the expense of the vast majority, who do not have the wherewithal to meet the basic needs of decent life. There is no social justice and distributive justice in India. The Globalization is organically linked with corruption amounting to lakhs and lakhs of crores of rupees. There is no ethics. Both are trying growth model that depletes Natural Resources. Even after 73 years since the Independence, both are not capable of bringing about Land Reforms as envisaged by the Indian Constitution.

What is the difference? Congress is accusing BJP that it is communal. BJP is playing the card that it is nationalist and belonging to the majority religion - Hinduism. The two outstanding examples used against each other by Rahul party and Modi party are: the killing of Muslims after Godhra and the killing of Sikhs after Indira Gandhi's murder. Both are in the same soup. Directly or indirectly both are playing majority card and at the same time trying to appease the minorities.

On the other hand fundamentalism is on the rise in all the three religions - Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. All the three religions are using ritualism and dogmas to appease the majority in their respective domains. They are bothered about quantity rather than quality. The radicalism

and prophetic character in each religion is given way to the ritualism and dogmas in each religion. The history of Islam and Christianity shows how they murdered the opponents. However, the majority communalism is more dangerous than minority communalisms.

What we need today in India is an inclusive economy and development. That means true land reforms,

education for all, water for all, health for all, houses for all, as a mandate from the Indian Constitution. We have to rise above seven deadly sins as earmarked by the Mahatma:

“Wealth without work
Pleasure without conscience
Science without humanity
Knowledge without character
Politics without principle
Commerce without morality
Worship without sacrifice.”

(Continued from Page 5)

them are cumulatively affecting our domestic economy and prices and the common man is paying in real terms by foregoing his opportunities

of wealth, health, education and future of progeny. Sooner we realise this and reformulate our policies, the better.

Indian Socialists In dialogue with Gandhi and Ambedkar

by
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