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The year that was

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On

Understanding Indian Muslims

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Secularisation Process in Punjab Politics

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Anna Domini 2014 which we have just packed off into history became Narendra Modi's year the day he kicked the Congress out of power and led his 282-member strong majority party, the BJP, into the Lok Sabha chamber to head a new government. His proclaimed agenda was Development and Development alone. Seven months into office, the political situation in the country, as we kick in the New Year, shows that the Prime Minister can claim only the first three months of the outgoing year as his. The last few months of the year were certainly not his. During this period, his development agenda had been hijacked, and new words heard long long ago but forgotten came to resonate across the nation. Conversion, forced conversion, reconversion, and *ghar wapasi* were the new words bandied about, while cities like Meerut, Sitapur and Lucknow allotted land to facilitate construction of temples for Nathuram Godse to celebrate his "martyrdom". Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated for the second time as Godse was hailed as a nationalist patriot. Modi remained a silent spectator along the sidelines, genuinely nursing the belief that encouragement of Hindutva would facilitate the success of his declared

consensual doctrine of "sabka saath sabka vikas".

Modi could spout the development agenda day in and day out, but his mentor, the RSS, and his party the BJP, and his admirers and supporters committed to the promotion of Hindutva - the vast and numerically strong saffron parivar, have their own agenda. This agenda has the "conversion" of India from being "secular, socialist, democratic" republic into a Hindu Rashtra (nation). One had expected the public articulation and promotion of Hindutva campaign immediately after Modi took over, and the absence of any signs in that direction misled the country into believing that Modi was keeping the saffron flock in check. That belief has faded with the RSS pushing Modi into the background, leaving him to promote relatively mundane campaigns like Make in India, Jan Dhan Yojana, Swachh Bharat and modernization to his heart's content.

The Prime Minister has attracted a lot of flak for maintaining a studied silence on the conversion issue. But there has been a saving grace for him. Thanks to the BJP's numerical strength, 282 members in a House

Between the lines

Communal Polarisation in J & K

Kuldip Nayar

of 543, reinforced by the addition of alliance members raising the NDA tally to a level just short of 350, he has parliament eating out of his hands. On the flip side, his silence on the conversion and other Hindutva issues has caught his government at its most vulnerable in the Rajya Sabha which was paralyzed for nearly a week as the year ended.

Consistent with the RSS philosophy of conversions, the BJP raised slogans demanding an anti-conversion law in support of their charge that Muslims were forcing Hindus and Christians to embrace Islam. To a lesser degree, Christians too are at the receiving end of this charge. The demand for anti-conversion legislation covers both Muslims and Christians. Home Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj have suggested that the legislation should be given across the board support. The rationale for such a legislation has been laid down by the RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat at a public rally in West Bengal. This is what he is quoted in newspaper reports as saying: "We are trying to create a strong Hindu society. Those who have strayed, they have not gone on their own. They have been lured and forcibly taken away. When the thief is being caught and my property recovered, when I am taking back my own property, what is new in it?" To put it simply, what Bhagwat is saying that the *ghar wapasi* programme only involves the re-conversion of Hindus who were forcibly converted to Islam and Christianity. Sounds reasonable and fair, but is loaded with political, social, economic and sociological implications. The *ghar wapasi* is bound to stir a hornets' nest and

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It was not plebiscite, as the outgoing Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah had cautioned before the polling. Yet the Jammu and Kashmir election very much tilted towards the People's Democratic Party (PDP) which reminded the Valley of autonomy, the kernel of the plebiscite demand.

The PDP, which has emerged the largest party with 28 seats, said during the election campaign that it would refurbish the state's identity which, according to it, had been diluted by the ruling National Conference. Perhaps this paid dividends.

Unfortunately, the State which has been an example of secularism for the rest of the country has been somewhat polarized. The PDP won in the Muslim-majority Valley. However, the most blame is that of the BJP. It has tried its best to polarise the society. It's hush-hush campaign that the State's integration meant little when the Hindus had no say in the affairs of governance. So electrifying has been the result that the party has jumped from 11 seats in the last election in 2008 to 25 seats.

It is obvious that the polarization in the State has changed the complexion. Jammu has become a base of Hindus and the Valley that of Muslims. Incidentally, the BJP did not get a single seat as predicted by Omar Abdullah, although it has increased its vote share.

The problem is not new. By electing the Muslims from the Valley, the Kashmiris enjoy a vicarious satisfaction of being separate from the rest of India. The candidates who sustain this illusion get the support. However, this is nothing new.

The National Conference, founded by Sheikh Abdullah, a popular leader in Kashmiri even when it was princely state, disseminated this idea when the state integrated with India after the lapse of British paramountcy in 1947. Maharaja Hari Singh, the Hindu ruler had the opinion to stay independent or join either India or Pakistan. He preferred to stay independent.

I have no doubt that Jammu and Kashmir, a Muslim majority state, would have come to Pakistan if it had been patient. The Maharaja declared independence and entered into a standstill agreement with Pakistan. India refused to follow suit because it appeared to harbour some other ideas.

Impatient Pakistan sent troops followed by the regular forces to take over the Valley by force. The Maharaja sought India's military support to ward off the Pakistan onslaught. The then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru refused to extend any help until the State acceded to India.

The Maharaja had no alternative except to signing the instrument of

accession. The Indian forces flew to Srinagar at the nick of time because the Pakistani troops were almost in the precinct of airport. Had the Pakistani forces not indulged in looting and delayed their departure from Baramulla so as to arrive in Srinagar before the Indian forces, the history of Kashmir would have been different.

The integration of Kashmir with India was in the hurried circumstances, although, Sheikh Abdullah was fully behind it. Nehru promised that the wishes of the people would be ascertained after the things had settled down. That eventuality never came because of changes in the global picture. Pakistan which was claiming Kashmir joined military pacts of the West and accepted weapons from it. Those were the days of the Cold War. The Pakistan's action was taken as a step towards joining the Western bloc.

Nehru said at that time that his promise to ascertain the wishes of the people of Kashmir did not hold good because of the induction of weapons by the West. The Pakistan's government blames Nehru for going back on his promise but its acceptance of weapons by the Western bloc changed the situation and diluted the Pakistan's claim.

The choice to join either India or Pakistan held the ground for decades. For some time the Kashmiris have raised the standard of independence (Azadi) a sovereign country of their own. How a land-locked state would keep its freedom intact without reaching an understanding either with India or Pakistan for a passage with the outside world is beyond comprehension. Yet azadi is what has swept the Kashmiris

off their feet. Pakistan, which was once unequivocally opposed to the proposal, has now shed its objection. Its expectation is that the Azad Kashmir would ultimately join their co-religionists, the Muslims, in Pakistan.

Whatever the twist of history, the fact is that India cannot hand over Kashmir to Pakistan, nor can Pakistan take Kashmir forcibly from India. The two have to reach a peaceful settlement for the betterment of the people and for normalization in the region. They have fought three wars and a mini one at Kargil. Both countries are also nuclear powers. But there is no end of hatred. No doubt, several futile attempts have been made to sort out the problem. The reason is that Pakistan considers Kashmir an unfinished task of partition while the state has integrated with India legally.

All the formulas and proposals have failed to produce a solution because the parties concerned are not really for an agreement but for the prevalence of their ideas.

The two countries have wasted some sixty seven years in finding a solution to the dispute over Kashmir. Both can waste another 67 years if they do not come down from the pedestal of rigidity on which they continue to sit.

Pakistan has brought in the factor of religion and has made the problem more intractable. The proposal that the Hindu majority Jammu joins India and the Muslim majority Valley Pakistan may reopen the wounds of partition.

There cannot be one-sided solution. There will have to be

consensus. There can be a solution on the basis of British Cabinet Mission plan which envisaged the retention of basic of partition and still keeping India together. Ultimately, the partition formula came to prevail.

A new proposal, which I suggest is that defence and foreign affairs of Kashmir under India should vest in New Delhi and likewise defence and foreign affairs of Kashmir under Pakistan with Islamabad. The rest of the subjects should be transferred to the Kashmiris and the border between the two Kashmiris should be abolished. This maybe will initiate a new relationship, devoid of mistrust and hostility.

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vitiating the politics and political atmosphere of secular India. We are sure that Modi is aware of this danger. He had kept saffron bodies like the VHP and Bajrang Bali at arms length in Gujarat as chief minister. Why is he allowing temples to be built for Gandhiji's assassin? Why is he allowing the RSS to have its way? If he wants to be on the same page as the RSS, it can be only at the cost of and the sacrifice of India's cherished goals of secularism, socialism, democracy and human rights. He must put an immediate end to the conversion campaigns in all their different forms.

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Jammu & Kashmir demands statesmanship

Rajindar Sachar

The exercise of forming the government in J&K is posing a delicate situation as no single party can form the government on its own. B.J.P. for all its broad developmental propaganda totally failed to make any dent except in Jammu where it got a 93% of votes polled as against Kashmir where it got miserable 4% and Ladakh even where Buddhists are in large numbers its share in only 2.39%. B.J.P. has got out of total 87 seats 25 seats in Jammu region but nil in Kashmir region.

So here is the unfortunate situation where no party has not only got a majority but the two regions of J & K have voted sharply differently. P.D.P. with 28 seats has to have coalition with other parties like National Conference (15) and Congress (12). But there is too much personality clashes amongst the leaders of these parties to obtain workable solution. That apart, they will be falling over with each other to retain their support in Kashmir valley with the resultant absence of participation from Jammu, the majority Hindu area.

Historically J & K represents the enviable civilization and culture of both Hinduism and Islam for centuries. Which place is so holy and fortunate enough to have the holy strand of Hair of Prophet of Islam and at the same time of Shiv Linga of Hindus which is an occasion for Amar Nath yatra every year, temple dedicated to Shankracharya, the greatest exponent of Hinduism. With all this complex situation a workable solution can only be a coalition of PDP and BJP (however distasteful

for people like me who believe the BJP policy of developmental propaganda is a chimera and its inability to openly condemn the ugly communal activities of Mohan Bhagwat and his disciples who are bent on spreading communal poison). But notwithstanding my personal views, the peculiar circumstances of Kashmir require a special strategy.

It is for this purpose that the odd suggestion of BJP/PDP coalition in Jammu & Kashmir may be the better solution for avoiding Governor's role. In this the personality of PDP leader Mufti Mohammed Sayyad is very important as he has worked with BJP in NDA Government in 1990.

I believe talks are going on between National Conference and BJP with efforts to rope in some independents. But this combination will hurt the sentiments of Kashmir, who have thrown out National Conference. Of course B.J.P. is trying its best at this solution because it hopes that it will get its Chief Minister from Jammu Region, who will inevitably be a Hindu. I believe this scenario is the most dangerous for J & K and will make any permanent solution of J & K impossible. I have no hesitation in saying that both on principle and practical politics Chief Minister of J & K has to be from Kashmir region and a Muslim. This is not communalism but appreciation of ground reality of the historical peculiar situation of J & K. [In similar situation in pre-independence in Punjab General

elections 1946, Congress had the largest number in coalition but the Prime Minister (as he was then called in States) was the Muslim Unionist Party leader Khizar Hayhat Khan.] B.J.P. / P.D.P. combine will bring a representative character and will be a source for removing misunderstanding between the two regions. Of course before P.D.P. and B.J.P. can enter into a pact some absolute pre-conditions will have to be accepted by B.J.P. which uptill now with its small-minded partisan politics has adopted policies which are not permissible under our Constitution, namely abrogation of Article 370. The result has been its total alienation in the valley. The results clearly show that sentiment still prevails – notwithstanding Modi's repetitive visits to the valley with his trumpet of development programme and the sly avoiding of mention of Article 370 it still brought a zero result in the valley. B.J.P. must understand that the dignity and self-respect of the people of valley of Kashmir is tied to the non-abrogation of Article 370. It is not as if Article 370 is the only exception. Article 371 provides for special responsibility of the Governor for establishment of a separate development for Saurashtra and Kutch (in Gujarat) and Vidarbha in Maharashtra for equitable allocation of funds for development of the area. No objection by BJP was ever raised even when Modi was the Chief Minister.

Article 371G introduced by Constitution (55th Amendment Act 1986) provides that no Act of parliament in respect of ownership

and transfer of land shall apply to the State of Mizoram unless the legislative Assembly of State of Mizoram by a resolution so decides. This provision is identical to Article 370 of the constitution regarding J & K. B.J.P. was a party to above amendment. Why does BJP apply double standard in the case of Muslim majority State of Jammu & Kashmir.

It needs to be appreciated that retention of Article 370 is a matter of self-respect and honour and assertion of its distinct identity for people of J&K. Cannot BJP, even when most of parties in J&K are desirous of finding a lasting solution, be statesman enough to give up its opposition to Article 370 – which no Kashmiri can possibly agree to abrogate.

It is true that if the communal activity of RSS and allied bodies going ahead with their lunatic activities of Ghar Vapasi, the silent collusion with Hindu Maha Sabha of praise of Godse, the murderer of Gandhiji are not strictly suppressed, Modi's efforts at coalition with PDP will be an impossibility.

B.J.P. must consider consequences of J & K not getting genuine elected majority of valley in the Jammu and Kashmir Government. This will spread further disillusionment. Notwithstanding that Army under electoral pressure on B.J.P. was quick enough to admit and take action against its army officers for false encounters. But B.J.P. Central government alone can give confidence to the people of J & K especially of the Kashmir valley that human rights violations by the State or the army will be severely dealt with. This can only be done by the coalition government of B.J.P./P.D.P. Is BJP especially Modi willing to show that statesmanship.

What is Good Governance?

D.K. Giri

The idea of good governance suddenly re-emerged into Indian public domain owing to a controversial announcement made by the present government to observe 25 December as a "Good governance day". Before we deal with the concept and practice of good governance, let us look at the needless controversy created during the Christmas celebration this year. The BJP "Think Tank", smart as it is assumed to be, faltered in declaring 25 December as good governance day. Their logic: they wanted to observe it on the birthday of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, by far their most popular leader in current times, who was also recently conferred the biggest award of the country "Bharat Ratna". The BJP government missed the point that 25 December is also the birth day of Jesus who, to the Christians, is their Lord, the Son of God. 'Christmas' on 25 December has become a universal celebration, across the religious communities. If BJP was little more imaginative and accommodative, they would have said, 25 December is also an auspicious day, as Lord Jesus was born that day; perhaps that would have been seen as them being not insensitive to a community of 24 million people although Christmas is a cosmopolitan religious festival. However, BJP not linking to the spirit of Christmas - that is love, joy, hope and faith - has shrouded their act in suspicion i.e., if they care for non-Indic religions at all. One heard the BJP spokesperson in national media, defending the decision by alluding to Christmas spirit. He said, "I envy my Christian brothers and sisters, as good governance day happens to be the Christmas day which is celebrated as love and service to fellow-human beings". But that was an afterthought, a

rationalisation. He also said, in service to humankind, there should be no holidays like soldiers on the borders, doctors on call, on policemen and women on law and order duty even on festive days. The confusion thus was created by the government circulars to schools, colleges and government departments to attend the office, plan some activities, later by making them optional, then withdrawing the orders etc.

The point here is that of multiculturalism or multi-religiously. If the BJP government treats other Godly days like Eid, Dussehra and Deepawali, etc. there is no issue. Secondly, if BJP government would have announced that, since 25 December is also the birthday of Jesus, the Son of God who sacrificed his life for others, we observe it as a good governance day, and pledge to sacrifice our time and resources for the welfare of others who are deprived and helpless that would have lifted the hearts of Christians. Some would see it as a continuum in the action-reaction, read conversion-reconversion saga. This is another debate on the fundamental right of citizens to faith; of course, how to exercise it is the question. I will desist from that debate here for now, and would focus on good governance; what it means and how we should practice it.

The idea of good governance gained currency in 1980s. Generally understood, the concept of good governance is a notion that it is a positive feature of political systems and bad governance is a problem that the countries need to overcome. Good governance consists of a list of good attributes of a government. For

the World Bank the characteristics of good governance are accountability, transparency, public sector efficiency, rule of law, and order in political interaction. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) adds participation, and equity to the list.

Thus, good governance has meant both the qualities of institutions and their capacities to deliver. Usually, the institution referred to in the context of good governance is the State. The State again is viewed in many ways. When the State serves personal or sectional interests, it is called a predatory State, and if the State is meant for the common good; it ensures equality, justice, is inclusive, transparent, it is called a developmental State. The features and the process that enable the State to transit from the predatory stage to developmental role constitute good governance. But, there are strong arguments against the State's capability to deliver development alone and to remain just, and neutral, etc. That is when a country needs other social, economic and political institutions to pitch in for development, and to secure societal values like equality, justice and inclusion, etc. Under such circumstances, the role of the State also changes; it rolls back and repositions itself. It becomes more supportive, facilitative rather than interventionist. So, the most universally accepted definition of good governance is to improve the State as a common-goods player, and to promote institutional pluralism in a decentralized as well as autonomous mode. Moreover, for good governance, constant generation of social capital based on trust, cooperation and solidarity etc. is necessary. Social capital leads to greater cooperation, social harmony, and peace in a society

There is, like anywhere else, growing awareness among

Indians about the concept of good governance. In any sector, business, civil society, multilevel governments, there is renewed emphasis on good governance. Indian traditionalists would argue that good governance is an age-old concept in India dating back to the famous treatise of 'Arthashastra', which laid down the fundamental principles and values to guide the rulers in making policies and decisions and putting them into action. The concept of 'Rajadharma' is invoked as a tradition of good governance. *Rajadharma* means that the fulfilment of their duties and responsibilities by rulers was of paramount importance to the stability and orderly development of the society and the happiness of the individuals in the state. *Rajadharma* was mentioned in the *Dhramashastra*, the Hindu Basic Law written 4th century BC. No wonder, the former prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee invoked *Rajadharma* while chiding Narendra Modi, then the Chief Minister of Gujarat soon after the communal violence in the state in 2002. Vajpayee had said, Modi should follow *Rajadharma* which suggests that the leader should treat all citizens as equals and should not discriminate one community against the other. It is so far so good with regard to good governance. But the context then was a king and his subjects. Now in a democracy, it is the voters and their representatives where it is not the benevolence or the righteousness of the ruler, it is the integrity of the institutions and fulfilment of governance objectives. It is not a virtue, but a necessity.

What are the elements of good governance in India today which is hugely diverse, hierarchical and unequal although it is seen to be spiritual with a spirit of accommodation? The first and foremost is the issue of justice. Whilst achieving equality may be a

kind of a tall order, delivering justice to minimise inequalities is doable. Justice again has three aspects in Indian context; one, equitable justice or justice before the law, which is equality in all areas of public life; second, distributive justice, each person to have access to resources, opportunities and benefits available in the country. It also means, the deprived and the marginalised will be brought into a level playing field through affirmative action, and the third, restorative justice, this is to correct the historical fault lines, whatever has gone wrong in society, environment and economy, etc. For instance, recognising various identities, respecting the dignity of dalits, tribals and backwards; arresting the mindless exploitation of natural resources, suppression of women, and neglect of children.

The second element would be growth and development. India has been a poor country with at least one third of her population which is over 300 million below the poverty line with less than one dollar a day. Some estimates would put the below poverty line population up to 50 per cent. So India needs a steady and high rate of growth to take its people out of poverty, invest in infrastructure, health and education, etc. So growth for India is life and stagnation may be death. But the nature of growth is debatable which influences good governance. In certain growth paradigm, only the strong and the wealthy benefit, many are left out of the growth process. In a speech on good governance, the former Bihar chief Minister, Nitish Kumar said, "growth is a tree whose fruits must be shared among all. The poor and the weak cannot be held back from picking the fruits of the tree of growth". He added, growth cannot be measured in terms of GDP alone, or reserves of foreign exchange, it has to be measured also

(Continued on Page 23)



August 5, 1928 – August 30, 2014

Balraj Puri was a political activist, a social worker, an academician, an author and a journalist. He started his public life as editor of a Urdu weekly in 1942 and participated in Quit India and Quit Kashmir movements. He authored and co-authored about 40 books and wrote over a thousand articles in national dailies and academic journals.

He did his M. A. in Economics. As director of Institute of J&K Affairs he conducted research studies for UNICEF, Oxfam, Indian Council for Social Science Research, Institute of Historical Studies, World Bank and organized seminars on a variety of subjects.

Closely associated with Sheikh Abdullah and principal mediator between him and Prime Ministers, Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, he was one of the few activists who was equally respected in all regions and sub-regions and among all the ethnic and religious communities of the J&K state.

Balraj Puri had been a crusader for the cause of communal harmony. Students Peace Volunteer Corpse organised by him was the only active force in Jammu region during the riots of 1947 which saved many lives of at personal risk.

In 1967, Hindu communalists declared in Jammu that they would avenge the alleged killings of Hindus in Kashmir valley by eliminating Muslims in Jammu. He organized a peace committee and offered his own blood before blood of any Muslim was taken. Some communalists did come to take his blood. But peace loving Hindus gathered round Balraj Puri.

In 1986, when first anti-Kashmiri Pandit riots started in Anantnag district of Kashmir, he was able to restore communal harmony. At one place, on his appeal a group of the Muslim audience, who was initially hostile, was converted to peace loving groups and was persuaded to contribute Rs 10,000 for the repair of a temple they had destroyed.

He intervened in communal situation in Aligarh and Meerut. In 1987, he set up a committee for inter-community dialogue and organized common meetings of the two communities which pledged to maintain peace.

As convenor of Committee for Dialogue on Punjab he was almost the first non-Sikh from outside the state after the Operation blue star in 1984 to visit the state. He toured throughout the state and addressed gatherings in educational institutions, bar associations and citizens groups without security and was able to dialogue with Sikh militant leaders as also Hindu leaders to ease the situation.

In 1989, he stood in between armed Hindu and Sikh mobs at one place in Jammu and prevented a clash between them.

In 1990 visited Kashmir valley soon after the start of militancy. On his appeal militants groups agreed to release some innocent civilians. In 1992 visited Doda district which had been affected by militants. At Bholderwah town he collected money from Muslims to repair the houses of Hindus which had been burnt by militants. Elsewhere common committees of the two communities were set up.

He visited victims of violence in most of the cases, irrespective of the community they belonged to and whosoever was the culprit.

Puri addressed leading Universities of USA and UK and prestigious audiences in Europe and the subcontinent. He has attended many international conferences, including on World Peace in Canada (2007), fiftieth anniversary of Declaration of Human Rights also in Canada 1998 and Religious Extremism at Dhaka in 2004.

As President of Associations of Voluntary Agencies in Rural Development J&K Chapter, he contributed to spreading a network of voluntary organisations throughout the state.

Socialist Activist

My brother, Balraj Puri was a frequent contributor to *Janata*, perhaps, the only democratic socialist journal left now. He had great admiration for those whose dedication sustained the journal for over six decades.

He was one of the founders of the Praja Socialist Party in Jammu & Kashmir state, along with veteran socialist and his friend, Om Prakash Saraf and late Dhan Raj Bargotra. The J & K unit was inaugurated by Asoka Mehta. It got a tremendous response in Jammu city and surrounding areas and the convention was well attended by diverse segments of society - farmers, workers and middle class intelligentsia. The people welcomed it as a viable third alternative to the essentially erstwhile feudal leadership of Bharatiya Jana Sangh and powerful oligarchic National Conference led by Bakshi Gulam Mohammad, after the deposition of Sheikh Abdullah, who had massively denied civil liberties to the people in Kashmir valley. When Asoka Mehta reached Kashmir valley to inaugurate party unit in Srinagar, his public

meeting was attacked by some elements encouraged by Bakshi Government.

Balraj Puri worked with the PSP Parliamentary Group to assist in their political-parliamentary task. He developed close contacts with top leadership of the party like, Asoka Mehta, Acharya Kripalani, Nath Pai, Hem Barua and others.

He was also associated with New Socialist, a journal started by journalists and academics like G. S. Bhargava and Umashankar Phadnis to explore and deepen the idea of democratic socialism.

Balraj Puri also edited a bimonthly, Kashmir Affairs from Jammu which got immediate recognition as an objective journal on matters relating to diversities of J and K state. It brought 12 issues before it ceased publication for want of funds.

Yogesh Puri

Life of selfless service

Wajahat Habibullah

I was deeply saddened to learn of the passing away of my old and dear friend Balraj Puri. He was a man of national stature who worked tirelessly with the objective of building a nation worthy of the poorest and most deprived of its people. I realise that Balraj had not been well for some time. I had visited him when he lay comatose at the AIIMS and I sought to sustain the strength of his daughter Ellora. So although I was reconciled to the imminent inevitability of losing him, yet his going on August 30, 2014 at GMC hospital in Jammu has cast a pall, not only on some of us who knew him personally and admired him, but as a loss to our country as a whole, particularly in our critical times.

Balraj Puri was fittingly recognised by the nation when it conferred on him the Padma Bhushan in 2005, among India's highest civilian honours, in Literature and Education. On 31 October 2009 he was also conferred the Indira Gandhi Award for National Integration by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. On that occasion the Prime Minister described Puri's book "*Kashmir towards Insurgency*" as a primer for anybody seeking to understand the intricacies of the vexed Kashmir issue. He recognised that Balraj Puri's life had been one of selfless service to society and to our nation. I can only echo the comment of Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh on the conferment of the Indira Gandhi Award that Balraj Puri's had been a life dedicated to the cause of promoting peace, good-will and communal harmony. It has been a life spent in building bridges between regions and communities, the sinews of India's nationhood

Although a journalist by profession, Balraj Puri was so much more, a man of many parts. In a career commencing on the eve of Independence in 1942 till today Puri's quest for new and diverse mantles never flagged. In each of these he would never cease to be admired or to provoke. He was an intellectual of standing, a journalist, a social and political activist, a human rights crusader and an incisive political analyst, using his commitment to the truth coupled with his consistent access to the thinking of common folk, to telling effect, which made him a formidable contender in any argument as many of the statesmen and national leaders of his time, with most of whom he was in personal rapport, were to learn, when he bluntly criticised their policies and actions, but with never a trace of malice. In his 68 years of public life

he played a crucial role in Indian politics. Critical of the undemocratic manner of the ouster of J&K Prime Minister Sheikh Abdullah from office in 1953, he initiated and then helped mediate the game changing 1975 Sheikh Abdullah-Indira Gandhi accord. From India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru down to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Puri was repeatedly consulted on various aspects of the Kashmir issue. He also had a role in restoring peace in Punjab in the 1980s.

As a young student at a time when Jammu & Kashmir was undergoing political ferment and feudalism was in dying convulsion, Balraj Puri began his entry on Jammu's intellectual firmament, representing the progressive voices of the region, and he continued to be associated with progressive politics throughout his life. Described by some as a 'one-man army', he could from these early times, shoot off a challenging letter to a state or national leader, deftly handle a tense or communal situation, lead or organise a dharna or peace march whenever the situation warranted.

But Balraj Puri's greatest strength lay in his sound political analysis reflecting a grasp of the complex issues that have characterised the turbulent history of the State. This makes his writings, spanning over seven decades, an exhaustive documentation of Kashmiri politics since Independence. This was also my first introduction to him when I was DC of the border district of Poonch and the country writhed in enforced silence under the 'Emergency'. He and Ved Bhasin were on a visit to Poonch when I myself was an enthusiastic young officer full of wishful thinking on what opportunities for rapid development had emerged. He knew Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, like her father, well. But, he told me curtly that the Emergency was an assault on democracy and will set the nation on a road to disaster. And so it was on that forbidding note that our relationship, which was to mature into friendship, was initiated, full of debate and ready disagreement, but sustained by a mutual respect, although he remained the elder and I the learner.

In a politically divided Jammu & Kashmir, he was one among the very few who recognised that the people of the state were central to its future. So he empathised with Kashmiris recognising that at its root their struggle was one for democracy and justice. But he also stood for the cause of other regions and their political

empowerment. This is what marked his contribution to the state Regional Autonomy Commission, recognition of the pluralist nature of J&K society, a pluralism that has often been ignored at our cost. His understanding of the Kashmir issue - especially the debacle of its flirtation with democracy, which led to the crisis of civil liberties, and the implications of the Centre's misplaced intrusive politics - was unparalleled.

The weight of Balraj Puri's argument meant that while strengthening the restoration of full democratic and federal governance in Kashmir, the cause of regional autonomy of Jammu and Ladakh regions must find place in its political evolution. The logic of autonomy as guaranteed under Article 370, he argued, could not stop at the level of the State and needed to be carried to the level of regions, districts and Panchayat, on grounds of

ethnic commonality, with care taken never to succumb to the idea of separation on communal ground.

His contribution to the understanding of the conflict that has plagued the state lay in his emphasis on the pluralities, the diversity and the political divergence within the State. Jammu, in his opinion, was a clue to what has been described as the Kashmir tangle and till political sensitivities of the region are not incorporated into the larger question of Kashmir, the conflict will defy resolution.

It has been said of him that with his passing: Jammu has lost the champion of its regional identity, Kashmir has lost a crusader for democracy and human rights, the State as a whole has lost a peace activist, and the nation has lost a liberal and progressive voice.

Remembering old comrade

Balraj Puri, a radical humanist and a sane voice in Jammu & Kashmir, started his public work as the editor of an Urdu weekly in J&K in 1942, and died in 2014 as the editor of J&K Human Rights.

He, along with Pdt. Premnath Bajaj, Radical Democratic Party leader, joined the Quit Kashmir movement in 1946 which was led by Sheikh Abdullah. Jayaprakash Narayan had gone to Kashmir to support the movement.

Balraj Puri involved himself in the political movement in the state. He became a vice-president at the National Conference and later joined the Praja Socialist Party when Sheikh Abdullah turned authoritarian. He was associated with all shades of anti-communal, anti-sectarian and Human Rights movements. For a long time he was the only peace activist in India who worked for the reconciliation of different religious and ethnic groups within Kashmir, of the Government of India and the people of Kashmir, and of the people of Indian Kashmir with those of the Pak-occupied Kashmir. He always emphasized on the concept of Kashmiriyat to fight communalism in Kashmir.

The publication of killings by the Indian Army, and the Pakistan-sponsored militants in his paper antagonized the governments of both the countries. A conference of Pakistan-India Peoples' Forum for Peace & Democracy was held in Lahore, in November 1995. He was one of three persons among the 100 Indian delegates who were

refused visa by the Pakistan Government. (Incidentally, both of us were among 12 Indians who were denied visa by the Pakistan Government in 1994, when we wanted to attend a SAARC Conference on Security, organized by Pakistan Sustainable Institute in Rawalpindi. As I was granted a visa in 1995, expecting that he too might get it at the last moment, he went with us to the Delhi airport.) In a likewise manner, the Indian Intelligence officers in Kashmir dubbed him as an American agent. In order to snub their whispering campaign Shri Puri accepted the offer of a Padma award by the UPA-I Government in 2006.

The J&K Government had appointed a committee on decentralization in the State with Balraj Puri as its chairman. But his recommendations were not accepted by the State Government.

He was the founder-member of People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) and was its vice-president. In 2006, he delivered PUCL J P Memorial lecture, on the theme: Jayaprakash Narayan's role in the politics of Jammu & Kashmir.

Wherever in India he visited he took up the case of the violation of human rights, locally. In 1982, when we were participating in a seminar in Madras, Asghar Ali Engineer, Balrajbhai and myself, went to the CM's office for the withdrawal of sedition charges against the Bharat Natyam danseuse Chandralekha, and the activist Sadananda.

—Niranjan Haldar

Shared bond of common commitments

Nandita Haksar

I read the news of Balraj Puri's passing with sadness. But it was only when I was asked by his daughter Ellora to write something in his memory I realised I knew next to nothing about him or his family.

All I remembered was the first time I heard Balraj Puri in a meeting on Kashmir. It was during the early days of the insurgency. He had spoken of how a temple had been demolished by some miscreants; but the Muslims in the area had contributed to rebuild it.

I do not remember any conversations with him; just brief encounters when I called him on my way to Srinagar. All I knew was Balraj Puri lived in Jammu and he was someone who I could turn to if I needed help in Jammu and Kashmir.

And in 2002 I desperately needed his help to save a Kashmiri from the gallows.

I had decided to defend a young Kashmiri lecturer who had been accused of conspiring to attack the Parliament of India. I believed that he was not involved; and I still do.

It was also a political challenge.

If we could prove that the Kashmiri was innocent then we would also prove that Indian democracy was not dead. Would it not win friends in Kashmir?

The only piece of evidence against the Kashmiri was a two minute conversation which he had with his younger brother on the morning after the attack on the Parliament. The police said the conversation showed he was guilty and his family said it proved his innocence. The problem was to get a person who would translate the conversation and then testify in the court.

I decided that the witness must be a Kashmiri Pandit so there could be no doubt in the judge's mind that the testimony was truthful. Where was I to get a Kashmiri Pandit willing to testify for a Kashmiri Muslim accused of a terrorist act?

The only name that came to my mind was: Balraj Puri.

I was no longer active in the human rights movement; and for the last six or seven years been out of touch with any political movement. I was living in exile in Goa.

I got Balraj Puri's number. The phone rang and he picked it up. I told him the facts briefly and then made my request; actually a demand. I said if he could not find me a Kashmiri Pandit I would come to Jammu and sit on dharna outside his home till he found me the right person.

Now, writing this obituary I wonder how I could have spoken to him with such familiarity; with certainty that he would respond. It was because of a shared bond of common commitments. Neither years of broken contact nor the lack of personal relationship came in the way of our conversation.

Balrajji asked for a little time. And in a few days he phoned to say he had found just the right man: Sampat Prakash, the trade union leader and the only Kashmiri Pandit to continue working in the valley during the Insurgency despite the risk to his life.

Sampat asked Balraj Puri why he was asking him to testify for a Kashmiri militant?

Balraj Puri said "Nandita Haksar has asked me."

Sampat wanted to know who the person was, sounded like a Kashmiri Pandit.

"She is P N Haksar's daughter."

"But P N Haksar would not support such work."

"She is a sincere human rights activist."

That was enough.

Balraj Puri phoned to say the witness had been found but his one condition was that he would tell no lies. I assured him that I did not expect him to.

Sampat came to Delhi and testified in court. The Kashmiri lecturer was acquitted. Rest is history.

Sampat Prakash, Balraj Puri and dare I add my name – belonged to a political era when politics did

not depend on personal relationships but shared ideals and commitments. These ideals went beyond narrow political ideologies. Sampat was a communist, Balraj Puri was a socialist and I was a human rights lawyer with left leanings.

My sense of loss on hearing of Balraj Puri's passing was the growing insecurity that such political relationships are so rare now; almost impossible.

And then more recently while writing a book on Kashmir I read Balraj Puri's writings, his dream of a federal Jammu and Kashmir and his concerns about the future. And then I wished I had more conversations with him, learnt more to deepen my understanding of this volatile part of the country.

Balraj Puri must have been so agonized to see the way politics was shaping in his state. Like Sampat Prakash he must have been so pained to see the growth of Hindu

fascism and Muslim fundamentalism. His inner strength sustained him nourished by his values. But it must have been lonely.

The last time I spoke to him was when he phoned to congratulate me on the acquittal of the Kashmiri; and he followed it by a letter full of words of encouragement. Now when I think of Jammu and Kashmir I know there will be a void.

I am grateful to Ellora for inviting me to share my thoughts on this occasion; for giving me an opportunity to pay my respects to Balraj Puri. He and his ideas of federalism are even more relevant today than they were when he first enunciated them in the 1950s. The way to honour his memory would be to keep his ideas and ideals alive. To keep alive the hope that people can live together even if they belong to different ethnic nationalities and religions.

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3. Kashmir Towards Insurgency — Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1993, revised 1995.
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11. Cooperative Farming — Institute of Political Social Studies, Calcutta, 1959.
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Voice of reason

Om Prakash Saraf

When I was 19, Balraj Puri was just 13 - both teenagers - when we made our first acquaintance as journalists for the first time, 51 years ago. Interests and pursuits usually associated with the age-group, never seemed to matter for us. From day one we found ourselves in the thick of discussions for hours together regarding the ebb and flow of the freedom movement in the context of the ongoing Second World War, He was soon to start his own weekly Pukar and write war diary for Ranbir bi-weekly. I do not remember precisely when we became political companions. Looking back now it seems somewhat amazing that we have been through such a prolonged harmonious personal and public companionship. Differences have arisen between us. His qualities of head and heart helped us to maintain out cool, never to air even strongly felt opinions in public and eventually to discover many pleasant shades between the black and white. I think this is a miracle and all credit is due to him. Words really fail me when I try to appraise such a multi-faceted personality. Volumes will be required to underline his contributions. In his small frame like that of Lal Bahadur Shastri was truly concealed a human dynamo with boundless energy for all constructive causes which may not be always be popular. He was profoundly knowledgeable on Kashmir affairs and understood the problems facing Muslims and other minorities in the sub-continent. His concerns for the minorities in his own homeland made him the foremost fighter for 'autonomy' of Jammu within an autonomous Kashmir'. His role in post-Independence renaissance of Jammu won universal recognition.

Balraj Puri blended his activism with journalism and scholarly pursuits with distinction and was a rare person who could do so brilliantly. While he was humble, humane in professing his ideas and formulations he was equally courageous whenever situation demanded him to stand for his principles and ideals. I have been a witness to that. He remained a voice of reason and rationality in the political landscape of Jammu and Kashmir amidst all tumultuous events, and he never compromised. Sometimes standing alone, he was able to take a public position with a rare courage and consistency.

He had an original mind and frequently commented on myriad set of issues facing the country. His work on minorities in India is original and continues to advance our understanding about their political, social and economic aspirations of the communities. I am confident that his seventy-year work and activism would continue to inspire future generations and guide them to tread a path which is destined towards building a more equitable and just India.

Balraj Puri's life is a perfect example as to how intellectual genius and passionate activism is a necessary pre-requisite for strengthening democratic ethos of a country. And this will enable his work to remain at the forefront as a guiding post whenever India's future relationships with the state and with respect to its minorities will be re-examined and evolve continually as it should happen in a working democracy.

Books co-authored by Balraj Puri

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- History of Freedom Movement in Kashmir — (one of the authors), Light and Life, New Delhi, 1980.
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Remembering father

Luv Puri

I was born when my father was 52 years old. While participating in the struggle for freedom in 1940s, the bulk of his active public life was spent in post-independent India. He belonged to the generation, which was imbued with ideals of freedom struggle but was conscious of the fact that painstaking effort was required to ensure that the idea of India is kept alive.

Though I used to sometimes remark about the age gap between us, he always used to reply what mattered was the relationship between parents and children rather than age gap. He used to describe his children as his friends.

As I started enjoying conversing with him about his writings and activism, he readily discussed with me as a friend. My introduction to his professional life was in the late 1980s. Post-dinner evening walks, be it summers or winters, were the occasion that we used to have discussions on several issues. The issues could be something topical or he used to reply to my curious questions about philosophy, history, politics or even career options. Being a voracious reader of newspapers and journals, he was quick to apply his own mind and relate the same to his field of work. I was kind of a sounding board for his ideas. It was a dialogic interaction, and we had these interactions till 2010 till he became so ill that such walks were no longer sustainable.

By the late 1980s, he had already established himself as one of the leading public intellectuals of the country whose articles and commentary educated the citizenry as well as people in the policy world on some of the critical issues facing the country. In the 1980s and 1990s, I happened to witness a number of incidents, which appeared to be a continuation of his previous work, as an objective public intellectual and a brave peace activist with deep-seated commitment to secularism and democratic socialism.

One of my earliest memories was chilly month of January 1989, when Hindu-Sikh riots broke out in Jammu. While the city burnt on 13 January, he singlehandedly rode on his scooter and started visiting the areas ravaged by communal violence. On one occasion, he stood between the two mobs baying for blood of each

other and acted as a human wall by preventing the riots. He calmed the mobs with his intellect. The same evening he fractured his leg when his scooter hit another burnt scooter lying in the middle of the road, which he could not spot because of darkness. I was with him during the accident though I escaped unhurt.

Personal injury could not deter him and the next day with a fractured leg, he sought the help of former Sikh insurgent and reformed Khalistani militant Avtar Singh to continue the peace efforts. I saw in my house how once dreaded militant was reformed by my father's guidance and intellectual might and molded into a peace activist. Avtar Singh worked in a determined manner with other peace activists led by my father in riot relief efforts. During the lunch break, my father and peace activists came back to our house, and I remember seeing Avtar Singh making Chappatis in my kitchen and feeding all of us. Sadly, Avtar Singh was killed mysteriously after a few years.

A year later, Kashmir valley turned rebellious and India's image lay tarnished with allegations of human rights abuse. India was awashed with hyper-nationalism and Kashmir valley was at its angriest mood against India. The establishment warned my father of security risks if he went to areas in control of militants.

My father was the last person to listen to these warnings. Though we were worried, he went ahead and reached out to ordinary Kashmiris in mosques. He broke the silence in the Indian press and repeatedly emphasized through his writings that human rights violations were weakening India's case in the long run.

Now it may be commonsensical to emphasize the respect for human rights. Early 1990s was a different era. I think it is my father's contribution of embedding the idea right from the beginning that respect for human rights in Kashmir valley and serving national interest are not antithetical to each other. He remained consistent for his advocacy of respect for human rights when militants started killing innocent people or non-combatants.

An abundant online literature in the form of his own writings on sensitive subjects already exists for anyone

to read with appropriate nuances and form their own opinion.

While he remained engaged with his challenging intellectual and activist pursuits, he did find abundant time for the family. It was a joy to be in his presence as he regaled us with his childhood experiences spent in forest area on the foothills of Himalayas. His vast repository of experiences based on travel all over India and to several countries to attend seminars made the conversation lively and educative.

Our former one bedroom house, a rented one, midst a mini-jungle was a place where we hosted people from all over the world including his friends or people referred by them. My mother enjoyed hosting them and I never heard her complain. I jokingly say to my friends that we had a hipster-like upbringing in some fashion. Snakes and wild animals were spotted quite frequently. My father knew how to cope up with any challenge with a cool mind. While we ran helter-skelter on spotting a snake in our house, he knew how to kill with one smash of a long stick. In his 60s, I remember he going on a hike with us and on another occasion even climbing a tree in our house to pluck topical fruits.

For years, till his late 60s, he rode a scooter bought in the 1970s. I remember many used to tell him that riding a scooter did not behove his international status and he should get a car. I do not know what he thought about it but I recall he used to laugh it over. He bought a second-hand Fiat car in 1997 though we didn't allow him to drive because of age.

My father certainly had ambitions in life. One of them was to combine his role as a public intellectual with politics. He succeeded to be one of the finest analytical minds working and writing on issues that continue to be

a cause for instability in the sub-continent. With regard to his political ambitions, he tried to succeed within the available structural constraints for him while calling for reforms in the existing structure of the state to be just to all regions of the trouble-torn state. He himself admitted many times that he could not realize his political ambitions. Another ambition was to be remembered as a person who remained consistent on his principles and values till his death. I heard him say that to me on numerous occasions more than his ambition to contest and win the Parliamentary elections.

Since 1 May 2012, he had to undergo nursing care and suddenly an active public life came to an end. At once, a vacuum was created in the public discourse though he himself used to say no one is indispensable. We continued to get calls in the period of his illness as people wanted his comments on developments as he had done in his seventy-years of public life.

He died on 30 August 2014 and was consigned to flames the next day.

While the entire family, as per the ritual, stood near the exit of the cremation house to thank the people who had come to pay respects, I heard one of the anonymous men among the gathering, who may be in his late 60s, mourning almost hysterically and loudly crying with words that "this man was not up for sale". Others shouted at him as he was not a family member. It sounded like a cry from the heart.

To my mind, this was my father's finest reward of long years of public life spent, amidst difficult challenges both physical as well as financial, with purpose, dignity and courage. He certainly realized his main ambition of life to live on his principles and values, which he imbibed from watching India's founding fathers.

Books co-authored by Balraj Puri

- New Challenges of Politics in Indian States — (Chapter on Kashmir), Uppal, New Delhi, 1986.
- Problem of Nationalities in India — (Chapter on Kashmir), Pune, 1987
- Panchayati Raj in J&K, — (One of the authors) Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi, 1990.
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Balraj Puri on

Understanding Indian Muslims

During the America-led war against global terrorism, a controversy arose on the attitude of Indian Muslims. Those who did not support fundamentalism, communalism, puritanism and militant Islam and hence were not disloyal to the country were asked to speak out and be counted. The liberal Muslims protested that the media noticed only the extremist viewpoint and ignored them, whereas they represented the silent majority.

The fact, however, cannot be denied that Muslims all over the world have been affected by a sort of anti-America wave, in varying degrees, notwithstanding the stand of their Governments and their internal contradictions. There are a number of reasons for this, including the post-modern communication revolution which has drastically reduced distances between members of a community and sharpened their urge for identity. The clash of civilisations thesis and America's perceived anti-Muslim policies further consolidated the current Muslim mood. No one is more conscious of it than leaders of the anti-terrorism coalition. Extensive diplomatic efforts, tours of the Muslim countries and Iftar parties to neutralise Muslim hostility bear that out.

India had obvious advantages in playing its role in the emerging international situation. Not only its large Muslim population, which had played a leading role in the constructive evolution of Islamic thought, but also its traditional relations with Muslim countries as a leader of the non-aligned block, of which most of them were members, were its unique assets.

Far from using our external and internal assets to evolve a consensus on a possible attitude towards American policies and global terrorism, this very issue was sought to be used as a new loyalty test for the Muslims of India by a section of our countrymen. Take the case of the Shahi Imam, for instance. Granted that his views are obscurantist and parochial and expression is intemperate. But how do these characteristics qualify him to be disloyal to the country? The Imam had also condemned General Pervez Musharraf for "betraying Islam". He also condemned jihad in Kashmir as anti-

Islam. Anti-Pakistanism and Indian sovereignty over Kashmir have been prescribed as a test of patriotism for Muslims. Why then was the Imam branded anti-national and demands made for his arrest on the charge of sedition? Why did the police pounce on Muslim youth in Malegaon and tear off the posters which urged boycott of products of American companies? When Muslims of Kashmir demonstrated against the American bombing of Afghanistan, without raising pro-Pakistan or anti-India slogans, why did the Indian authorities feel scared?

The question is not whether these manifestations of the Muslims' viewpoint represent a majority or minority of the community and whether they are right or wrong. The real question relates to the concept of Indian nationalism and which one of the viewpoints cited above defies it.

Again, the widely-held presumption that Muslims are more easily swayed by the appeal of religion needs to be examined more closely in this context. Religion has two aspects: one, beliefs and practices and, two, basis of an identity. These aspects clashed in the personalities of Maulana Azad and M. A. Jinnah. While the former claimed that the Quran was the sole source of his knowledge, the latter was completely ignorant of it. Azad, with his humanitarian and cosmopolitan interpretation of the Quran, led the ulema almost as a class to become an ally of Indian nationalism led by Gandhi. Jinnah, steeped in western culture, was for all practical purposes a non-practising Muslim. He defied many strict Islamic injunctions in his personal life.

The moral of the pre-Partition clash between the two approaches was clear - viz, Jinnah's concerns for Muslim identity and its mundane political and economic interests expressed in non-religious language triumphed over the religious appeal of Islamic scholars and the ulema led by Azad. In fact, the effective Muslim leadership then, from Sir Syed Ahmad, Ameer Ali, Chirag Ali, Agha Khan, Allama Iqbal to Jinnah, was westernised and modernised. None of them could be accused of being a fundamentalist or a puritan. As against that the Hindu leadership from Dayanand, Madan Mohan

Malviya, Vivekananda, Tilak to Gandhi was thoroughly religious. The cordial understanding between it and the religious Muslim leadership did not deliver the desired goods because the Muslim masses did not respond to the religious idiom and the message of the latter. No value judgment is implied on the roles of Azad and Jinnah except to underline the point that religion - a set of beliefs and practices - was not the decisive factor in the Muslim behaviour in pre-Partition India. It should be obvious that a thoroughly religious person may not be a communalist and a communalist need not be a puritan. And all of them need not be disloyal to the country.

The Indian ulema have, no doubt, made a seminal and original contribution to the growth of Islamic thought. But historically their role in shaping the Muslim mind has been far less than that of the Sufis and the political establishment of Muslim kings; none of them practised Islamic codes being preached by modern fundamentalists. The Sufis freely borrowed local customs and culture and preached more through music, poetry and humane conduct than through quotations from scriptures and prescribing a rigid religious code of conduct. Many of the kings were hedonists and indulged in pursuits prohibited by orthodox Islam.

Having interacted with the two greatest civilisations of the world, Indian and Western, Indian Muslims

were, culturally and intellectually, the richest Muslim community of the world. If, in spite of these facts, some Muslims of India today betray tendencies towards any kind of fundamentalist, puritan and militant Islam, it is for the whole nation to find out its reasons and remedies and not for the Muslims alone.

Cultural heritage and political aspirations of a community are as much a factor in influencing its behaviour as its theological beliefs. It is important to understand the cultural heritage of Indian Muslims which they share at the national and to a greater extent at the regional level with non-Muslims. Politically nothing hurts them more than special loyalty tests that are being prescribed for them.

The contribution of the Indian ulema, Sufis, Muslim poets and artists is so rich that it can inspire the rest of the Muslim world. No other Muslim community is so richly endowed. They are equally inheritors of a 5000-year-old civilisation and citizens of a genuinely functioning democratic and plural country.

The debate between liberals and non-liberals, between Hindus and Muslims may continue. But it would generate more light, rather than just heat, if everyone is able to proclaim that he/she is a proud inheritor of the great composite heritage of India.

December, 2001

Choice for Kashmiris: Independence, Autonomy and Freedom

What sustains the separatist movement in Kashmir is a certain measure of popular alienation among Kashmiri-speaking Muslims of the State; this is not a result of external factors alone but for which internal causes are also responsible.

The exceptionally long recorded history of the land locked Valley of Kashmir and its proverbial beauty had created a strong urge for Kashmiri identity. According to the popular perception of history, Kashmir had been enslaved by outside rulers for the last four centuries, since 1586 to be precise, when Akbar annexed it to the Mughal empire. This was followed by the rule by outsiders like Afghans, Sikhs and Dogras.

Since 1931, when the modern phase of political movement started under Sheikh Abdullah's leadership, azadi has been the popular slogan. Abdullah welcomed the role of the Indian Army in 1947, which could come only after the State's accession to India, since it had come to defend the azadi of Kashmir threatened by Pakistan-sponsored tribal raiders. Since then the popular leaders of Kashmir have used independence and autonomy interchangeably as synonyms for azadi.

Two vital considerations must be kept in view if the demand for independence or autonomy is to be made achievable. First, will it be confined to the Kashmiri-speaking Muslims? Or will it cover the other two regions of the State on the Indian side, namely, Jammu

and Ladakh, which do not share Kashmir's historical background and pride in its unique identity? Second, how far will independence or autonomy being demanded ensure freedom to the people? Azadi is the Urdu translation of two distinct concepts of independence and freedom. Independent countries do not necessarily provide freedom to their people.

To maintain the unity of the State, an idea to which most of the leaders of Kashmir region are still committed, autonomy has to be extended to the other two regions within the State. The commitment to provide for regional autonomy in the Constitution of the State made by Nehru and Abdullah in July 1952, and reiterated by the latter numerous times hence, could not be implemented, the autonomy of the State gradually eroded. This erosion is the major cause of popular alienation in the Valley. Otherwise too, unity in as diverse a State as J&K can only be maintained in a federal set-up.

For instance, the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution, granting Panchayati Raj in the rest of the country, is not applicable to the State. Thus, it is deprived of institutions of democratic decentralisation at district, block and panchayat levels. The Prime Minister had set up five working groups to recommend measures for dealing with some major problems of J&K State, after the Second Round Table Conference, representing most of the ethnic groups of the State, held in June 2006. Out of them four submitted their reports which were discussed at the Third Round Table Conference in Delhi in April 2007. These reports are at various stages of processing and implementation.

But the fifth working group on the crucial question of Centre-State and State-Centre region relations, headed by Justice Sagheer Ahmad, has so far not submitted its report. Justice Sagheer Ahmad had pointed out sharp divisions in the working group on the issue before it as the reason for his failure to finalise its report and asked for the services of a senior political scientist to assist him.

The sharp divisions within the State on its status are, in fact, responsible for many complications in the

Kashmir problem. Mainly these centre on the sharp regional divide within the State. In 1947 when the Hindu and Muslim leaderships of Jammu were supporting the Maharaja's desire for independence of the State, the Kashmiri leadership opted for India. The reason for their diametrically opposite stand was their attitude to the Maharaja. While Kashmiri leaders had launched a movement against what they called the Dogra Raj, the Jammu leaders were, by and large, loyal to the Maharaja.

After 1947, their roles were reversed. While the Kashmiri leaders were keen to preserve the autonomy of the State, their Jammu counterparts demanded full merger of the State in a bid to end what they called the Kashmiri Raj. The controversy over full and limited accession eventually made the issue of accession itself in doubt which was mainly responsible for the crisis of August 1953, when Sheikh Abdullah, the acknowledged leader of the Kashmir region, was dismissed and detained. Since then Article 370, which guaranteed autonomy of the State, has further eroded and thus increased the alienation of the people in the Valley.

A via media was found in July 1952, when Pandit Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah declared, at a joint press conference, that the Constitution of the State would provide for regional autonomy. The agitation of the Praja Parishad, the Jammu affiliate of the Jana Sangh, for full merger of the State was withdrawn on a specific assurance of Nehru to its leaders, who were called to Delhi, after their release from jail. Somehow the commitment of the Kashmiri leaders could not be implemented. They must realise that autonomy of the State would be better guaranteed, if its logic is extended to the regions. Otherwise, too, the unity of as diverse a State as J&K can only be maintained in a federal set-up. Another reason that has caused confusion on the question of autonomy of the State is that it has so far been debated as Kashmir versus India. Let it first be discussed in terms of the interests of the people of the State. It must be ensured that Article 370 is not used or misused by the rulers of the State to curb the freedom of the people.

May, 2008

Human Rights in India

India was a signatory to Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in 1948, just a year after its independence.

It signified new republic's resolve to follow the path of democracy which would ensure human rights to its citizens despite doubts expressed by leading statesmen

of the developed democracies about the success of such an experiment in India. For these was at that time hardly any precedent of a newly liberated colony attempting doing so.

India's venture was unique in many other respects also. For democracy was adopted in many countries after completing the phase of industrialization. India embarked upon the course of industrialization with the launching of first Five Year Plan in 1951 and soon after held general election on the basis of adult franchise to all citizens and genders. Many advanced western countries introduced women suffrage and voting rights to all citizens (to blacks in America) after India did. Again, India has the largest diversities in the world - of religions, languages and races - united under a democratic set up. India's democratic autonomous institutions like independent judiciary, Election Commission, National Human Rights Commission, Auditor General, Information Commission under Right to Information Act, free media and multi-party system further guarantee human rights of individual.

Except the brief interregnum of Emergency from 1975 to 1977, Indian democracy has maintained a fairly high standard. India has been freely choosing and changing governments in the states and at the centre.

Yet threats to individual freedom are no less formidable. Religious intolerance, caste tensions, regional chauvinism, terror threats, detentions without trial, poverty amidst plenty, crime against women, custodial deaths, corruption in public life and attendant evils are some of the threats to human rights of the citizens. Though judiciary is independent, litigation is too costly and time consuming to be within the reach of a person with humble means. That three crore cases are pending in the courts reflect on inadequacy in the number of judges and in the system of justice. Communal riots like those in Gujarat show how insecure are minorities despite our loud professions of secularism. Inter-communal and inter-caste marriages often result in killing of the couple. In some cases even the parents are involved in what are called honour killings. The brute form that regional chauvinism can take was demonstrated by recent attacks on North Indians in Mumbai organized by Raj Thackeray's Maharashtra Navnirman Sena

Drastic laws have not been able to curb menace of terrorism which also needs radical socio-economic and political measures. Out of 77,000 persons arrested under TADA (Terrorist and Destructive Activities Act) alone,

only 800 were put on trial and out of them mere 725 were convicted (*Hindu* 28 May 2008). There are other drastic laws like AFSPA (Armed Forces Special Powers Act) under which courts have no jurisdiction over wrongful acts of the armed forces. Detentions under such laws may be even more arbitrary. Nobody can say how many of them are actually criminals or innocent. But most glaring cases of unjust detentions include those of human rights activists.

Lynching of suspected criminals by the mob is becoming very common as the people are losing faith in police and justice system. Another factor that encourages crimes is easy availability of small arms which are used by even young students against fellow students or teachers at the slightest provocation. India is one of the fastest growing economy of the world with rate of growth hovering around 9 per cent and the number of billionaire are added every year. Yet 30,000 poor farmers under debt committed suicide in Maharashtra within a decade out of 1.5 lakh who killed themselves across the country, according to a study by Prof. K. Natraj of the Madras Institute of Development Studies. He has analyzed data recorded by the National Crime Records Bureau from 1997 (*Hindu* 14 November 2007). Uncontrolled spiral of inflation is increasing the gap between the rich and the poor.

While legally, socially and politically women have made many strides, having occupied the post of the Prime Minister, the President and the leader of the ruling alliance, there has also been rise in crimes against them. There are a number of reasons for it including greater media attention and reporting of such crimes, increase in number of working women, unsuitable working hours, unescorted travelling, inefficient and insufficient policing and smaller number of women police.

The promise that India had initially shown in the field of human rights and the type of democratic institutions it had evolved, had won international recognition. For these reasons it was elected a member of Human Rights Council of the United Nations, which had replaced the Commission on Human Rights on 19 June 2006, by securing 173 out of 191 votes of the United Nations General Assembly - the maximum number of votes. All the member states are to be covered within the four year Universal Periodic Review (UPR). In the first session of the council in April 2008, the UPR listed both positive and negative record of India. Among the positive points it noted "widespread international appreciation and admiration for the sweeping proactive

legal and administrative provisions for the promotion and protection of the full range of human rights, whether in terms of outlawing egregious forms of caste discrimination, or affirmative action programmes in favour of historically disadvantaged parts of the population and vulnerable sections such as women, children and the disabled.”

On the negative side, India’s non-conformity with international human rights benchmarks received more concentrated exposure during the UPR than ever had in the past. It raised pointed questions about India not ratifying the convention against torture, not being party to the Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their families, on refugees and stateless persons, the ILO Convention on the abolition of child labour, on the rights of indigenous and tribal people, and the government’s persistent refusal to cooperate with the council’s special procedures with respect to torture, and treatment of human rights defenders, summary and arbitrary executions, sale of children, arbitrary detentions, child prostitution and child pornography and arbitrary detentions. Most persistent were questions about the lack of implementation of India’s comprehensive constitutional and legal framework for protecting human rights.

In a similar vein, Human Rights Watch, the leading human rights organization of the USA, concedes that India is a vibrant electoral democracy and takes note of the various measures for the protection of human rights, including training of government officials, armed forces, prison officials and legal officers. But while welcoming the government efforts, HRW still believes that human rights violations are rampant. According to it, serious abuses are being committed in many states where there is a violent campaign by Maoist Naxalite groups. Further the government is ignoring the crime

of forced disappearances from past conflicts in Punjab and Nagaland, it said. It further holds security forces responsible for rights abuses in Jammu and Kashmir, Assam and Manipur.

According to the Human Rights Watch, “India urgently needs to reform its policing system. Junior police officials operate in abysmal working conditions which make them more likely to succumb to corruption and brutality. Senior officers, on the other hand, complain of interference from politicians.

Amnesty International, in its 2008 annual report, has said that despite economic boom, in India 300 million still live in poverty. The report shows how India is replicating the US model of fighting terror with human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir, North Eastern states, Gujarat, Naxalite affected states of Chhatisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand. The report has also mentioned Nandigram violence in West Bengal. The report, however, noted that India signed the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance in February.

The experience in Kashmir and elsewhere amply underlines the vital fact that human rights violations harm the interests of whosoever indulges in them, security forces or the militants.

It needs to be realized that higher standard of human rights is in the best national interest. To be a world power that India is aspiring, it cannot depend on its hard power i.e. economic, industrial, technological and armed strength alone. The role of soft power, which depends on cultural, moral and political values, including democratic and human rights of the people, is being universally recognized. India need not search for any model elsewhere. It should aspire to be a model for others.

October, 2008

Secularisation Process in Punjab Politics

Most of the current interpretations like anti-incumbency and anti-price rise factors are far too, inadequate to explain the verdict of the recent election to the Punjab assembly. Above all, it marked a crucial shift in the tradition of politics of the state towards secularisation.

So far the Akali Dal has been the champion of the cause of the Panth and its election plank used to be grievances of the Sikh community against Hindus or

Delhi. As a reaction, Hindus - including parochial and communal sections of them -, tended to vote for the only viable alternative of the Congress.

This time Akali Dal did not make Sikh grievances as the main election issue. Instead corruption and development problems were highlighted. Far from anti-Hindu overtones, it gave tickets to seven Hindu candidates and included many Hindus to campaign for

it. Hindus were no longer afraid of its success and also voted for its candidates and its ally the BJP, which, too, put up five Sikh candidates for the assembly election and fire brand Navjot Singh Sidhu for Lok Sabha byelection. Price-rise issue also mattered for this community. The election of Naresh Gujral to the Rajya Sabha, on the Akali Dal ticket, as a follow up to the assembly election, was an eloquent testimony to its secularisation process.

While traditional secular-tradition paradigm of the state politics seems to have become irrelevant and should be welcome, contours of a new stable paradigm have yet to emerge. But before that the factors responsible for changing situation needs to be studied.

I belonged to the small minority of non-Sikhs who had supported the cause of Punjabi language and Punjabi Suba and held Hindu leadership that opposed it for weakening the cultural identity of Punjab. There was a time when Sikh leaders were willing to consider option of Devnagri script for Punjabi language for those who could not use Gurmukhi. Principal Jodh Singh had moved a resolution in the senate of the Punjab University suggesting option of two scripts on which Hindu members of the senate walked out. I had warned how self-defeating the policy of the Hindu leaders was to their interest.

I was equally critical of the Sikh leaders who had campaigned for Punjabi language and Punjabi Suba as a Sikh demand through a Sikh party of Akali Dal. Thus they were guilty, according to me, of breaking political identity of Punjab. My campaign on two fronts was mostly through my writings, and occasionally through interactions with and lectures at intellectual gatherings. I also got a positive response from master Tara Singh and Sant Fatch Singh through dignitaries like Jayapraksh Narayan and PSP leader Asoka Mehta who met them respectively in Jail and whom I had briefed. Both Sikh leaders gave a categorical assurance that Akali Dal would be turned into Punjabi Dal after Punjabi Suba was formed. A similar assurance was given by Sant Langowal to Indar Kumar Gujral and Kuldip Nayyar who met him in jail.

This background was extremely helpful to me in my role as a convenor of Dialogue on Punjab, in dialoguing with the leaders of the two communities after the Operation Blue Star. I was almost the first person to visit Amritsar after the tragic Operation. Some friends in Guru Nanak Dev University arranged my lecture there. I was warned that it was the citadel of Khalistani militant. Anyhow, I took the risk and visited the university where

the lecture hall was over full. Outside I met some armed Sikh youngmen who introduced themselves as followers of Sant Bhindrawala and told me that they knew only one form of dialogue ie through the gun. I expressed my inability to dialogue through that medium. They said that the only thing they knew about me was that I was a friend of Sikhs and they had been deputed to provide me security for my meetings.

My speech and question and answer session lasted for about three and a half hours. I took up most of the issues that agitated the Sikh youth. I asked my audience the possible character of Khalistan. Would non-Sikhs be allowed to live there? What would be their status? Would that be a democratic country with free judiciary and other democratic institutions? None was prepared for such questions. I was told that it was slogan that they raised in sheer desperation. I further told them that if the demand of restoration of all Punjabi speaking areas to Punjab and autonomy under Anandpur resolution was conceded, it would become a Hindu majority state who could rule the state without sharing power with the Sikhs and if Punjab was excluded from autonomous federal institutions like the Supreme Court, Sikhs would be the worst victim. I analysed the Sikh problem essentially as deprivation from political power. For the Congress party returned to power with the bulk of Hindu support plus marginal support of sections of Sikhs like Ramgariya and Mazahbi Sikhs, excluding the mainstream of Sikh community. If Akali Dal turned into Punjabi Dal and was able to secure the same percentage of Hindu support, Sikhs could rule over the state for ever. I was asked if any Hindu would join the new Punjabi Dal. I replied that many Hindus who genuinely believed in a Punjabi identity would join it. I recalled Gandhi's comment when Sheikh Abdullah converted Muslim Conference into National Conference in 1939. He had said "even if not a single Hindu joined the new party, Abdullah's moral strength had been multiplied". I further argued that Hindus were not immune from temptation of becoming an MLA and sharing power as ministers. That category alone would ensure the requisite Hindu support.

The success of my approach at Amritsar emboldened me to address similar meetings in all the towns of Punjab. Later, on my request, Sarva Seva Sangh agreed to send about 100 Gandhian workers from all over the country who were allotted different parts of the rural areas of the state. They were briefed about the basic problem of Punjab at Ferozpur and were asked to report back their reactions after a fortnight at Amritsar where all their queries were answered. We met finally at Pathankote

and assessed the final outcome of their dialogue between the two communities. In between I was called by the leaders of the Panthic party which was organizing the militant movement in the state at their well fortified underground cell. I was told that they might not follow my highly intellectual and sophisticated arguments but were convinced that I knew Sikh mind and the problems of the community. I was assured of full security for me and my team in my activities.

It is far from me to claim credit for the development that eventually culminated in partial secularization of the Akali Dal. I was simply associated with the trend that I could anticipate was bound to take place in the politics of Punjab. Above all, it was compulsion of power that made Akali leaders to realize that Hindu support was vital for their attaining power. But a combination of a Sikh party and a Hindu party does not make a viable stable

secular front. Akali Dal for its long term survival must transform itself into a genuine secular regional party with adequate share for non Sikhs in the highest decision making forum. After all Sikh history has set an example of real secularism. If Gurus used two swords Piri and Miri and two platforms Akal Takhat and Harminder Sahib as symbols of secular and religious affairs, less mortals must separate political and religious leadership also. Let the lesson of the latest assembly election be carried to its logical conclusion.

A genuine and full-fledged secular regional party in Punjab would not only be able to play an important role in national politics but will also enable it to promote understanding between emerging Punjabi identities in India and Pakistan which could substantially contribute in promoting peace and prosperity in the subcontinent.

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(Continued from Page 6)


in terms of level playing fields in education, employment, nutrition, healthcare, social security, housing and protection and preservation of ecosystems and biodiversity. The latter measurement connotes inclusive growth which means good governance.

The third element is that of transparency, integrity and elimination of corruption. The process of liberalisation was meant to reduce corruption, but ironically, it has given rise to a demon of corruption that is eating into the

very fibre of country's politics. The second UPA government was caught in a spate of corruption scandals which badly affected the confidence of people in governance. There cannot be good governance at any rate without seriously tackling the menace of corruption.


Finally, in order to deliver good governance, India has to pursue the values of equality, identity, pluralism, dignity, security and solidarity. These values are widely discussed in governance as well as development literature, so they

need no elaboration. All these values are best achieved in a vibrant democracy. The challenge is to make democracy deliver. In order to do so, to revitalise democracy, and make it substantive, the primacy of voters needs to be restored through a political structural adjustment (see Giri, Do Voters Matter, *Janata*, 21 December 2014). So, as we saw, governance is process, not a policy prescription, nor a product. The process is continuous and self-renewing with structural and strategic changes to build a good society.




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Governance by ordinances

Rajindar Sachar

Bangladesh needs fresh start
Kuldip Nayar

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Adnan Sattar

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Sankara Narayanan

I am getting more and more convinced of the truth of the idiom attributed to Marx namely, “that the bourgeois government is the executive committee of the big business and industrial houses”. This is sharply brought out by Modi government issuing ordinances on increased FDI in Insurance and the Coal Mines (Special Ordinance) the very next day after the Parliament adjourned, notwithstanding that it had over three weeks to get these Bills introduced and get them passed. Of course it is well known that BJP lacks majority in Rajya Sabha. But then why it did not call for a joint session where it claims it has majority? That a devious game was deliberately being played by BJP in resorting to two ordinances is clear from the Union Finance Minister's open declaration (even during parliament session) that “if the opposition did not relent, the government was ready to take a joint session route” – notwithstanding this boast the government opted for undemocratic route of ordinances.

It is well known that there are serious differences in Parliament about the very motive of passing the amendments allowing increased FDI in Insurance Sector – that is why the insurance bill has been held up for

nearly six years and BJP ironically was the vociferous opponent of the bill in the last Lok Sabha. The history of L.I.C. since 1956, when life insurance was nationalized by paying just Rs. five Crores to the then private insurance companies has been a gold mine to the union government. L.I.C. has given to the central government hefty amounts yearly (2008 – 09 to 2012 – 13) of Rs. 929.12 Crores, 1030.92 Crores, 1137.62 Crores, 1281.23 Crores, 1436.38 Crores respectively (It also donated Rs. 7000 Crore in 7th Plan). It defies logic why in such a situation central government should welcome FDI resulting in loss to L.I.C. which will have to share premiums paid by Indian citizens to foreigners, unless it is a commitment given by Modi on his U.S.A. visit. So much is the desperate attempt to woo foreign investors that when their reaction was the expected one, namely that they would wait for regular law to be passed before risking their investment, union government came out with a convoluted version in the press that even if ordinance is not approved by the Parliament, enhanced FDI made during ordinance period would remain valid and irreversible. This proposition is legally unsound because unless Parliament passes the law by endorsing the ordinance, all

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actions under the ordinance, would be unconstitutional.

The ordinance regarding auction of coal blocks is even more mischievous. I can understand that the blocks having been cancelled by the Supreme Court last year had to be auctioned afresh. But under the cover of re-auctioning, mischievous steps are being taken to erode the provisions of Coal Mines (Nationalization Act, 1973) which provided that all rights title in relation to coal mines shall stand vested in the central government. It also provides that no person other than the central government or a government company or a corporation managed or controlled by central government can engage in mining. I am convinced that union government deliberately avoided introducing the bill in Rajya Sabha. I say this because by the ordinance the union government has surreptitiously indirectly amended the Coal Mines Nationalization Act, 1973. It knew very well that for BJP to reopen nationalization by a debate in the parliament would make it run for cover and an open charge of serving the interest of its election fund donors. The ordinance is a half-clever sly trick to bring private sector into coal mining after a lapse of over 40 years. People in coal business have explained that ordinance explicitly allows private-public joint ventures and permits commercial mining by state government companies - activities which the Supreme Court had said were illegal. This will benefit favourite companies of Modi government that are already partnered by state government companies which lack mining expertise - an indirect method to scuttle the coal mining nationalization law.

The ordinance regarding land acquisition is the limit of hypocrisy and shows total contempt for parliamentary system. The Act was the result of years of massive agitation by organizations like Narmada Bachao Andolan to get some justice to the evictees of land taken for the benefit of big business and industrialists. Surely this unanimous legislation by the previous Parliament cannot be set at naught by an executive fiat - the irony being that the Act was approved in the previous Lok Sabha by a parliamentary committee headed by the present BJP Lok Sabha Speaker. The puerile excuse that it was necessitated by keeping exemption of atomic plants from the provision of the Act is phony because this would have required only amendment of Section 105. There was no urgency to dilute social impact assessment measure and the provision of enhanced compensation which was to benefit the millions of poor and dispossessed. Why does not BJP openly admit that it owes a debt to big business by displacing lakhs of farmers/poor residents so that it could open up Delhi-Mumbai corridors for the corporate sector for which Modi's first visit to Japan was the precursor. In fact ordinance specifically empowers the government to exclude industrial corridors from the applicability of the Act.

No Mr. President Mukherjee Sir, Your Excellency seeking clarification from three Union Ministers was only part obligation under the Constitution when issuing the ordinance - the real stake holders, the millions of poor farming population needed to be consulted and heard through their well established representatives prior to issuing the ordinance especially when these organizations

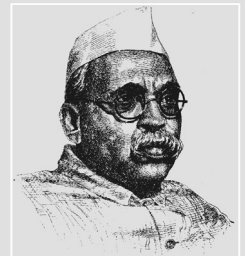
had also represented to you seeking a meeting.

Ordinance making power is the legacy of British colonialism. This should have no place in free India, nor is it to be found in any other democratic countries. But Modi Government is flouting the norm openly by having already readied an ordinance on Arbitration Act. What urgency can possibly explain such a bizarre move?

The Supreme Court has very strongly commented as far back as in 1987 that ordinance making power "is in the nature of emergency power to take action when the legislature is not in session. This power is to be used to meet an extraordinary situation and it cannot be allowed to be perverted to serve political ends".

Thankfully Modi's undemocratic exercise of power is being resisted by trade unions who went on a token strike have also decided to hold a joint demonstration and protest before the parliament when it holds its next session.

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Between the lines

Bangladesh needs fresh start

Kuldip Nayar

Dhaka was understandably in the midst of violence a few days ago because Begum Khalida Zia of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) had given a call for blockade. Hers was a protest against the polls held on January 5 last year when Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina won a majority even before a single vote was cast.

Begum Zia is to blame herself largely because she boycotted the election. She suspected that the polls would be a farce and that it was futile to contest. But that argument did not hold water because the election held despite her boycott was by and large a free and fair affair. General H.M. Ershad's Jatiya Party was able to return some numbers who constitute the main opposition in parliament today.

That Sheikh Hasina is authoritarian is nothing new. But Begum Zia gave legitimacy to Sheikh Hasina's strong methods by avoiding the polls. Sheikh Hasina's governance is a one-person rule and even the judiciary feels shy of giving judgments which may annoy her. As for bureaucracy, it has become a rubber stamp.

Begum Zia's charge that she was forced to stay in her party office for the whole night may be true. The police themselves admit that they had beefed up the security and were willing to take her to her home. Apparently, she wanted to go somewhere else so as to pursue the call for a demonstration on the first

anniversary of her election boycott.

Bangladesh won independence through the blood of thousands of people who fought the then ruling Pakistani army. The country should have settled down to peaceful conditions by now. But, as has happened in other liberated countries, the freedom fighters themselves battle against one another to register supremacy. Bangladesh is no different.

What is painful is the effort to tear the social fabric which the liberators and custodians of democracy had inherited when Bangladesh was born. But over a period of time they have been concentrating more on usurping power and wanting to dominate. And they seem to stop at nothing in achieving them. Bangladesh is in the midst of something like that. The army once took over the state and tried to govern. But it found that the Bangladeshis loved to rule themselves, raucously and irrationally.

Therefore, the army does not want to burn its fingers again. The two Begums, Sheikh Hasina and Khalida Zia, continue to fight and have no compunction in harming the country to establish their supremacy. However, good fallout of their never-ending confrontation is that the people have learnt not to obey their calls for *hartal* or disturb the work. Bangladesh has sustained the growth rate at six percent a year for the last two decades.

Yet what is the solution for peaceful governance? New Delhi, which helped the Bangladeshis to liberate themselves, could play a role. But it is backing Sheikh Hasina because of her secular credentials. Begum Zia has staked her future by aligning with the Jammāt-e-Islami which is fundamentalist and which sided with the anti-liberation forces, including the Pakistani army, during the freedom struggle. Islamabad continues to try to fish in troubled waters. But its dependence is on the extremist elements which do not seem to sell at this juncture.

Despite an appeal in the name of Islam, Bangladesh remains a secular, democratic state. Although the Indian Muslim League, which founded Pakistan, originated in East Bengal, later East Pakistan could not silence the voices of liberalism that have been the bedrock of this area. The people, increasingly becoming religious today, are liberal at heart. Nearly one million Hindus still live there and go about their religious obligations without much interference.

Pakistan, although trying its best, has not been able to make headway because of the murders and atrocities its army committed to suppress the Bangladeshis' freedom movement. The cold blooded murder of the cream of the Bangladesh society was meant to deny it a future of meritorious people. Islamabad's army was instrumental in the worst kind of pogrom.

A book entitled, *The Blood Telegram—India's Secret War in East Pakistan*, by Gary G. Bass, has confirmed this. But what the book reveals is the misreporting of events in Bangladesh. Many of US Embassy staff did not approve of them. “(The US) Embassy has had full-scale revolt on general issue by virtually all officers in Consulate General, Dacca, coupled with forfeiture of leadership for American community there, Dacca’s reporting has been tendentious to an extreme,” says the book.

Bangladesh has not been liberated in the true sense because it heavily depends on foreign aids. There is a consortium with America playing the leading role to provide Dhaka with foreign exchange and a large amount of *Takka*, the Bangladeshi currency.

As long as the Bangladesh leaders do not look within, they will continue to depend on foreign powers which will naturally exact a price. Engaged as they are in internal squabbles, the political parties have no concrete programmes to liberate themselves from foreign influence. In fact, the assistance of foreign powers is sought to deal with the domestic problems. However, this is not a long-term solution.

The tragedy of Bangladesh is that both the Begums, because of their personal enmity, continue to build their support with the help of outside powers. As long as they dominate the political scene, Bangladesh has little future. But then how does this change? Unfortunately, no alternative is emerging. And many attempts in the past have made no headway.

(Continued on Page 7)

Do voters matter - II

D. K. Giri

“In a democracy, all citizens, regardless of their interest, hold office. Every one of us is in a position of responsibility. We the people are the boss. We will get the kind of political leadership we demand and deserve”. These were the famous and loaded words from John F. Kennedy. We need to deeply reflect on this statement to see how much of it is true in present context. Was Kennedy being platitudinous? Or did he mean this to be the true role and status of citizens in a democracy? Let us recall a few more perceptions of democracy. Martin Luther King III exhorted the citizens, “if we are to be a great democracy, we must take an active role in our democracy, our role goes far beyond simply casting our votes”. But why do people vote? It is just to choose their representatives. But do they really represent the people? Giuseppe Prezzolini, an Italian writer, author and editor, strongly derided the representative democracy, “Representative government is artifice, a political myth, designed to conceal from the masses the dominance of a self-selected, self-perpetuating, and self-serving traditional ruling class.” He debunks the assumption that, in a democracy, power rests with the people, and is exercised by them directly, or indirectly, through a system of representation involving free elections. It is true that voters in most democracies are let down by their representatives who, once elected, behave as their leaders or rulers.

There are concerns among political leaders and scientists about the alienation of voters from

democracies, or for that matter the state. Alexi de Tocqueville, in his major study of “Democracy in America” had argued that state may overgrow and become an intrusive regulatory agency in the daily lives of people. The assumption that the state was guarantor of public welfare and progressive change was fallacious, argued Tocqueville. He cautioned, “If this gravely mistaken assumption was not countered in theory and practice, it would become a recipe for capitulation to the dictates of public administrators”. He suggested a series of countervailing forces including decentralisation of governance, forming social and political associations to stand between the individual and the state when the latter became unrepresentative and exclusive, and nurturing the spirit of liberty.

Tocqueville’s countervailing strategy has not worked effectively as the state became too powerful to control by the citizens. What is therefore suggested here is another approach where voters become a structural part of the governance process, and thereby inform and influence the state actions. For instance, let us look at the possibility of voters becoming co-legislators along with their MLAs in Assemblies and the MPs in the Parliament. A short term and ad hoc experiment was made in 2012, when civil society representatives (voters) were invited to co-draft the Lokpal Bill. Anna Hazare led a formidable movement for institution of Jan Lokpal to check all pervading corruption in the society. Sensing the growing appeal of Anna’s struggle to the people, the then government

invited Anna and his nominees to be a part of a joint drafting committee. This was done not to initiate a new legislative procedure, but to placate Anna and diffuse his appeal. That is why the arrangement fell through in no time. Co-legislation could be part of the constitutional arrangement through an amendment. Voters could be consulted through a referendum or voters could be asked to suggest issues to be legislated upon. The legislators will be constitutionally bound to take up those suggestions.

A co-legislative practice has been initiated recently in the European Union (EU). It is pertinent to note that Union of India and the European Union are quite similar in their political and social texture although both have come up through dissimilar trajectories. On independence itself, India began as a Union of states, a plural society, and has been alert in preserving its unity and pluralism, while European Union is being built out of independent states coming together. Be that as it may, the initiative taken in the European Union to give a greater say to the voters in EU affairs is called the European Citizens Initiative (ECI). Martin Schulz, the president of the European Union Parliament had hailed this move and said, "it is the very first experiment in participatory democracy at an EU level and an opportunity for the people in EU to set the agenda." What is ECI? In European Union, although there was growing awareness about the creation and growth of EU as a supranational entity, the voter like anywhere else was losing interest as it was evident from steadily declining voter turnout in EU parliament elections. Since the direct elections to the European Parliament started in 1979 when the turnout was 62 per cent, it fell down to almost half at 34 per cent in 2014. The ECI was created to arrest the voters' alienation, also thereby

to offset the democratic deficit. The ECI allowed any national of a European Union country to take part in the legislative process to make it more participative, although some conditions apply to this procedure. One condition is, in order to qualify; an initiative must be approved by the citizens/voters from at least one quarter of EU member states that is 8 states out of 29 at the moment. The second condition is, the initiative organisers then have twelve months to collect one million signatures of EU citizens to have their proposal examined by the European Commission. If successful in meeting these conditions, the initiative organisers can present it to the parliament. However, irrespective of the conditions or a particular procedure with regard to the contexts, the significance of such arrangements on voters engagement is worthy of discussion and emulation. Interestingly, many Members of European Parliament say, although ECI requirements may seem hard for the average citizen to meet, this is where people need to rally and create a real momentum to wrest part of the legislative privilege from their representatives in whom they seem to be losing faith. The idea of ECI must be shared by the entire community and truly transnational tools may be developed to pool and share ideas throughout the European Union.

The above was one concrete example of how citizens/voters must be involved in the political process. There is another example of how voters are getting more powers in addition to voting once in 4 or 5 years. In Britain, the 'right to recall' bill has been passed last year. The power to recall an MP means that an MP is forced to stand down and face by-election if s(he) is found guilty of wrongdoing on three counts: one, an MP is convicted in

the United Kingdom and receives a custodial sentence of 12 months; second, the House of Commons suspends an MP for at least 10 days when Parliament is sitting and three, an MP is convicted of an offence under section 10 of the Parliamentary Standards Act 2009 which is intentionally providing false and misleading information to claim MP's allowances. If one of these conditions exists, and if 10 percent of voters in the MP's constituency sign a recall petition, then the MP in question will have to face a by-election. This is a path-breaking reform in partly restoring the primacy of voters in respect of their representatives.

There could be several such constitutional reform initiatives to engage the voters. It becomes increasingly important when one looks at the conduct and ability of MPs or MLAs in carrying out legislative duties. In India, due to continuous disruptions, normal sittings in the Parliament as well as state Legislatures are quite low in number. We are said to be the largest democracy in the world, but our Parliament fares poorly by international norms. Britain's Parliament met for 162 days in 2013-14, whereas Indian Parliament, the Lok Sabha, for a decade, 2003-13 met for an average of 68 days a year. The state Assemblies did even worse. During the same period, the Delhi Assembly met only for an average of 21 days, Goa 26, Bihar 31 and Haryana Assembly for a shocking 13 days per year. Furthermore, Indian Parliament has also not passed a single private member's bill - an important indicator of MP's independence from party lines - since 1970. Such is the role and efficiency of people's representatives in the legislatures.

Gandhi's composite vision of India

Anil Nauriya

This article was written a few years ago in the context of a play that had sought to glorify Gandhi's assassin. The issues with which it deals are relevant in the current context in which similar tendencies have re-surfaced.

Our argument, therefore, is that voters must be brought into the governance process - in legislative, executive, and watch-dog roles. And they must be rewarded for doing so. Why should voters be involved without material gain to themselves, which is some cash reward, like any other service provider in the system? Voters can no longer be courted with platitudes and moral sermons on good citizenship. In fact, the perks and privileges given to the legislators could be cut down to compensate the voters for their time and energy. Otherwise, voters may not participate beyond voting. A survey was done to measure citizens' participation. It was found that 91% voted in elections, 25% joined any campaign, 33% made contact with officials, and only 11% joined protest demonstrations. So the fear that voters are not much active beyond voting comes true.

To conclude, theoretically, in a democracy, which is essentially self-rule, voters should be active, and practically, if voters are not actively engaged, not only democracy suffers, voters' unrest and cynicism grow as their representatives become apathetic as well as self-serving. The only way to revitalize democracy - generate hope and deliver governance - is to engage the voters, because voters matter in a democracy.

It is difficult to share the certitude of those who have been opposing as "nonsense" a ban on the play glorifying Gandhi's assassin. Liberal opinion, or what passes for it, has tended to invoke freedom of expression to compare the restrictions, illusory as they maybe, with M F Hussain's recent unpleasant experiences. This comparison is erroneous. Mr. Hussain's paintings did not preach violence or the politics of assassination.

If there were a play which sought to justify Adolf Hitler and to 'give his perspective' on why it became 'necessary' to eliminate millions of Jews, or a play justifying the anti-Sikh pogrom in Delhi in 1984, would this also now be justified as an exercise of freedom of expression? The glorification of the sati incident in Rajasthan was rightly interdicted by an ordinance; also the local public demonstration in support of the Bhagalpur blindings - on the ground that those blinded were criminals - was condemned by civil society.

That a columnist of Harijan and former editor of that paper and of Young India should be shot dead by the editor of Hindu Rashtra was an extraordinary way to settle a political argument. Imagine an editor today killing another editor and a play justifying that killing being bruited about

as an exercise of the freedom of expression. The matter is therefore, not as simple as has been made out. After all, what must a play contain before its performance may be validly restricted as a permissible 'reasonable restriction' on freedom of expression as envisaged by the Constitution?

One can, however, be more open to a position which, while admitting that the play deserves a legal ban, asserts that the misinformation contained in it needs to be tackled politically. The play is supposedly based on the statement, which the convicted murderer made in the course of his trial. That statement is a tissue of suppressio veri suggestio falsi. The role played by the Hindu Mahasabha at each stage from 1928 onwards in complicating settlement of the communal problem is throughout suppressed from the statement. Nor does Gandhi's assassin mention the fact that the two-nation idea was propounded by Savarkar in the presidential speech from the Hindu Mahasabha platform in December 1939.

In this speech, Savarkar attacked the territorial concept of nation: "This conception has...received a rude shock in Europe itself from which it was imported wholesale to India and the present war has justified my assertion by exploding the myth altogether"...Instead he propounded the alternative

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conception that "...we Hindus are marked out as an abiding Nation by ourselves". (Indian Annual Register I 939, Vol. II, p. 317).

Jinnah's formal adoption of the two-nation theory came soon after this and is simply the other side of the coin. Savarkar, the assassin's ideological mentor and co-accused, then, must rank among the ideological forebears of Pakistan. Similarly, having spoken of equal rights for all in Pakistan in August 1947, Jinnah relapsed to speak Savarkar's language in December 1947. At the League Council meeting in Karachi, Jinnah spoke of Pakistan as a "Muslim State" (though not an "ecclesiastical state"). And on March 28, 1948, apparently unmoved even by Gandhi having staked his life for a composite concept of Indian nationhood, Jinnah said: "Pakistan is the embodiment of the unity of the Muslim nation and so it must remain". (Jinnah's speeches and statements as Governor General of Pakistan, 1947-48, pp. 211-212). On August 15, 1943 Savarkar declared: "I have no quarrel with Mr. Jinnah's two-nation theory. We Hindus are a nation by ourselves and it is a historical fact that Hindus and Muslims are two-nations". (Indian Annual Register, 1943, Vol. 2, p. 10)

The vital difference between Gandhi's approach and the Savarkar line, to which the assassin subscribed, is thus not mentioned in the court statement. This lay in their entirely different definition of the nation. Gandhi's definition of nation was one of composite Indian nationhood while Savarkar's concept of nation, like Jinnah's was religion-based. Gandhi's understanding of Indian nationhood is summed up succinctly

in a statement he issued a fortnight before his death:

"Delhi is the Metropolis of India. If therefore we really in our hearts do not subscribe to the two-nation theory, in other words, if we do not regard the Hindus and the Muslims as constituting two distinct nations, we shall have to admit that the picture that Delhi presents today is not what we have envisaged always of the capital of India. Delhi is the Eternal City, as the ruins of its forerunners Indraprastha and Hastinapur testify. It is the heart of India. Only a nitwit can regard it as belonging to the Hindus or the Sikhs only. It may sound harsh but it is the literal truth. From Kanya Kumari to Kashmir and from Karachi to Dibrugarh in Assam, all Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians and Jews who people this vast sub-continent and have adopted it as their dear motherland, have an equal right to it. No one has a right to say that it belongs to the majority community only and that the minority community can only remain there as the underdog. Whoever serves it with the purest devotion must have the first claim. Therefore, anyone who wants to drive out of Delhi all Musalmans as such must be set down as its enemy No. 1 and, therefore, enemy no. 1 of India. We are rushing towards the catastrophe. It is the bounden duty of every son and daughter of India to take his or her full share in averting it". (Letter to Men and Women of Gujarat, Jan 14, 1948, Selected Letters, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, p. 324).

Over-emphasis, especially in Anglo-centric writings, on Gandhi's religiosity has sometimes blinded scholars to the fact that Gandhi's

definition of nation is emphatically non-religious, non-denominational and secular in every sense of the term, while Savarkar's and Jinnah's definition of nation is religion-based. Gandhi's concept of nation was and is shared by millions of Muslims, Hindus Sikhs, Christians and others while the Savarkar-Jinnah definition of nation was and is a source of communal conflict and made anti-humanistic demands for exchanges of population and eviction. Hindu Mahasabha and RSS members prior to independence acted especially to injure the concept of a composite Indian nation. As the veteran socialist, N G Goray, wrote in the Congress Socialist of May 14, 1938, the Mahasabhaitees and RSS workers attacked the May Day procession, tore up the nationalist flag and beat up leaders like Senapati Bapat and Kanitkar.

(Continued from Page 4)

Fundamentalism is no solution because it seeks to mix religion with politics, apart from the archaic thinking it cultivates. There is no go from democracy. But the hitch is that hostility between the ruling Awami League and the BNP is concentrating on how to grab power. The key to unlock the problem lies with Shiekh Hasina.

It is probably too much to expect from the Prime Minister Hasina to announce fresh elections so as to give a chance to the BNP to seek its fortunes from within the system. But that seems to be the only way out in a country that is sharply divided and engaged in political feuds. The poverty of the people which both parties promised to eradicate is not possible until there is a reasonable normalcy. This cannot happen without a fresh start in the political field.

Resurgence of Godse

Ram Puniyani

Times are a changing; and changing fast. During last many decades most Hindu nationalists have kept the appreciation of their hero, Nathuram Godse under wraps. The programs appreciating his politics did use to make small news here and there some time; but as such it was a muted act not much publicized and generally kept as a low key affair. During last few years Pradeep Dalvi's play in Marathi, "Mee Nathuram Boltoy" (I, Nathuram speaking), attacking Gandhi and upholding Godse, drew packed houses in various places in Maharashtra. Many people had also protested against staging of this play off and on.

With the new dispensation coming to power (Modi Sarkar, May, 2014) many communal assertions, acts and intimidations are up in the air. It seems these acts are being silently appreciated by those in power. This inference is logical as none in the positions of power have either reprimanded or opposed these Godse acolytes. The main reason is that due to the compulsions of power they do not openly support the Godse appreciation clubs. They also do not condemn these voices as they too belong to the Godse ideology of Hindu nationalism. This Hindu nationalism in popular parlance is projected as 'Nationalism', keeping the Hindu prefix in the silent mode.

The latest in the series of acts - statements by this Godse appreciation clubs is the bhumi-pujan (earth prayer-a ritual before beginning of new construction) by Hindu Mahasabha for Godse temple in Meerut (Dec 25 2014). The activists of Akhil Bharatiya Hindu

Mahasabha are all set to build the country's first temple for murderer of Mahatma Gandhi in Meerut. There are several demands from the Hindu Mahasabha offices to install his statues. The Hindu Mahasabha has requested land from the Centre to erect a statue of Godse in the national capital. The paperback issue of Godse's book is already running into second reprint.

The BJP MP Sakhshi Maharaj recently called Godse as nationalist; of course he retracted it soon; apparently to ensure that the ruling party, BJP, is not embarrassed on the issue. At the same time, BJP's parent organization RSS has come out with two books meant for internal circulation. These books claim to ensure that RSS viewpoint is reached to its Pracharaks, swayamsevaks. These books are "RSS- Ek Parichay" (RSS-an introduction) and "RSS- Ek Saral Parichay" (RSS-a simple introduction), the second of which is written by veteran RSS member M. G. Vaidya. Shri Vaidya claims that "a narrative of accusation was built around RSS", so the book to dispel that. Essentially these books aim to dissociate RSS from Godse. While the Prime Minister Modi is maintaining maun (silence) on the subject the opposition leaders are strongly criticizing Hindu Mahasabha's and others' views on the murder of Mahatma Gandhi by Nathuram Godse.

What is the relationship between Godse and RSS? Was he part of RSS and later left it or was he part of it and also joined Hindu Mahasabha in mid-1930s? As for as official line is concerned RSS has tried to keep its slate clean by stating that it had

nothing to do with Godse and he was not a member of RSS when he killed Mahatma Gandhi. Just to recall, in early 1998 Professor Rajendra Singh, the then RSS chief, had stated "Godse was motivated by akhand Bharat. His intention was good but he used the wrong method." (April 27 1998, Outlook)

How do we understand the whole issue? The major backdrop to understand the issue is to see the politics of Hindu nationalism as expressed through Hindu Mahasabha and RSS. These organizations remained aloof from the freedom struggle. Hindu Mahasabha (HM), was more interested in the immediate participation in politics, as the flag bearers of Hindu communal politics, and the RSS wanted to concentrate on making a network of 'cadres' before forming organizations and infiltrating into different arena of education, culture, electoral politics and state apparatus. There was a lot of overlap in the agenda of these organizations as they were both working for the common goal of Hindu Nation. Nathuram Godse, 'uniquely' symbolized the fusion of both these two trends.

RSS could get away with dissociating with Godse or rather underplaying Godse's association with RSS as there was no official record of members of RSS, and so they could disown Godse at legal level. In 1930 Godse joined RSS and very soon rose to be the "baudhdik pracharak" (intellectual propagator). Like both HM and RSS he was ardent Hindu Nationalist.

As a strong Hindutvawadi he was extremely critical of Gandhi's

ahimsa (non-violence) and the anti-British movements led by him. Godse had very poor opinion of Gandhi's role in freedom movement. RSS-Hindu Mahasabha kept criticizing Gandhi for his involving all religious communities in the freedom movement. Gandhi kept religion as personal matter and projected overarching Indian identity for all. This was what annoyed the HM-RSS combine, as they wanted only Hindus to be recognized as Indians. Godse's assessment of nationalism of Gandhi is expressed in a way which identifies nationalism with Hindu kings. He used very peculiar parameters to assess Gandhi, "His (Gandhi's) followers cannot see what is clear even to the blind viz. that Gandhi was a mere pigmy before Shivaji, Rana Pratap and Guru Govind (Pg. 40, Why I assassinated Gandhi?) and finally about the winning of swaraj and freedom I maintain the Mahatma's contribution was negligible." (Ibid. pg. 87)

He held Mahatma responsible for appeasing Muslims, and thereby the formation of Pakistan. About his association with RSS and Hindu Mahasabha, he writes, "Having worked for the uplift of the Hindus I felt it necessary to take part in political activities of the country for the protection of just rights of Hindus. I therefore left the Sangh and joined Hindu Mahasabha (Godse, 'Why I Assassinated Mahatma Gandhi' 1993, Pg. 102).

Hindu Mahasabha was at that time the only political party of Hindutva, and he became general secretary of its Pune branch. In due course he started a newspaper, called "Agrani or Hindu Rashtra". As such Gandhi murder was not on the charges propagated by them (Partition and insistence on paying Pakistan's dues (Rs. 55 crore) from the treasury), but due to the basic

Abominable

However, nothing could have been more despicable than the campaign of the Hindu Mahasabha to glorify the assassin of Mahatma Gandhi. It must be mentioned that the first statement hailing Nathuram Godse as a "patriot" had come from a senior BJP MP, Sakshi Maharaj. As a result of the prime minister's private advice or directive to him, he withdrew his statement and declared that he no longer thought that Godse was a patriot. Yet nothing deterred the Hindu Mahasabha from demanding the construction of Godse temples and installation of his statues across the country. To this folly, it added a new doctrine on conversions. Since the reconversion of Muslims to Hinduism would lead to "genetic abnormalities", said a leader of the Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha, Muslims "should be packed off to Pakistan". Why Pakistan would accept such a huge exodus from this country or what the international community would think of India's expulsion of 13 per cent of its population seems to be of no concern to Godse's bhakts.

What happened during a debate on the subject on a TV news

channel was abominable beyond words. The Hindu Mahasabha's national general secretary, Acharya Madan, justified the Mahatma's murder by Godse. He argued that "killing for a cause" was no crime, and that patriotic Godse had a just cause. The anchor asked him whether his unacceptable behaviour could give others the right to strangulate him. He ducked the question but went on pontificating that "Mr Gandhi" was responsible for the death of "10 lakh Hindus". This was the result of Partition, for which the responsibility was "Mr Gandhi's". The Hindu Mahasabha spokesman went on to say that, unfortunately, there was no law under which "Mr Gandhi" could be brought to book. So Godse did what he had to. There was not an iota of support for the Hindu Mahasabha's position during the TV debate but it is scandalous beyond measure that so little notice was taken of the vile words against the father of the nation and so much praise heaped on his murderer. Both government and Opposition parties have been equally neglectful in this respect.

—Inder Malhotra

deep differences between the politics of Gandhi and that of the followers of the Hindu Rashtra. These two reasons are proffered merely as a pretext for the same.

What does Godse mean when he says that he left RSS? Is it true? This truth behind Nathuram's leaving RSS, is clarified by his brother Gopal Godse. In an interview given

to 'The Times of India' (25 January, 1998); Gopal Godse, who was also an accomplice in the murder tells us the reality behind Nathuram's statement that 'he left RSS'. Gopal Godse says "The appeasement policy followed by him (Gandhi, added) and imposed on all Congress governments' encouraged the Muslim separatist tendencies that eventually created Pakistan...Technically and

theoretically he (Nathuram) was a member (of RSS), but he stopped workings for it later. His statement in the court that he had left the RSS was to protect the RSS workers who would be imprisoned following the murder. On the understanding that they (RSS workers) would benefit from his dissociating himself from the RSS, he gladly did it.”

So this is the logic of Godse saying that he ‘left’ RSS. The dual membership (RSS+HinduMahasabha) was not a problem. Thus the murder of Gandhi was steeped in both the streams of Hindutva politics, RSS and HM. His editing the paper called, ‘Hindu Rashtra’ was quite symbolic. This murder had a broad sanction of the followers of HM and RSS, as they celebrated Mahatma’s murder by distributing sweets, “All their (RSS) leaders’ speeches were full of communal poison. As a final result, the poisonous atmosphere was created in which such a ghastly tragedy (Gandhi’s murder) became possible. RSS men expressed their joy and distributed sweets after Gandhi’s death.” (excerpt from Sardar Patel’s letters to M. S. Golwalkar and S. P. Mookerjee.). Godse was no freak. The way Hindu communalists were spewing poison against Gandhi, it was the logical outcome of their politics. And Godse had the ‘benefit’ of the teachings of both RSS as well as HM. They used the word “wadh” for this murder. This word “wadh” stands for killing a demon who is harming the society. In a way Gandhi murder was the first major offensive of the Hindutva politics on Indian nationalism; in a way it was to herald the onset of bigger strides which Hindutva politics has assumed during last few decades, and this is what we are witnessing today.

So though officially RSS family kept dissociating from Gandhi’s

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A new resolve for the New Year

Javed Anand

It’s time Muslims seriously considered making a long overdue New Year’s resolution: bidding farewell to the state of denial, saying “no more” to conspiracy theories.

How does the mere condemnation of the cold-blooded massacre of schoolchildren in Peshawar by a suicide squad of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) help? A host of maulanas and maulvis promptly expressed outrage, denounced the savagery, asserted that those guilty of such heinous crimes cannot be called Muslims. “This is not Islam,” they said. But the unrepentant TTP has no doubt it is more-Muslim-than-thou.

Within hours of the shooting spree, it released a photo (taken earlier) in which the soon-to-turn-mass-murderers could be seen staring straight at the camera, with a banner in the backdrop proclaiming Islam’s core article of faith: “La ’ilaha ’illa-llah, Muhammadun rasulu-llah (There is no god but God, Muhammad is the messenger of God)”. The very next day, it quoted out of context a hadith (saying) of the Prophet that a boy with pubic hair is no longer a child. Thus, according to the TTP, the butchery was entirely halal.

No doubt, the killers must have prayed prior to the carnage, beginning with the words, “Bismillahirrahmanirrahim (In the name of Allah, the most merciful, the most compassionate)”. They killed and died with the absolute conviction that their “virtuous mass murder” would guarantee them a permanent place in paradise.

No doubt, the TTP, other “good terrorists” and “bad terrorists” from Pakistan, the self-proclaimed Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (Isis), the Boko Haram in Nigeria, the al-Shahab in Kenya and Allah knows who else, are plotting their next barbaric deed. Sooner than later, will there be mere condemnation one more time, repeat “this is not Islam” declarations?

This surely is no cure for the malaise within today’s lived Islam. To cry out not-in-my-name is one thing. But to insist that the perpetrators of terror cannot be Muslims is to deny personal agency, evade moral responsibility for what some Muslims do in the name of a shared faith. Perhaps Muslims should heed the Friday sermon of Mirwaiz Umar Farooq at Srinagar’s Jama Masjid a day after the killings. He said: “The Peshawar attack was barbaric and gruesome. It has become incumbent on Islamic scholars and religious preachers to introspect and look for reasons that cause certain elements to commit such crimes and thus defame Islam.”

Where did the “certain elements” get their Islam from? For believing Muslims, the primary sources of Islamic law are the Quran and the Ahadith (plural of hadith, words and deeds of Prophet Mohammed). Do the Quran and the Ahadith promote peace or violence? The Quran, the Bible or the Gita promote neither peace nor violence. It is the believers who choose to interpret passages of their holy texts one way or the other.

Who does the interpreting? Muslims will tell you there is no

place for priesthood or a pope in Islam. That's theory: things don't work that way in real life. Like followers of other faiths, most Muslims have neither the theological wherewithal nor the time or inclination to unravel the Divine Commands on their own. Inevitably then, they rely on some Dharam Guru, high priest, "Shaikhul Islam" for guidance.

The dubious distinction of warping the Muslim mind in the modern era goes to four highly influential theologians: Mohammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (founder of Wahhabism in Arabia), Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb (Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt) and Maulana Abul A'la Maududi (Jamaat-e-Islami, Indian subcontinent). According to these founding fathers of "political Islam", unlike other religions, Islam is not merely a moral or spiritual compass but a political ideology, a theology of power. And it was/is the bounden duty of every Muslim to struggle through every means possible (jihad) to dismantle all man-made laws and institutions and to enforce sharia laws through the instrument of an Islamic state.

An Islamic state and sharia rule are precisely what the likes of the TTP, Isis, Boko Haram and al-Shahab seek to establish. No doubt, many followers of Wahhab, al-Banna, Qutb or Maududi distance themselves from the terrorist Muslim outfits. But who among them can deny that more often than not, it is these very leaders who provide the theological "base camp" of all the terrorist Muslim outfits?

The Students Islamic Movement in India (Simi) is an organisation that was spawned by the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH) in the 1970s. Having subsequently graduated to the ideals

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Let's reclaim faith

Jyoti Punwani

Muslims who say what was done in Peshawar was anti-Islamic and, hence, those who did it are not Muslims, forget that the TTP may well declare them 'kaafirs'. "Jai Sri Ram" was the cry raised by the rioters as they attacked Muslims who had dared to venture out during the January 1993 riots in Mumbai. Reading about these cases, I was repulsed by the way L.K. Advani and associates had transformed the name of one of our most revered and popular gods. A month earlier, I had felt ashamed of being a Hindu, watching the saffron hordes demolishing an ancient structure that had become the touchstone of our country's secularism.

When Babu Bajrangi boasted that he felt like Rana Pratap as he killed Ehsan Jafri, most Hindus watching the sting operation on TV felt sick. Hearing Sadhvi Rithambara (in Indore, 1990) and Sadhvi Saraswati (at the Virat Hindu Sammelan last Sunday) call Muslims gaddaars, I was filled with loathing.

From the lynch mobs of 1993 to the Bajrangis of 2002 to Dara Singh, who killed Graham Staines and his little boys in 1999, to Yogi Adityanath declaring that if "they convert one Hindu girl, we will convert hundreds of their girls", they have been proud Hindus, deriving their inspiration from Hindu mythology, harking back to a distorted version of history. In their imagination, they are the rishis and rajas of yore, roaming the countryside to slay rakshasas and invaders. Not for a moment can I say: "They are not Hindus", though I can say this is not the Hinduism

most of us practise.

Why then are so many articulate and politically aware Muslims finding it difficult to say that the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) are Muslim? "This is not Islam," has been repeated many times over the last few days, as has "They are not Muslims." Indeed, they are. They derive their inspiration from Islam. The picture of the gunmen released by their organisation has the kalima in the background. The kalima is what you recite when you convert to Islam, it is what you recite when you are about to die, so that you go to jannat. That's why these gunmen made their targets recite it just before shooting them. They were mindful of their religious duty.

How many times have we heard "Islam prohibits the killing of innocents; one innocent killed is the killing of humanity. Hence these men cannot be Muslims"? Isn't this a convenient way of washing one's hands off the reality that these killers belong to one's faith? Their version of Islam doesn't gel with one's own, for whom Islam means peace and mercy. That is fine. But at least it should be acknowledged that, for them, the same religion means slaying the enemy mercilessly. Accepting that doesn't take away from Islam. In fact, it obliges one to counter their version of Islam with a different one.

Muslims who say that what was done in Peshawar was anti-Islamic and, hence, those who did it are not Muslims, forget that the TTP

may well declare them kaafirs. “Jis Hindu ka khoon na khole, khoon nahin woh paani hai (The Hindu whose blood doesn’t boil doesn’t have blood but water)” is a slogan coined by the RSS. For them, many of us are not Hindus at all. But who has given them the right to say so? The same applies to those who declare that the TTP are not Muslims. Who is to define who is not a Hindu or a Muslim? Many Indian Muslims were not even willing to believe that the Peshawar attack was the work of the Taliban. Excuses like “tribals” or “bearded imposters” were being made till they were left with no choice after the TTP owned up to the killings.

Then there’s the other excuse: “Terrorism has no religion.” It certainly does. Sadhvi Pragya is a Hindu, as are Colonel Purohit and Swami Aseemanand, who are accused of terrorist acts against Muslims. Hafiz Saeed and Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi are proud Muslims. Let us accept that religion is at the heart of much terrorism in India and Pakistan. By doing so, we don’t betray our faith. By denying it, we shrug off our responsibility to reclaim it.

(Continued from Page 10)

murder by Godse, in private many members not only uphold the dastardly act, but also have succeeded in undermining the importance of Mahatma and they do ‘sympathize’ with Godse. This complex trick kept going on so far. Now with Modi Sarkar there is no need to hide the true ideology and thinking of this combine and so the open efforts to glorify Godse!

(Continued from Page 11)

of jihad, shahadat (martyrdom) and the establishment of an Islamic caliphate, the Simi denounces the

JIH for having reneged on the teachings of Maududi. The Isis aspires to overthrow the original sponsors of Wahhabi Islam — the Saudi monarchy.

Muslims cannot even begin to deal with the malignancy in their midst until they disown the inherently capable-of-mutating legacy of Wahhab, al-Banna, Qutb and Maududi, purge themselves of the idea that while a secular state is a compulsion where Muslims are in a minority, an Islamic state is the

ideal. Perhaps they should get better acquainted with Hassan al-Banna’s younger brother, Gamal, who died last year.

According to Gamal, Middle Age interpretations of the Quran “should be thrown into the sea”. In 2008, he wrote a book arguing that all sayings attributed to the Prophet that are misogynistic, against freedom of religion or promote violence, must be rejected since they are not consonant either with Quranic teachings or the life of Mohammed.

– **Indian Express**

Asaduddin Owaisi must tender apology

Forum for Muslim Studies & Analysis (FMSA) has strongly condemned the statement of AIMIM Chief, Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi in which he had said that every human being is born as Muslim.

When a child is born, he or she remains a human being and it is we who divide them geographically and religiously. If our religious and political leaders do not deliver provocative statements as Asaduddin Owaisi has done then we can achieve unity in diversity, said Dr. Jasim Mohammad while chairing a fortnightly meeting of Forum for Muslim Studies & Analysis held on Media Centre Aligarh. He pointed out that Asaduddin Owaisi is a politician and not an Islamic scholar. If every born person is Muslim then what is the aim of having Iman (believe) on Islam? He called upon people to strongly condemn the statement of Asaduddin Owaisi. He also said that recent and earlier statements of Asaduddin Owaisi clearly indicate that Hindu Mahasabha and AIMIM are two sides of the same coin. He said that

India is a secular country and in such a country the statement of Yogi Adityanath that every person is a born Hindu and that of Asaduddin Owaisi that every human is born as Muslim are a conspiracy to divide the country and society on communal grounds and it is against our Constitution. He said that Indian government should take strict lawful actions against such elements.

Dr. Aftab Alam said that presently India is a developing country and is emerging as an economic power on global level. Religious beliefs and faiths are personal for an individual. Politicisation of religion roadblocks the development of country and so Indian society must reject that.

Prof. Shahabuddin Iraqi said that it is very unfortunate that Asaduddin Owaisi has delivered such a provocative statement which will ultimately give political mileage to communal parties only. He reminded that Islam rejects religious controversy and favours respect to all religions. Asaduddin Owaisi should withdraw his statement and apologize to nation and society.

– **J. Mohammad**

Peshawar massacre

Adnan Sattar

It struck you in the pit of your stomach. The pain was gut-wrenching. You felt as if the ground beneath your feet had parted. Your mind was blown into a million little pieces. How do you cope with the images of schoolchildren, some as young as 11 and 12, their school uniforms drenched in blood, their faces peering out of coffins? Mothers wailing inconsolably, fathers with a vacant stare in their eyes; eyes that looked like dried-up wells in the middle of a parched desert. Mirrors to souls wounded so deeply that life itself had ceased to have any meaning.

The massacre of 141 people, including 133 children, at Army Public School in Peshawar on December 16, 2014, was, at first, beyond comprehension. The grief and pain of the parents and siblings, many of whom had just managed to escape the orgy of killing at the school, defies rendering in ordinary language.

The initial shock soon gave way to an all-consuming rage. Pakistan's military and civilian leadership, which had hitherto been unable to see eye to eye on how to deal with the Taliban, met in Peshawar and declared to the citizens of their beleaguered country that 'enough was enough'. Significantly, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, flanked by opposition leaders, including erstwhile cricketer Imran Khan — known to be a Taliban apologist — told newsmen that there would be no distinction made any more between 'good Taliban' and 'bad ones'.

Surely, moral outrage and anger are all too natural in the face of such a gruesome incident. If calculated murder of over 10 dozen children does not make us angry, perhaps nothing will. However, anger also blunts your capacity to see things in perspective. It engenders a tunnel-vision manifested in the punitive overdrive the Pakistan government went into immediately after the Peshawar massacre. The unofficial moratorium on the death penalty, which had been in place since 2008, was lifted. The hangmen were called up and at least six convicted terrorists were executed by December 21, 2014, despite urgings by international human rights groups to the contrary.

Almost everyone in Pakistan today is saying they want to stand true to the memory of children slaughtered in Peshawar. That seems to be the least common denominator across the political and societal divide. Exceptions are rare. These include increasingly jittery Taliban supporters, such as Maulana Abdul Aziz, the head Imam of the Red Mosque in Islamabad that was stormed by the Pakistan Army in 2008 following a prolonged standoff. Underneath this common resolve, however, lie fundamentally divergent worldviews and ideologies, currently concealed by shared grief and anger.

The struggle of man against power, wrote Milan Kundera, is the struggle of memory against forgetting. The key question today is what is it that you decide to

remember and how? You could view Peshawar as an isolated incident, a total aberration in an otherwise acceptable state of affairs. Or, you could see it as the extreme end of a spectrum of violence that defines contemporary religious terrorism. The conceptual choice has significant consequences for how the public thinks about an event like this and how policymakers respond to it.

What happened in Peshawar has no exact parallels. Yet, children falling prey to terrorism and violence is now so common — and in such a wide variety of contexts — that it hardly strikes you as something unusual. Violence against children is now part of what Hannah Ardent memorably called the 'banality of evil'.

The Taliban, for one, have made a career out of blowing up schools on both sides of Durand Line, the official border dividing Pakistan and Afghanistan. Children, let us not forget, also find themselves within the ranks of suicide-outfits from Boko Haram in Nigeria to the Taliban in Pakistan. Some of these children themselves witnessed extremes of physical violence before being duped or coerced into becoming soldiers of jihadist Islam.

Malala Yusufzai, mature beyond her years, nailed it when she said recently: "I tell my story, not because it is unique, but because it is not." To transcend your own suffering and to connect it with that of others

is indeed a sign of a beautiful mind and a spacious soul.

Now that we have decided to remember, let us also remember that, as Malala fought for her life after being shot in her school van, many in Pakistan had the temerity of calling her a Western stooge. She had herself shot to gain popularity and find herself a foreign passport. So went a shamelessly repeated conspiracy theory. How is that for denial and moral depravity?

In her Nobel Prize acceptance speech, Malala remembered schoolchildren killed by the Taliban in Afghanistan — children who in official accounts in Pakistan are dry statistics, if anything at all. The truth is, children caught in violence, children blown up in suicide attacks, as well as children orphaned by acts of terrorism are all victims. Seldom do we pause to think that children within the folds of the Taliban, who blow themselves up having been brainwashed into believing that it is the shortest route to paradise, are victims too. So are Afghan refugee children in Jolazai and Mosazai camps at the outskirts of Peshawar, whose only fault is that they were born on the wrong side of the border. Yet, as Pakistan mourns the Peshawar massacre, many hyper-patriotic politicians and TV anchors are demonising refugees and demanding that they be driven out supposedly because refugee camps serve as sanctuaries for the Taliban.

Consider also the suffering of Esha, 14, who has problems walking and speaking, and Esham, 13. They are the children of Asiya Bibi, a Pakistani Christian woman who has now spent four years on death row for allegedly insulting the prophet of Islam. She was framed and convicted

— as the standard practice goes, on instigation by local extremists — under Pakistan's notorious Blasphemy law bequeathed to the nation by dictator Zia-ul-Haq. In the apparently evolving consensus against the Taliban in Pakistan, no one has dared to openly suggest the following: Let us now repeal this draconian and blatantly discriminatory law. Enough is enough.

To me, as a Pakistani and as someone who has worked with children across the country, including Peshawar, this is not the way to honour the memory of little souls butchered by the Taliban on December 16, 2014. Sure, responsibilities must be fixed. Those involved in planning and abetting the massacre must be caught and put on trial. Fixing individual criminal responsibility, however, does not

imply that you can wriggle out of collective failures.

The 'we shall not forget Peshawar' pledge, ringing out across Pakistan today, must also encompass an acknowledgment of a million guises that violence parades in. We must also promise our children, all children, that militants will never be used as strategic assets. We must also acknowledge that teaching children to glorify wars and belittle those who do not happen to share their own faith or nationality is also a form of violence, albeit not as spectacular as the cold-blooded mass murder we witnessed in Peshawar. We have no choice but to become fully conscious of the brutalisation of children in conflict zones, on its peripheries, and in seemingly normal settings. Only then will we cease to pass on violence blindly to future generations.

— **The Hindu**

Forcing people to get Aadhaar card

Sankara Narayanan

When Aadhaar was unfolded with a lot of fanfare by UPA-II government, a series of objections tumbled out from print and electronic media and a few experts pinpointing the grave risks to the citizens. By collecting and holding all the personal details, the state can easily put the individuals to ransom, if needed. We are regularly flooded with information how unscrupulous elements are playing havoc with our money in banks by way of knowing our account number or credit card details or ATM pin. Less we talk about our Income Tax returns exposed to mafia elements, the better.

All personal information about the citizens will also be available with the private companies involved in the execution of the UID scheme for a period of seven years. There are very many outside companies. One such company was promoted by the notorious Central Intelligence Agency of the USA.

A Public Interest Litigation (PIL) was filed in the Apex Court challenging the validity of Aadhaar on several grounds. Infringing the fundamental rights of a citizen and endangering the sovereignty of the nation were among several issues pointed out in the PIL. The petition was

admitted by the Supreme Court and the matter is subjudice.

During the interregnum, oil marketing companies (OMCs) started insisting people to produce Aadhaar card to avail subsidy on cooking gas. Several other state agencies forced people to produce Aadhaar card to enjoy a few other facilities. This was brought to the notice of the Supreme Court by the petitioners.

The Supreme Court had scrapped the Aadhaar card in its interim order, saying that it was not mandatory to avail the card to get government subsidies. But, people are still being asked to furnish the cards, once they are issued, to get subsidy on cooking gas cylinders.

The Central Government had already spent Rs.8000 on this scheme without the sanction of Parliament. While the validity is under challenge before the Apex Court, the state governments are going ahead with the scheme at breakneck speed. People are cajoled and threatened by the state in various fora to rush and enroll failing which they will be denied several benefits. Opening a bank account will be possible only when a citizen produces Aadhaar card is another threat. What will happen to all these efforts, harassment to the public and the money spent already/ being spent now, if the court strikes down the UID scheme?

Documents provided by consumer activists show that consumers wanting to avail non-Aadhaar-based LPG subsidy transfer need to make a submission that they will furnish the Aadhaar card to the bank once it is issued to them. One of the testimonies needed to be furnished by the non-Aadhaar card holders

to the bank as well as the LPG distributor goes like this: "I confirm that I do not have Aadhaar number as on date. As soon as I receive the Aadhaar number, I will link the same to my LPG consumer number by giving a copy of the same to my distributor and also will get it linked to my bank account."

If a consumer does not give the Aadhaar card despite having it, he will face punishment under the Indian Penal Code for giving false information. Justice K S Puttaswamy, a retired judge of the High Court of Karnataka, who had moved the Supreme Court against the Aadhaar card, termed these measures contrary to the BJP's national manifesto and the Supreme Court directions.

"The interim orders passed by the Supreme Court on a batch of petitions on Aadhaar card have virtually scrapped the Unique Identity (UID) scheme. Yet, the government is pushing for it. The BJP is stepping back from its poll promises," said Justice Puttaswamy. The Centre was trying to push for the project by bringing in the National Identity Authority Bill in parliament.

Officials promoting this scheme believe that diversion of subsidised LPG can be checked through the UID. It is a bogus claim. The subsidised cylinders can be diverted even after making Aadhaar mandatory.

The percentage of diversion is now at a minimum as the oil companies have understood the problem and have taken many corrective measures. The OMCs have realised that a 14.25-kg cylinder will be enough for a family of four for 21 days. So nobody can avail a refill cylinder before 21 days. Another important measure is the IVRS system whereby the oil companies

have stopped the distributors from accepting the request for a refill cylinder.

The consumers can directly call the IVRS number and the request is forwarded to the distributor. Whenever a bill is raised, the consumer gets an SMS alert, said a consumer activist. He said that unless the consumer colludes, there is no possibility of diversion of subsidised cylinder. According to a few studies during the past four years, Aadhaar which is expected to check the misuse of government schemes for poor people is a fraud.

Aadhaar was linked to the LPG delivery system to achieve the registration target, on which already Rs 8,000 crore has been spent. When the Centre realised that they were failing in this scheme due to lack of interest among the people, particularly the middle class, they linked LPG subsidised cylinders to Aadhaar.

These contradictions were brought to the notice of the courts by some activists. In the lower court, they failed. But, when they learnt about a PIL in the Supreme Court, they intervened in the petition. They expanded the argument by bringing discrepancies to the notice of the Apex Court.

They also expressed serious reservations over the UID, saying that US-based L-1 Identity Solutions, where one retired CIA director - George Tenet - is on the roll, has been assigned the task to execute the programme.

If we are conscious citizens, should we not file a batch of contempt of court petitions against the Centre, States, OMCs and banks over the violation of court order?

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What price education?

S. Viswam

Education, a wit is reported saying, is a wonderful thing, every school should have it. We may add a few more items to the list. Looking at Indian conditions we may say schools should also have toilets for the students, separate for boys and girls, well-aired class rooms, fans and coolers in the summer and heaters in the winter, blackboards, chalks, desks and chairs and ultimately teachers to teach. Most of these prime requisites are absent in our schools, the more pathetic situation being that where there are students there are no teachers and vice versa. Talk of education and the image of teacherless schools and empty classrooms appear on the horizon.

Seven decades after independence, the state of education in India is pathetic, to use a mild word. The overall impression is that there is more confusion over education than any other nation-building activity. We sometimes wonder whether it was a mistake to put education in the state list. There might perhaps have been greater uniformity if education had remained in the central list. Today, while the Centre does everything to retain a

toehold on education and breath policy down the necks of state educators, the states themselves are not clear of the direction education should be given in state planning. The result is that instead of progress and advance, there is regression. In urban areas, parents find education quite expensive, the higher the child rises the more is the investment needed. In rural India, parents have to be goaded, cajoled and persuaded to send their wards to schools, and more often than not, we find that the drop-outs in school come from rural areas and because parents find keeping the child in school is an economic liability.

Year after year, we find government schools getting more and more unattractive to the parents relative to private schools, even if they are more expensive. We have the problem of drop-outs, capitation fees in higher institutions, specific disciplines like medicine and engineering beyond the reach of the common citizen. Yet, the paradox is that India is turning out more doctors, engineers and technologists-technicians than can be absorbed in the employment streams.

Between the lines

Can India democratize Sri Lanka?

Kuldip Nayar

Interestingly, it is these doctors and engineers on whose behalf hefty investments have been made by their parents who naturally expect good returns on money invested. The only blessing or curse such expensive education has brought instantly is not jobs and positions with high salaries alone but a steep rise in the “market value” of the boy or girl in the matrimonial market!

Education has become a problem subject, whereas there ought to have been maximum clarity on and about it. The real cause for concern is not at the higher levels of education which have, fortunately overcome the challenges at those levels and stabilized themselves. It can be argued that for a country of India’s size, population and diversity, we have yet to touch the fringe!

Most disturbing is the finding that government-run schools are not popular and hence pupils are more attracted to the private schools. But that is not as bad as the other finding that while the government is spending on infrastructure it has not invested enough in the quality of learning. In the past five years there has been no improvement in major areas. More than half of the children in rural areas are behind in reading, writing and “rithmetic. Twentyfive percent students in Class VIII cannot read Class II textbooks. Only 25 per cent of children enrolled in Class V can read simple English sentences and around 26 per cent of Class III students can do a two-digit subtraction. The Pratham survey covered more than 15000 government schools of which 8844 were primary schools and 6362 were upper primary schools.

The Pratham survey said that there
(Continued on Page 3)

New Delhi has lots to explain when Mohinder Rajpaksa was reelected as Sri Lanka’s President for the second time. India had supplied him small arms which he liberally used to kill the Tamils, the largest minority in that country. He should have been tried for war crimes because he killed 40,000 Tamils in cold blood even after the surrender by what was then called the LTTE, the militant face of Tamils in the Northern Sri Lanka.

That he tried to woo both the military and police chiefs to stay back even after the defeat shows how adroitly he led a democratic India up to a garden path. Yet New Delhi should have known what was all over that he ruled the country by force. His one brother was the Defence secretary.

I can never forget his role because the police harassed me at night - my only crime was to observe that the now-defunct LTTE should be fought politically, not militarily. That night there was a knock at my door. The police did nothing except to see my passport. The message was clear. I left the country the following day and has never returned to Colombo.

Now that the country has ousted the dictatorship it should implement the old US-sponsored resolution, adopted by the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. The resolution said that Sri Lankan government

should conduct an “independent and credible” investigation into allegations of violations of international human rights law and the untold atrocities committed in the last phase of the war. Unfortunately, one message that came loud and clear was that New Delhi tried its best to defend the Rajpaksa government. But the 47-nation strong body, led by the US, not only brushed aside the India’s objections but also refused to water down the resolution. In protest to Delhi’s attitude, the DMK had withdrawn its support to the government at that time.

It is still not too late to constitute the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) suggested by India at that time, to probe the whole happening which would bring out the skeletons out of the Sri Lankan cupboard. A similar attempt earlier proved to be futile because the Sri Lankan government, the accused, held the probe itself. Naturally, nothing worthwhile emerged from the investigation, which was a sham.

Indeed, it is heartening to see Sri Lanka returning to the fold of democracy. But it is unfortunate that in contrast, the Pakistan’s people are not asserting themselves to have the real democracy back. The surrender of politicians on the constitution of military courts is the recent example. What it meant is an amendment in the constitution to provide for trial

of terror suspects by military courts for a period of two years.

Unfortunately, the only comment came from Gen. Raheel Sharif, Pakistan military chief, who said 'special courts are not the desire of the army but need of extraordinary times'. The timid politicians gave concurrence by their silence.

Both Sri Lanka and Pakistan are our neighbours. What happens there can have repercussions in India. That the roots of democracy in our country are deep enough to withstand such developments is heartening to see. Yet a dictatorship next door is disconcerting. New Delhi cannot export democracy to other countries. But it should do all it can to see the will of people prevailing in the neighbourhood, without interfering in the internal affairs of the countries.

Dictatorships get a fillip when democracies falter. India committed this cardinal sin when it abstained from voting at the UN Human Rights Council a few years ago. A resolution was sought to be passed to seek an international, transparent inquiry to find out whether Sri Lanka had killed in cold blood 40,000 soldiers and others in the wake of hostilities against the Liberation of Tamil Tigers Eelam (LTTE) - even after they surrendered unconditionally.

India's abstention at that time reminded me of the words of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru: When aggression takes place or human rights are violated, we will not and cannot remain neutral. Yet the Manmohan Singh government was found placating the dictatorial government headed by Rajapaksa. New Delhi did not bother about the

harm it would be doing to the cause of Tamils' rights and their own say in governance.

My hunch is that bureaucrats in the Ministry of External Affairs, with their mindset, decided to stay absent, what they thought was "in the interest of the country." The then hapless foreign minister Salman Khurshid went along. He probably wanted the release of 100 fishermen who had "strayed" into the waters claimed by Sri Lanka.

I was not surprised to read the Rajapaksa government's reaction: Thank you. No doubt, New Delhi was under pressure from the democratic world, led by America and that China and Pakistan, where democracy has been reduced to a relative term, supported Colombo.

I do not regret the obliteration of the LTTE which was largely a terrorists' organization. But as a humanist, I feel sad over the killing of soldiers and their supporters after the surrender. The Sri Lankan army, obviously with the blessings of President Rajapaksa and his brother, Defence Minister Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, had no remorse over their indulging in a blood bath.

The world would not have known about the killings if the enterprising BBC Channel 4 had not shown the documentary on the killings and atrocities committed not only against the LTTE troops but also against the innocent Tamils. Colombo's own inquiry was eyewash, exonerating the army and heaping the blame on the Tamils who wanted an equal say in the affairs of Sri Lanka. Will they get it under the new regime? It is a test for its democratic governance.

(Continued from Page 2)

is a lack of flexibility in the system which which can help children catch up with the better performers. The percentage of children in Class II who still cannot recognize numbers upto 9(nine) has increased from 11.3 in 2009 to 19.50 in 2014. The ability to do division among class VIII students has been dropping since 2010. The proportion of Class VIII students who could correctly do a three digit by one digit division problem was 68.3 per cent in 2010 and the number has dropped to 44 per cent in 2014.

What is to be done? First, education planners have to look into the language policy. Is the three-language formula working? Why is it that English is not being learnt with the same zeal in some states and is more popular in some states? Are our teachers lacking in professionalism and talent? Is teacher—selection and appointment done scientifically? What can be done to stop drop-out phenomenon? A re-think is obvious in various areas. The Pratham report is indeed a wake-up call.

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Corporate Fiction

Vandana Shiva

As the New Year begins, I feel compelled to reflect on how fictions and abstract constructions are ruling us; the nature of being and existence is being redefined in such fundamental ways that life itself is threatened. When corporations that were designed as legal constructs claim “personhood”, then real people who stand in line at polling booths, eke out livelihoods, and raise families lose their rights.

This has happened recently in Vermont and Maui. Residents of Maui County, Hawaii voted on November 4 to ban the growing of genetically modified crops on the islands of Maui, Lanai, and Molokai until scientific studies are conducted on their safety and benefits. Monsanto and Dow Chemical’s unit Mycogen Seeds have sued the county in federal court to stop the law passed by the people. And Vermont, which passed a GMO labelling law through a legal, democratic process, is being sued by a conglomerate of corporations on the false premise of corporate personhood, and the influence of money as corporate “free speech”.

This is at the heart of new free trade treaties based on “investor rights”. Denying citizens the right to know violates the fundamental principles of food democracy. Dow and Monsanto sued Maui, thus subverting the democratic process that rests on the will of people, not on the power of corporations. This corporate jurisprudence needs to be reversed if human rights and the rights of Mother Earth are to

be protected.

Corporate fictions that have already had disastrous impacts on the biodiversity of the planet, nations and on farmers whose time immemorial rights to save and exchange seeds are being criminalised under patent law and new seed laws.

When biotechnology corporations claim to have “invented” the seed and courts and governments uphold this fiction, millions of years of evolution and thousands of years of agricultural history gets erased.

Seeds are not automobiles or circuit boards; life cannot be manufactured. It is not an invention. It is not engineered, piece-by-piece, by a worker on an assembly line. Living organisms are self-organised complexity. Chilean scientists Maturana and Varela differentiated between two kinds of systems autopoietic and allopoietic. Autopoietic systems are self-organised and make themselves. Allopoietic systems are put together externally. A seed is an autopoietic system constantly self-organising, evolving and adapting to changing contexts. To claim that by adding one gene a corporation creates the seed and all future generations of that seed is an ontological flaw, a scientific outrage and an ethical violation.

India’s laws have a clear articulation that biological and living systems are not inventions. Article 3(d) of India’s patent laws states clearly that the discovery of a new

property or a new use of a known substance is not an invention.

When corporations claim ownership of a seed that contains a gene from a Bt-bacteria, it is, in fact, a new use of a known substance. When they introduce the gene into a plant by “shooting” the gene through a gene gun into the cell of a plant, the reproduction of the cells and the life cycle of the plant is a biological process. The biotech industry is not assembling the organism, nor are they assembling future generations of seeds.

Section 3(j) of Indian Patent Act is a legal interpretation of the scientific principle of the self-organisation of life. That is why the Appellate Board of the Indian Patent Office ruled in the case of Monsanto’s climate resilience patent application: “the claimed method is considered as a series of generic steps modified by the plant cell... In the case like the present which does not involve a simple leap from prior art to the invention but rather entails a journey with many generic method steps that are essentially biological taken in sequence and we have found the invention is not involving inventive step, mere fact of human intervention would not change the position as we have otherwise found it not patentable in view of obviousness and new use of known substance.”

While the Indian law recognises that seeds make themselves, including future generations of

Wanted - Justice for Rural Innovator

Bharat Dogra

It is a widely accepted precept that farmers and villagers who have best understanding of local conditions should be encouraged for innovations which help villagers and protect environment.

Mangal Singh from Lalitpur district of Uttar Pradesh is an outstanding example of a farmer-cum-innovator whose invention Mangal Turbine (which has obtained a patent) has been widely appreciated by senior officials and experts for its potential of great contribution to reducing farmers' expenses as well as for protecting environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This innovation helps to lift water from streams and rivulets without using diesel or electricity.

A study by the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi and Vigyan Shiksha Kendra said, "This turbine is a fine example of common people's inventiveness, and should be encouraged by all means for people's benefit."

As news about this highly useful innovation and its appreciation by experts and senior officials spread, Mangal Singh started working with government agencies like CAPART and DRDA to take his work further.

Unfortunately Mangal Singh, who has a knack for speaking very frankly and fearlessly particularly when he comes across any irregularities or injustice, did not get the due encouragement from the government. Instead he was harassed to such an extent that his

ancestral land had to be auctioned.

When Mangal Singh protested repeatedly against this injustice the Department of Rural Development of the Government of India appointed Dr. B.P. Maithani former Director National Institute of Rural Development to prepare an evaluation report on Mangal Singh's projects taken up with CAPART (Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology). This report has clearly established that allegations against Mangal Singh (and hence all victimisation based on this) were completely wrong and unjustified. This report has shown how some officials with their own selfish agenda ignored and/or violated the directions of their own Director General to continue to inflict injustice after injustice on Mangal Singh.

The report prepared by Dr. B. P. Maithani for the Department of Rural Development (to be referred to henceforth as BPM-RD report) says, "It will be clear from the above account that Shri Mangal Singh was harassed and harmed in the process of implementation of the project. This has happened not only in connection with the project under reference which was the last sanctioned by CAPART. It has happened in respect of all projects sanctioned by CAPART to Shri Mangal Singh earlier too."

This report further says, "CAPART should compensate for the damage of its project sites and also the monetary loss suffered by Shri Mangal Singh. This should be

transgenic seed, which have a gene introduced from an unrelated organism, the American laws treat the transgenic seed as a "machine" invented by corporations. This position of seeds as machines and corporations as inventors was elaborated in the US Supreme Court case of *Bowman vs Monsanto*. Bowman had bought mixed soyabean seeds from a grain elevator and planted them. Monsanto claimed that the seed being planted to get a crop was not the natural reproduction of a seed sprouting into a plant, which then produced the next generation of seed. The US Supreme Court upheld Monsanto's claim that the reproduction of the plants in Bowman's fields was a "replication of a machine" invented and patented by Monsanto.

From the very beginning, Monsanto's push for GMO seeds has been for claiming creation and ownership of seed.

India's Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act, 2001, has a clause on farmers' rights, which states, "a farmer shall be deemed to be entitled to save, use, sow, re-sow, exchange, share or sell his farm produce including seed of a variety protected under this act in the same manner as he was entitled before the coming into force of this act."

The US would like to force India to adopt a false science and laws that dictate that seeds have been created by Monsanto and are therefore Monsanto's property.

US President Barack Obama will be the chief guest at our Republic Day celebrations. It is
(Continued on Page 15)

the part of out of court settlement of the dispute. One possible way to do this could be to reimburse the net present value (NPV) of the investment made in these projects by Shri Mangal Singh minus the NPV of the amount already released by CAPART.”

“The Secretary RD, Government of India speak to the Secretary / Principal Secretary Rural Development and also to the APC Uttar Pradesh Government to withdraw the false cases against Shri Mangal Singh, defreeze bank account and restore his land through an out of the court settlement process. For this the inquiry report of Shri Arun Arya IAS exonerating Shri Mangal Singh of inaction and misappropriation charges could be the basis for such an action by the State Government.

“Shri Mangal Singh needs to be suitably rewarded for his invention and contribution for the betterment of society.”

Instead of acting on this report submitted in 2011, the Government has unfortunately gone on adopting delaying tactics such as constituting more committees or ordering more reports. Even Dr. B.P. Maithani was asked to join a second committee when no worthwhile action was taken on his earlier report's recommendation which had already examined all the relevant issues in great detail.

Also there is clear need for spreading this innovation at suitable sites in the country. This has the support of many eminent experts. The work already initiated by Mangal Singh but damaged by anti-social elements should also be repaired and completed.

? Mangal Singh should be compensated for all his losses on the basis of the Govt. of India (Dept. of Rural Development) appointed Maithani Committee in 2011.

? On the basis of the recommendations of the same committee and also in keeping with the broader policies of the Government of India and the widely acknowledged excellent work done by Mangal Singh, he should be suitably rewarded and encouraged for future work, including provision of adequate facilities for spreading the technology of Mangal Turbine.

Recently Mangal Singh received

A non-trivial threat to ecological economic security

On 29th August 2014 the Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change of the Government of India (hereinafter referred to as MoEF & CC) set up a High Level Committee headed by former Union Cabinet Secretary T. S. R. Subramanian, IAS (Retd.). This Committee was given a comprehensive mandate: to review all laws and judgments pertaining to environment, wildlife and forest protection, and also those relating to pollution control, and then produce a report with specific recommendations for reforms in law and governance. This enormous and complex exercise of review of laws and judgments, and governance practices, followed by the formulation and presentation of a report with recommendations for amendments to existing laws, was to be completed within two months.

The deadline for completion of the Committee's tasks was extended by a month, and the final report was submitted by the Committee to Shri Prakash Javadekar, Union Minister

a letter from CAPART dt. 21.10.2014 which offered to make a settlement keeping in view the Maithani Report. However Mangal Singh said that the offer is not at all in keeping with the Maithani Report and he considers the offer made to be very unjust. Dr. Maithani also said clearly that what was said in the letter was not at all in keeping with his report.

Mangal Singh is a highly talented farmer-scientist of great achievements and even greater potential. But due to apathy and injustice he is a completely shattered man today. He should be helped and a justice based settlement should be made before it is too late

of State for Environment, Forests and Climate Change with Independent Charge on 18th November 2014. The report was not made public at that time. However, it was leaked, and it soon became available on various websites of media and environmental and social action groups. Soon after, an embarrassed Ministry also made the report available on its website.

In our critique of the High Powered Committee Report, we find that the entire exercise has been undertaken in a hurried manner, without sufficient inquiry into the relevant factors, without addressing concerns of a range of communities, especially those which are indigenous and natural resource dependent, and without at all considering the importance of consulting elected representatives from Local Government, Legislatures and the Parliament. This report, thereby, is an outcome of a comprehensively democracy

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The end of an era in journalism

N. D. Pancholi

B.G. Verghese who passed away on December 30, 2014 at the age of 87 at Gurgaon was an inspirational personality, not only to a large number of journalists but also to the generations of social and civil liberty activists. He belonged to that rare breed for whom journalism was a sacred mission, not a mundane profession. He started his career in 1949 in *Times of India* and his rise in profession coincided with the period when modern India was in the making, brick by brick, and he not only witnessed the process closely but took care that each of his steps was to be his contribution to the said 'making'.

One of his distinguished qualities was 'fearlessness'. During the 'Indo-China War' of 1962 he was sent to NEFA to cover proceedings of the war at the North East front. Chinese had launched a sharp offensive that scattered the ill-equipped Indian forces. Verghese was in Tejpur in Assam when news came on 18th November that Chinese had attacked the Se La which fell to them without a fight and they were further advancing. Lt. Gen. B. N. Kaul, commander of the 4th Corps stationed at Tejpur disappeared somewhere and the battalion was called back to Gauhati. In the prevailing anxiety and confusion order came to evacuate Tejpur and the North Bank as part of scorched earth policy and the Nunmati refinery to be blown up. By the evening of November 19, Tejpur town was evacuated. Indian Press had already left the town

previous day, anxious to seek safety rather than stay with the news. Tejpur became a Ghost town. The State Bank had burnt its currency notes. Official records were destroyed so that Chinese could not get possession of the so-called 'state secrets'. The administration had unlocked the gates of the mental hospital and around thirty bemused inmates could be seen wandering around the town like lost souls. Nehru broadcast to the nation that his heart 'went out' for the people of Assam and promised that struggle would continue.

However, eleven journalists remained in the ghost town, only two of them Indian, one Prem Prakash of Visnews, also covering for Reuters, and the other B. G. Verghese. They wandered around the deserted town having their companions the hapless mental patients and a number of uneasy dogs and cats, waiting for the invading Chinese and what would follow. Unexpectedly, a radio broadcast during November 19-20 midnight broke the news that Chinese had announced unilateral withdrawal. Radio stations around the world started flashing this news then onward, but for All India Radio (AIR) it was otherwise. In the words of B. G. Verghese :

"AIR's early morning bulletin still had the Indian Army valiantly fighting the enemy, while all other stations around the world and the newspapers carried the Chinese ceasefire announcement and other details. None in Delhi had dared to

wake up a tired prime minister and brief him about the night's dramatic developments. The imbecility and paralysis that had come to characterise Delhi and the pompous vacuity of the official information policy could not have been more strikingly demonstrated. For days and even weeks earlier, everybody from jawan to general, including Bijji Kaul (Lt.Gen.), had been tuning in to Peking (now Beijing) Radio to find out what the hell was going on in their own battlefield."

He writes : "...His (Nehru's) words offered cold comfort and to this day the North-easterners hold it against him and the Indian State that they had been bidden farewell." (First Draft - Witness to the Making of Modern India by B. G. Verghese).

How many journalists there are in India at present who, instead of relying upon the official handouts, generally unconvincing to the discerning eyes, would risk their lives in trying to find out the truth of the claims and counter-claims of rival sides in situations prevailing at present on either sides of our borders where cross firings and ceasefire violations seem to have become the order of the day and each side keeps on blaming the other?

I came in touch with B. G. Verghese during the Emergency when he joined People's Union For Civil Liberties & Democratic Rights (PUCL) in 1976, after having been ousted from the post of Editor of

the *Hindustan Times* on account of his opposition to the policies of the then government, especially his criticism of the annexation of Sikkim and proclamation of the Emergency. The PUCL was founded in October 1976 at New Delhi by Lok Nayak Jayaprakash Narayan and V. M. Tarkunde to organize opposition to the Emergency and to fight for restoration of the democratic rights. He also joined the Citizens For Democracy (CFD) which was also floated by Lok Nayak Jayaprakash Narayan and V. M. Tarkunde in April 1974.

After the end of the Emergency in March 1977, Verghese who was then working in Gandhi Peace Foundation, was elected as President of the Delhi chapter of the CFD and myself as its Secretary. He continued to guide CFD for about four years in that capacity till he joined the *Indian Express* in 1982. CFD took up many notable activities under his leadership and guidance like jail reforms, electoral reforms, campaign for autonomy for radio, voters' education, etc.etc. To work under his stewardship was very profitable experience for me.

He constituted a committee for jail reforms which included V. M. Tarkunde, B. G. Verghese himself, Amiya Rao, Leila Fernandes, Arun Shourie and myself, amongst others. Delhi Administration appointed all the members of the committee as 'jail visitors' for Tihar jail under Prison rules and the said members used to visit Tihar regularly. Several suggestions were made for reforms. CFD also intervened in 'Sunil Batra Vs. Delhi Administration' case in the Supreme Court and submitted its suggestions.

This case resulted in the celebrated judgment (1978) on jail reforms delivered by Justice Krishna Iyer.

Verghese was part of the investigating team which was formed on behalf of CFD in 1977 to enquire into the allegations of killings of Naxalites in Andhra Pradesh in so-called police encounters. The other team members were Justice V.M. Tarkunde, Naba Krushna Choudhury, K.G. Kannabiran, Arun Shourie, M.V. Ramamurthy and K. Pratap Reddy. The report of the committee revealed that many of such deaths were the result of cold blooded killings. This report was the first systematic exposure of fake encounters by the police. The report was widely discussed and reinforced the demand for reforms in the police administration.

The 2nd Police Commission, called as 'Dharamvira Commission', appointed in 1978 to suggest police reforms, submitted its report in 1981. By that time Government had changed and the new Government was not willing to publish the report. CFD and other organizations were agitating for publication of the report but the Government did not respond. CFD then filed writ petition in the Delhi High Court praying for mandamus to the Central Government directing it to publish the report. After some hearings the Government was forced to publish the same under pressure of the Court in 1982. Thereafter campaign for implementation of the recommendations of the commission commenced which campaign is still going on though more than 32 years have passed since then.

Two notorious criminals Billa and Ranga had abducted two young

persons, a brother and a sister, namely Sanjay and Geeta Chopra, in New Delhi in 1978, raped the sister and murdered both near Budha Garden. There was wide spread anger among the public who did not know how to ventilate its feelings. The present types of organized demonstrations were unknown in those days. It was B. G. Verghese who organized a big public meeting in protest. To my memory this was the first organized demonstration in Delhi in protest against 'rape'. An award i.e. 'Child bravery award' was instituted in the names of brother and sister by the Indian Council of Child Welfare.

Soon after joining the *Hindustan Times* as Editor in 1969 Verghese started a regular column on one village, namely Chhatera, as a mirror to rural life at a time when news and public attention used to be fixed on urban developments, even of the most trivial kind. This village was situated in Sonapat (at that time Rohtak) district in Haryana, had a population of around 1500 composed of land owning Jats and Brahmins and landless Harijans. It was the most neglected village and therefore an ideal choice for Verghese who used to visit it almost fortnightly along with experts of various kinds to discuss the problems of the villagers and seek their solutions. Discussion would take place in the cemented Jat Chaupal and none was barred on caste grounds. The problems of education, health, communications, sanitation, availability of fertilizer and many other things used to be attended. Regular fortnightly column 'Our Village Chhatera' in the Sunday Magazine of HT began to appear from 22nd February 1969 focusing on the problems of the village till 1975 when Verghese was ousted

from the newspaper. The feature carried a logo showing a pretty but shy eight year old Dalit girl, Premvati, holding a staff and with a lamb draped around her neck. The authorities took notice. Much needed bridge was constructed. A branch of Syndicate Bank was opened and within four hours Rs. 20,000/- were deposited. Young interns and junior doctors of AIIMS started visiting the village. Scientists from the Indian Agricultural Research Institute conducted complete soil survey and water analysis. The number of tube wells doubled in four years. Separate toilet blocks for boys and girls were made beside the school to habituate children to use a latrine rather than go out in the fields. A TV set was installed in the Panchayat where all used to sit together, irrespective of caste or gender to view programmes between 6 and 7 P.M. Many developmental activities were undertaken. Chhatera became the most completely documented village in India and a lesson as to how 'development journalism' can become an agent of change.

Two years back CFD was revived (it had become non-functional since 1997 due to certain reasons) and Verghese gave his blessings for the effort. He agreed to become member of its newly constituted national council. Thirty four Burmese-Arakan and Karen freedom fighters, who were in Indian jails for about 13 years, first in Andamans and then transferred to Kolkata, were got released as a result of strenuous efforts made by Nandita Haksar. They were in Delhi in June 2012. On the occasion of the observance of Anti-Emergency Day on 26th June, 2012, CFD decided to honour them.

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Arbitrary prevention of travel

People's Union for Civil Liberties strongly condemns the arbitrary, highhanded and illegal action of the immigration officials of the Government of India at the New Delhi airport refusing to permit Priya Pillai, senior campaigner of Greenpeace, to board her flight to London on 11th January, 2015. Worse still was the vindictive act of the immigration officials stamping Priya Pillai's passport as 'OFFLOADED' thereby effectively ensuring that she cannot leave India until and unless the Government of India revokes the unannounced ban on her travel.

Ms Priya had valid business visa and all her travel papers were in order. There is thus no acceptable reason for preventing her from travelling to London as she is neither a convicted person nor is there any judicial restraint order prohibiting her travel abroad.

It is objectionable and shocking that no reason for preventing Ms. Priya from leaving for London was disclosed by any of the authorities on 11th. Incredibly, the Ministry of Home Affairs has reportedly stated that they had no information about such an order being passed, while the immigration officials state that they were acting on orders from the Government of India. PUCL condemns this shameful action on the part of the Government of India's officials from shirking to accept responsibility, as it is unbelievable that such a drastic decision could have been taken without the initiative and instruction at the highest level.

The action to prevent Ms. Priya from travelling is particularly

deplorable as Ms. Priya was travelling to London at the invitation of British MPs to talk to them about the destructive and potentially damaging environmental and social impact of coal mining in the Mahan forest area of Madhya Pradesh on local tribals and other vulnerable communities. The coal mining project being undertaken by a Essar group company and Hindalco, has been opposed by local people as being environmentally destructive, ecologically devastating and posing serious threat to life and livelihoods of local people.

PUCL would like to point out that Ms. Priya, as a whole time environmental campaigner, was only exercising her fundamental right of free speech and expression (u/s Art. 19(1)(a)) to inform people, including ordinary citizens, decision and policy makers and the media about the ill effects of the Mahan coal mining project, which is well within her freedom.

A 7-judge Bench of the Supreme Court in '*Maneka Gandhi vs Union of India*' (1978) held that the freedom of speech guaranteed under Art. 19(1)(a) is exercisable not only in India but also outside and if State action sets up barriers to its citizen's freedom of expression in any country in the world it would violate Art. 19(1)(a) as much as if it inhibited such expression within India itself.

Ms. Priya and Greenpeace are only fulfilling their "Fundamental Duties" under Article 51A of the Constitution of India which makes it a duty of every citizen of India to "protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes,

rivers and wild life, and to have compassion for living creatures” (Art. 51A(f)) and “to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of enquiry and reform”. (Art. 51A(h)). Moreover Art. 48A enjoins the State to “protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wild life of the country”.

The peremptory and unexplained action of the Government of India lends credence to the charge that the government acted clearly to prevent Ms. Priya from sharing with the outside world about the potentially damaging nature of the coal mining project and the legal infirmities abounding in the project clearance.

In a globalised world, negative impacts - both economic and environmental — has implications globally and is not confined to national borders. Thus any assertion of rights of local communities, articulation of environmental concerns and creation of public opinion has to necessarily be global. It is therefore sinister of the Government of India to dub rights activists, including the environmental campaigners, as “anti-national” and against “national interest” whenever they raise concerns of environmental destruction posed by specific projects.

PUCL calls upon the Government of India to immediately desist from criminalising rights activities, including environmental campaigns, and give due recognition to their contribution to the nation.

PUCL demands that the Government of India immediately revoke its decision to ban foreign travel by Priya Pillai of Greenpeace, strike out the stamp in her passport of being “Offloaded” thereby enabling her to travel abroad if all

her travel papers are in order. PUCL also calls upon the Government of India to stop hounding and targeting rights activists for coercive or police action and instead create a conducive, non-adversarial,

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deficit effort, and promotes a schema for environmental reforms, which, if adopted could result in widespread chaos in environmental governance and jurisprudence, and also would result in irreversible damage to the environment, cause widespread loss of natural ecosystems and could further fuel fundamental violation of human rights in a country where discontents over environmental decisions are become increasingly contentious.

There are elements in the Committee’s report that are worth taking note of and possibly implementing. But these are few and far between, and a bulk of the Committee’s recommendations are based on an extraordinary reliance on the capacity of technical bureaucracy to deliver good environmental governance, on market forces to meet environmental management objectives, on a slew of new regulatory and judicial forums to police the system, without actually making an effort to enquire and justify if such comprehensive makeover in the environmental decision making system is essential at all. Neither does the Committee formulate its tasks clearly, nor does it make any effort to clearly explain the basis of its recommendations. In light of which, what the Committee recommends comes across as a set of confusing proposals which if implemented could confound the environmental governance system quite

intimidation-free environment enabling people to share, discuss and debate in a democratic spirit crucial issues of development projects and programmes.

-Prabhakar Sinha, Dr. V. Suresh,
President and General Secretary, PUCL

fundamentally.

With this in view, and in the interest of present and futures generations of the country, and also in securing the extraordinary biodiversity of the region that has evolved over billions of years, we urge the Government of India to comprehensively reject the recommendations of this Committee. In the national interest we urge the Government to repeat the exercise ensuring terms of reference are clear and not caged by catch phrases that confound more than clarify, by involving an interdisciplinary committee consisting of women and men, experienced and expert members, and drawn from various geographies, supported by a deeply democratic process and with sufficient time and space for public consultations nation-wide, so that the outcome would be recalled as a monumental effort that not only secured national interest, but also that of a world precariously edging towards runaway climate change induced impacts.

A copy of the critique of the High Powered Committee Report, entitled “A Non-trivial Threat to India’s Ecological and Economic Security” may be accessed at: www.esgindia.org. Comments and criticisms are welcomed.

Leo F. Saldanha Bhargavi S. Rao
Environment Support Group

Religious conversions

K. Pratap Reddy

It is unfortunate that new set of controversies on religious conversions are emerging in various parts of the country. It is a matter of shame that, while the whole world is advancing towards intellectual, scientific and technological growth taking human evolution to celestial levels, some sections of our society and more particularly those belonging to the majority, are indulging in such controversies tending to lead the society and the country into medieval period which would adversely affect our constitutional goal of integrity of our nation.

It cannot be denied that in all efforts of finding a remedy to a malady, it is always necessary to go into the origin or cause of the malady. In such process of tracing the origin or causes of the present malady, we inevitably come down to the deplorably inhuman caste system going down to the lowest level of the concept of untouchability existing in the Hindu Religion. We all know the horrible condition of our “untouchable” (also known as Panchamas) brethren. They were driven to live in separate habitats and deprived of all civic rights. They were forced to live on the carcasses of dead animals. Even if they came to the main village of upper castes to attend to menial work of the latter, they were forced to come with a Jhadu (sweep stick) tied to their back in order to satisfy the inhumanly whimsical belief that the path trodden by them was cleansed by the means of the Jhadu. These are but a few of the inhumanly uncivilized treatments that our Panchama

(untouchable) brothers were subjected to by the upper class (Brahminical) members of the Hindu religion.

Now, let us have a glimpse into the historical advent of Christianity and Islam into our country. While the Portuguese, Dutch and English tradesmen came into India in the 17th century, the Christian missionary led by Saint Thomas, bringing the message of Jesus Christ of equality came into India in the 2nd century itself. Likewise, while the so-called Islamic rule was established in the 13th century, Arab traders came into India in the 6th and 7th centuries bringing the message of equality, justice and compassion of Prophet Mohammed. Jawaharlal Nehru in his celebrated book “The Discovery of India” in Chapter VI referring to the growth of Hindu-Muslim culture and Indo-Arab relationships wrote as follows: “There were no invasions, contacts between India and Arab world grew, by travel to and fro, embassies were exchanged...These trade and cultural relations were not confined to North India. The southern states of India also participated in them, especially the Rashtrakutas, on the west coast of India...This frequent intercourse inevitably led to Indians getting to know the new religion, Islam. Missionaries also came to spread this new faith and they were welcomed, mosques were built...There was no objection raised either by the State or by the people, nor were there any religious conflicts. It was the old tradition of India to be tolerant to all faiths and

forms of worship. Thus Islam came as a religion to India several centuries before it came as a political force.”

It must be understood that our oppressed “untouchable” brothers were attracted to the preaching of message of equality and humanity spread by Christian and Islamic missionaries and adopted the religions where they were given equal treatment; either by Christians or Muslims, as the case maybe. It might be true that the Christian missionaries have given to our erstwhile Panchama brethren free education, shelter but it is not true to say that the conversion was by use of force.

As stated above, while the Islamic state or Islamic rule, as the case maybe, came into India in the 13th century, the English rule came into India through the East India Company in the 18th century and directly in the middle of the 19th century. It must be realized by our Sangh Pariwar brethren that the conversions of our erstwhile “untouchable” brethren into either Christianity or Islam were much earlier to the establishment of either Islamic rule or the British rule.

One other aspect, our the Sangh Pariwar brethren who are involving in this present controversy of reconversion must realize that the conversions of Hinduism to either into Christianity or Islam are only from the oppressed members of Hindu religion who were subjected to inhuman and humiliating treatment by

the upper class (Brahmanical) members of Hindu religion.

One other aspect of this process of “reconversion” (being called “ghar vapasi”) is to what caste these “ghar vapasi” people will be added. Will they once again be added to the same “pancham” community or will they be given a higher status as Brahmins, Kshatriyas or Vysyas, inasmuch as the caste system is not only continuing but taking stronger roots in the country in the socio-political context of the reservation of seats in Parliament, Assemblies, Panchayat Raj, employment and educational fields.

It was in this context, the great saints like Swamy Dayananda Saraswathy and Guru Nanak in the west and north, Ramakrishna Paramahansa in the East and social reformers like Narayan guru, Sane guruji, Basaveshwar, Subramanya Bharati and Gurujada Appa Rao, Unnava Lakshmi Narayana, in the south struggled all their life for the abolition of castes.

The Father of the Nation “Mahatma Gandhi” along with his struggle for independence of India from foreign rule campaigned for abolition of untouchability, at times undertaking fast unto death. In spite of several such movements the caste system and also untouchability, though in the name of “Schedule Castes”, is also existing in spite of the constitutional mandate of abolition of untouchability.

My humble request to our “Sangh Pariwar” brothers is first to undertake a campaign with a missionary zeal to abolish the abominable caste system still prevailing in the Hindu society.

Plachimada/Cola Compensation Bill

S. Faizi

The letter from the central Home Ministry to the Kerala government ‘requesting’ it to withdraw the Plachimada Coca Cola Victims Compensation Claims Special Tribunal Bill, 2011 constitutes a glaring act of subversion of the Constitutional process. The reasons raised by the central Home Ministry are an outlandish repeat of the multinational company’s ‘legal opinion’ it had submitted to the UPA government.

The Home Ministry provides gratuitous advice to the State government in line with the multinational’s ‘legal opinion’- to approach the National Green Tribunal (NGT). This betrays the sad fact that the Home Ministry officials have not even read the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010. Section 15.3 of the Act requires the petitions for compensation to be filed within a period of 5 years, with a grace period of 6 months. The most critical damages to groundwater and toxic contamination caused by the Cola company at Plachimada occurred during 2000-2004, way before the five years and six months time bar set by the Act and therefore this Act cannot be used to redress the tragedy at Plachimada. This is the reason why the Bill was (unanimously) passed by the Assembly. And it may be recalled that the NGT became operational only in May 2011. The Home Ministry officials and their legal advisors should be held accountable for deliberately misinforming a State government.

There is absolutely no conflict between the NGT Act and the Bill,

primarily due to the difference in the temporal coverage, in fact by filling the time gap in regard to the Plachimada locale the Bill provides an excellent complement to the NGT Act. The Home Ministry repeating the challenge of the Cola company that the State Assembly has no legislative competence to enact legislation to redress the damages in the areas of health, agriculture, labor (loss), animal husbandry, groundwater etc, all listed in the State List (II under the Seventh Schedule) is posing a serious question on Centre-State relations, and all democratic forces should be concerned about this.

The Bill does not by any means comes in conflict with the Centre’s powers as provided by Articles 253 and 246; it flows from the State’s Constitutional responsibility to act upon the violation of the Article 21 and has got nothing to do with any international declaration.

It is surprising that the while the Home Ministry refers to the responses of the Department of Legal Affairs and the Solicitor General that favour the Cola company, it tactically ignores the categorical support to the Bill officially expressed by the relevant ministries long time ago. And these ministries are: the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Food Processing Industries and the Department of Justice under the Ministry of Law. That is obviously a tactics adopted to favour the

powerful American company, especially at a time when the US president is set to visit India.

The Home Ministry is subverting the Constitutional process by refusing to pass on the Bill, with the government's comments, to whom it was originally addressed - the President, even after three years and in spite of seeking and obtaining numerous clarifications.

I call upon the State government

to squarely reject the Centre's letter, and mobilise political forces with the democratic society to have the assent obtained. If the assent is further delayed by the Centre, the State Assembly may pass a resolution on the subject and commence the enforcement of the law, as there is no case of repugnance involved.

The State Government shall not further delay initiating criminal proceedings against the recalcitrant

company for which show cause notice was given by the Pollution Control Board in 2007, under the Hazardous Wastes (Management and Handling Rules).

There is no justification for the State government's delay in registering case against the Cola company under the SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act as recommended by the Plachimada High Power Committee.

Appoint Grievance Redressal Authority

Kailash Awasya

The Social Justice bench of the Supreme Court presided over by Justice Madan Lokur and Justice U.R. Lalit began hearing on the case related to further raise in the height of Sardar Sarovar dam, on 9th of January, 2015. The apex court had received summary submission with data and arguments from the petitioner, Narmada Bachao Andolan through Medha Patkar and other Project Affected Persons along with respondents, Union of Indian/Narmada Control Authority and states of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat.

At the very outset, counsel for Government of Gujarat, Harish Salve and Attorney General of India for Union of India challenged the locus standi of Medha Patkar, accusing her and Narmada Bachao Andolan with quoting from single judgment on Omkareshwar dam and calling Andolan and Ms. Patkar as obstructionists to the dam and asserted that she should not be heard and the Andolan should not be permitted henceforth to be in the Supreme Court. The Judges listened to all the argument on maintainability

and then requested Sanjay Parikh to plead on behalf of the representatives, petitioners of farmers, labourers and fish-workers in thousands.

Adv. Parikh narrated the history of violations of Narmada Water Dispute Tribunal Award, the state rehabilitation policies as well as the judgments of the apex court of 1992, 2000 and 2005.

The land and livelihood based rehabilitation, he argued, is far from completed and the same is evident from the official documents and reports. Hundreds of cases are pending before each Grievance Redressal Authority, chaired by a former judge and hundreds of orders are not complied with. Land offered and/or allotted to many is uncultivable and hence against law and court's judgment.

Ms Patkar was granted permission to plead as party-in-person against the request of the opponents. She in her turn, put forth the situation on the ground as well as the violations. She narrated the story of the big scandal in

rehabilitation that has totally derailed the policy and squandered crores of Rupees from rehabilitation funds without completion of rehabilitation.

The fake registries scam, she said, has led to making affected persons landless instead of giving them better standard of living, promised through policies.

The Bench enquired about the present status and functioning of Grievance Redressal Authorities; she got it confirmed before the Bench that hundreds of cases are pending before GRAs while there is no chairmen the bodies in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat today. The bench then directed to appoint urgently five GRAs in Madhya Pradesh and two in Maharashtra and Gujarat each. Further, the Bench stated that it would like to get pending cases redressed and GRAs to give their assessment on the differing data presented by parties. The Bench also directed all the three states to consult respective authorities and come back with names of the GRAs.

Red carpet for corporate honchos, iron fist at farmers

While the Government of Gujarat is splurging on the jamboree called Vibrant Gujarat it is a crime to raise the issue of farmers' suicides and low cotton prices. Sanyukta Khedut Sangharsh Samiti had planned to make a peaceful representation before Gujarat Government on 11th January, 2015. Farmers were setting out for the action spot in their thousands. In a wanton display of its paranoia as well as dictatorial tendencies the Government first tried to scare away bus and other transporters. They attempted to force them to cancel farmers' bookings. Farmers demonstrated their resolve by finding other means to reach the appointed spot. Thousands of farmers were detained in tens of places across Gujarat. Shivlal Vekaria (ex-MP) and Chandulal Shingala were detained in

Rajkot.. In the dead of the night - around 12.30 am - Sagar Rabari and Lakhan Musafir were arrested. Other prominent farmers detained include Mansukhbhai (Rajkot), Pradyumansinh and Ramdevsinh Chudasma (Dholera), Mahendrasinh Karmariya, Nipul Patel, Yakub Gurji (Bharuch), Lalji Desai (Becharaji-Mandal). The Mansa MLA Amitbhai, Dehgam MLA Kaminiben and Jashubhai Rana of Gandhinagar were also arrested.

The farmers' demands were simple and basic:

1) Support Price for Cotton at 1200 / 20 kg, and Rs. 1000 / 20 kg for groundnut.

2) No de-commanding of

Narmada waters and diverting it to industries.

3) Repeal of draconian anti-farmer laws such as Special Invest Region Act, and Gujarat Irrigation Act.

4) Immediate withdrawal of the Ordinance making the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition Act meaningless.

It has become the standard practice for the Government of Gujarat to clamp down on demands of the poor and toiling people of Gujarat rather than addressing them. This Government believes in ruling via ordinances on the one hand and organising public relations jamborees - all at the tax payers' expense.

—Persis Ginwala, Rajni Dave, Anand Mazgaonkar

We want change and we will change

“We women have been subjugated to many traditions and superstition-based rituals for centuries together. We were asked to worship the Banyan tree on Watsavritri day and pray to get the same husband for at least seven future lives. But there is no reciprocal ritual prescribed for men. Observing more than a dozen such rituals all the year round put great strain on our time and energy because we have to perform all daily chores of house-keeping from morning till night every day. Secondly, we have to put in hard labour to organise family functions like Barase and Dohaljevan for our female relatives besides the engagement and marriage ceremonies which are not infrequent. We yearn for being freed from all this monotony. As we are entering educational institutions and

planning for career of our own liking, we demand freedom and spare time for that hence we demand freedom from the drudgery of rituals and family functions. We hope our menfolk would appreciate our aspirations and expectations and create congenial atmosphere for our liberation”, observed Nisha Bhosale, activist of Andhashradha Nirmulan Samiti, Solapur. She was addressing a huge women's rally organised by Rashtra Seva Dal at Yenegur in Osmanabad district on 25th December, 2014.

She was followed by Pushpa Kshirsagar, a teacher and a poetess. She called upon men to appreciate the aspirations of their female relatives and help them by reducing burden of age-old customs and make available necessary

facilities.

Vaishaly Chitte was felicitated for receiving training in Australia about how to nurture HIV-affected children. She narrated some of her experiences in canvassing help of the rural folk for extending help on the basis of equality, not to be scared of getting infection and maintain congenial atmosphere so that the HIV-affected children can also enjoy their childhood and receive education.

Vyankatesh Hambire, Editor of Sangharsh Daily said that women should render the old saying “women are the enemies of women” outdated. When a neighbour asks a woman about her newly-wed daughter-in-law, she complains that

she is disobedient and tries to alienate the son from her. And when the neighbour enquires about her newly-wed daughter, she proudly says that her daughter is fully controlling her husband and the latter is also amenable. Such double standards

must be done away with. He also exhorted the women to vigorously campaign for prohibition in their villages.

Subhash Ware of the SM Joshi Socialist Foundation said that gender

equality does not mean class struggle of women against men. Men and women should treat all as equal human beings. For that, the menfolk should liberate themselves from the old hegemonic mindset.

—Pannalal

(Continued from Page 9)

B. G. Verghese chaired the meeting and welcomed the Burmese who were overwhelmed by his affection and warmth. They soon got recognition as refugees by the UNHCR and are now in Netherlands. None of us was aware during the function that Verghese was born in Burma in 1927.

Verghese stood for democratic rights of the people and fought for the freedom of the Press. He repeatedly said that in a democracy people had a right to know as to what the terrorists have to say. He equally criticized the terrorists' attempts to intimidate the journalists and dictate to them as to what they should publish and what not. He stood for secular values and communal harmony. He relentlessly criticized the communal propaganda pursued by the Sangh Pariwar. At the beginning of militancy in Kashmir in 1990 the Sangh Pariwar, with a view to justify its campaign towards destruction of Babri Masjid, had launched a propaganda campaign alleging that hundreds of Hindu temples had been destroyed in Kashmir by the Kashmiri Muslims. Verghese investigated such allegations and found them false. His report dented the Sangh Pariwar's mischievous campaign. He was great votary of 'Indo-Pak people to people contact' campaign and made significant contribution to the said process. He wrote important books such as 'Waters of Hope', 'India's North-east Resurgent' and 'First

Draft—Witness to the Making of Modern India'. The last one, besides being his autobiography, is in my opinion the best book to better understand the historical developments of the post-independent India.

(Continued from Page 5)

time to start a planetary dialogue and a civilisational exchange based on us all being part of the Earth family; and based on our inalienable right to Swaraj, including "bija swaraj (seed democracy).

We hope Mr Obama's visit will

In his demise, India has lost a great journalist and good human being—a humanist to the core. Having closely associated with him in some of the activities concerning struggle for democratic rights, I pay my tribute to him and salute him.

enhance and deepen the common freedoms of the people of India and the US, and not just the freedoms of corporations, which are undermining the freedoms of citizens in both countries and across the world.

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Much of a muchness

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Who needs the WTO?
Sankara Narayanan

**Government-Corporate nexus
against people and democracy**
Prem Singh

**Liberalisation of education
widened caste inequities**
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Wise advice

S. Viswam

It is a sad reflection of the state of national politics in India that after seven decades of conducting parliamentary democracy the country's head of state has to remind the nation of the politicians' duties and responsibilities. His sage counsel, born out of experience of many years of public service, is applicable both to the country's rulers and to its opposition parties. Also, his wise words were targeted at the appropriate quarters - students of higher education institutions whom he addressed via a video link.

India is one of the few countries that have set a record of working the parliamentary system successfully despite being a new comer to the international scene as an independent, sovereign, secular, socialist republic. True, seven decades is not a long time in the life and career of a nation, but in politics diversions and distractions can occur to take the country in wrong directions unless wiser counsels prevail.

Under the Indian system which follows the Westminster pattern closely, presidents, like monarchs, are merely constitutional (figure) heads with no real powers of governance, the Constitution allots them powers to be exercised on special occasions and

circumstances. The president is also traditionally the supreme commander of the armed forces. Of course, being a figurehead does not debar him from sharing his thoughts and experiences with the people, a privilege which senior leaders like Pranab Mukherjee can exercise for the betterment of the nation and its polity, and the society at large. His latest intervention in national politics is one such example, and the country will naturally take a serious note of his wise words even if only because they have a vital bearing on the current political situation in which, paradoxically, progress and impasse seem to run together.

The President touched on two hugely relevant points. The first was the manifest tendency of the Modi government to run the country through ordinances even while parliament is in session. As many as nine ordinances have been promulgated. Too many by any account, even if one concedes that with the numerical configuration in the Rajya Sabha running adverse to the ruling dispensation the temptation to resort to ordinances as an expedient or a way out of a logjam is often irresistible. Of course, it is needless to emphasise that ordinances are not meant to replace parliamentary processes or requirements but only as "temporary holding devices"

awaiting conversion into legislations to be enacted by the two houses. “Ordinances,” the President pointed out, “are meant for a specific purpose to meet an extraordinary situation under extraordinary circumstances.” The mandatory requirement is that the ordinance has to be replaced with a normal legislation six weeks after parliament resumes. Failure to do so leads to its lapse. The government is therefore taking a calculated risk in issuing ordinances. The President has perhaps said the last word on the subject.

The second issue Pranabda referred to was that of parliamentary proceedings getting stalled due to the Opposition’s obstructionist tactics and the normal conduct of legislative business getting disrupted, thereby leading to loss of time and resources.

Coincidentally, the President’s reference came at a time when the Rajya Sabha is disrupted and no business could be transacted for several days. The Constitution

provides a way out when one of the two Houses is dysfunctional. The way out is to hold a joint session and getting the legislation passed. Here again, the President had vital guidelines to offer. He said that holding joint sessions was not a practical solution. Since 1952, there were only four joint sessions held to pass laws. On the question of disruption the President said that it was the responsibility of the political establishment as a whole to ensure the passage of laws. The opposition also was as responsible as the ruling party in ensuring smooth passage of laws.

The cardinal principle of parliamentary democracy is that the majority has the mandate to rule while the Opposition has the right to oppose, expose and if the numbers permit to depose. But under no circumstances should there be disruption of proceedings because of Opposition’s obstruction. “A noisy minority cannot be allowed to gag

a patient majority,” the President added. His well-meant advice was rounded off with the comment that when parliament fails to discharge its responsibilities, it breaches the trust reposed in it by the people. That was neither good for democracy nor for the policies anchored in the laws passed by parliament.

A word to the wise is enough, it is said. The timing and aptness of the President’s intervention is noteworthy. The stalemate in the Rajya Sabha is based on legitimate concerns of the Opposition about the activities and conduct of the parties and individuals in the saffron Parivar. It is the government’s duty to meet these concerns and convince the Opposition of its bona fides. The government can encourage sectarianism only at the risk of damaging the country’s pluralistic structure and fabric. The President’s advice must be seen and heeded to as a wake-up call delivered in national interest.

Much of a muchness

The run-up to this year’s Republic Day began a week ahead and could not have started on a happier note for prime minister Narendra Modi. It is not all prime ministers who get themselves described as “God’s gift to India” as the well-known economist Jagdish Bhagwati has done, adding for good measure that he has met all the (Indian) Prime Ministers but never anybody like Modi. It is definitely a rare occasion when Nobel laureates like the highly popular and well-informed Paul Krugman call India “the country of the future”. It is a sign of the times that renowned scholars and academics like Nissim Nicholas Taleb declare with solemn sincerity that “if I were Indian, I would vote for Modi”.

The world is telling India, in various ways and through various means directly and indirectly that in Modi India has the right man for the right job at the right time and Indians should regard themselves fortunate in being led by him. God’s gift needs to be appreciated with the right kind of gratitude. The message is going home, but there are many ifs and whys and wherefores to be tackled at the same time before Indians en masse give Modi similar certificates of conduct, competence and capability. But there is no doubt that Modi is still riding the crest of the wave of popularity that catapulted him to the Indian throne in an electoral tsunami the like of which is unlikely to recur in the near future.

Modi’s war cry of “development” and “good governance” has worn out a wee bit around the edges but is holding. The slogan of ridding India of the Indian National Congress (Congress-*mukt* Bharat) has scored impressively, the BJP having acquired control of more states between May, when Modi took over and now, when Modi completes eight months in office. Meanwhile, a pile of slogans have been coined and they have enriched the Indian political, economic, social and cultural lexicons. Modi may or may not prove a great prime minister but few politicians can beat him as a slogan-coiner and as a practitioner of using alliterations in the conveyance of thought. We are now engaged in building many new

Indias, the *Swachhh*, the digital, Make in India, Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana which aims to put a bank pass book in every villager's hands and the latest innovate in India and so on and so forth.

Not all the new schemes, not even a few of them, envisaged under the aegis of the ear-catching slogans may aim at poverty-eradication but we are assured that they point to that direction. Indeed, the word 'poverty' rarely but rarely figures in the political discourse these days, and it looks like it has been forgotten amidst the plethora of newly-coined slogans that are supposed to underpin the ideal of development.

An India engaged with the high adventure of national multi-sided development is a heart-warming prospect, but unfortunately such a picture does not emerge from the ground realities. Modi may want development and shout from the roof tops for it, but he and his party, and that party's mentor, the RSS, are not on the same wavelength here. Modi's best slogan to date is one universally acceptable and welcome, "Sabka saath, sab ka Vikas" but his party does not subscribe to it. In this context, what is disturbing is that Modi has done little to rein in the hotheads of the RSS-dominated Sangh Parivar. And by way of reaction to the divisive politics played by the Parivar hotheads, Modi's silence is deafening. Modi has had nothing to say about the highly disturbing statements of the RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, endorsed by the VHP leader Ashok Singhal that Modi's advent in Delhi heralded the emergence of the Hindu Rashtra after 800 years and that India was now a Hindu country that had come to stay. The RSS affiliate, the Dharma Jagaran Samiti, contributed

its little bit by predicting that by 2021 India would be an exclusively Hindu nation, hinting subtly that non-Hindus had better behave. An insight into the thinking that goes into the concept of Hindu Rashtra, founded on the philosophy and culture of Hindutva was provided by a colleague of Modi and that too on the floor of parliament. BJP's Union Minister of State, Saadhvi Niranjan Jyoti said all BJP supporters were "raamzadas" whereas all others were "haramzadas". Modi attributed the reprehensible remark to the minister's rural origins and unfamiliarity with the working of parliament. Modi virtually exonerated the minister despite her comment being outrageously communal.

Consistent with the Hindutva campaign, the party launched the *ghar wapsi* programme. It set off adverse reactions in both the minority Christian and Muslim communities who were apprehensive of being targeted by RSS goons for forcible conversions. Mohan Bhagwat proclaimed that all that the programme meant was that the Hindus were reclaiming their properties which were stolen by non-Hindu outsiders! In this atmosphere all non-Parivar Indians were shocked at the statement of a BJP member of parliament hailing Nathuram Godse as a nationalist and a patriot. At the same time, there were reports of BJP trying to build temples for Godse in select centres of UP and MP. No one was surprised when external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj recommended the adoption of the Bhagwat Gita as the "national scripture". Many in the country reminded her that in secular, democratic, socialist India, only the Constitution was the acceptable national scripture.

Although India's record as a secular nation is exemplary, the BJP behaves, obviously at the dictat of the RSS and its constituents the Sangh Parivar that Hinduism is in danger. This is obvious from the fantastic suggestion of another BJP MP Sakshi Maharaj advising Indian women to have four children each to protect their religion. The call, which again created a huge rumpus, got no reaction from Modi. Another BJP MP reinforced the suggestion with his own call to women to produce not four but five children! As if there was a competition in force, the Shankaracharya of Badrikashram Shri Vasudevanand demanded that Hindus should have ten children! And, mixing religion with politics (!) he said that this was necessary because Hindu unity had enabled Modi to be PM, and hence to maintain the majority in parliament Hindus should have ten children. The seer said that Islam and Christianity had originated from Hinduism and hence *ghar wapsi* programme should be allowed to be conducted freely.

The divisive, communal politics of the saffron parivar is being conducted as an adjunct to Modi's programme of *Sabka Saath, sabka vikas*. It is difficult to reconcile the two. The Modi stream is quite acceptable to all since it is premised on doctrines of all-round development. Modi can be very persuasive and charming in both public and private discourse, and there is agreement in the country that he is an engaging conversationalist. He has made a good impression on foreign leaders in high office with his vision for India and the various schemes he has in mind for development. Yet, it is inexplicable why he is permitting the entrenchment in public discourse of a political rhetoric that is divisive

in approach and sectarian in content. His party senior Atal Behari Vajpayee was as good or as bad as Modi as a BJP member, but he conducted a pattern of consensus politics that found favour with all parties in the political spectrum.

It is quite nice to hear Modi talk of an India of the future which is closest to the India of everyman's dreams. It is nice to hear him talk of India as a 20 trillion dollar economy. It is not however as nice to hear his partymen talk of four or five children to defend Hindutva or of a *ghar wapsi* programme which will increase the Hindu population through re-conversion. Which India is the real India which the real Modi is sponsoring? On this Republic Day, an answer will be welcome, as welcome as an assurance that under Modi the country will not witness a politicians-sponsored communal polarization, but will ensure the continuation and entrenchment of the prevailing pluralism. May India always be great!

—S. Viswam

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Between the lines

The idea of India

Kuldip Nayar

When Jawaharlal Nehru declared on January 26, 1929, from the banks of Ravi that India wanted complete independence, not the dominion status, hitherto demanded, very few people believed that they would see the end of the British rule 18 years later. But it happened non-violently and without any rancour. There was no bitterness and the people looked forward to a polity which would be independent and would have their elected representatives to help them realize the ethos of pluralism and egalitarianism which they had cherished.

Why the social fabric has got torn and why the dream of a pluralistic society has become more distant are the questions that stare at our face. From whichever angle you look at, the fault lies with the political parties. Their parochial ideologies and an eye on power have pushed aside the ideals which inspired us to throw out the mightiest colonial power without firing a shot.

Having gone through the ordeal of freedom struggle we were inspired by idealism and values. Little did we realize that the British had divided us so much that for the time being we pushed into background our inclination to caste and community. This schism reappeared soon after the last British soldier left the gateway of India at Mumbai. And today we are divided caste-wise, religion-wise and language-wise.

One can argue that China, when it attacked India in 1962, thought

in the same way but found a united country to defend the northeastern territory which in ordinary times was considered arguably a point for discussion. The only explanation is that an outside invasion unites the country, not the dangers of division or dispute.

However reprehensible the reason, it does not hold water today. The country has been furrowed deep by caste and religion. This becomes all the more appalling when the state is found mixed up in strife. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's emphasis on development, however praiseworthy, loses its sheen when he meets the RSS leaders who make no bones about their ideology of Hindu Rashtra.

The BJP rules at the centre and it endangers the idea of India, a democratic and pluralistic society. I do not buy the argument that radical Islam is encouraging the violent fringe among the Hindus. The RSS is systematically changing the complexion of the polity so that it looks Hindu. Its chief Mohan Bhagwat has proudly said many a time in public that the Hindu raj has returned after 800 years! What effect it would have on the minorities? Several Muslim leaders have told me that the community lives in fear.

Things have reached such a pass that serious Muslim thinkers are worried over the extremism in Islam (Islam literally means 'Peace upon you'). Even there is a move to admit Hindu students in madarsas.

The Muslim students also want to join the DAV and Arya Samaj educational institutions.

What is disconcerting is that even activists from secular parties are making a beeline for the BJP. It cannot be the love for ideology but sheer aspiration to be on the side which is in power. Such personalities like Kiran Bedi who have stood against communalism all their lives are proudly parroting the stand of the BJP. Basically, it is the lure for key positions in the party they consider would come to power.

The fallout of these developments is not healthy. It is making the minorities insecure and forcing them to think that they are second class citizens. This will sap the energy of India and come in the way of development. Until there is a feeling among the minorities and the marginalized that they will equally gain, there will be no concerted effort to push the wheel of India ahead.

The increasing strength of the BJP should be a point of concern not only for the minorities but also the liberals in the country. The idea of India, as inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, is a state where all are equal before the law and enjoy equal opportunities. The feeling of the Muslims is that they are increasingly pushed to the wall. This may lead to desperation. The world has seen such developments in the past and more dangerously in the present.

The killing of 12 people by the armed gunmen early this month in the Paris office of the Charlie Hebdo is not justified even by the tenets of Koran. The insult of the Prophet Mohammad is not acceptable but

(Continued on Page 6)

Who needs the WTO?

Sankara Narayanan

US poultry imports were banned by India on account of avian influenza. World Trade Organization (WTO) has called the decision 'unscientific' in its October 2014 judgment. The government is set to challenge the order asking it to lift a ban on poultry imports from the US.

The government is consulting with stakeholders on ways to protect the growing domestic poultry industry from the inflow of US chicken legs, which are cheaper by about Rs 100 per kg. A breeder from Coimbatore said, 'Currently, fresh chicken in retail was selling for Rs 180 a kg and chicken legs for Rs 240 a kg. On the other hand, chicken drumsticks from US come in at around Rs 50-60 a kg'.

A government official said. "We are committed to protect the industry with huge employment potential and are looking at various measures to that effect. We have had a meeting with the poultry industry and breeders."

Last week, China banned the import of US poultry and eggs after the detection of an avian flu strain in the Pacific Northwest. More than 20 countries, including members of the EU, South Korea and South Africa, have imposed curbs on poultry from certain US states or the entire country.

With US consumers preferring chicken breasts, the less-favoured chicken legs are frozen for export to other markets at highly competitive prices. "As Russia has also banned American poultry, they are really

eyeing the Indian market to sell **chicken legs frozen for the last four-five years** at may be Rs 40-50 a kg compared to Rs 160 -170 a kg price prevailing in India," said another official.

But as per WTO rules, national treatment must be accorded, which means the domestic industry must be subjected to the same rules as the foreign seller.

US will export chicken legs that are four to five years old. India at best could restrict imports to products that are not more than six months old. Even for this, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India must come out with standards. According to experts, India could also look at options such as anti-dumping duties to curb imports and use the argument that the chicken are fed with genetically modified food.

"US chicken is given genetically modified feed, which is not allowed in India. They are also injected with a lot of hormones," said an expert. The EU banned US chicken on account of chlorine treatment. An anti-dumping case could be possible but difficult.

It is really funny that Indian officials are planning to challenge in WTO the safety of American chickens landing in India on the plea that these chickens are fed with genetically modified feed. Americans will not miss to point out a very recent statement of our Forest & Environment Minister in Parliament that there was no scientific proof to establish the hazardous nature of GMO to people and living organisms.

All our major malls are selling the US made GMO eatables without any restriction. But the government is suddenly woken up to the hazards of GMO because they have to protect the powerful Indian poultry lobby.

We will attract international ridicule if the government complains about the injected hormones in American chickens. Last year an environmental NGO (Centre for Science and Environment) exposed through studies how dangerously the Indian poultry products were injected with hormones. It went on to warn us that this would lead Indians to be non-reactive to antibiotics soon. Indian poultry breeding majors called this study a coup organised by the poultry MNCs to damage the native industry.

Have we not tied a rope around our necks by signing the WTO treaty on dotted lines? If the US succeed in WTO appeal, which is very likely because this organisation is in American coat pocket, Indians will be condemned to eat chicken legs that are four to five years old.

Indians farmers have all along been opposing India's entry into WTO. The "informed" Indians kept quiet all along. Now they will also face the music in the form of health risk. With the cheap poultry products from America, not only the big breeders will be hit. Poultry supports many a small farm households as an alternative source of income. Now that is in peril.

Last year Modi government, in spite of the strong pressure from EU and the US, refused to sign the Trade Facilitation Treaty (TFT) till the food security issues (state procuring from farmers at an administered minimum support price and stock piling for PDS) are resolved satisfactorily.

This decision was welcomed by all farm associations across the nation. Though the reaction was mute, India Inc, trade bodies and economic experts expressed their displeasure. What is good for farmers is bad for our Lalas and experts.

TFT was desperately sought after by the powerful western nations. That was the real trump card for Indian government to negotiate our food security issues. But the commerce minister subsequently agreed to sign the TFT on American soil, without finalising the food security issues, succumbing to the pressure groups within and without. Please note that the Indian commerce minister gave this assurance not to WTO but to America. Once Americans give green signal, WTO's acceptance is just a formality. So much for this international body's independence!

Strong economies from East and West are applying enormous pressure on Indian state to allow fishing trawlers in our sea coasts and dumping of dairy products, cotton, silk, rubber, fruits, oil seeds, potato, tomato etc made out of huge state subsidy. Our economists also strongly vouch for this as the Indian consumers will have the freedom to choose the world class products at the cheapest of prices. Indian state is inching towards giving permission to such demands.

Now it is the turn of American chicken legs. Sooner our markets will be flooded with the best of farm products from alien lands for the informed Indians to enjoy. But the day is not far off to witness Indian farmers and fishermen becoming pirates to attack international ships as Somalians are doing now.

(Continued from Page 5)

killing the people connected with it is also equally condemnable. I can understand and appreciate the hurt and anger the insult of the Prophet must have caused. But to kill the people allegedly connected with it is a blow against humanity, particularly the freedom of expression.

The axiom that your liberty ends where my nose begins holds good in this matter. But in this case, the revenge is the killing. It will be a law of jungle if the individuals take upon themselves to avenge the insults to the religious icons. People's anger is understandable and all efforts should be made to assuage it. But what kind of world it would be if people take to arms because their religion has been insulted or their icons run down? Methods are very important.

Mahatma Gandhi said that if means are vitiated, the ends are bound to be vitiated. It is a pity that the Indians have not come up to that standard. But this does not falsify the nobility of what he said. In a world, crisscrossed by fanaticism, extremism and jihad, the only dictum to adopt is cooperation and conciliation. This was the dream of Nehru when he raised the flag on the banks of Ravi. I wish that India would follow that path and be an example for other countries, particularly the neighbours.

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Government-Corporate nexus against people and democracy

Prem Singh

The Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act 2013 (LARR Act 2013) was enacted in the parliament after incorporating suggestions from the BJP and with its due support. Sumitra Mahajan, presently the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, then had headed the Parliamentary Committee, which okayed the law. The LARR Act 2013 which came into effect from January 2014 empowers land-owners, for the first time, with the right to fair compensation for acquired land along with consent right. As per the Act the provisions to pay fair compensation to the farmers and seek their prior consent were to be implemented over and above the existing 13 laws in the matter within a year's time. The LARR Act 2013 was meant to replace the Land Acquisition Act of colonial times enacted in 1894. The staggering scale of destitution of peasants and tribals, social unrest and environmental devastation resulting from the post-1991 new economic policies had forced the UPA government to enact this law. This law mandates prior permissions of 70 per cent land-owners in cases where land is acquired by the government, and prior permission of 80 percent land-owners, in cases of acquisitions by private companies. Along with this, Social Impact Assessment (SIA) has also been made mandatory.

The ordinance promulgated by the present government on the last day of December 2015 adds Section 10 A to the Act which undoes the rights which the land-owners got

in LARR Act 2013. As per this Section five areas – national security, defence and defence production projects; industrial corridors projects; rural infrastructure projects; infrastructure/social infrastructure projects, mostly fall under the public private partnership (PPP); and housing projects for the poor – will not require either prior consent or Social Impact Assessment. It is a matter of speculation if any areas are left out of these five! For these five areas, even fertile multi-crop cultivable land can be acquired straightaway. The government decided to bring in this amendment to the LARR Act 2013 after the winter session was over. When the President inquired into the reasons as to the hurry regarding the matter, three ministers on the part of the government clarified their reasons and the President's permission was promptly obtained. Thus, whatever role the peasants and tribals had come to have in the process of the acquisition of their lands as per law was snatched by this amendment and the powers placed back instead into the hands of bureaucracy and corporate houses. Whatever justifications the BJP leaders are giving for this amendment, ought to have been given at the time of enactment of the Bill. Explicitly, the government has compensated for the support of the corporate houses in the Lok Sabha elections by bringing the amendment in such a hasty manner.

It seems as if the corporate houses had placed their bet on Narendra

Modi instead of Manmohan Singh and Sonia Gandhi because they were aggravated by MNREGA, Land Acquisition Act, Food Security Act and the like. Manmohan Singh was an economist prime minister who followed the classicist approach towards neo-liberal reforms whereas Narendra Modi is taking blind leaps. BJP's propaganda against Manmohan Singh as a weak prime minister was misleading; nonetheless, it proved to be an effective winning campaign in the general election. As the progenitor and facilitator of neo-liberalism in India, Manmohan Singh will be remembered as the strongest prime ministers ever. He removed India's economic policy and its goal from the axis of the Constitution and installed it instead on the axis of various power stations of neo-liberalism like World Bank, IMF, WTO, World Economic Forum, various multi-national companies and so on. He believed in the wisdom that the capitalist way to growth is the only right way. From the Harshad Mehta scandal to the numerous scandals during his tenure - nothing ever brought even a slightest shadow on his brow. That is because he honestly believed that the path of capitalist development has to traverse through corruption. Narendra Modi is an extension of Manmohan Singh because the same policies and practices are being carried forward by his government too.

It is inherent in the spirit of the Constitution as well as has been explicitly reiterated by the Supreme

Court in 1987 that amendments ought to be brought only during an emergency or an extraordinary situation. It will be well to remember that the sequence of ordinances had begun in Manmohan Singh's tenure as finance minister. The Vajpayee government swiftly carried the strategy forward. The UPA-2 government too was a government of ordinances - promulgating at least five ordinances in a year. But the current government in its seven months' tenure, by coming out with nine ordinances during and after the parliament session, has delivered the severest blow to the parliamentary democracy till date. To say that amendments harm parliamentary democracy is - as some critics have observed - merely a technical objection is misleading. The pertinent question is: why did the previous governments or the present one resort to it. The only possible answer is that governments do so in the interest of the global bodies of corporate capitalism, multi-national companies and corporate houses in the country. Thus, it is a one-sided power play that ruins the already marginalized farmers and forest-dwellers.

In the neo-liberal times, elections have become extremely expensive. According to some news reports, in the last parliamentary elections, the BJP spent twenty to twenty five thousand crores and the Congress spent about ten to fifteen thousand crores of rupees. This money comes from corporate houses. Prime ministerial candidates openly participate in the conclaves and conferences of capitalists and solicit their support saying 'make us win and we will do your bidding'. Indian democracy has, thus, been hijacked by corporate houses. The BJP government under the prime

ministership of Narendra Modi, just after its formation, had made it clear that it intended to amend the four months old LARR Act 2013. It considers the thirty per cent electoral mandate to be a gift of corporate houses, not of the voters. In such a scenario, the interests of big business houses become of utmost importance to the government. The point is, if the money of corporate houses is not kept out of elections, it will not be possible to keep out the ordinances promulgated in their interests.

With this ordinance the already complicated issue of water, forest and land (*Jal, Jungle, Jameen*) will become even more confounded. Monetary compensations against acquired lands do not ensure salvation for farmers and tribals. Most farmers have small land holdings and that are their only assets. With the land acquisition, they are rendered rootless. The compensation is usually blown up in frivolous expenditures and addictions. Very few people are able to invest the compensation money judiciously for the future. Non-land-owners like dalits and craftsmen castes who depend on land farming for their livelihood did not receive any compensation amount, residential plots or jobs right from the time of the Land Acquisition Act of 1894. In such a situation, land acquisition without prior consent or any social impact assessment will invariably lead to social discontent, and might even increase Naxalite violence.

The important lesson in the Land Acquisition Ordinance is that the supposedly apolitical efforts of a few good people (who wish to bring respite to farmers-tribals-labourers by working within the

fold of neo-liberalism as advisors to the governments) cannot be a permanent solution. They will have to understand that the awareness and participation of the people that they talk about in their NGO endeavour means nothing without active political participation.

Most parties, including the Congress, have opposed this ordinance. Many peoples' organizations, farmers' unions and important citizens have also opposed it. Justice Rajindar Sachar has expressed harsh criticism in his statements as well as columns. He is equally opposed to the Insurance and Coal Mines ordinances. The farmer cell of the BJP too has opposed the ordinance as its affiliate trade union Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh participated in the token strike of the Coal Mines Workers Union along with other trade unions against promulgation of the Coal Ordinance. This protest will be meaningful only if all these parties and organizations identify, recognize and oppose the root cause: that is, the neo-liberal economic policies and the capitalist model of development.

Along with opposition to the ordinance, some important measures must also be taken. Political parties must fight for the strengthening of the LARR Act 2013, and they must also insist on the formation of a Land Use Commission, as has been demanded by the Socialist Party (India). This commission must have comprehensive representation of farmers, tribals and non-land-owners of villages. The farmers have played an important role in the freedom movement. It has had several important leaders and thinkers including Gandhi himself.

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Liberalisation of education widened caste inequities

K. S. Chalam

Education as a process of assimilating and disseminating knowledge is one of the important factors that has civilised groups and nations. Interestingly, it has been used as a tool to socially exclude some groups like castes to enter the mainstream society. It is once again proved that the same old traditions are prevailing in India in making the benefits of education inaccessible to socially and educationally backward people. The NGO Pratham's 10th annual survey report released recently has brought out some startling but expected results. The learning outcomes of children in the rural schools particularly in the government schools is very poor as majority of the children in V class are not able to read a paragraph of II class and similarly fail to do simple division and multiplication in mathematics. This is happening when the nation is said to be growing at a faster rate of growth than before due to further liberalisation of the economy. This brings into focus the age old dichotomy of growth on the one hand for the few and decay and degradation for the underprivileged. Is this a manifestation of our traditional values re-emerging or getting new lease of life despite the absence of the *mlecchas* who were once considered as responsible for our troubles or the same old story continuing in different garb?

Indian caste system based on occupational reservations had been subjected to disparagement from the time of Buddha, was structurally confronted in the nineteenth century by providing representation to the unrepresented castes in bureaucracy in certain

princely states. It was formalised by the British India government in the admissions of schools through the recommendations of Hunter Commission in 1882. Thus, the struggle for equality of opportunity initiated in the education sector is again brought under the regime of exclusion through public policy of liberalisation and privatisation. Two decades of planning from 1990s and remorseless response to needs of the underprivileged brought the education system at a stage where Mahatma Phuley left it. Dalits, OBCs and Muslims are not adequately represented in quality institutes and disciplines though government claims achievement of universal enrolment in elementary education to satisfy UN MDGs.

The social reform movements and the so-called communal representation popularly known as reservation in admissions and public jobs have substantially improved the Human Development Indices in the South. In two of my publications in the 1990s I have provided empirical data on how it has happened. The World Bank and the UNDP in their reports noted the positive contributions of reservations in India and compared them with that of preferential representation to Bhumiputras in Malaysia and similar policies in other countries. Yet, people keep on referring to this simple measure as an aberration without knowing the size of caste-based reservations of let us say (15 per cent) scheduled castes. There are 175 lakh jobs in government (state, union, local body, public sector) where the caste-based reservations are observed. It means that there will

be 26 lakh dalits in all categories of jobs if the policy is implemented without distortions. This is around one per cent (1.3) of the 20 crore dalits in India. Does the country not afford to contribute this paltry amount to call itself a civilised nation or *viswaguru*? The amount of sacrifices and the contributions of these groups in the form of remaining illiterate, sick and jobless for six decades after independence are greater than what was stacked in Swiss Bank or Mauritius or Singapore. Yet, both the politicians and the policy makers have remained silent on this important issue making the forward castes educated at their cost and migrated to the West and now open the system to market. It is now openly admitted by economists like Kaushik Basu and others that markets have failed the masses and inequalities are widened.

Inequalities in education sector and the divides and despairs that it has created in post-Independent India is seen everywhere. Though some of the "paid intellectuals" refuse to probe into the factors responsible for the inequities now, the fact remains that education particularly technical education provides the necessary competencies to enter the job market which the reservation communities are missing. It is common sense knowledge of everyone that the Government schools and colleges have become dumping grounds for SC, ST, OBC and poor to get admission into B.A, B.Sc., B.Com, etc while the rich and those who can meet the opportunity cost get in to technical institutes. Privatisation of higher education has created caste cleavages of institutions that

thrive on public money in the name of fees reimbursement. But, the underprivileged and poor who fail to pay the remaining part of institutional cost drop out or remain unfinished or are thrown out due to caste prejudices in states like Andhra Pradesh to which our media pay little attention.

It is in this context the 10th ASER survey report evoked some interest as it has reported that the levels of learning like reading a II class text by a III class student is limited to only 25 per cent and so on. Though some of the findings are not reckoning with NCERT survey due to conceptual issues, it is declared that enrolment in 6-14 age elementary education is 96 per cent or almost universal. It is also reported that the enrolment in tuition fees paid private schools is 30.8 per cent and in cities like Hyderabad 54.8 per cent. However the differences in the performance of dalits and others persist. For instance, reading of a text is performed by 58 per cent of dalits while it is 69 per cent for forward castes in private schools while the difference in government schools is large 42 per cent and 65 per cent for dalits and others respectively. It is reported in some studies that government schools are considered as schools for reservation folk and therefore neither the teachers nor the public servants are bothered and they slowly perish. Perhaps like the Public Sector enterprises that are designed to make losses to be confiscated by crony capitalists, the education system is perhaps heading towards that goal. But, the situation in countries like USA, Pakistan and China with whom we always compare is different. There the state takes the responsibility of 'no child left behind' unlike India that makes an RTE Act and forget.

Status of schooling

The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2014 was released in the last week. This is the tenth annual report. ASER is the largest annual household survey of children in rural India that focuses on the status of schooling and basic learning. Facilitated by Pratham Education Foundation, in each rural district ASER is conducted by local organizations and institutions. ASER 2014 reached 577 districts and 16,497 villages, and about 570,000 children in the age group 3-16 were surveyed in just over 340,000 households.

Every year, ASER finds out whether children in rural India go to school, whether they can read simple text and whether they can do basic arithmetic. In 2005, 2007, and every year since 2009, ASER has also included a visit to one government school in each sampled village. Since the implementation of the RTE Act in 2010, school visits in ASER have included indicators of compliance with those norms and standards specified in the Right to Education Act that are easy to measure. In 2014, ASER visited 15,206 government schools across rural India.

Key Findings

2014 is the sixth year in a row that enrolment levels are 96% or higher for the 6-14 age group. The proportion of children currently not in school remains at 3.3%.

- India is close to universal enrolment for the age group 6-14, with the percentage of children enrolled in school at 96% or above for six years in a row.

- Nationally, the percentage of children out of school (age group 6-14) remains at 3.3%, the same as the figure last year.
- In some states the proportion of girls (age group 11-14) out of school remains greater than 8%. These states are Rajasthan (12.1%) and Uttar Pradesh (9.2%)
- Although enrolment levels are very high for the age group covered by the Right to Education Act (i.e. 6 to 14 years), the proportion of 15 to 16 year olds not enrolled in school is substantial. Nationally, for rural areas, 15.9% of boys and 17.3% of girls in this age group are currently out of school.

The proportion of children enrolled in private schools has increased slightly from last year.

- In 2014, 30.8% of all 6-14 year old children in rural India are enrolled in private schools. This number is up slightly from 29% in 2013.
- As in previous years, in each age group, a higher proportion of boys go to private schools as compared to girls. In 2014, in the age group 7-10 years, 35.6% of boys are enrolled in private schools as compared with 27.7% of girls. For the age group of 11-14 years, 33.5% of boys are in private schools as compared to 25.9% of girls.
- Compared to similar figures in 2013, there has been an increase in private school enrolment in

almost all states. The only exceptions to this are Gujarat, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand, Nagaland and Kerala.

- Five states in India now have private school enrolment rates in the elementary stage that are greater than 50%. These are Manipur (73.3%), Kerala (62.2%), Haryana (54.2%), Uttar Pradesh (51.7%), and Meghalaya (51.7%).

Reading levels remain low and unchanged.

- Overall, the situation with basic reading continues to be extremely disheartening in India. In 2014, in Std III, only a fourth of all children can read a Std II text fluently. This number rises to just under half in Std V. Even in Std VIII, close to 75% children can read Std II level text (which implies that 25% still cannot).
- Some very small improvements in reading are visible in the last few years. For example, the proportion of Std V children who can at least read a Std II level text has inched upwards from 46.8% in 2012 to 47% in 2013 and to 48.1% in 2014. 38.7% of Std III children could read at least a Std I level text in 2012. This number is slightly higher at 40.2% in 2014.
- In some states, reading levels have improved since last year. For example, in 2014 a higher proportion of children in Std V in Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Bihar, Odisha and Karnataka can at least read Std II level text than was the case last year. Tamil Nadu shows major gains in reading over last year for

Std V.

- Looking at trends over time, in many states the reading status of children is largely unchanged. However in some states, like Bihar, Assam, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra there are visible declines in reading levels over the last 5-6 years.

Math continues to be a serious and major source of concern.

- The All India (rural) figures for basic arithmetic have remained virtually unchanged over the last few years. In 2012, 26.3% of Std III children could do a two digit subtraction. This number is at 25.3% in 2014. For Std V children, the ability to do division has increased slightly from 24.8% in 2012 to 26.1% in 2014.
- There are other trends which are quite worrying. For example, the percentage of children in Std II who still cannot recognize numbers up to 9 has increased over time, from 11.3% in 2009 to 19.5% in 2014.
- Similarly, the ability to do division among Std VIII students has been dropping since 2010. The proportion of Std VIII students who could correctly do a three digit by one digit division problem was 68.3% in 2010. This number has dropped to 44.1% in 2014.
- Few changes are visible since last year (except in Tamil Nadu where there are improvements). However looking over a five to eight year period, it is clear that math levels have declined in almost every state. Karnataka

and Andhra Pradesh are the exceptions where the situation has been more or less the same for the past several years.

Ability to read English is unchanged for lower primary grades.

Assessments of basic English have been carried out in 2007, 2009, 2012 and 2014.

- Children's ability to read English is relatively unchanged in lower primary grades. In 2014, about 25% of children enrolled in Std V could read simple English sentences. This number is virtually unchanged since 2009.
- However, a decline is visible in upper primary grades. For example, in 2009, 60.2% of children in Std VIII could read simple sentences in English but in 2014, this figure is 46.8%.
- In 2014, of those who can read words (regardless of grade), roughly 60% could explain the meanings of the words read. Of those who can read sentences, 62.2% in Std V could explain the meaning of the sentences. Depending on the class, the ability to say the meaning (of words and sentences) was higher in previous years.

School observations

ASER 2014 visited 15,206 government schools with primary sections. Of these 8,844 were primary schools and 6,362 were upper primary schools which also had primary sections.

Teacher and child attendance show no major changes from last year.

- In 2014, ASER data indicates that 71.4% of enrolled children in primary schools and 71.1% of enrolled children in upper primary schools were present on the day of the visit. In 2013, these figures were 70.7% in primary schools and 71.8% in upper primary schools.
- As in previous years, children's attendance varies considerably across the country. States like Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu have attendance levels that range from 80 to 90%. But in states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkhand, and Madhya Pradesh, attendance rates are much lower and range from 50 to 60%.
- Trends over time show that children's attendance both in primary and upper primary schools was higher in 2009 as compared to 2014. In 2009, attendance was at 74.3% in primary schools and 77% in upper primary schools.
- Since 2009, there has been a small decrease in the attendance rates of teachers. For primary schools, in 2014, 85% of appointed teachers were present in school on the day of the visit as compared to 89.1% in 2009. The 2014 figure for teacher attendance in upper primary schools is 85.8% as against 88.6% in 2009.
- Of the government primary schools visited in 2014, over one third are "small schools" with a total enrolment of 60 children or less.
- In 2009, the percentage of government primary schools visited that were "small" was 26.1%. For the most part, improvement in school facilities continues.
- The percentage of schools complying with RTE mandated pupil-teacher ratios has increased from 45.3% last year to 49.3% in 2014. In 2010, this figure was 38.9%.
- Nationally, as far as office/store, playground, boundary wall and kitchen shed are concerned, progress is visible from year to year.
- With respect to drinking water provision and availability, drinking water was available in 75.6% of the schools that were visited. In 2010, this figure was 72.7%. In four states (Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh), drinking water was available in more than 85% of schools.
- ASER records whether toilets are available and useable on the day of the visit. Since 2010, there has been significant progress in the availability of useable toilets. Nationally in 2014, 65.2% of schools visited had toilet facilities that were useable. In 2013, this figure was 62.6% and in 2010, it was 47.2%). The proportion of schools visited where girls' toilets were available and useable has gone up from 32.9% in 2010 to 53.3% in 2013 to 55.7% in 2014. In four states, more than 75% of schools visited had useable girls' toilets. These states are Gujarat, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana.
- There is a small increase in the availability of computers in the schools visited. The 2014 figure stands at 19.6%, as compared to 15.8% in 2010. Several states stand out in this regard. In Gujarat, 81.3% of schools visited had computers; this number was 89.8% in Kerala, 46.3% in Maharashtra and 62.4% in Tamil Nadu.
- The proportion of schools with libraries has increased substantially, from 62.6% in 2010 to 78.1% in 2014. In about 40.7% of schools that were visited, children were seen using library books as compared to 37.9% in 2010.

(Continued from Page 4)

In the post-independence era, from Chaudhary Charan Singh to Mahantha Devaru Nanjundaswamy, Kishan Patnaik and Sachidanand Sinha, there have been people who have deeply deliberated upon the nature and problems of agriculture and agriculturists vis-a-vi industrialization in previously colonized countries including India. This unique legacy must become a part of the present discourse of development/progress. There are peasant movements and leaders world over, even in the Europe, who oppose the conditions imposed by the WTO in the interest of certain multi-national companies operating in agriculture sector. Lessons can be learnt from these movements.

The proportion of "small schools" in the government primary school sector continues to grow.

Evolutionary (Science-Directed) Socialism: Part-VII

Bhagwat Prasad Rath

Environmental problems are ringing a warning bell for humanity. We can ignore it at our peril. To quote Fred Magdoff, “Not just climate change, but also pollution of the air, water, soil, and living organisms, the loss of biodiversity both aboveground and in the soil, the extinction of species, and the overuse and misuse of both renewable and nonrenewable natural resources” (‘Building an ecologically sound and socially just economy’ in *Analytical Monthly Review*, September-2014). These issues plague the whole of humanity. Also unemployment, inequality and poverty should not be tolerated by any state. The Brundtland Report-1987 says that ‘development is that which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.’

Today illusive money is ruling the world. To quote from the book *‘Ecology Economy’*: “Money has come to exist more and more in token form - from notes to electronic trading. In relation to massive debt, the whole edifice of money stands increasingly revealed as a colossal illusion. Phantom wealth is created through a phantom mountain of debt.” Andrew Simmas’ *‘Ecological Debt’* contrasts the impossible, unrepayable financial debts that Third World governments owe to First World banks with a different level of real debt owed by the world’s financial elites to the regions whose resources they have plundered.

“Since the bailout of banks in the US and the UK - starting in 2008 with massive injections of

government funds - something of the insanity our present world financial system is based on has become increasingly visible. Could we do things differently? Are we mortgaging our earth to pay for a style of living that can only be sustained for a minority of humans, for a brief period.”

Joseph Stiglitz, a Nobel-winner economist, is alarmed at the World Bank and IMF imposed policies ruining the world: “Economics of the Fund-Bank kind is bad for many reasons. It is intellectually dishonest, and does not really benefit countries or reduce their poverty; profits created at human expense can be seen as morally bad, specifically bad Karma. The destructive impact of escalating debt is the essence of bad economics.”

Why are the rulers of different countries accepting these wrong policies? Actually, democracy has crumbled in almost all countries of the world. In the US, one percent of people are deciding the policies and strategies of the government. (Stiglitz says that American democracy is “of the 1%, by the 1% and for the 1 %”). Both the Republicans and Democrats are controlled by the leading capital-owners, who are one percent of the public of the US. In India the situation is not different. The two leading parties, the BJP and Congress, are at the beck and call of corporation powers. The people of the democratic countries are misled by the media owned and managed by the corporation elite.

“Perpetual growth” is the formula constantly dinned into

public ears by the media and the state-controlled economists. Does the world need more growth, as mainstream economists and politicians continually affirm, or a planned de-growth, as ecological economists like Martinez-Alier, Simms and Johnson advocate? Does it need a different kind of growth? If so, what, and how could his be managed?

Herman Daly points out the logical fallacy in models of economic growth: “In its physical dimensions the economy is an open subsystem of the earth ecosystem, which is finite, non-growing, and materially closed. As the economic subsystem grows it incorporates an ever greater proportion of the total ecosystem into itself and must reach a limit at 100 percent, if not before. Therefore its growth is not sustainable. The term ‘sustainable growth’ when applied to the economy is a bad oxymoron... Rather, it (GDP growth) is an economic system that has basic internal forces - especially the profit motive and competition among firms - that operate in such a way as to promote exponential growth while simultaneously causing massive negative social and ecological effects.” – *‘Ecology Economy’*.

It is unfortunate that we forget that we are living in an inter-dependant world. “All living beings are members of ecological communities bound together in a network of interdependencies. When this deep ecological perception becomes part of our daily awareness, a radically new system of ethics emerges” writes Fritjof Capra in *‘The Web of Life’*.

Non-violence is considered as the greatest value of the Yoga system. The Mahabharata places non-violence at a higher level than truth (Adiparba-Kausika Myth). Violence shatters the web of life and disturbs the normal pace of nature.

Mining companies are making profit only because of state's support.

'*Out of This Earth*' (Padel and Das 2010), with a cost-benefit analysis of Aluminium projects showed that making alumina and Aluminium can only make a profit with huge subsidies on the price of electricity, water and transport, and by excluding pollution costs, etc. as 'externalities'. Also, any mining makes a profit only if the basic cost of ore is kept abysmally low-far lower than it should be considering the huge environmental and social costs involved. Keeping costs and prices low is what cartels are about.'

America's top aluminium expert wrote: Aluminum making is dependent on vast

continuing grants of low-cost electricity.... (It) is no great maker of employment, uses little skilled labor, and adds little to the independent development of an area.... The US cannot any longer afford to make aluminium if it can be obtained in large enough quantities on favorable price terms from other sources. (Anderson 1951:21, as cited in Padel and Das

Stiglitz writes, "Resources should belong to the people and governments should represent the people, which means government can't permit the appropriation of public resources by the private sector."

In the book '*Power and Morality*' two world-level sociologists Prof. Pitirim A. Sorokin and Walter A. Lunden write, "When the morality and mentality of rulers and the ruled are measured by the same moral and mental yardstick (and not by the double standard discussed above), then the rulers' morality and minds appear to be marked by a much stronger dualism - by greater mental and moral schizophrenia than the morality and mentality of the members of the ruled populations. The moral behaviour of ruling groups tends to be more criminal and sub-moral than that of the ruled strata of the same society. The greater, more absolute, and coercive the power of rulers, political leaders, and big executives of business, labour and other organizations, and the less freely this power is approved by the ruled population, the more corrupt and criminal such ruling groups and executives tend to be."

They also write, "In regard to the captains of finance and wealth, it was said long ago that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. The truth of this maxim is well confirmed by the experience of the past as well as by the careful histories of the modern big fortunes and by the biographies of recent captains of industry and finance, go-betweens, and some labour leaders. These histories and biographies show that in recent times, just as in the past, there are few, if any, big fortunes amassed without crime, just as there are few captains of industry and finance, and few powerful labour leaders that are free from criminal violations of law and morality."

Though computer scientists have discovered that nature moves in a

particular direction to produce the human species on the earth (Prof. Stuart Kuffman

calls it "order for free"), scientists generally accept the idea that man's appearance on the earth is an accident. Darwin made the greatest discovery of the 19th century but he gave competition the key role in evolution. Male-dominated Eurocentric thinking biased Darwin. The same bias guides many leading scientists of the world. Scientists like Stephen Jay Gold and Lewontin raised their voices against scientists having the race bias but they too forgot that we would be living in a world free from wars and aggressive nationalism, had female intellect directed world affairs. Nonviolence in the ambience is necessary for freedom of all the species on the earth. Man went against nature's direction when he gave importance to violence.

In *the Hindu* of December-28, 2014 Harsh Mander writes: "To draw men into struggles against patriarchy, 1,200 activists from 94 countries converged in Delhi for a conference titled Men Engage. "Patriarchy and gender injustice remain defining characteristics of societies around the world with devastating effects on everyone's daily life," the conference declared. Patriarchy constitutes "immense threats to human wellbeing" because "no matter who we are, and no matter where we are in the world, these forces make our relationships less fulfilling, less healthy and less safe. From an early age, they introduce suffering, violence, illness, hate and death within our families and communities. They strip us of our fundamental human rights and hinder our ability to live a life with love, dignity, intimacy

and mutual respect. They hamper the development of our economies and keep our global society from flourishing.”

A landmark UNFPA study confirms how closely men and boys in India conform to these domineering models of masculinity. Ninety-three per cent men felt that “to be a man, you need to be tough”; 60 per cent of men report that they are violent with their intimate partners. Nine in 10 men felt that a woman must obey her husband, and three in four that, in family matters, a man’s word should be final. Only 15 per cent of men involve their wives in making family decisions.

How devastating the unholy combination between capitalism and male chauvinism can be, comes out in the book ‘*Churning the Earth, the Making of Global India*’ by Aseem Shrivastava and Ashis Kothari. The two authors went to an area which the Government wants to declare as SEZ (special economic zone). An area of 25,000/-hectares will be in this SEZ. The state is displacing the farmers of a number of villages with the help of the police and the anti-social elements created and energized by the think tank of the reliance industry. In the words of Shrivastava and Kothari: “To be sure, some famers (hedging their bets) have sold a part of their land. Others have made distress sales, given the tough economic conditions. But they have not been able to take advantage of the compensation money. We asked a farmer in Pelpa who was attending a meeting of the village elders (known as *taus*) what he did with the money he had received from Reliance. He responded that he barely got to see the money. We asked whether Reliance had paid him. ‘Of course,’

he responded, ‘but the boys took it away.’

Why did you give them the money, we asked. His response caught us totally off guard.

My son put a pistol to my head and took the money away. This is becoming quite common here. They (the boys and the young men) are only interested in three things: gadi, daroo, bandook (cars, liquor and guns). Come with me one evening after sundown to the road which bisects the SEZ area. I will be able to show you the line of new jeeps (SUVs) parked along the road. Loud disco music blares out of the vehicles. The boys drink and make merry in them till the early house of the morning. Our *bahu-betis* (daughters-in-law and daughters) have stopped stepping out in the evening. It used to be very safe here. Now it isn’t. The boys return home in the early hours of the morning, sleep till the afternoon, and in the evening return to their favourite hideaway to repeat the routine. How many months will Rs.22 lakh last if it is being burnt at this rate?

The farmer’s wife says, “This is not just the forced takeover of our land and ancestral village, it is also the decimation of our culture and roots. Alcohol was always a problem in our villages. Now, with easy money, alcoholism is a daily nightmare. Men are out of control. Domestic violence is all too common. We do not belong to the city. And our own village seems alien to us now. *Hum toh kaheen ke nahin nabe* (We belong nowhere now)...Rural society in Haryana is in a state of moral breakdown. A certain despair haunts people here. It is the despair of ‘traumatized communities that have lost control over their fate.’

Globalization has led to lumpenization of the proletariat and the elite also. Societies are becoming atomized as well as herdlike. Human society through millions of years developed its intelligence and social abilities. Man lived in band societies. Human bands consisted of about 148 members. Prof. Dunbar and his colleagues researched and came to the conclusion that the volume of human mind was proportional to the number of members in a band. Gibbons are not so intelligent. They live in bands of five or six. Chimpanzees live in bands of 50 to 60 members. They are more intelligent than Gibbons. Socialized bands of humans was definitely the contribution of the females of society. Big bands of humans gave them safety from the predatory animals. To-day, within decades, we are undermining our heritage of millions of years. We are going in a reverse direction to evolutionally nature’s intention of building a matricentric socialist society because we (the rulers and commoners) are getting atomized and lumpenized at a fast pace. What to speak of band societies of 148 members? Even families consisting of a few members are breaking in different countries. Man is a product of society. Lumpenization is an enemy of social values. To-day economic globalization and lumpenization reinforce each other. Economic globalization is also creating ecological disturbance. How to prevent both is the question that cries for answer among the social thinkers of the world.

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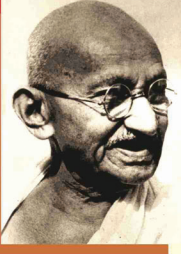
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30 जनवरी को महिमामंडन किसका करें ?



**शहीदों को
सलाम!!**

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इकबाल मैदान, भोपाल

गांधी के नेतृत्व में
लड़ी गई आज़ादी
की लड़ाई का
या फिर
ब्रिटिश राज का साथ
देनेवाली संकीर्ण
'हिंदू राष्ट्र' की
ताकतों का ?

ब्रिटिश हुकूमत के खिलाफ रामप्रसाद बिस्मिल और
अशफ़ाकउल्लाह खां की शहादत का? भगतसिंह,
चंद्रशेखर आज़ाद, राजगुरु व सुखदेव द्वारा
समाजवादी धर्मनिरपेक्ष आज़ाद भारत के लिए
दी गई शहादत का?

या फिर

राष्ट्रपिता गांधी पर कायराना हमला करनेवाले
कातिल गोडसे का?
उदार हिंदू दर्शन के खिलाफ़
संकीर्ण 'हिंदू राष्ट्र' थोपने की साजिश का?

संविधान के मूल्यों पर आधारित
लोकतांत्रिक, समाजवादी, धर्मनिरपेक्ष,
समतामूलक, विविधतापूर्ण
व संप्रभुतापूर्ण भारत का?

या फिर

कट्टरवादी धर्मांध व देशी-विदेशी
कारपोरेट पूंजी के गुलाम
साजिशकर्ताओं का?

राष्ट्रीय सेक्युलर मंच, शिक्षा अधिकार मंच, गांधी भवन न्यास, ऑल इंडिया ट्रेड यूनियन कांग्रेस (एटक), सेंटर ऑफ इंडियन ट्रेड यूनियन्स (सीटू), प्रगतिशील लेखक संघ, जनवादी लेखक संघ, भारत ज्ञान विज्ञान समिति, कलमकार परिषद, मुस्लिम एजुकेशन सोसायटी, अखिल भारतीय जनवादी महिला समिति, शहादत-ए-इक ह्यूमन वेलफेयर ट्रस्ट, नागरिक अधिकार मंच, ऑल इंडिया स्टूडेंट फेडरेशन, स्टूडेंट फेडरेशन ऑफ इंडिया और एकता परिषद — संपर्क : मो. 09425301582

Martyrs' Day

Bhopal

January 30, 2015



100 days Anti Liquor Walk in Tamil Nadu from 2nd October 2014 to 12th January 2015

Sting in the tail

S. Viswam

The home truths offered by the visiting US president Barack Obama shortly before ending his three-day visit to India could not obviously have gone down well with a section of the Indian political class. For those who have been advocating the conversion of India into Hindu Rashtra, any comment by anybody challenging such advocacy can only be anathema. If such a challenge comes from a visiting world leader, that too leader of the world's second largest democracy, it can hurt the saffron parivar, just as it can enthuse the entire secular spectrum. Predictably, barring the right wing parties drawing inspiration from the RSS, all other parties have endorsed Obama's reminder to the BJP-led ruling dispensation that "with power comes responsibilities" and that such responsibilities include the upholding of Article 25 of the Indian Constitution guaranteeing freedom of religion".

Obama's comment must be seen as not one of the pontifical generalities spouted by visiting dignitaries but as one pointedly addressing the government of the day. Speaking about religious freedom and gender equality, he said that in all countries upholding those freedoms was the responsibility of the government and the citizenry, adding that religion has been used to tap into the dark side of man. In other words, religion was used to spread hate and disrupt communal and social harmony. Considering that both India and the US, are victims of fundamentalism and extremism that impact adversely on the cultural and social diversities characterizing the ethos of the two nations, Obama's remarks were timely, critical of the divisive forces in India, and suggestive of the fact that the US was quite conscious of the pro-Hindutva preferences of the newly elected government in India, whose Constitution defines it as a "secular, socialist, democratic republic".

Indeed, in this age and time, when democracy has been firmly established in India and the US, it is still necessary for attention to be focused on either religious freedom and gender equality because these two attributes are still not being respected or honoured in several countries, some of them even calling themselves both modern and progressive. This is rather unfortunate but true. In his own country, said Obama, he had often felt being treated "differently" because of the colour of his skin. In India, we are still fighting many disabilities arising from caste,

colour, creed, religion and gender. Fortunately, India and the Indian Constitution fully subscribe to the postulate enunciated by Obama that "every person has the right to practice their faith as they choose, or no faith at all without fear or discrimination." Obama pointed out that in both the democracies, people "dream big". Referring to himself and Narendra Modi, he said that these were countries where the son of a tea vendor can be PM, can draft the Constitution (BR Ambedkar) and the grandson of a cook can be President." He paid tributes to India for promoting gender equality.

Although Modi said in a statement that he and his "friend" Obama had forged a close relationship, the president's comments on the breach of religious tolerance in India must have cut him to the quick. In particular, Obama's comment that India will succeed as long as it is not splintered on sectarian lines was direct hit at the policies the current government is promoting, supporting or permitting. It is no wonder that the Congress has been elated at the presidential remarks and Congress leaders and spokesmen have asked Modi to understand them in their true perspective. It is however too much to hope that programmes like ghar wapasi, which have begun to splinter the nation on communal lines and have vexed the Muslim and Christian minorities, will be withdrawn by the saffron parivar. The ghar wapasi programme is being projected as an instrument of the Hindu Rashtra movement. The danger is that the dissatisfied minorities may be tempted to launch ghar wapasi programmes of their own.

Aside from the "sting in the tail" comment on India needing to be fully secular, the Obama visit must be seen as a great success from both the countries' point of view. The agreements signed by him and Modi, in particular the one enabling the breakthrough of the nuclear deadlock, the deepening of the strategic and economic partnerships, have upgraded the bilateral ties to a new level where each country can better further their interests. Doing business with India has been made easier for the US and vice versa, and even in the defence field, the expansion of bilateral cooperation is imminent. Obama's visit has truly been path-breaking. It was replete with both symbolism and substance, a phenomenon acknowledged by Obama himself.

Tilt towards America

Kuldip Nayar

Prime Minister Nareendra Modi must be regretting that he invited President Barrack Obama for the Republic Day. The latter made no secret of demolishing the Bhartiya Janata Party's 'ghar wapsi' slogan and the other programmes related to Hindutva ideology. He reminded India of its commitment to religious freedom, consecrated in the Constitution.

A more charitable explanation can be that Modi wanted his Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) to know what the democratic world thought about its new zeal for a Hindu Rashtra. Whatever the case, the BJP has got such a rebuke that it will be difficult for the party to show its face in the democratic world.

President Obama reminded the Indian nation that it can succeed so long as it is not splintered along religious lines and allowed people to freely "profess, practice and propagate" religion. Whether the BJP has liked his frank statement or not, the nation as a whole is happy that tall leader like Obama has reminded the country of its pluralistic ethos. Some BJP leaders are upset because they have been hinting at building the Ram temple at the site where the demolished Babri Masjid stood.

The visit of President Obama has some other fallout regarding India's status in the international affairs. Probably, realizing this one Pakistani television channel telephoned me to sum up the outcome of Obama's visit. I said in reply: A tilt towards America to the chagrin of China. Let me explain.

Even during the cold war when New Delhi was leading the non-alignment movement, its deference to Moscow was apparent. Since India provided a stable and reliable channel to the Soviet Union, Washington would take New Delhi's tilt in its stride.

Today, Moscow is neither strong nor commands support from what was the then eastern Europe. True, President Vladimir Putin has put a strong foot forward. But he is conscious of his limitations. Ukraine's standard of revolt is one example. America's support to it is open and public. So much so, a question to President Obama at

his press conference at Delhi brought his strong support to Ukraine without any ifs or buts.

Prime Minister Modi, a post-cold war leader, is conscious of America's military and economic prowess, compared to weak Russia's. He is also pragmatic enough to bring that in consideration when looking ahead. He has cautiously moved towards America knowing well which side of the bread is buttered. It may soon be followed by proximity with Australia and Japan. These two countries are already on the American side.

Washington seems to have no doubt in its thinking that its real adversary is Beijing. America cannot find a better partner than a larger and economically burgeoning India. That is the reason why Beijing has reacted adversely to President Obama's visit and has warned India not to be taken in by America's overtures. New Delhi is sensitive to China's sensitivities. Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj is herself going to Beijing to assure it that India's friendship with America is not at the expense of China.

Beijing is not naïve about the possible dangers. It understands that India is the only power in the region which can challenge China. True, its 1962 victory against India is a heady wine which still intoxicates Beijing. But it also knows that New Delhi has come a long way since. It realizes that New Delhi is militarily stronger and more resourceful than it was in 1962.

Then the non-aligned status of India was a bone of contention with America. Still it responded to Jawaharlal Nehru's request for weapons and air umbrella. It is another thing that Beijing announced a unilateral ceasefire after making pulp of India's military strength and defeating it decisively.

President Obama's visit is a guarantee that India would not be alone if ever such a situation develops again. It can feel secure after his visit. New Delhi tried its best to wean America away from Pakistan. Prime Minister Modi reportedly talked more than once to President Obama, but he could only get support for action against

(Continued on Page 30)

The Business of Government Subsidies

Neeraj Jain

The Narendra Modi-led BJP government at the Centre is not only continuing with the anti-people policies of the previous UPA government, it is implementing them at an accelerated speed.

Just like his predecessors, the Finance Minister Arun Jaitley too is claiming that government subsidies to the poor (also called social sector expenditures), that is, expenditure on providing cheap welfare services - education, health, food, drinking water, etc. - to the people, have reached very high levels¹. On August 13, 2014, the government set up an Expenditure Management Commission to suggest ways to reduce food, fertiliser and oil subsidies, and thereby reduce the government's expenditure minus its revenues, called the fiscal deficit². Even before the Commission has submitted its recommendations, there are reports that the government is moving to prune the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and confine it to the 200 poorest districts in the country. The UPA government had reduced MGNREGA allocation from Rs. 40,100 crores to Rs. 33,000 crores; the new government is proposing to reduce it further by Rs. 3000 crores. The government is also proposing to reduce its expenditure on education by Rs. 11,000 crores and on health by Rs. 7,000 crores. The Departments of Panchayati Raj, Rural Development and Sanitation are facing average cuts of about 25 percent³.

One of the conditionalities of the World Bank-dictated structural adjustment programme (SAP) imposed on India following the foreign exchange crisis of 1990-91 was that the government must strive to reduce its fiscal deficit. Since then, each and every budget of the government of India (even though the coalition at the Centre has been changing) has made reduction in fiscal deficit a central task of the budget.

Of course, neither the World Bank, nor any of our Finance Ministers — from Arun Jaitley to P. Chidambaram to Manmohan Singh — have really been concerned about reducing the fiscal deficit. This is obvious from the way they have been handling the various components of the government's expenditures and revenues. The fiscal deficit is the excess of the government's expenditures over receipts. Even a cursory look at the policies being pursued by the government of India reveals that it is

giving away lakhs of crores of rupees as subsidies to the rich. Had it really been concerned about the fiscal deficit, it could have easily reduced these mind-boggling give-aways! But in the new economic lexicon preached by the High Priests in Washington, these concessions are called 'incentives' and are considered essential for 'growth'. On the other hand, the concessions given to the poor, which are aimed at making available essential welfare services like education, health, food, transport, electricity, etc. to them at affordable rates, are given the derisive name 'subsidies' and are being drastically reduced in the name of containing the fiscal deficit. Not only that, these essential services are being privatised too — resulting in fabulous profits for the private sector.

Let us take a look at some of these so-called incentives given to the rich, especially the giant foreign and Indian business houses.

i) Tax Concessions

Every year, for the past several years, the budget documents have included a statement on the estimated revenue forgone by the government due to exemptions in major taxes levied by the Centre. The budget documents reveal that for the year 2013-14, the government gave away Rs. 5.32 lakh crores in tax exemptions/ deductions/ incentives to the very rich. (The write-offs as mentioned in the budget are actually Rs. 5.72 lakh crores. From that, we have deducted the Rs. 40,000 crores forgone on personal income tax, since this write-off benefits a wider group of people.) These major write-offs are in direct corporate income tax, customs and excise duties⁴. These tax concessions given to the rich exceed our fiscal deficit for 2013-14 (Rs. 5.25 lakh crores)!⁵ Had Chidambaram really been concerned about reducing the fiscal deficit, he could have reduced these concessions given to India's richie rich.

Successive governments at the Centre have been doling out these concessions to the 'corporate needy and the undernourished rich' for the last several years, ever since the economic reforms began. Budget documents reveal that over the nine-year period 2005-06 to 2013-14, the tax write-offs given by the government to the super-rich total a mind-boggling Rs. 36.6 lakh crores! That amounts to roughly one-third of our 2013-14 GDP.⁶

These tax concessions are being given to some of the richest people in the world. *Forbes*, the oracle of business journalism, puts out a list of the world's billionaires every year. Its 2013 list included the names of 55 Indians, with an average net worth of around Rs. 19,080 crores. Their total net worth is ...er, Rs. 10.5 lakh crores, double our fiscal deficit for 2013-14.⁷

The obscenity of these tax concessions becomes evident from just a single statistic: in 2013-14, the single biggest chunk of customs duties forgone was on diamonds and gold, accounting for Rs. 48,000 crores, nearly one-fifth of the total customs duty revenue forgone. The waiver on gold and diamonds in just 3 years (2011-14) was Rs. 1.6 lakh crores — equivalent to 30% of our fiscal deficit for 2013-14. No wonder that three new Indian entrants to Forbes 2013 Billionaires List were from the field of jewellery.⁸

Tax-GDP Ratio: Lowest in World

It is because of these huge tax concessions that India's tax-GDP ratio, at 18.5% of GDP, is far below not only the 'advanced economies' (36.7%), but also the 'emerging market and developing economies' (27.9%). Even the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, considered to be one of the poorest regions in the world, have a tax-GDP ratio of 27% (Chart 1). It is thus obvious that there is a huge scope for increasing tax revenues in the country.

These mind-boggling transfers to the corporate trough are going to continue at an accelerated pace under the new government at the Centre. Arun Jaitley, the finance minister of the BJP/NDA government, has gone on record to say that the country had a "high tax regime", and that as the economy improves, he would announce more income tax concessions.¹⁰

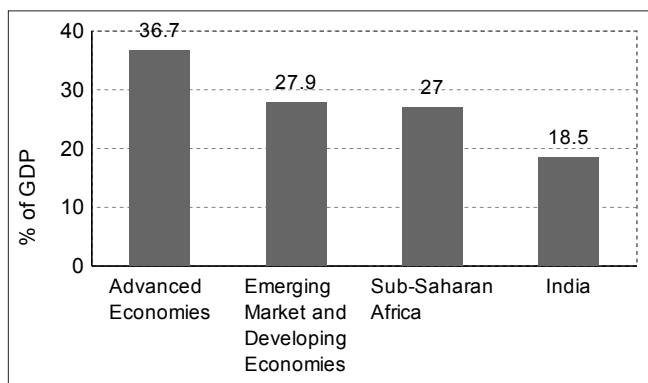


Chart 1:
General Government Revenues, % of GDP, 2007-11⁹

(ii) Plundering Resources

a) KG Basin Gas Scam

Though hydrocarbon reserves of the country belong to the people, in 2000, the government of India handed over exploration of gas reserves in D-6 block of the Krishna Godavari basin to Reliance Industries Limited (RIL). The Production Sharing Contract with RIL stipulated that RIL is to pay the government only 10% of the total revenue until it recovers 1.5 times its investment; thereafter, the government's share is to rise.¹¹ RIL, in naked collusion with the government, through a series of manipulations, has indulged in absolutely mind-boggling plunder of the country's natural gas wealth. We briefly give two of these frauds below:

- In 2004, the government allowed RIL to over-invoice its capital expenditure in developing the D-6 block from the original estimate of \$2.4 billion to \$8.8 billion. This 'gold-plating' by RIL is estimated to have caused a loss to the government of at least Rs. 37,000 crores.¹²
- In 2003, the public sector National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) agreed to buy gas from RIL for its thermal plants at the rate of \$2.34 per unit of gas [One unit of gas = One million British thermal units (mBtu)] for the next 17 years — even though ONGC was supplying gas (to industries such as power and fertiliser) at the rate of \$1.83 per unit of gas. (According to one estimate, RIL's cost per unit of gas is \$1.43; another estimate puts it at less than \$1.) And then, in 2007, the government allowed RIL to double the price of gas being supplied by it (to NTPC and other industries) to \$4.20 per unit! The total profit to RIL due to this price increase — a cool Rs. 1,20,000 crores (this is over and above the profit it was making when it was supplying gas at \$2.34 per unit)!¹³ Three-fourth of the natural gas in the country is consumed by the power and fertiliser industries,¹⁴ implying that this largesse to RIL is one of the reasons for the steep hike in price of electricity and urea fertiliser in recent years.

Adding up all of the above, the total loss to the exchequer is going to be Rs. 1.6 lakh crores at the minimum. This, for gas fields identified by the ONGC, which also has the necessary technology and expertise needed to explore and develop these gas fields — in other words, there was no need to transfer them to RIL! But then that is what globalisation is all about!!

b) The Iron Ore Mining Scam

In 2005, the US-Korean multinational POSCO signed an agreement with the Odisha government to build a steel plant in the state, along with a captive port and allocation of iron ore mines. The agreement allows POSCO to extract a total of 600 million tons of high grade iron ore for use in its proposed steel plant in the area, and also mine another 400 million tons of iron ore for export to its steel plants in South Korea. While the project is billed as India's largest FDI proposal, it is also going to result in stupendous profits for POSCO. We make a rough estimate below (for only its mining operations):¹⁵

- Taking cost of extraction, processing and transport of iron ore for POSCO to be a generous Rs. 800 per ton; and taking the market price of iron ore lumps to be Rs. 5000 per ton (an underestimate), on which POSCO has to pay an absurdly low 10% royalty to the government;
- POSCO therefore stands to make a profit of at least Rs. $(5000 - 800 - 500) =$ Rs. 3700 per ton of iron ore mined. POSCO will be mining 600 million tons of iron ore for its steel plant over the next 30 years — giving it a total profit of over Rs. 2.22 lakh crores.
- Additionally, POSCO has been allowed to export 400 million tons of iron ore to South Korea — thus giving it an additional profit of Rs. 1.48 lakh crores.

All this, just from mining iron ore, that belongs to the people of the country, when we have public sector companies with all the necessary technology and expertise needed to mine it.

That is just the legal iron ore mining scam. Apart from this, millions of tons of iron ore is being illegally mined and exported from the country.

(iii) Great Land Grab

Tens of thousands of acres of land is being handed over to private corporations virtually for free to set up their projects. A few examples from Gujarat:

- The Gujarat government allotted a staggering 14,305 acres — equivalent to 5.78 crore square metres — of land in Kutch to billionaire Gautam Adani controlled Adani Group at prices ranging from Re. 1 to Rs. 32 per sq metre (average price less than Rs. 10 per sq metre). Adani paid less than Rs. 60 crores for the huge chunk of land, whose market price was anywhere between Rs. 1000 to Rs. 1500 per sq metre.
- The state government allotted 8 lakh square metres

(80 hectares) of prime land to Larsen and Toubro in the industrial zone of Hazira in Surat also at Re. 1 per sq metre.

- 24,021 hectares was gifted to Archean Chemicals Ltd and 26,746 hectares to Solaris ChemTech in the Rann of Kutch for manufacturing salt and salt-based chemicals, at just Rs. 150 per hectare.
- The Essar Group, another Modi favourite, was allotted 2.08 lakh sq metres of Coastal Regulation Zone land and forest land for a steel plant, that can't be allotted as per Supreme Court guidelines — as if to atone for this crime, Essar paid Rs. 20 lakhs as fine and peacefully continues to occupy the land.¹⁶

iv) Direct Cash Transfers to Corporations

a) Costly People's Car

State governments are competing with each other to give thousands of crores of rupees as subsidies to private corporations for setting up projects in their states. After Tata Motors was forced to move out of Singur by a determined people's movement, Modi rolled out the red carpet to welcome Ratan Tata to Gujarat. It was a carpet with gold linings. Here is a brief list of the concessions given to the Tatas to set up the Nano car project in Gujarat:

- Tata Motors was allotted 1100 acres of land for the project in Sanand, Gujarat at a discounted price of Rs. 900 per sq metre, when its market rate was around Rs. 10,000 per sq metre — a total concession of Rs. 44100 crores.
- On top of it, Tata Motors was given the facility of making the payment of Rs. 400 crores for the land in 8 equal instalments at 8% compound interest with a moratorium of two years.
- The total project cost is estimated at Rs. 2200 crores. No financial institution grants a loan of more than 70-80 percent of the project cost; however, Tatas were given a soft loan of Rs. 9,570 crores at an interest of 0.10 percent per annum, with repayment deferred for 20 years.
- The state government also volunteered to meet the cost of shifting the project, estimated to be Rs. 700 crores.
- Tatas were exempted from payment of stamp duty, registration charges and transfer charges.
- The Gujarat government promised to build a four-

lane highway for the facility; it also agreed to acquire land for a railway line leading to the plant, for ancillary industries and for setting up a township for Tata Motors ...

The total costs to the Gujarat exchequer? Rs. 33,000 crores over the next 20 years! The installed project capacity is 2.5 lakh small cars per annum, so the plant would be producing 50 lakh cars over these 20 years — implying that for each car produced, tax-payers would be shelling out Rs. 66,000!¹⁷

b) PPPs in Infrastructure Sector

The economists sitting in Washington/Paris/London keep coming up with innovative ideas about how to transfer government funds to the private sector. One such concept that has been embraced by the government of India in a big way is Public-Private-Partnership (or PPP). Under this, the private partner is not only guaranteed a minimum rate of return on its investment (the government making up for any shortfall in profits), is not only given land and other resources at concessional rates, even the investment money is also often provided by the government in the form of long term loans at concessional rates. What a partnership!

One of the most common forms of PPP subsidy is what the government calls 'Viability Gap Funding' (VGF). In the name of making their investments 'viable', the government of India provides a direct subsidy to investors in the infrastructural sector of up to 40% of the project cost!¹⁸ And if the investor is somehow able to pad up his project cost, he can then extract an even higher subsidy!

The scale of the PPP scheme is enormous: the cost of projects completed, under implementation or in the pipeline as on March 31, 2012, comes to nearly Rs. 13 lakh crores.¹⁹ These projects are in highways, ports, airports, railways, power, urban infrastructure, and other sectors. Assuming that most of these projects are receiving VGF grants @ 40% of the investment, the total public 'subsidy' to these projects works out to more than Rs. 5 lakh crores.

That was during the UPA regime. Soon after assuming office, the new BJP Finance Minister announced a host of new infrastructural projects, all involving huge transfers of government funds to the private sector via the PPP route. These include:²⁰

- A slew of measures to fast-track PPP projects that have been held up for various reasons;

- Plans for new infrastructure projects such as port projects, airports in smaller cities, and expressways, all to be set up through the PPP route;
- Revival of Special Economic Zones;
- Setting up 100 smart cities;
- Setting up a National Industrial Corridor Authority to coordinate development of several new industrial corridors.

But the 'VGF Scheme' is just one of the many ways in which lakhs of crores of rupees in subsidies are being given to investors in the infrastructural sectors. To give another example, private corporations building expressways and metro projects are additionally being given vast amounts of real estate for commercial use. Thus, in the case of the infamous Yamuna Expressway built by Jaypee Group under the PPP model, the Group was allowed to acquire five parcels of land along the expressway, each of 500 hectares each, for township projects. The expressway cost the Jaypee Group roughly Rs. 13,000 crores. The Group must have got 40% of this, that is, Rs. 5200 crores, as investment subsidy. But the real bonanza for the company was the 2500 hectares of land allotted to it — it acquired this land from farmers for around Rs. 1500 crores (at the rate of around Rs. 5 lakhs to 60 lakhs per hectare), and its present market value has zoomed to a whopping Rs. 1.5 lakh crores! That is some deal.²¹

v) Firesale of PSUs to the Private Sector

One of the most important elements of the WB-imposed SAP is privatisation of public sector undertakings (PSUs). Governments of all shades that have come to power at the Centre since 1991 have dutifully implemented this diktat and have been gradually selling government equity in public sector companies to private investors; in many firms, the government has even sold majority stake and handed over management control to the private sector. Each and every such disinvestment in these PSUs, built out of the hard earned savings of the people of the country, has been done at scandalously low prices, resulting in huge losses to the government. Some recent examples:

- In 2001, the then NDA government sold 51% of Balco, the giant public sector aluminium producer (valued at more than Rs. 5000 crores and with fixed deposits of Rs. 350 crores), to Sterlite for just Rs. 550 crores — an amount less than half the value of Balco's captive power plant!²²

- In 2002, the government handed over 25% share and absolute control of Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd (VSNL), the telecommunications giant, to the Tatas for just Rs. 1439 crores. VSNL was a cash-rich company with cash reserves and surplus to the tune of Rs. 6,000 crores and had made a profit of Rs. 800 crores over the paid-up capital of Rs. 285 crores in the year ending 2000. At the time of its sale, VSNL had a market capitalisation of about Rs. 10,000 crores. In addition, it had prime properties in all major cities, whose value would also be many thousands of crores of rupees.²³

India's rulers have become so shameless that they have actually been gloating over this sale of 'family jewels' at throwaway prices. During his roadshows across Asia and Europe in early 2013, the theme of the presentation made by Finance Minister P. Chidambaram before foreign investors was: "Why Global Investors Should Invest in India." One of the arguments he gave was that the government was going to sell-off shares in India's leading public sector corporations, and it presented investors with an "Opportunity to Reap High Yields".²⁴

vi) Robbing Banks

As if giving them tax concessions, cash transfers, control over the nation's natural resources and profitable public sector enterprises was not enough, the government is allowing private sector corporations to siphon off public sector bank funds too! It is the grandmother of all scams.

Small time bank robbers are put in jail (if caught); ordinary people defaulting on bank loans have their house/scooter/other assets seized; farmers are driven to suicide for not being able to pay the instalments on their bank loans. But when the super rich default on their (public sector) bank loans, nothing happens to them, they go scot free, even their names are not disclosed;

they continue to enjoy their heated swimming pools, rooftop helipads, foreign homes, fast cars. The banks simply write off their loans. In a presentation made to bankers, Reserve Bank of India deputy governor K. C. Chakrabarty revealed that over the past 13 years (2001-2013), Indian public sector banks have written off a whopping Rs. 2 lakh crores of loans, of which more than Rs. 1 lakh crores was owed by corporate houses.²⁵

Loan write-offs, however, make bad news, both for the corporates and the banks/government. So public sector banks are adopting a new stratagem to provide succour to these 'helpless' rich, they 'restructure' their loans. That's the buzz word today, 'Corporate Debt Restructuring' (CDR). Under its name, the payback period may be extended, interest may be waived, a part of the loan may be converted into equity; the corporation is even given another loan to tide over its 'crisis'. Data provided by the RBI shows that banks, led by state-run lenders, have cumulatively recast loans worth more than Rs. 2.5 lakh crores under the CDR mechanism till June 2013. Another report by the industry body FICCI says that the total volume of restructured loans is much more than this, and stood at over Rs. 4 lakh crores, as banks restructure loans outside the CDR cell too.²⁶

If the Government was Serious ...

If the government was indeed serious about containing the fiscal deficit, the simplest way of doing so would have been to curb some of the above mentioned freebies to India's billionaires — withdraw some of the tax concessions given to them, ask them to pay more for their wives' jewellery, get them to pay market prices for the land they purchase, make them repay their bank loans, restrain them from plundering our natural resources ...

But that is precisely the point we are trying to make: the government is not really interested in reducing the fiscal deficit.

Withdrawal Of 'Subsidies' To The Poor

If that is so, then why have the IMF-WB and all the governments at the Centre since 1991 been harping upon the necessity of reducing the fiscal deficit? Because it provides them with a theoretical justification for drastically cutting down social sector expenditures of the government, and privatising these sectors. In a deft use of language, while the breathtaking

'subsidies' given to the rich are justified as being necessary 'incentives' for 'growth', the social sector expenditures — whose purpose is to provide the bare means of sustenance to the poor at affordable rates — are condemned as 'subsidies', as being wasteful, inefficient, benefiting the wealthy rather than the poor, promoting parasitism, and so on.

The neoliberal doctrine that each and every sector of the economy must be profitable is nothing but economic rubbish. A society provides free or low cost food, water, education, health, housing, sport, transport and other essentials to its citizens so that they can live like human beings and develop their abilities to the fullest extent. This ‘subsidy’ is actually an ‘investment’ for the future. Human beings are nature’s highest creation, their potential is infinite. However, people must be given the appropriate social circumstances and opportunities to realise their inherent potential. When such human beings pool in their energies and engage in collective labour, they can create heaven on earth. The wealth they will create will be many times the ‘subsidies’ invested on them. This is simple economic commonsense.

Already at the Bottom

Most developed countries have a very elaborate social security network for their citizens, including unemployment allowance, universal health coverage, free school education and free or cheap university education, old age pension, maternity benefits, disability benefits, family allowance such as child care allowance, allowances for those too poor to make a living, and much more. Governments spend substantial sums for providing these social services to their people. The average public social sector expenditures of the 34 countries of the OECD is around 20% of the GDP, and for the EU-27 is even higher at around 30% of the GDP. The average public social sector expenditures for the 21 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean has been rising and is presently 18.6% (in 2009-10).²⁷

In contrast, the public social sector expenditures of the government of India are very low! Jaitley and his

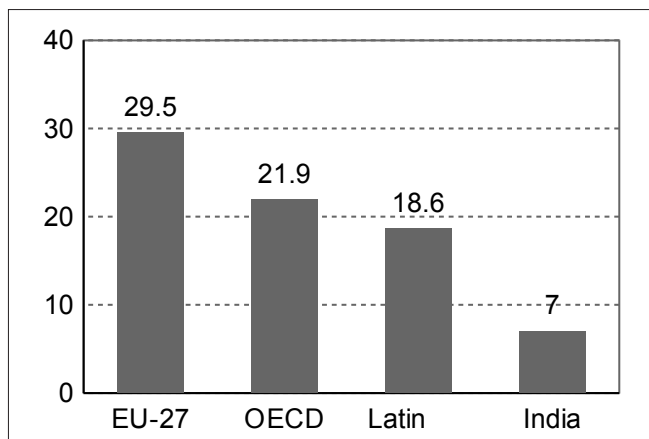


Chart 2: Public Social Sector Expenditures of Developed Countries and India, 2010 (% of GDP)²⁸

predecessors in the Finance Ministry and the ‘Chicago boys’ who are their economic advisors are all blithely lying when they claim that the subsidies to the poor are very high! The total social sector expenditure of the government (Centre and States combined) of India is barely 7% of the GDP.²⁹

It is because of this very low social sector spending that India is at the bottom of the pyramid when it comes to overall human development. According to the *UN Human Development Report 2011*, 53.7% of the Indian population is “multidimensionally poor” — a measure that captures how many people experience overlapping deprivations in living standards, health and education, and how many deprivations they face on the average. India’s Human Development Index ranking fell from 119 in 2010 to 134 in 2011.³⁰

And yet the WB-IMF and the foreign corporate houses and their concubine governments are pressurising the government of India to further reduce its social sector expenditures, and Delhi’s Badshahs are slavishly implementing their dictates. The Indian government is cutting its already low expenditures on all social services, from education, health, electricity and public transport, to the public distribution system designed to provide food to the poor at affordable rates, to even drinking water supply. Worse, in the name of improving the quality of these social services, they are also being privatised — either through the infamous PPP route, or even outright. Private corporations are jumping with glee — being essential services, the scope for profits is huge.

We briefly discuss the abysmally low social sector expenditures of the government of India in the health sector, and its consequences for the people.

Collapse of the Public Health System

The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends that countries should allocate at least 5% of the GDP for public health services. Public health care spending in the advanced countries is around 7% of the GDP, while it is between 3 to 5% of GDP in several emerging economies — especially in East European countries and several Latin American countries like Argentina, Brazil and Chile. It is because of these high expenditures on public health services that nearly all OECD countries have universal or near-universal access to health care; the same is the situation in most of Eastern Europe, and several developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.³¹

In contrast, public health expenditure in India actually fell from 1.3% of the GDP reached in 1985 to a shocking 0.85% of the GDP in 2004-05.³² In the Eleventh Plan (2007-12), the government promised to raise it to 3% of the GDP, but it did not make the necessary financial allocations and hence budgetary allocation for health (both Centre and States combined) rose to only an abysmal 1.29% in 2011-12.³³ India's public health expenditure is amongst the lowest in the world, even lower than sub-Saharan Africa, according to the WHO.³⁴

This has forced citizens to bear the brunt of health spending. India has amongst the most privatised health systems in the world — households undertake nearly three-fourths of all the health spending in the country (72%), public spending accounts for just 28%.³⁵ Obviously, in such a situation, the poor are going to be the worst sufferers. An appalling 21% of Indians no longer seek medical treatment of any kind for their ailments — up from 11% a decade ago — because they cannot afford it.³⁶

The consequences are predictable. India's health system is in crisis. Some alarming statistics:

- India has not succeeded in controlling many infectious diseases, including tuberculosis, malaria, kala azar, filariasis, dysentery, typhoid, hepatitis and Japanese encephalitis. Malaria alone kills nearly 2 lakh people in India every year.³⁷
- India is in the grip of a tuberculosis (TB) epidemic. WHO statistics for 2011 give an estimated incidence figure of 2.2 million cases of TB for India out of a global incidence of 8.7 million cases. WHO estimates that around 3 lakh people die of TB every year in the country, nearly 1000 a day.³⁸

- According to the WHO (2008), of the total number of deaths due to disease in a sample of 192 countries across the world, India accounted for nearly one-fourth of the deaths due to diarrhoea, more than one-third of the deaths due to leprosy and more than half of the deaths due to Japanese encephalitis.³⁹
- Of the seven million children who died before the age of five in 2011 in the world, one-fourth of these child deaths (1.8 million) took place in India. The bulk of these deaths are preventable, with an appalling one-third of the deaths being due to pneumonia and diarrhoea alone. India also accounted for one-fifth (56,000) of the 287,000 maternal deaths in the world in 2010, according to a UN report.⁴⁰

India's public health care system is seriously sick, it is in ICU (intensive care unit). But the thick-skinned ruling classes are unconcerned. While the government is unwilling to raise its meagre expenditures on public health in the name of 'keeping the fiscal deficit under control', it is giving 'incentives' to corporate houses to set up five-star hospitals! For instance, several of Mumbai's leading private hospitals — from Jaslok to Breach Candy, Leelavati, Hinduja, Nanavati and Ambani Hospitals — have been given prime land at a fraction of the market value; several of them have in fact been given land on a token lease rent of 1 rupee per annum. Other concessions include additional FSI, concessional rates for water and electricity, low-interest loans from public sector banks, customs duty exemptions on imported machinery, income tax exemption on more than 85% of their income, etc.⁴¹ The majority of the Indian population is too poor to afford treatment in these elite hospitals. And so they are busy providing healthcare services to the rich from across the world!

Obscene Inequality

The sharp reduction in government's already low expenditures on the poor and multi-billion dollar transfers to the rich transforming the country into a 'first world – fourth world' society.

On the one hand, the rich have never had it so good! "Its raining billionaires in India" — to quote one newsreport.⁴² India now boasts of 56 billionaires with a collective net worth of \$191.5 billion, as per the latest global ranking of the super-rich by *Forbes* magazine. That amounts to ...er, Rs. 11.7 lakh crores, or one-tenth

of India's GDP for 2013-14.⁴³ India now has the sixth largest number of billionaires in the world, and is ahead of the UK, Japan and Canada.⁴⁴

Last year (2013), the number of Ultra High Net Worth individuals in India, defined as those having net assets (meaning company shares, real estate, art, cars, planes, yachts, etc.) of above \$30 million (Rs. 200 crores or so), increased by 120 to reach 7850, and their total wealth grew to \$935 billion. To give an idea of what this means, this amount is just a tad above 50% of India's GDP.⁴⁵

On the other hand, crores of ordinary people have been pushed down to fourth world immiseration. They have never had it so bad! We have already given figures about the health crisis gripping the country. Some more statistics:

- i) 75.5% of the rural and 73% of the urban population were unable to access the minimum recommended 2200 / 2100 calories in 2009–10!
- ii) 50% of the children under the age of five suffer from malnourishment. According to UNICEF, malnutrition is more common in India than in sub-Saharan Africa. One in every three malnourished children in the world lives in India.⁴⁶
- iii) 42% of the children in India drop out of school without completing basic schooling (elementary education).
- iv) 62.6 crore people do not have access to toilets and are forced to defecate in the open — sixty percent of the global total.⁴⁷

- v) More than 44% of the households in the country still have no access to electricity, more than six decades after independence.⁴⁸

Secession of the Rich

India's Westoxicated elite has abandoned all concern for the tribal child dying of malnutrition in Melghat, the farmer in Andhra Pradesh committing suicide because of his inability to pay his medical bills, the old man dying of cold on the streets of Patna because of lack of social security, the village beauty sold off to pay her father's debts in Bundelkhand...

The major political parties that dominate the Indian Parliament, and the corporate houses that control the reins of power from behind the scenes, have decided to secede from the people. They have decided to dump the vision of our nation's founding fathers embedded in the Directive Principles of our Constitution.

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Understanding the Ambedkar–Gandhi Debate

Rajmohan Gandhi

In 1936, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was invited to deliver a lecture in Lahore – then very much part of India – by a Hindu group opposed to untouchability. When the group saw an advance text of the lecture, which was entitled ‘Annihilation of Caste’, it cancelled the invitation because towards the lecture’s end, the author had declared his intention of leaving the Hindu fold. In a riposte to the cancellation, Dr. Ambedkar published *Annihilation of Caste*. Its contents elicited an immediate comment from Gandhi in his journal, *Harijan*, to which Ambedkar issued a rejoinder.

A major text from India’s recent history, *Annihilation of Caste* has been republished many times and has been translated into several languages, often with the Ambedkar–Gandhi exchange added to the main text. In March 2014, a new edition was published in Delhi by Navayana. In this new edition, *Annihilation of Caste* is preceded by a 153-page text by Arundhati Roy, entitled ‘The Doctor and the Saint’, which is presented as an introduction to Ambedkar’s classic ‘undelivered’ lecture.

This is a response to Arundhati Roy’s ‘The Doctor and the Saint’. However, it also bears an indirect connection to the historic debate between Ambedkar and Gandhi, which took place during a period well removed from our times. While Gandhi’s assassination occurred nearly seven decades into the past, Ambedkar died in 1956, almost six decades ago.

The two were involved in a positive, if impersonal, relationship during the 1920s. Though they did not meet each other in this period, Ambedkar appreciated Gandhi’s concern for the plight of Dalits, and he also welcomed the method of satyagraha that Gandhi had introduced. However, the 1930s saw sharp, and from a historian’s standpoint revealing, exchanges between the two.

The exchanges help our understanding not only of two powerful individuals in history, but also of continuing flaws in Indian society and the tension in the first half of the twentieth century between the goals of national independence and social justice.

The first face-to-face meeting between Ambedkar and Gandhi took place in Mumbai in 1931, shortly before their piercing verbal encounters. Begun in the autumn of 1931 in a well-lit London arena (the 1931 Round Table Conference on India’s political future, convened by the British prime minister), these encounters continued in 1932 in a dark Pune prison, where the British had incarcerated Gandhi, and where a successful negotiation resulted. Robust exchanges were, however, resumed before the Indian public in the mid-1930s, mainly via the press.

The Ambedkar–Gandhi debate was interrupted by Gandhi’s frequent imprisonments, resulting from his struggles against British rule. From 1932 to 1934, and again from 1942 to 1944, Gandhi was behind bars. In contrast, Ambedkar, who believed that the battle for social democracy was more important than the fight for national independence, was not only never jailed by the British, he was also included in the Viceroy’s Executive Council from 1942 to 1945.

In the summer of 1945, Ambedkar published ‘What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables’, a strong attack on Gandhi and on the Congress movement led by him. Absorbed from 1944 in what turned out to be a losing battle to avert partition, Gandhi offered no reply himself to Ambedkar’s 1945 charges, but he encouraged ‘Ambedkar Refuted’, a short tract written by Chakravarti Rajagopalachari.

The period from 1947 to 1948 saw an unexpected – and, from any perspective, remarkable – rapprochement between Gandhi and Ambedkar. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Deputy Premier Vallabhbhai Patel were party to this accord, which resulted in Ambedkar’s entry into free India’s first cabinet and his leadership of the Constitution-drafting process, culminating in the 1950 Constitution.

However, in 1951 Ambedkar resigned from the cabinet. In the 1952 elections, and again in a by-election in 1954, he opposed the Congress, losing on both occasions. Shortly before his death in 1956, he led lakhs

of fellow Dalits out of Hinduism and into an embrace of the faith and vision of the Buddha...

Many have bought and no doubt read her work, 'The Doctor and the Saint'. Excerpts and quotes from 'The Doctor and the Saint' have been widely published in the print media and on the internet. Roy's lectures on her tract have been well-attended and well-reported.

At first, I was disinclined to read 'The Doctor and the Saint'. The sections that I had come across suggested – to me at any rate – that Roy had created a false, easy-to-ridicule, straw-man Gandhi. Eventually, however, I obtained and read a copy. For one thing, people were likely to ask me what I thought of it. More importantly, it was wrong for me to mentally label a text without reading it in its entirety.

Having read 'The Doctor and the Saint', I must confess that it took me a while to understand its chief purpose. A discussion of the thesis of Annihilation of Caste is not her focus. Nor, certainly, the Gandhi–Ambedkar relationship. Not even the Ambedkar–Gandhi debate. Nor an evocation of the times in which the debate took place. 'The Doctor and the Saint' comes across mainly as a fierce indictment of the Mahatma, and there are indications here and there that the demolition of Gandhi is its true aim.

Many Dalits have censured 'The Doctor and the Saint', not so much for its disagreements with Ambedkar, but largely, it would seem, because three-fourths of its 153-page text, presented as an 'Introduction' to a new edition of Annihilation of Caste, is about Gandhi, and only one-fourth about Ambedkar. She has only used Ambedkar to attack Gandhi.

There is nothing necessarily illegitimate with that – except that she should have been frank about her intention.

My response is being offered because of Ms. Roy's fan following, which is the result not only of her well-earned reputation as a writer; it has to do also with her willingness to take out-of-favour positions. Not everyone agrees with all the unpopular stands Ms. Roy has taken, but many (including this writer) may agree with one or two of them.

Since what Arundhati Roy says carries weight with several good people, I thought it necessary to point out

some of the flaws in her attacks on Gandhi. Before doing so, I should, of course, acknowledge that Gandhi merits criticism, including on some of the points underlined by Arundhati Roy.

Though he constantly asked caste Hindus to repent for the great sins of untouchability and caste superiority, he only rarely led or encouraged direct struggles for Dalit rights, whereas he led and triggered a large number of direct battles for Indian independence. During his South African phase, he struggled for Indian rights, not directly for Black rights. These are undeniable – if also well-known – truths, and Roy has every right to reiterate them, even if Gandhi had his reasons for choosing certain priorities at different times in his life.

I should freely concede something else. Some of Roy's unreasonable attacks may have been the result of a lack of knowledge. She has not been a Gandhi scholar for any length of time.

The omissions in 'The Doctor and the Saint' constitute the text's most serious weaknesses. Hindering even a limited knowledge of where Gandhi stood on caste, race and religion, these exclusions also keep readers from understanding the nuances in the Ambedkar–Gandhi debate. More importantly, perhaps, these gaps in 'The Doctor and the Saint' prevent its readers from feeling with their mental fingers the true textures of India's intertwined movements for national freedom and social justice in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s.

The pages that follow will provide some of the material that Roy's text unfortunately excludes. I believe this left-out material corrects and completes the picture that Roy has painted.

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'Though dead for decades, the Mahatma takes care of himself.' This is a view I too have held and usually continue to hold.

However, Gandhi stands for a whole set of crucial values that are also under attack today – fairness, concern for the neediest, refusal to bow before the god of money, and goodwill among people of different nations, religions, races, castes and classes, being some of them. Pointing out Gandhi's failings may, at times, be necessary. As some readers may be aware, it is something I too have attempted – respectfully, I hope, but also frankly.

I say ‘respectfully’ for personal reasons. Others may have broader reasons for wanting to respect Gandhi even while criticising him. Those who wish to be irreverent will not find someone such as me objecting, and I suspect that Gandhi himself might have welcomed such a stance.

Yet, it is altogether another matter when a denigrator is ‘creative’, or conceals what he or she knows to be true. That it might feel ‘safe’ to be irreverent towards Gandhi – whereas caution seems a prerequisite while questioning others – is a poor reason for launching untrue or half-true attacks.

It is hardly a secret that those opposed to an India that exists for everyone – an India where all have equal rights – have been working for decades to destroy the physically dead, but still (to them) an obstinate Gandhi who obstructs their path, even as – for identical reasons – the living Gandhi was gunned down in January 1948.

Gandhi’s legacy is a precious ally in many necessary struggles today. When he is misleadingly attacked by a person with a significant platform, these struggles demand that he be defended. Thanks to my having studied, over the course of many years, his life and times, I am perhaps better able than some others to spot falsities in attacks on the Mahatma.

I would like to argue that the narration in ‘The Doctor and the Saint’ of the Gandhi–Ambedkar relationship, which saw both conflict and partnership, is seriously flawed. Even if examining it was not the central purpose of Roy’s text, this relationship features in it.

I would also like to show that Roy’s attacks violate the principles of historical debate. These principles require, first, that attacks on a statement that X or Y or even a Mahatma may have made 50 or 100 years ago should provide the context in which the statement was made. Second, the norms require that pertinent information is not scissored out.

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Ignorance, however, cannot explain Roy’s near-total suppression of Gandhi’s comment on the Mahad Satyagraha of 1927. This was conducted in Western Maharashtra under Ambedkar’s leadership by a large number of Dalits who had been denied access to a tank of water in Mahad. As part of their satyagraha, they surged forward in unison to the tank and drank from its water.

Thereafter, they were attacked with sticks and clubs by infuriated groups of the orthodox class.

Ambedkar, who was present in Mahad, wisely asked his people not to hit back. As Roy concedes (107), Gandhi wrote ‘approvingly of the Untouchables’ composure in the face of the attacks.’ However, Roy does not want her readers to know that Gandhi had said much more than that in the Young India article cited by her, and therefore, one assumes, read by her.

Praising the Dalits’ ‘exemplary self-restraint’, Gandhi wrote that, the ‘so-called orthodox party’, not having reason on its side, had used ‘sheer brute force’. ‘Dr. Ambedkar,’ Gandhi went on in an article in Young India on 28 April 1927, ‘[was] fully justified in putting to the test the resolution of the Bombay Legislative Council and the Mahad Municipality by advising the so-called Untouchables to go to the tank to quench their thirst’ (emphasis added). The Mahatma also urged ‘every Hindu opposed to untouchability’ to publicly defend the courageous Dalits of Mahad ‘even at the risk of getting his head broken’ (CW 33: 268).

This, again, is radical stuff. Roy deliberately hides it. Later in the year, in an article published in Young India on 20 October 1927, Gandhi wrote that a satyagrahi against untouchability ought not to allow entry to ‘hate, haste, thoughtlessness or exaggeration’. Once impelled to fight, however, the satyagrahi should not retreat (CW 35: 100).

In December 1927, Ambedkar and his followers publicly burnt a copy of the Manusmriti in Mahad. I, for one, do not know what Gandhi’s comment on this was. Whether Ambedkar was wise in what he did in December 1927, and whether Gandhi ought to have supported him more actively than he did, are questions on which there may be two or more opinions.

But there can be only one comment on Roy’s suppression of what Gandhi wrote in April 1927 about Ambedkar and the Mahad satyagrahis: it was not an honest thing to do!

These are only a few examples of the numerous concealments in ‘The Doctor and the Saint’ regarding Gandhi and Dalit rights. Here is one more. While Roy concedes (123) that the Indian National Congress’s Karachi resolution of 1931 on equal rights for all – a forerunner of the equality pledged in India’s 1950 Constitution – was a ‘valuable, enlightened document’,

she avoids mentioning that Gandhi had played a principal role in its drafting.

Here is another. She names ‘the beloved Bhakti poets . . . of the anticaste tradition’: ‘Cokhamela, Ravidas, Kabir, Tukaram, Mira, Janaba’ (37). (Her spelling of the Mahar poet Chokhamela’s name is incorrect.) But, of course, she will not inform her readers that several of these were among Gandhi’s favourite poets too, or that their songs were frequently sung in his ashrams and prayer meetings. Or maybe she is again not aware.

Here is another omission (out of a number of possible ones). She gathers much amusement (132–33) from a piece by Gandhi called ‘The Ideal Bhangi’, and pokes fun at Gandhi’s concern with sanitation and reproduces many sentences from it. But she carefully omits the sentence that conveys Gandhi’s anger at the way the Bhangi was/is treated, published in Harijan on 28 November, 1936: ‘But I know this much that by looking down upon the Bhangi, we – Hindus, Mussalmans, Christians and all – have deserved the contempt of the whole world’.

Yes, Gandhi was troubled by caste injustices and by India’s insanitation and by much else.

Gandhi, Untouchability and Caste

At the time of Gandhi’s death, India remained caste-ridden and continued to ill-treat Dalits. Indian society has not greatly changed in the decades since. Yet, Gandhi’s words and deeds have contributed to whatever change that has occurred.

Roy’s readers should be made aware of the positions he took first in South Africa, where he interpreted the discrimination against Indians as a just reward for untouchability in India, and thereafter, following his return to India.

In 1907, in South Africa, in an article first published in Indian Opinion on 11 May that year, Gandhi wrote of ‘the wicked superstitions about untouchability’ and of how ‘in India some of us oppress the bhangis and force them to . . . speak in obsequious language’ (CW 7: 470). When satyagraha sent many Indians to prison in South Africa, he rebuked those prisoners who refused to eat food touched by Dalits or to sleep near them (CW 9: 181).

On 16 February 1916, a year after returning to India, this is what Gandhi said about untouchability in a public speech in Madras:

Every affliction that we labour under in this sacred land is a fit and proper punishment for this great and indelible crime that we are committing (CW 13: 232–33).

Orthodoxy attacked him. This is how Gandhi replied in Godhra (Gujarat) in November 1917:

I shall continue to be my own guru . . . It is no good quoting verses from Manusmriti and other scriptures in defence of this orthodoxy. A number of verses . . . are apocryphal, a number of them are quite meaningless (CW 14: 73–77)

Reiterating his position, that verses quoted from scripture could not override the individual conscience, he added that verses from scripture ‘cannot be above reason and morality’ (CW 14: 345).

A year later, in April 1918, in a preface to a book of poems by the Gujarati writer Padhiar, which described the cruel treatment of Dalits, Gandhi asked for the poems to be ‘read out to men and women in their millions, in the same way that works like the Bhagavat are read out to them in every square’ (CW 14: 344–5).

Two years later, after the Non-Cooperation Movement was launched, he said through his article in Young India in November 1920,

We shall be unfit to gain Swaraj so long as we keep in bondage a fifth of the population (CW 19: 20)

Before the year 1920 ended, Gandhi ensured that the removal of untouchability was, for the first time, made an integral part of the political programme of the Indian National Congress.

In 1920, the Non-cooperation Movement for Swaraj was launched, which, among other things, saw the opening of national schools. Gandhi’s orthodox foes in Gujarat attacked him in violent language because he refused to bar Dalits from these schools. Through the press, in letters and via a whispering campaign, these men warned Gandhi that unless Dalits were excluded, they would support the Raj and kill the swaraj movement. They also alleged that Gandhi’s interest in Dalits was borrowed from Christian friends, in particular from Rev. Charles Andrews.

Gandhi’s response was two-fold. First, in his Gujarati weekly, Navajivan, on 5 December 1920, he expressed confidence that ‘God will vouchsafe me the strength to

reject the swaraj which may be won by abandoning the Antyajias' (CW 19: 73). ('Antyaj', connoting something like 'the end-person', was at this time the word that many used for a Dalit.)

Second, writing to Andrews and then in public speeches, he recalled the start of his work against untouchability. To Andrews, in a letter dated 29 January 1921, he said,

I began this work in S.A. – before I ever heard of you and I was conscious of the sin of untouchability before I came under other Christian influences in S.A. The truth came to me when I was yet a child. I used to laugh at my dear mother for making us bathe if we brothers touched any pariah. It was in 1897 that I was prepared in Durban to turn Mrs. Gandhi away from the house because she would not treat on a footing of equality Lawrence who she knew belonged to the pariah class and whom I had invited to stay with me . . . (CW 19: 288–90)

Andrews having expressed keenness for Gandhi's focus against untouchability to remain strong and sustained, Gandhi added the following in the same letter:

You are doing an injustice to me in even allowing yourself to think that for a single moment I may be subordinating the question [of untouchability] to any others . . . *It is a bigger problem than that of gaining Indian independence, but I can tackle it better if I gain the latter on the way* (CW 19: 288–90; *emphasis added*).

Three months later, on 13 April 1921, Gandhi addressed a Suppressed Classes Conference in Ahmedabad. He said,

I was hardly yet twelve when this idea had dawned on me. A scavenger named Uka, an 'untouchable', used to attend our house for cleaning latrines. Often I would ask my mother . . . why I was forbidden to touch him? If I accidentally touched Uka, I was asked to perform the ablutions, and though I naturally obeyed, it was not without smilingly protesting . . . I often had tussles with [my parents] on this matter. I told my mother that she was entirely wrong in considering physical contact with Uka as sinful (CW 19: 572).

Exactly two years earlier, the Jallianwala Bagh massacre had taken place, under the aegis of Brigadier-General Dyer and Governor O'Dwyer. Gandhi recalled

that massacre in this speech to the Suppressed Classes Conference, but added,

What crimes for which we condemn the government as Satanic have not we been guilty of towards our 'untouchable' brethren? . . . We make them crawl on their bellies, we have made them rub their noses on the ground; with eyes red with rage we push them out of railway compartments – what more than this has British rule done? What charge that we bring against Dyer and O'Dwyer may not others and even our people lay at our door? (CW 19: 572).

Does Roy allow her readers to know anything contained in the preceding dozen or so paragraphs? Not only does she not; she is unwilling to accept Gandhi's recollections regarding Uka! Disbelievingly she writes, 'Gandhi later insisted that untouchability troubled him since he was a boy . . .' (84). Elsewhere she says, 'From his childhood he resurrected the memory of Uka . . .' (105). One can only marvel.

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Roy's observation that Gandhi's Hind Swaraj, written in 1909, makes 'no mention' of untouchability, and that a discussion of 'caste is absent' (84) from it, is entirely correct, but hers is not an original discovery. The omission was discussed in a study done by me (1995, 161) and no doubt others too have marked it. In that 1995 study, I also speculated on Gandhi's likely reasons.

If, as Gandhi recounted (Pyarelal 1932, 303), Hind Swaraj was largely a reproduction of a dialogue that he had had earlier in 1909 with a radical friend in England, possibly that friend, Pranjivan Mehta, did not discuss caste or untouchability with Gandhi. Or, Gandhi may have felt that an admission of untouchability practised over the centuries would hurt Hind Swaraj's picture of the virtues of Indian civilisation.

Though the absence of caste and untouchability from *Hind Swaraj* undoubtedly weakens it, we have seen the clear evidence showing that Gandhi was an unceasing foe of untouchability from much earlier.

It is also a fact, however, and one that Ambedkar would justifiably underline, that the fight against untouchability did not gather adequate momentum in the 1920s. Why did it not? In part because of the rigidity of Indian society, but also because Gandhi and his colleagues had other

tough goals as well which they were striving to reach, including swaraj and Hindu–Muslim unity.

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On 2 August 1931, shortly before he was to go to London for a Round Table Conference (RTC) on India's political future convened by the British Prime Minister, and around the time when he and Ambedkar, who too was going to the London RTC, had their first meeting (in Mumbai), Gandhi made a significant statement in Ahmedabad:

If we came into power with the stain of untouchability unaffected, I am positive that the 'untouchables' would be worse off under that 'Swaraj' than they are now, for the simple reason that our weaknesses and our failings would then be buttressed by the accession of power. (Pyarelal 1932, 303)

Gandhi was admitting here that swaraj would give India's upper castes political power in addition to the social and economic power they already enjoyed, and thus make Dalits 'worse off'. Since the swaraj goal could not be abandoned, the solution – as Gandhi saw it – was to attack untouchability alongside the struggle for swaraj.

At the London RTC in the autumn of 1931, Gandhi and Ambedkar had their famous clash over separate versus joint electorates. If the Raj could provide separate electorates for Sikhs, Muslims and India's Europeans, why not a separate Dalit electorate? Gandhi answered with a counter-question,

Sikhs may remain as such in perpetuity, so may Mohammedans, so may Europeans. Will untouchables remain untouchables in perpetuity?

But there was something more worrying, a hurtful reality. Here is how Gandhi described that reality in London on 31 October 1931 at Friends House, the Quaker centre in Euston:

The 'untouchables' are in the hands of superior classes. They can suppress them completely and wreak vengeance upon the 'untouchables' who are at their mercy. I may be opening out my shame to you. But . . . how can I invite utter destruction for them? I would not be guilty of that crime (*CW 48: 258*).

Gandhi said before the Minorities Committee of the RTC that 'he would not sell the vital interests of the

untouchables even for the sake of winning the freedom of India'. He claimed (on 13 November 1931) that those demanding the separate electorate 'do not know their India, do not know how Indian society is today constructed' (*CW 48: 297–8*).

Though Roy devotes several pages to the Gandhi–Ambedkar debate in London in the autumn of 1931, she carefully expunges the sentences I have quoted.

Ambedkar's demand for a separate Dalit electorate was backed by many RTC delegates in London, most of whom were nominated by the Raj. A separate electorate could be introduced, the Raj indicated. Gandhi declared he would, if need arose, fast unto death against it.

Gandhi and South Africa's Blacks

A good chunk of 'The Doctor and the Saint' is devoted to Gandhi's oft-discussed and undoubtedly deplorable ignorance and condescension regarding black South Africans during some of his time in South Africa. However, here too Roy is carefully selective. Thus she totally leaves out a notable 1908 speech that Gandhi had made on the subject in Johannesburg during a period when he entertained high hopes from the British Empire:

I have endeavoured to study the question [of Indians in South Africa] as it [also] affects the Africans and the Chinese. It seems to me that both the Africans and the Asiatics have advanced the Empire as a whole; we can hardly think of South Africa without the African races . . . South Africa would probably be a howling wilderness without the African races . . . They (the African races) are still in the history of the world's learners. Able-bodied and intelligent men as they are, they cannot but be an asset to the Empire . . .

It is well for me to be a loyal subject of the Empire, but not I hope as a member of the subject race . . .

If we look into the future, is it not a heritage we have to leave to posterity, that all the different races commingle and produce a civilisation that perhaps the world has not yet seen? (*CW 8: 242–46*)

This is from a well-known speech given at the YMCA in Johannesburg, reproduced at the time in two issues of *Indian Opinion* (6 and 13 June 1908), included later in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, and discussed in more than one modern study, but Roy is either unaware

of it (so much, in that case, for her diligence) or she does not want others to learn of it. Though hardly revolutionary by today's standards, the speech was ahead of the times in which it was made. Not many Indians in South Africa or in India spoke in 1908 or later of the 'commingling' of 'all the different races'. In fact, few people anywhere did; not very many will even today.

Gandhi's prejudices at that time (which almost all his contemporaries shared) should be frankly faced, but why does Roy cover up the more favourable side of the ledger, which was rare for its time?

Predictably, Roy also leaves out Gandhi's well-documented friendship with John Dube, one of the founders of the African National Congress, whose centre near Durban was not far from Phoenix, where Gandhi established his first ashram. Like Gandhi, John Dube too hesitated to support the Zulu Rebellion of 1906 and said, in fact, that 'we should . . . assist the government to suppress the rebellion' (quoted in Reddy 1995, 21).

Heroic yet also tragic, that rebellion bore similarities with India's 1857 rising, from which contemporaries such as Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Sayyid Ahmed Khan kept their distance, and which another contemporary – Jyotiba Phule – openly opposed.

Roy also leaves out Gandhi's praise in *Indian Opinion* (30 December 1905 and 17 March 1906) for the efforts of the African journalist and educator, Tengo Jabavu, in establishing a college for Africans, writing of 'an awakening people' and of 'the great Native races of South Africa' and adding that 'British Indians in South Africa have much to learn from [Jabavu's] example.' (quoted in Reddy 1995)

Roy speaks of Gandhi's alleged 'disdain' for blacks (83), but fails to mention that Gandhi's offensive remarks were provoked by the shocking conduct witnessed by him of men convicted for serious crimes, with whom he shared his prison cell.

Gandhi's stance regarding South Africa's blacks was influenced by the circumstances and prejudices and also the equations of his time. Since blacks lay at the lowest rung of South Africa's political and social ladder, Gandhi's fight for Indian equality with whites necessarily, if also regrettably, called for separating Indians from blacks. This angle is of no interest to Roy.

Nelson Mandela, whom Roy professes to admire (87), wrote the following in a 1995 publication:

"Gandhi had been initially shocked that Indians were classified with Natives in prison . . . All in all, Gandhi must be forgiven these prejudices in the context of the time and the circumstances" (Mandela 1995).

'The context of the time' is precisely what Roy cuts away. Thus, she makes much of, and derides, Gandhi's caution regarding a premature African-Indian alliance (74-75). Yet, her readers should know that in 1913, John Dube, the first ANC president, thought that black resistance along the lines adopted by Indians under Gandhi would fail: he believed that the blacks would lose discipline under provocation, and that the white reprisal would be devastating (quoted in Patel 1989, 216-17).

Interviewed in 1976, another founding member of the ANC, Selby Msimang, also thought that the African leadership of Gandhi's time 'would, in any case, have found Indian politics too radical to countenance an alliance' (Swan 1985, 133).

However, such acknowledgments would belie the picture that Roy wishes to present.

Also relevant to an understanding of Gandhi's attitude towards blacks is Gandhi's 1905 comment on American slavery. Summarising the life and times of Abraham Lincoln for readers of the Gujarati edition of *Indian Opinion* on 26 October 1905, here is what Gandhi wrote:

It is believed that the greatest and the noblest man of the last century was Abraham Lincoln . . .

Nobody [then] saw anything wrong in openly selling Negroes and keeping them in slavery. The high and the low, the rich and the poor saw nothing strange in owning slaves . . . Religious minded men, priests and the like, saw nothing amiss and did not protest . . . Some even encouraged [slavery], and all . . . thought that slavery . . . was a divine dispensation and that the Negroes were born to it . . . [E]ven those [who thought that slavery was wrong] . . . preferred to remain silent, being unable to assert themselves . . . Even today our hair stands on end to hear an account of the atrocities inflicted on slaves. They were tied up and beaten; they were forced to work; they were branded and handcuffed . . .

Lincoln alone of all men made, and put into execution, his resolution to change the ideas of men, ideas which [had been] indelibly carved on their minds . . . (CW 5: 50–52).

Was the writer of these and similar lines a man who ‘disdained’ blacks? In Yeravada Jail in Poona, where he had been detained from 1922 to 1924, Gandhi made friends with Adan, a Somali prisoner who had become a warder. An incident involving Adan was observed by Gandhi’s prison-mate and occasional critic, Indulal Yagnik, who described it in a 1943 book, *Gandhi As I Knew Him*:

“One evening our Negro warder from Somaliland was bitten by a scorpion on his hand. He gave a shout. Mr. Gandhi was quickly on the spot . . . He first asked for a knife to cut the wound and to let out the poison. But he found the knife dirty. So missing no moment he quickly washed the area around the wound and applying his lips to the wound began to suck out the poison. He went on spitting after sucking and eventually stopped when Adan felt relief” (Yagnik 1943: 303).

Was this the reaction of one who ‘disdained’ blacks? Not that Roy would ask such a question, or even let her readers know that Gandhi reacted thus. Or maybe she was not aware of this incident. She also suppresses or belittles Gandhi’s increasing willingness to write openly of black rights.

On 22 July 1926, Gandhi declared in *Young India* that he could not think of ‘justice being done to Indians [in South Africa] if none is rendered to the natives of the soil’ (CW 31: 181–2). Two years later, when a few Indians in South Africa objected to a plan to send Indian students to Fort Hare College, which had been established for Africans, Gandhi, in an article in *Young India* on 5 April 1928, likened the sentiment to what ‘is expressed by the South African whites in respect of ourselves,’ and added, ‘Indians have too much in common with the Africans to think of isolating themselves from them. They cannot exist in South Africa for any length of time without the active sympathy and friendship of the Africans’ (CW 36: 190).

In 1939, he told a visiting black leader from South Africa, Rev. S.S. Tema, that Africans ‘are the sons of the soil who are being robbed of their inheritance’; theirs was ‘a far bigger issue’ than that of South Africa’s Indians (Harijan, 18 February 1939; CW 68: 272–4). By 1946,

Gandhi felt that the time for a common African/Indian front had arrived.

Aim of ‘The Doctor And The Saint’

Here, I ask myself, why bother to show Roy’s unconcern with the real Gandhi? After all, she has hinted at her aim with ‘The Doctor and the Saint’. She desires, she says, to ‘rearrange the stars in our firmament’ (140), not to analyse or understand Gandhi. She wants to shoot Gandhi down from the sky, not get to know him. She wants – in her own words, expressed not in ‘The Doctor and the Saint’ but at a meeting where she tried to explain her text – to ‘move the Gandhi monument out of the way’, in order, she says, that Ambedkar may be better understood and honoured (Roy 2014a).

This logic is hard to understand. Our minds can have the space to understand both, and our hearts to honour both, and it is no tribute to Dr. Ambedkar to say that his legacy depends on the destruction of Gandhi’s.

However, the trouble I am taking is called for. As I have already acknowledged, Roy enjoys a following, which she has won through her writing skill and a willingness to take unpopular positions. My belief is that many of Roy’s admirers would welcome a scrutiny such as the one I am offering of her attacks on Gandhi.

I should also ask: what provoked this strong dislike in Roy? Was it Gandhi’s lifestyle? Or his oft-expressed belief that despite their conflicts, human beings – and races, castes, classes and nations – should find solutions that allow bitterness to melt? I do not know. Roy’s popular novel, *The God of Small Things*, might have supplied a clue or two, but I have not managed to read it.

In any case, ‘The Doctor and the Saint’ makes clear Roy’s total disapproval of what she thinks to be Gandhi’s lifestyle. According to her, Gandhi ‘left his followers with a legacy of a joyless, joke-free world: no desire, no sex, . . . no food, no beads, no nice clothes, no dance, no poetry. And very little music’ (81).

How truthful is this picture? The ‘very little music’ that she reluctantly concedes to the Gandhi legacy was actually a daily affair in his life, morning and evening. True, it was religious or spiritual music, yet Gandhi had an ear for song and, in fact, possessed a decent singing voice, which fellow ashramites and fellow prisoners spoke of.

It is true, too, that the ballroom dancing lessons he took in London as a student were later never put into practice, but no one who spoke as often as Gandhi did of ‘dancing with joy’ could have been an enemy of dance. And although Roy may not be aware, Gandhi frequently quoted poetry in his journals – English, Hindi, Bengali, Urdu or Gujarati poetry.

As for his ‘joyless, joke-free’ world, here is what William Shirer, the American author of ‘Rise and Fall of the Third Reich’, said, referring to a time that he and a few others had spent with Gandhi:

“In no time at all Gandhi had us all laughing and completely at our ease . . . If in this world of varied personalities there is a single man even half as charming as Gandhi, I have not seen him (quoted in Jack 1956, 399).”

And he enjoyed others’ jokes. Writing, in 1932, from a Pune prison to Srinivasa Sastri, Gandhi said, ‘Sardar Vallabhbai is with me. His jokes make me laugh until I can laugh no more, not once but several times a day’ (Parikh 2, 91–2). Everyone who spent more than a few minutes with Gandhi came away with stories of his merry side.

Like some others in history who took on daunting goals, Gandhi had strict views on sex. Many will disagree with those views, but the dreary Gandhi painted by Roy was never encountered by his friends or foes. Such a Gandhi never existed.

Gandhi’s Aim

In the course of her pursuit to demolish Gandhi, Roy pauses to describe Gandhi as ‘perhaps the most consummate politician the modern world has ever known’ (58). Since most politicians usually nurse a clear aim, at least at any given time, we may ask, what was the goal towards which Gandhi applied his ‘consummate’ skills?

Roy refrains from providing her own clear views regarding this, though here and there she insinuates that Gandhi was not really pro-poor and that equality was not his real goal. Yet, it is not enough for a ‘consummate politician’ to know what, allegedly, he does not want. He must know what he wants.

At one point, Roy appears to inch towards understanding something about Gandhi’s goal. She writes:

“Gandhi returned to India in 1915 after twenty years of political activity in South Africa, and plunged into the national movement. His first concern, as any politician’s would be, was to stitch together the various constituencies that would allow the Indian National Congress to claim it was the legitimate and sole representative of the emerging nation” (58; emphasis added).

She is hugely condescending here, and in some respects quite incorrect.

Gandhi was not part of the INC when he arrived in India in 1915. But he was perhaps the only Indian at this time with a conscious goal of involving all Indians – caste Hindus, Dalits, Muslims, peasants and industrial labour – in a national movement; the first person striving to enlist people from outside his or her linguistic/cultural region; the first to insist on using local languages to reach the ordinary Indian; perhaps the first person determined to get to know the whole land of India and as many as possible of its people. As for his ‘plunging into the national movement’, it might be fairer to say that in 1919–20 he created a national movement into which he and others plunged headlong.

But the ‘stitching together’ notion is apt for Gandhi.

His imperial foes – men such as Churchill, Linlithgow and Wavell – were never in two minds as to Gandhi’s purpose, all of them agreeing that ending British rule was his dominant passion. While Churchill’s antipathy towards Gandhi is well-known, not many may be aware that in 1947, Wavell, the British commander-in-chief during the Quit India Movement and viceroy from 1943 to 1947, called Gandhi ‘an implacable foe of Empire’ and the ‘most formidable’ of the opponents ‘who have detached portions of the British Empire in recent years’ (Moon 1973, 439).

Now, here is the interesting – actually damning – thing about Roy’s text: in this 153-page demolition exercise, Roy mentions the freedom struggle not at all and the ‘national movement’ only once or twice. This Great Context of the debates on caste, class, race and gender that ‘The Doctor and the Saint’ fervently (and selectively) discusses is missing altogether. Was it consciously banished? Or did it never enter the talented author’s mind?

I have no means of knowing the answers to these questions. Yet, the talented author’s admirers ought to be

reminded that nothing said by Gandhi or Ambedkar or anyone else in the India of the first half of the twentieth century can be understood without an awareness of the context.

That context meant that Indians pained and shamed not just by Indian injustices but also by alien rule were obliged to prioritise. Time and again, they had to choose between struggling against an Indian oppression and struggling against European subjugation. Or, they alternated and oscillated between the two.

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, some persons of conscience in what until then was Britain's American colony had also been forced to prioritise. Should they focus their energies on opposing slavery or on ending British rule? In the end, independence attracted more American energy than opposing slavery, which, in fact, was even subtly codified into the US Constitution¹; it was only in 1865, shortly before the South surrendered in the Civil War, that slavery was declared illegal.

As for that War, President Abraham Lincoln thought, along with many other Americans, that the Union had to be preserved, and the South's secession ended, before slavery could be abolished. Ambedkar, who obtained a PhD at Columbia University in New York, was well aware of this fact (Ambedkar 1945, 271).

The India that Gandhi and his generation faced also presented more than one challenge to people with a conscience. To name three, India was a subject nation ruled by aliens; Indian society practised untouchability; and there was the Hindu–Muslim divide.

Although, as we have seen, Gandhi's imperial foes saw him primarily as an enemy of British rule, all of us know that he also embraced the struggles against untouchability and for Hindu–Muslim friendship. He was stitching together India's divided constituencies.

*

Since Roy does not let her readers know of any of Gandhi's passionate statements against untouchability, let me remind – or inform – them of two more. In 1917, only two years after his return from South Africa, Gandhi said,

Ravana was a rakshasa but this rakshasi of untouchability is even more terrible than Ravana...

Even the slavery of the Negroes is not worse than this. (CW 14: 73–7)

In November 1932, he wrote,

Socially [the 'untouchables'] are lepers. Economically they are worse than slaves. Religiously they are denied entrance to places we miscall 'houses of God'. They are denied the use, on the same terms as the caste men, of public roads, public hospitals, public wells, public taps, public parks and the like, and in some cases their approach within a measured distance is a social crime, [or] . . . their very sight is an offence.

They are relegated for their residence to the worst quarters of cities or villages where they practically get no social services. Caste Hindu lawyers and doctors will not serve them . . . Brahmins will not officiate at their religious functions. The wonder is that they are at all able to eke out an existence or that they still remain within the Hindu fold. They are too downtrodden to rise in revolt against their suppressors (CW 51: 347).

Despite scores of similar utterances by Gandhi (all censored out by Roy), and despite the struggles he waged for Dalit rights, Roy insists that he was 'the Saint of the Status Quo' (40).

The Gandhi–Ambedkar Relationship

Gandhi was a prisoner of the Empire in Pune's Yeravada Jail when, in September 1932, he announced his fast of indefinite duration, directed at the separate Dalit electorate as well as at the caste Hindu conscience. Meeting in Bombay a day before the fast was to commence, India's most influential caste Hindu leaders resolved that 'one of the earliest Acts of the Swaraj Parliament' would be to assure to 'untouchables' equal access to 'public wells, public schools, public roads and all other public institutions'. Pressured by Gandhi's fast, they signed an historic, if overdue, pledge.

While Ambedkar would note this pledge (Ambedkar 1945, 103), Roy, of course, banishes it from her survey.

Across India, goaded by Gandhi's fast, temples closed for centuries to the 'untouchables' opened their doors. Brahmins invited Dalits to meals in their homes. The Empire, on its part, opened the doors of Yeravada prison, and Ambedkar went inside to confer with Gandhi.

¹ See "Constitutional Topic: Slavery." US Constitution. http://www.usconstitution.net/consttop_slav.html

A settlement was reached. Gandhi not only agreed to what he had earlier opposed – namely reserved seats for Dalits in legislatures – he also said that Dalits should have seats in proportion to their population. In its scheme of a separate-electorate-cum-reserved Dalit seats, the Raj had prescribed only half that number of seats.

From his side, in order to save Gandhi's life, Ambedkar agreed to give up his demand for a separate electorate, where only Dalits would have voted for or against Dalit candidates.

Finding common ground, the two agreed on their Pact. A cable went to London, where His Majesty's Government accepted the joint proposal sent from one of its imperial prisons, and Gandhi broke his fast.

The essence of this Pact was subsequently enshrined in free India's Constitution. Every subsequent Indian election in the 82 years since the Pact – whether nationwide or in a state, town or village – has been conducted on the basis of that Pact, with reserved seats for Dalits but without a separate electorate. With independence, separate Muslim and Sikh electorates also ended.

Gandhi had claimed during the fast that 'an increasing army of reformers' would resist 'social, civic and political persecution of the Depressed Classes'. The issue was of 'transcendental value, far surpassing Swaraj', he added (CW 51: 119).

Expressing his 'Hindu gratitude' to 'Dr Ambedkar, Rao Bahadur Srinivasan and . . . Rao Bahadur M. C. Rajah,' – the Dalit leaders who had conferred with him in Yeravada – Gandhi added:

They could have taken up an uncompromising and defiant attitude by way of punishment to the so-called caste Hindus for the sins of generations.

If they had done so, I at least could not have resented their attitude and my death would have been but a trifling price exacted for the tortures that the outcasts of Hinduism have been going through for unknown generations. But they chose a nobler path and have thus shown that they have followed the precept of forgiveness enjoined by all religions. Let me hope that the caste Hindus will prove themselves worthy of this forgiveness. (CW 51: 143–5).

To caste Hindus, he conveyed a warning:

The political part of [the settlement] . . . occupies but a small space in the vast field of reform that has to be tackled by caste Hindus during the coming days, namely, the complete removal of social and religious disabilities under which a large part of the Hindu population has been groaning.

I should be guilty of a breach of trust if I did not warn fellow reformers and caste Hindus in general that the breaking of the fast carried with it a sure promise of a resumption of it if this reform is not relentlessly pursued and achieved within a measurable period (CW 51: 143–5).

However, he feared that the caste Hindu change was not going deep enough. To Andrews, he wrote in a letter on 30 September 1932:

I did expect a mighty response from the orthodox, but I was unprepared for the sudden manifestation that took place. But I shall not be deceived. It remains to be seen whether the temples opened remain open and the various other things done persist (CW 51:154).

Was reform 'relentlessly pursued and achieved within a measurable period'? Much was done, but much more remained undone. Did Gandhi then start another fast unto death? No, he did not, though he did fast for 21 days over untouchability in May 1933. Was he, therefore, a hypocrite and a secret foe of the Dalits, as Roy alleges? Or was he an unusual human being fighting, with all his human limitations and the limitations of his people, and yet with all he had in him, for more than one tough objective?

*

Shortly after signing the Pact, Ambedkar said he had been 'surprised, immensely surprised' to find 'so much in common' between Gandhi and himself. 'If you devoted yourself entirely to the welfare of the Depressed Classes', Ambedkar said to Gandhi, 'you would become our hero' (Pyarelal 1932, 59).

Gandhi's close British friend, Charles Andrews – the one who called Gandhi 'Mohan' and was called 'Charlie' by Gandhi – tendered the same advice. Recalling that Gandhi had 'again and again' said that with untouchability, Indians were 'not fit' for Swaraj, Andrews asked his friend to focus solely on untouchability and not try 'to serve two masters' (Gracie 1989, 155).

Whether or not we agree with Gandhi, we can look at the reasons he gave for declining the earnest advice.

To Andrews, 15 June 1933: My dear Charlie: Now for your important argument about untouchability . . . My life is one indivisible whole. It is not built after the compartmental system. Satyagraha, civil resistance, untouchability, [and] Hindu-Muslim unity . . . are indivisible parts of a whole . . .

You will find at one time in my life an emphasis on one thing, at another time on [an]other. But that is just like a pianist now emphasizing one note and now [an]other. But they are all related to one another . . .

[I]t is utterly impossible for me to say: ‘I have now nothing to do with civil disobedience or Swaraj!’ Not only so . . . Full and final removal of untouchability . . . is utterly impossible without Swaraj . . . Love. Mohan (CW 55: 196–9; emphasis added).

*

Though still its prisoner, the Empire allowed Gandhi to edit from jail a journal called *Harijan*, through which he hoped to continue his campaign. In its 11 February 1933 edition, he explained his choice of the word ‘*Harijan*’ and recalled that an ‘untouchable’ reader of *Navajivan* (which the Raj had banned in 1932) had suggested that the name ‘*Harijan*’ – God’s person – be used to designate a so-called ‘untouchable’.

Since (said Gandhi) God was, above all, the protector of the helpless, and since none were more helpless than the ‘untouchables’, the word ‘*Harijan*’ seemed appropriate to him. When, Gandhi added, caste Hindus realised their folly and changed, they too would be entitled to be called *Harijans* (CW 53: 266–7).

Gandhi asked caste Hindus to realise that, in effect, many of them ‘despised’ Dalits, whatever they might claim. In his new journal, he wrote on 25 February 1933:

If to relegate a body of people to distant locations, to regard their touch, approach or sight as pollution, to throw at them the leavings of one’s food, to deny them the use of public roads and institutions, even the use of public temples, is not to despise them, I do not know what the word ‘despise’ means (CW 53: 405).

*

Roy briefly acknowledges Ambedkar’s warmth for Gandhi at the time of the Poona Pact, but immediately adds:

“Later, though, having recovered from the trauma, Ambedkar wrote: ‘There was nothing noble in the fast. It was a foul and filthy act’ (126).

Ambedkar indeed used those severe words. But when? When he recovered from the trauma of Gandhi’s fast, says Roy. How many days would it have taken Ambedkar, Gandhi’s irreverent adversary, to recover from Gandhi’s ‘pressure’? Seven days? Seven months? The words that Roy quotes, while suppressing their date, were actually written in the summer of 1945 – thirteen years after the fast and the Pact – in an impassioned tract that Ambedkar titled, ‘What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables’

In this fiery text, Ambedkar attacks Gandhi’s fast, and the working out of the Poona Pact, but – let us clearly mark – not the terms of that Pact.

In places in his 1945 text, Ambedkar, in fact, claims that the Poona Pact was a victory for him. Thus he writes, ‘When the fast failed and Mr. Gandhi was obliged to sign a pact – called the Poona Pact – which conceded the political demands of the Untouchables, he took his revenge by letting the Congress employ foul electioneering tactics to make their political rights of no avail’ (Ambedkar 1945, 259).

Roy says that Ambedkar ‘didn’t stand a chance’ (126) when facing a fasting Gandhi. A few pages later, she speaks of ‘the debacle of the Poona Pact’ (137). Yet, Ambedkar not only refrained, in his tempestuous 1945 text, from criticising the Pact’s terms, he also did not – then or later – try, as far as I can figure out, to have that Pact annulled or replaced. Far from seeing the Pact as a ‘debacle’, he seemed to view it as a compromise that benefited everyone, including the Dalits.

Only two years after writing his 1945 text, he would begin the process of steering the passage of a Constitution that incorporated the Pact, which from today’s perspective stands out as a statesmanlike settlement.

As for Gandhi’s 1932 fast, Ambedkar acknowledged in his 1945 text – even if Roy does not – that conservative Hindus too saw it as pressure on them and resented the Pact it produced. While observing that ‘the Untouchables

were sad' because of the concessions he had made, Ambedkar added:

“[T]he caste Hindus very definitely disliked [the Pact], although they had not the courage to reject it (Ambedkar 1945, 90–91).”

Orthodox opposition to the Pact and to the fast produced two attempts on Gandhi's life in 1934 – one in Jasidih in Bihar and the other in Pune. However, Gandhi felt that orthodoxy was losing ground. To Nehru, he wrote (15 February 1933),

The fight against sanatanists is becoming more and more interesting if also increasingly difficult . . . The abuses they are hurling at me are wonderfully refreshing. I am all that is bad and corrupt on this earth. But the storm will subside . . . [I]t is the death dance of the moth round a lamp (CW 53: 309–10).

No wonder (as 'The Doctor and the Saint' would not acknowledge), some sanatanists tried to kill Gandhi in 1934.

*

Ambedkar was the clear victor over Gandhi in their 1936 argument over caste, varna and hereditary occupations – an argument triggered by the former's lecture of that year, *Annihilation of Caste*.

Some months before their 1936 argument, Gandhi had publicly given up defending 'caste'. 'CASTE HAS TO GO' was his heading to a 16 November 1935 article in *Harijan* in which he wrote, 'The sooner public opinion abolishes [caste], the better' (CW 62: 121–2).

Before 1935, Gandhi had at times claimed that 'an ideal' form of caste could be justified, while nearly always adding that 'the ideal' never existed in practice, and always insisting that any notion of superiority and inferiority was utterly wrong. This seeming 'defence' of caste was Gandhi's way of sugar-coating the bitter pills he was asking caste Hindus to swallow.

In his 1936 debate with Ambedkar, Gandhi reiterated his rejection of caste, said that it was 'harmful both to spiritual and national growth', and did what he had thus far hesitated to do: he publicly affirmed his acceptance of inter-dining and inter-marriage (Ambedkar 2014, 326).

However, he claimed that 'varna' was different from caste, and tried to justify 'varna' by saying that the hereditary occupations for which he claimed 'varna' stood could ensure harmony and thrift. He added, however, that restoring a pure varna system was like 'an ant trying to lift a bag of sugar' or 'Dame Parkington pushing back the Atlantic with a mop'. He was saying that the varna system was impossible.

This seeming 'defence' of varna was neither easy to comprehend nor convincing, and Ambedkar easily picked holes in it.

That is how we would judge the debate today. In 1936, what many took from *Annihilation of Caste* was Ambedkar's categorical statement in it to all Hindus: 'I am sorry, I will not be with you. . . I am go[ing] out of the fold' (Ambedkar 2014, 317). What they also took from the 1936 debate was Gandhi's defence of Hinduism and his regret that Ambedkar had 'transferred' to Hinduism the 'disgust' he justifiably felt against 'a part of its professors' (Ambedkar 2014, 322).

Eight years after Gandhi's death, Nehru would tell the European journalist, Tibor Mende:

"I asked [Gandhi] repeatedly: why don't you hit out at the caste system directly? He said, 'I am undermining it completely by tackling untouchability' . . . [Gandhi's] genius lay in finding the weakest point of the enemy, the breaking of his front" (quoted in Mende 1958).

Realising that he would unite pro-orthodox ranks if he started with an attack on caste, Gandhi chose to zero in on an evil none could defend.

*

In the elections of 1937, the bulk of India's Hindus, including a great many Dalits – called Harijans at that time by Gandhi and many Indians, including Dalits – voted for Gandhi's Congress rather than for Ambedkar's party.

As Roy does not acknowledge, a Dalit minister was part of almost every provincial cabinet formed by the Congress in 1937. By December 1939, when the Congress quit office (because the war that had begun in Europe in September 1939 had sharpened the Empire–Congress divide), these ministries had accomplished a few things for Dalit rights. In Madras Presidency, for instance, a 1938 law made discrimination against Dalits

in jobs, wells, public conveniences, roads, schools and colleges an offence. As a result of another law that protected temple officials willing to open doors, Dalits entered several of the South's great temples for the first time.

What was the context for the fierce language of Ambedkar's 1945 text, which he wrote in New Delhi in his official residence on Prithviraj Road? At this time, he was a Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council. The war was about to end. After three years of detention for Quit India, which had stirred much of India, the Congress leadership was about to be released. The British were on the verge of proposing a new political scheme for India, and new elections were imminent across the country.

The brilliant thinker and Member (minister in effect) writing the 1945 tract was also someone who wished to influence any new British scheme. In addition, he was a political leader unable to forget the results of the 1937 elections, which – because the war had intervened – were the last to have taken place. He hoped to do better in 1945–46. Through this 1945 tract, an Ambedkar still vexed by the 1937 results presented his case to Britain's leaders and simultaneously to India's voters.

However, the elections of 1945–46 confirmed that the INC commanded the bulk of the Indian electorate, including a good deal of Dalit support. Obtaining caste Hindu as well as Dalit votes, the INC won an even larger proportion of Dalit seats than it had in 1937.

Many Dalit candidates have understandably resented the fact that non-Dalit voters can cause their defeat. Unfortunately, this happened to Ambedkar himself in the 1952 general elections, after he had resigned from the cabinet in disappointment at the Congress's slowness in passing the Hindu Code Bill, and again in 1954, when he contested a by-election.

In a joint electorate, good people of all jaatis, including the Dalits, would at times be defeated by votes from outside their jaati, and at other times be elected, thanks to 'outsider' votes.

Founded on Ambedkar's legacy by Kanshi Ram, the Bahujan Samaj Party has more than once led a government in our largest state, Uttar Pradesh, thanks in part, some might say, to the Poona Pact and the joint electorate.

That Pact was hardly the folly that Roy paints it to be, and it would be difficult to make a case that the India of 2014, or the Dalits and Adivasis of 2014, would be better off with separate Dalit and Adivasi electorates.

*

As Gandhi saw it in the 1920s and the 1930s, if Dalits and caste Hindus were locked in a fierce clash in every village and city of British-ruled India, that would constitute an insurmountable barrier to independence, larger even than the barrier created by Hindu–Muslim mistrust. It would also constitute a compelling reason for the Empire to deny independence to India, and would have been accepted as such by the world.

Moreover, in the circumstances of the time, when caste Hindus enjoyed an ever greater superiority in terms of money and arms than they do today, such a clash, Gandhi thought, would destroy the Dalits. His opposition to a separate Dalit electorate stemmed, he claimed, from his concern for Dalit safety.

In Gandhi's assessment of the real world around him, steering caste Hindus towards national independence, and simultaneously shaming them for the practice of untouchability, was the right strategy for all concerned, Dalits and caste Hindus included. For him, independence from British rule was a pre-requisite for a successful fight against what, to him, was the even greater wrong of untouchability and caste superiority.

Nothing that has happened in the 67 years after independence suggests that this strategy was wrong. Just as, for practical reasons, America needed independence and a Union before it could tackle slavery, India needed independence before it could confidently, safely or adequately tackle caste arrogance, but it had to be an independence that recognised the evil of caste arrogance.

As independence seemed closer, Gandhi seemed to free his radical side for tackling India's society. On 1 August 1946 – a year or so before independence – he wrote to Vallabhbhai Patel:

Who are the people who beat up Harijans, murder them, prevent them from using wells, drive them out of schools and refuse them entry into their homes? They are Congressmen. Aren't they? It is very necessary to have a clear picture of this (CW 85: 102).

Three months after writing this letter, Gandhi found himself in Noakhali in eastern Bengal, where communal violence had flared up. In January and February 1947, he and a handful of companions walking from village to village halted overnight in 47 east Bengali homes, where their hosts, many of them Dalits, included washermen, fishermen, cobblers and weavers.

In Noakhali, Gandhi told caste Hindu women that if they continued to disown the ‘untouchables’, more sorrow would be in store. The women of the village of Chandipur were given radical advice:

Invite a Harijan every day to dine with you. Or at least ask the Harijan to touch the food or the water before you consume it. Do penance for your sins (Tendulkar 1951, 7: 350; CW 93: 229).

On 24 April 1947, he said in Patna that for some time he had ‘made it a rule not to be present or give his blessings for any wedding unless one of the parties was a Harijan’ (CW 87: 350).

But Roy is not interested in any of this. Or maybe she simply does not know.

In June 1947 – two months or so before independence – Gandhi proposed that ‘a Harijan like Chakrayya² or a Harijan girl should be made the nation’s first President and Jawaharlal should become the Prime Minister . . . [S]imilar arrangements [can be] made in the provinces too . . .’ (CW 95: 217).

A purely symbolic suggestion? Perhaps. However, the symbol would have been powerful. It was one of the several suggestions made by Gandhi that Nehru, Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Rajagoplachari and other INC leaders successfully resisted in the last year of their ‘master’s’ life.

On 14 June 1947, by when partition had been accepted and independence was only two months away, Gandhi asked the Congress to frontally address untouchability and caste injustice and also the question of the adivasis:

And what about the ‘untouchables’? . . . If you say that ‘untouchables’ are nothing, the Adivasis are nothing, then you are not going to survive yourselves. But if you do away with the distinction of savarna and

avarna, if you treat the Shudras, the ‘untouchables’ and the Adivasis as equals then something good will have come out of a bad thing [partition] . . . (CW 95: 286–7)

The battle for swaraj having been won, the Congress had no excuse now, Gandhi was saying, to delay the battle for social justice.

None of this is of any consequence to Roy, according to whom, ‘There was never much daylight between Gandhi’s views on caste and those of the Hindu right.’ She adds, ‘From a Dalit point of view, Gandhi’s assassination could appear to be more a fratricidal killing than an assassination by an ideological opponent’ (128).

For herself, Roy acknowledges an ideological clash between Gandhi and the Hindu right. Thus, she writes, ‘[The] message of tolerance and inclusiveness between Hindus and Muslims continues to be Gandhi’s real, lasting and most important contribution to the idea of India’ (82). The implication seems to be that while she can understand the ideological confrontation, Dalits cannot.

*

There was one Gandhi proposal, initiated in December 1946, which Nehru and Patel did accept (See Gore 1993, 180–81; Ramachandran 1964, 179)³. Dalit literature has recorded Gandhi’s crucial role in the remarkable invitation extended by Nehru and Patel to Ambedkar to join free India’s first cabinet (See Gore 1993, 180–81; Shastri 1975, 32–33) but Roy throws a thick blanket over it. After providing scores of pages of Ambedkar’s sharp criticism of Gandhi and the INC from 1933 to 1947, she merely says:

“In a gesture of goodwill, and perhaps because there was no one as equal to the task as he was, the Congress appointed Ambedkar to the Constituent Assembly. In August 1947, Ambedkar was appointed India’s first Law Minister and Chairman of the Drafting Committee for the Constitution” (138).

That’s it. Offering no comment on the statesmanship behind the invitation and behind its acceptance, she effectively suppresses a remarkable coming together of bitter adversaries, resulting in Gandhi’s partnership with Dr. Ambedkar in the final phase of his life.

2. An Andhra Dalit who had greatly impressed Gandhi in his Sevagram ashram

3. Particularly, see M.S. Gore’s quotation from C.B. Khairmode’s biography of Ambedkar. According to G. Ramachandran, apparently Gandhi insisted on Ambedkar’s inclusion as an essential part of the ‘atonement’ due to India’s ‘untouchables’.

Everyone knows of the amazing results of Ambedkar's induction into Constitution-making. A brilliant and passionate human being, who happened also to be an Indian and a Dalit, piloted a Constitution assuring equal rights to all in a society that for centuries had called people like him inferior and untouchable and had treated them harshly, and an elected Constituent Assembly, where a large majority were caste Hindus, welcomed and adopted such a Constitution.

When, two months after Gandhi's death, Ambedkar married Sharada Kabir, a Brahmin doctor⁴, Vallabhbai Patel wrote to him, 'I am sure if Bapu were alive he would have given you his blessings.' Ambedkar replied, 'I agree that Bapu, if he had been alive, would have blessed it' (Das 1971, 6: 302).

This sort of exchange would make no impact on Roy. In her stern and pessimistic view, the Constitution that resulted from the Ambedkar–Gandhi rapprochement and from discussions in the Constituent Assembly 'reflected the views of its privileged-caste members more than Ambedkar's' (138). She also seems unhappy that many Ambedkar statues in the country show him holding the Constitution in his hand. She would rather have him hold Annihilation of Caste (44).

Nothing wrong with that wish. Yet, for Roy to suppress the partnership forged in 1947 between Gandhi, Ambedkar, Nehru and Patel only strengthens our scepticism over her text.

Roy quotes a characteristic Gandhi statement, made in 1931:

"It has been said that Indian swaraj will be the rule of the majority community, i.e. the Hindus. There could not be a greater mistake . . . If it were to be true, I for one would refuse to call it swaraj and fight it with all the strength at my command, for to me Hind Swaraj is the rule of all the people, of justice."

But, adds Roy, 'For Ambedkar, "the people" was not a homogeneous category . . . ' (45).

Nor was it for Gandhi. Both understood the inevitability of struggle between different sections of a diverse and at times sharply separated people – between classes or castes of Indians, between groups formed by language, religion, sect or party.

Both agreed, however, that struggle had to be peaceful – resolute, fearless and passionate, yes, but not violent, for killing usually damaged a struggle's goal. For Ambedkar, and also for Gandhi, Dalit solidarity, Dalit education and the Dalit vote were weapons far superior to the lathi or the gun; when used by a vulnerable Dalit, the latter only played into the hands of the better-armed enemy.

Both realised that the culmination of a struggle for justice was usually negotiation and a settlement rather than surrender by the foe and complete triumph for one's side. Despite harsh experiences, both knew that the adversary in a struggle, the Other, was a human being too, and that justice seldom endured without reconciliation.

The Poona Pact of 1932 and, 15 years later, the Gandhi–Ambedkar partnership at independence, represented victories for India's society and polity, and also for the two individuals concerned. Their agreements with each other may only have been occasional, their arguments more frequent. But the agreements were hugely consequential for India and even beyond.

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(Continued from Page 4)

terrorists. There is a separate paragraph in the statement urging Islamabad to bring the perpetrators of 26/11 carnage to justice.

In Washington's scheme of things, Pakistan's support is essential in the war against terrorists. In principle there cannot be any difference on this point. Yet the reality is that Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, urging jihad against us, is openly preaching hatred against India. The Pakistan government ran a special train to facilitate travel of his supporters to attend his rally.

On top of it all, there is no serious interest in pursuing the 26/11 attack on Mumbai where some 200 people were killed. Judge after judge has been transferred. There are hearings all over again. Pakistan is afraid of the Taliban inside and outside the country in proceeding with the case, much less taking action against the perpetrators.

President Obama's statement that they should be brought to book makes little sense when he has done nothing to ensure some action. It is obvious that he does not go beyond a point lest he should embarrass Pakistan. Yet, America is the only country which can force Pakistan deliver. Pakistan denied that Jammatt-ud-

Dawa has been banned. Only its back account has been frozen. Washington should exert more pressure.

I wish President Obama were to use his good offices to arrange a meeting between India and Pakistan. However divergent their viewpoints are, the two countries might find a way to have trade and tourism. Once the two countries meet, they may find other avenues for cooperation. With trust deficit on the one hand, and no contact with each other on the other, the gulf between the two is bound to grow further.

President Obama's offer to finance solar energy production may prod New Delhi to go for this type of power in a big way. Already Rajasthan has some plants. Their expansion or installation of new ones can produce so much power that it can be transmitted across the border. Pakistan is presently short of power. Washington can pursue President Obama's suggestion and ensure that India share the additional production. There may be other economic avenues which, if followed, can increase India's earning. His personal interest in such projects will not only ensure their early completion but also impress on New Delhi that the economic sinews are the best ties that can bind India and Pakistan together.

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

by
Rohini Gawankar

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The Abolition of Truth

Dilip Simeon

A fanatical conspirator enters a prayer meeting open to all, and shoots dead a 79 year-old unarmed and unguarded man at point-blank range. For nearly seven decades, one section of our intelligentsia looked upon the murderer as a martyr and hailed his act as it were something admirable. Today these fans of Godse and Savarkar are thrusting their hate-filled ideas down our throats. What is this if not the brazen celebration of communal terrorism and murder?

Let us be clear about this - if Godse's preparedness for death signifies something virtuous to the 'parivar', the activities of all the jihadis, maoists, khalistanis and sundry insurgents across the sub-continent also become virtuous. Don't all terrorists have their admirers? How do we adjudge one brand of murder as virtue and another as evil?

One big lie is that Gandhi was responsible for the partition of India, overlooking the fact that he referred to partition as a sin, and resisted it to the end of his days. He accepted it with sorrow only after the leadership of the Congress, most importantly Sardar Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru recommended it as the only way out of the political crisis of 1946-47. The truth is complex and it is a matter of shame that senior leaders of the so-called Sangh Parivar should be spreading falsehood and half-truths for narrow partisan ends. If the Two Nation Theory was false and evil, why did their hero V. D. Savarkar support it? Here is what he said on August 15, 1943: "*I have no quarrel with Mr Jinnah's two-nation theory. We Hindus are a nation by ourselves and it is a historical fact that Hindus and Muslims are two nations*" (Indian Annual Register 1943 vol.2 p.10).

The other big lie is that Gandhi did not condemn Muslim fanaticism, was more concerned with the protection of Muslims and ignored the plight of Hindu victims of communal violence. This is utter nonsense, yet repeated day in and day out. In his speeches at his prayer meetings and in his writings Gandhi makes it clear time and again that good and bad people were to be found in all communities, that no community held a monopoly of good and

evil. In November 1946 he spent several weeks walking in the areas around Noakhali, in Chittagong division of East Bengal, where Hindus had been the victims of communal violence. He stayed there and walked for 190 km; speaking of the need for repentance, harmony, and justice. This was in the face of the hostility of the Muslim League provincial government and the vicious behaviour of their cadre towards him. Some of their tallest functionaries even accused him of instigating the massacres in Calcutta. They repeatedly called him the arch-enemy of Muslims.

When Gandhi went to Bihar early in 1947 to calm the communal fires there (here, conversely, Muslims were targeted), he was accused of being partial to Muslims. The same accusations were hurled at him in August 1947, when he remained in Calcutta. In his speech in Delhi (January 18, 1948) calling off his last fast, he referred to a Muslim visitor in Patna who had given him a book by a cleric, in which he read that kafirs deserved to be exterminated. Gandhi denounced and despaired of such views (which were also condemned by Maulana Azad that same evening). The entire commentary may be read on page 446, vol 90 of the collected works. Such observations are indeed available throughout his writings and speeches. But both kinds of religious extremists relentlessly accused him of being partial to the other side. For them, nothing but total submission to their hateful world-view would suffice.

Yet another lie is that his last fast was directed at forcing the Union Government to part with the 55 crores owed to Pakistan. Undoubtedly Gandhi wanted the Union Government to fulfil its obligation to hand over to Pakistan what was rightfully its property. But the facts show clearly that his fast was meant to calm the fires of communal hatred and violence then raging in Delhi and North India, and to secure the restoration of the tomb of Khwaja Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Chisti in Mehrauli. Had he not staked his life for this cause, we would have had another Babri-type fabricated dispute on the edge

of the capital. Gandhi's last fast, or yajna, as he called it, led to the Delhi Declaration of January 18, 1948, which was agreed to by all parties and groups, including the Hindu Mahasabha and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. This declaration was a solemn commitment to uphold communal harmony and friendship among all communities, to refrain from revenge attacks on innocent people, and to return all places of worship to their rightful owners. As Rajkumari Amrit Kaur said, "*With his infinite love he was trying to quench the anger that raged in many breasts. He was the one thing that stood between us and disaster, for lawlessness and disorder and hate and violence can lead nowhere else.*"

The hate-fuelled utterances are an avowal of political murder. They undermine the ethic of lawful government and they corrode the authority and legitimacy of the Indian Union. Those who have been trained in communal half-truths and deceit for decades will not be able to see what is dangerous about this new-found bravado of the Godse-brigade. But responsible citizens hope that judges, IAS and IPS officers and other constitutional officials can see the Parivar undermining the integrity of the state. The portents are not good. When India's Chief Justice makes a gushing statement about the 'goodness' of Narendra Modi, it gives rise to concern about his impartiality.

If state officials - including elected representatives - forget that they are servants of the Constitution, not of the government of the day; if they let fear and timidity affect their official performance, let them understand that they are contributing to the subversion of the Constitution. In which case, they should refrain from talking about Maoist subversion in future. They are worse, because they are sworn to uphold the law of the land.

Do Prime Minister Modi, his party colleagues, and their RSS mentors believe in and support vigilante violence and political assassination? *If they do not, they should come out and say so.* If they do, on what grounds can they ask insurgent groups to give up violence? The Kesari article demonstrates yet again the Sangh Parivar's contempt for law. There's no point saying this is not the official position of the BJP, or that these are 'fringe elements'. The RSS is not a fringe of the BJP. The BJP is a front of the RSS.

So are the VHP, Bajrang Dal, Durga Vahini, ABVP, BMS and a host of other organisations. Is there any doubt that most cadre and followers of the RSS political family hold these beliefs? Have the leaders of the RSS distanced themselves from such ideas? It is all very well to be clever and dodgy, but cleverness cannot forever substitute for truthful speech.

The editor of a prominent news portal has written an opinion piece where he argues that the debate about Gandhi's assassination requires us to go 'beyond the binary of good and evil'. His argument shifts imperceptibly towards matters of public perception and relativism: "*If someone has a right to eulogise Gandhi, surely others have a right to criticise him or praise his nemesis? If we can today write books giving imaginary versions of Ravana's side of the story (and not Ram's), surely we can live with the ideas of those who think Godse was not pure evil?*". Well put. Of course we can live (and die) with the murderous ideas floating around us. We have been doing so for decades. Even when such ideas are aired by the highest in the land, as in 'when a great tree falls, the earth shakes'; and 'every action has an equal and opposite reaction' - etc. But who has questioned anyone's right to an opinion?

The editor continues: "*The only thing absolutely wrong about what Godse did was putting bullets through the Mahatma instead of debating him and converting the Indian public to his cause. But, at that time, the public was besotted with Gandhi and unwilling to listen to others. Godse's ideas were checkmated by Gandhi's popularity, and this frustration drove him to murder..*"

What does it mean to say "The only thing wrong about what Godse did"? As far as public debate is concerned, what else did he 'do' aside from killing Gandhi? The murder is precisely the point at issue. Would this debate be taking place at all if Gandhi had not been killed? Or if Hindutva ideologues were not defending political assassination? Incidentally, it is also incorrect to say 'the public was besotted with Gandhi'. He was immensely popular, but there were also people who hated him, and during his last *upavas*, there were demonstrations of large numbers of refugees from Pakistan who shouted 'let Gandhi die'.

Well before January 1948, the Mahasabha and Savarkar had attacked Gandhi in speech and print. The editor fails to note that (aside from several physical assaults and attempts at inflicting serious injury on him, right from his days in South Africa) there was a bomb attack in 1934, an attempted train derailment in 1946, another such in 1947, and two more attacks in January 1948, the last of which killed him. All these involved persons and groups that objected to his ideal of composite nationhood, and of Hindu-Muslim unity.

But it is not the ideas of Hindutva that are being discussed, noxious though they were (and remain). It is the fact that the men around Savarkar were hell-bent on murder. The editor may well deflect the discussion into an argument about the respective merits of Savarkar's ideas and the right of people to hold such ideas. But he ought not to trivialise the murder by saying "the only thing absolutely wrong about what Godse did was putting bullets through the Mahatma", because the *assassination is the central issue that has been highlighted by the admirers of Godse themselves*. His brother Gopal Godse is on record stating his pride in the deed. One opinion piece in an RSS journal has even stated that Godse should have killed Nehru, and many others have spoken admiringly of Godse's deed.

These days, India's Prime Minister invokes Gandhi at every available opportunity. As journalist Sandipan Sharma says, *"the PM's efforts to eulogise, emulate and hardsell the Mahatma should have by now triggered a Munnabhai-type revival of the Gandhian ideals in India. And yet, ironically, the exact opposite is happening: it is Godse's cult that appears set for a cultural renaissance."* He goes on: *"There are many pitfalls of turning Godse into a hero... once you defend Godse's action, the same logic can be extended to every terrorist who kills for his ideology - political or religious - making it impossible to differentiate between the assassins of Gandhi, the butchers of Peshawar and the perpetrators of 9/11 or 26/11. None of these were seeking personal vendetta; all were promoting their political ideologies through violent means. The people who valourise Godse are, at the core,*

firm believers in Hindutva, in the two-nation theory. For them, Indian secularism is their biggest enemy and Godse is a hero for having killed one of its biggest proponents. For them, Gandhi is not the man who helped Indian win freedom and the world discover the merits of ahimsa over violence; he is the person who helped create Pakistan..."

What is wrong about the manner in which the apologists of the 'parivar' discuss this issue? It is the fact that the act of murder is lost sight of, and we prefer to keep our attention focused on the stated motives of the murderers. The same may be said for protests against this or that film, book, cartoon, etc. Note the current campaign by the Savarkarites to bring in the pain of partition as the justification for the murder of Gandhi. Who can deny the pain of partition? But what does that have to do with murdering Gandhi? How does it justify political assassination?

There's no doubt that the world is complex, as are the motives of human beings. We wish good and evil to be clearly demarcated, but unfortunately they often come in mixtures. Gandhi was well aware of this. For him, the fact that in the *Mahabharata* the wrong-doers had good men like Bhishma and Drona on their side was a sign that, *"evil cannot by itself flourish in this world. It can do so only if it is allied with some good"*. He wrote this in 1926 and remained consistent in his belief. In 1940, he said, *"Goondas do not drop from the sky, nor do they spring from the earth like evil spirits. They are the product of social disorganization, and society is therefore responsible for their existence... they should be looked upon as a symbol of corruption in our body-politic"*. Confronted by riots in 1946 he said, *"I deprecate the habit of procuring a moral alibi for ourselves by blaming it all on the goondas. We always put the blame on goondas. But it is we who are responsible for their creation as well as encouragement"*. At the height of the violence of 1947 he said, *"it is time for peace-loving citizens to assert themselves and isolate goondaism. Non-violent non-cooperation is the universal remedy. Good is self-existent, evil is not. It is like a parasite living in and around good. It will die of itself when the support that good gives it is withdrawn."*

However, complexity does not abolish the distinction between right and wrong, good and evil.

To arrive at that point would be to leave behind the capacity that makes us humans. Goodness is indeed a first principle - we can't define it in simpler terms. Disagreement between people about what is good or bad would be impossible if they did not first agree that there is a difference between good and bad.

The central question of our time is violence, not the multifarious justifications produced by those who practice violence. Violence feeds on itself, it has always done and will always do. Those who still cannot see this are doomed to remain in an endless cycle of argumentation & intimidation. This is why Gandhi remains relevant. Above all, he was an advocate of friendship and dialogue. He stood for *atma-bal*, or soul-force and *satya-bal* (truth force) as against *sharir-bal*, or physical force. He read all the religious scriptures and asked his fellow Indians to do the same. He concentrated on what was common to them, rather than on dogma and doctrine. He drew sustenance from the fact that there were good persons among all communities, and that was proof enough that their faith must have provided them with an impulse toward goodness. In the worst of circumstances, in the midst of utter barbarity, in Noakhali, Patna, Delhi and wherever he went in those last weeks of his life, he appealed to the wrong-doers to look inwards, to remember their common humanity, to recognise the evil they had wrought, to repent (*prayaschit*) and change their ways.

Gandhi was an optimist of the soul. We need him as much today as we needed him in 1948. Even those who hate him need him, an old horse upon whose tired back we can off-load all our remorse and anger and pain. Well may the 'Parivar' hail his assassins (there were more than one). They seek to kill him yet again, to wipe out the last sweet traces of his memory from our minds. But to do that, they would have to abolish the very human capacity to love, smile and befriend people. As Gandhi said, *The force of love is the same as the force of the soul or truth. We have evidence of its working at every step.* As long as we retain those capacities, they will fail.

On January 31, 1948, as India and indeed the whole world was plunged in grief (barring those whom Sardar Patel accused of distributing sweets), the Hindusthan Standard published a black front page,

with three simple sentences:

Gandhiji has been killed by his own people for whose redemption he lived. This second crucifixion in the history of the world has been enacted on a Friday - the same day Jesus was done to death one thousand nine hundred and fifteen years ago. Father forgive us.

The Indian people need to stand up and fight against the propaganda directed against Mahatma Gandhi, and the celebration of his murder by people whose minds are crazed by hatred, ignorance and spite. It is a crying shame that this campaign is being led by people who are close to or indeed, members of the ruling dispensation. It will bring them nothing but disgrace. Gandhi belongs to humanity. The Reverend Martin Luther King said: "If humanity is to progress, Gandhi is inescapable. He lived, thought, and acted, inspired by the vision of humanity evolving toward a world of peace and harmony. We may ignore him at our own risk."

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Adapting Agriculture to Times of Climate Change

Bharat Dogra

The extensive damage suffered by farmers in several parts of the country in recent years due to adverse and highly erratic weather conditions has raised questions whether this may be related to long term climate change. Therefore there is a clear need for adapting agriculture in time to meet the challenge of increasingly erratic weather behaviour. Any changes we make should be compatible with other widely accepted aims of equality, poverty reduction and protection of environment.

Keeping in view climate change related new threats, government's policies need a huge and significant shift (including budget allocation, overall thrust of governance and other aspects) in favour of poorest and marginalised sections, small farmers, rural life and farming based livelihoods (with their lower GHG emissions and importance for food security), environment protection and disaster prevention as well as better relief work at the time of disasters and adverse conditions. It can no longer be business as usual for the government as new threats bring new responsibilities. Budget allocations should shift very significantly in favour of agriculture, and related activities and environment protection.

Sustainable farming

We need a change that strongly favours organic farming. In the conditions of India's villages, along with organic we need to strongly say, "as low-cost as possible" and "as self-reliant as possible", these two aims being strongly inter-related. Our context is basically that of small farmers with a low resource-base. Dependence on chemical fertilisers and pesticides made them indebted. It is certainly not desirable that one dependence should be replaced with another dependence, for example dependence on expensive market-purchased bio-fertilisers. So the entire emphasis should be based on making the best possible use of local resources (dung, crop-residues, leaves, cow-urine etc.) and farming practices like maintaining diversity, suitable rotations etc. to become as self-reliant as possible in maintaining the fertility of land and in keeping away harmful insects and pests.

Secondly, a question that needs to be asked is whether the promotion of organic farming can be compatible with

the seeds which were specifically aimed at being more fertiliser-responsive. Clearly there is a contradiction here and so we have to go back to the heritage of rich diversity of our traditional seeds as our basic treasure of genetic material on the basis of which farming can progress on a sustainable basis.

Thirdly, it is very clear that we can't look at organic farming in isolation, we also need to look at improving systems of water-and-moisture concentration, good green cover in the form of trees and pastures and overall conducive conditions for animal husbandry to flourish well. Due to the high risks, hazards and uncertainties associated with genetically engineered crops, there should be a ban on the introduction of any genetically engineered crops, and strong bio-safety regimes should be introduced to check genetic pollution.

Cottage industry

Cottage and small-scale industrial activity should be encouraged in villages and small towns. The spirit of swadeshi and maximum possible self-reliance of village communities emphasised by Mahatma Gandhi during the freedom movement must be revived to meet contemporary needs. Growth of desi (indigenous varieties) cotton can become the base of revival of hand-spinning and hand-weaving (khadi cloth). Cottage industry like khadi/handloom should get increasing strength from the emphasis on reducing GHG emissions and environment-friendly textiles. A wide range of cottage industries related to agriculture, animal husbandry and minor forest produce, as well as other cottage scale labour-intensive industries can be started. The kind of small-scale industrial activity that doesn't displace or threaten farmers but instead provides additional livelihoods to them should be encouraged.

Policy changes

Indiscriminate spread of combine harvestors has been criticised on grounds of loss of livelihoods and wastage of fodder. There were objections also to excessive extraction of groundwater using electricity and diesel as this lowered the water table and hence damaged sustainable aspects. Now in times of climate change all these objections to excessive mechanisation get further

emphasised by the need to reduce GHG emissions and curb the use of fossil fuels as much as possible.

On the other hand renewable energy sources need to be encouraged. Innovations by rural innovators relating to improved tools and smaller machines relating to agriculture and crop processing should be encouraged. Innovations such as Mangal turbine should have a better spread. Improved bio-gas plants and stoves also need to spread more widely.

Water and soil-conservation

Water and soil-conservation work is very useful and important but at present it is marred by many problems. There is huge scope for improving this work and its benefits. Watershed projects should be integrated with egalitarian objectives, land reforms and need to help the poor on a priority basis. Cropping-patterns should be compatible with water availability. For some years concentration should be on better use of existing irrigation sources. Water needs of agriculture and animal husbandry should get priority over water needs of industry.

Low cost farming

At all levels efforts should be made to reduce the costs of farmers and thereby reduce the chances of indebtedness. Loans at significantly reduced interest rates should reach farmers wherever these are actually needed, and relief from loan or interest should be provided at the right time in case of adverse weather. Loans should be on simple interest basis and not compound interest basis. Self help groups for self-reliance in meeting small credit needs should be encouraged and helped.

Farmers should get a higher price for their crops which should be based on treating farming as highly skilled work. Farmers' needs should be evaluated keeping in view the realistic size of a farm family. Organic produce should get further encouragement and financial incentives. Direct links of farmers and consumers should be encouraged. Even while paying higher returns to farmers, price of healthy, organic food can be kept within reasonable limits by reducing expensive inputs and reducing the share of exploitative middlemen. Dues of farmers should be paid promptly.

Food first

In terms of crop-choices, the first priority should be for a diversity of local staple foods including cereals, millets, pulses, oilseeds, vegetables, spices. Second

priority can be given to crop for other local economic activities such as fodder for dairying, cotton for hand-spinning and handloom work.

A system of farming which integrates agriculture and animal husbandry should be adopted, with encouragement for care and concern for welfare of farm-animals. Protection of indigenous breeds of cows and bullocks and other farm animals should be encouraged in a big way. Promotion of animal husbandry and welfare of farm animals should get high priority.

Women farmers

The greatest possible encouragement should be given to women farmers. Their initiatives and independent identity should be recognised and encouraged. All land titles should be together in the name of husband and wife. However there should not be any insistence on division of land among all sons and daughters and transfer of land-ownership outside the village should be avoided. Even sons should as far as possible work jointly instead of dividing land in every generation. However in case of single women, they should get rightful share of land whenever they need it. When a marriage takes place, the bride's name should be entered into the land records along with the husband's name.

Tree farming

When forest department wants to plant trees on its degraded or vacant land, this should be done with the help of landless or nearly landless poor rural households, with special emphasis on tribals. Till the trees have not grown sufficiently, these families must be paid for their work for planting trees and care for them under the various poverty alleviation and afforestation schemes. Once trees have grown adequately these families will have full hereditary right over minor forest produce. These rights will not be disturbed till these families fulfil the responsibility for protecting trees. They can get additional remuneration for protecting wild life. Indigenous species of trees which have good minor forest produce and good soil and water conservation properties should be planted. Efforts should be to approach conditions of natural forests as much as possible.

Land reforms

Land distribution among the poor should get very high priority, and optimum use of all the existing laws (including ceiling laws) and favourable administrative orders should be made. In addition new laws and

administrative guidelines may be needed. Fertile farmland should be protected from diversion to other uses. Displacement should be reduced as much as possible. Agriculture should be mainly based on small farmers. Landless farm workers, including particularly dalit-advansi farm-workers, should be helped to become small farmers making available 1 to 2 acres land to each landless family. Marginal farmers having less than one acre of land can also be given some additional land. Those who have already received land but could not cultivate it should be helped to occupy and cultivate

this land. All new allottees should get help for minor irrigation, soil and water conservation.

Strengthen decentralisation

A highly decentralised approach will be needed to cope with times of more erratic weather behaviour so that last minute changes can be made more easily to cope with any unexpected weather conditions. Keeping in view this enhanced need for decentralisation, more attention should be given to strengthening and improving panchayat raj.

Western Railway Employees Union

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

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

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

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

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

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

(R.C. Sharma)
President

(J.R. Bhosale)
General Secretary

Mahatma Gandhi's death ends an epoch of Indian history of which he was the originator ... Each one of us who has raised his hand against innocent men, women and children during the past months, who has publicly or secretly entertained sympathy for such acts is a collaborator in the murder of Mahatma Gandhi.

–Mian Iftikharuddin (President, West Punjab Muslim League)

I and others may be revolutionaries but we are disciples of Mahatma Gandhi, directly or indirectly, nothing more nothing less.

–Ho Chi Minh



अपना बाजार को-ऑप.

मुंबई कामगार मध्यवर्ती ग्राहक सहकारी संस्था मर्यादित

(बहुराज्य ग्राहक सहकारी संस्था)

गोविंदजी केणी रोड, नायगांव, दादर (पूर्व), मुंबई - ४०० ०१४

ठळक वैशिष्ट्ये

- ६४ वर्षांची अभिमानास्पद ग्राहक सेवा
- भारतातील एकमेव बहुराज्य ग्राहक सहकारी संस्था
- एकूण विक्री दालने ३०
- वार्षिक उलाढाल ₹ ११६ कोटी
- २० लाख निष्ठावंत ग्राहक
- दोन वेळा जमनालाल बजाज उचित व्यवहार पुरस्कार प्राप्त (१९८९-२००१)

➤ आरोग्यसेवा

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- ☆ होमियापथिक चिकित्सा केंद्र, भौतिक उपचार केंद्र व नेत्ररोग चिकित्सा केंद्र
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Kuldip Nayyar

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Mr Prime Minister**
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Wider role of teaching
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A narrow escape

S. Viswam

Not all of us perhaps fully realize and appreciate that the nation has fortunately ridden out a dire crisis which, if it had not blown over as it has, would have impacted disastrously on the polity's character and future. We refer here to the recent needless controversy resulting from subtle and not so subtle suggestions and demands from the saffron parivar for the deletion of the words "socialist" and "secular" from the Constitution of India. The controversy was set off by the call for a national debate on the issue by Union Communication Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad who took the cue from the Shiv Sena which wanted the two words dropped from our national charter. The nation ought to be deeply indebted to the Bharatiya Janata Party president Amit Shah for burying the controversy and asserting that the Preamble as it stands should remain unchanged.

We still need to keep our fingers crossed since the final word on the subject has to be said by none other than Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Mr. Modi is a powerful orator, and no one can deny he is an excellent communicator. But for all that he chooses to remain silent when circumstances warrant his direct and vocal intervention on

some issues of importance to the maintenance of those features in the Constitution that guarantee a variety of freedoms including the freedom to practice one's religion without let or hindrance. The issue of retention or deletion of the two words socialist and secular was needlessly raised no doubt but it was mounted on the party platform. If and when Mr. Modi endorses Mr. Shah's stand, the party and the government would be on the same wavelength on an issue that has a vital bearing on the cultural, social, and demographic content of our polity.

Mr. Modi should have his say at the earliest for two reasons. First, we can't guarantee that the constituents of the saffron parivar will not rake up the issue again. Second, not till he puts his seal of approval on Mr. Shah's clarification will the minorities in the country feel safe and secure. The question of minority insecurity has surfaced after the launch by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and some BJP units of the ghar wapasi programme. Even Mr. Amit Shah has demanded a legislation banning forcible religious conversions.

Mr. Modi has chosen not to react to the varied demands raised by saffron

Between the lines

parivar units from time to time. Even such a shocking development as the deification of Nathuram Godse and suggestions for building temples for him did not induce Mr. Modi to admonish the saffronites.

Luckily, the nation has had a lucky escape for the second time. As is well known, the original preamble in the constitution did not carry the two words, which were inserted into the document during the 1975 Emergency declared by the then prime minister Indira Gandhi. This was ostensibly done to secure the support for the Emergency from the Left - inclusion of the word socialist - and of the minorities -inclusion of the word secular. The inclusion was legitimized by the enactment of the 42nd constitutional amendment. However, when subsequent governments headed by Morarji Desai and Atal Behari Vajpayee sought to restore the status by deleting whatever was done to the Constitution during the Emergency - through the 44th constitutional amendments - the two words were retained.

The question of India remaining secular is not only of concern to Indians but now has become an international issue following President Obama's comment on the linkages between India's secularism and success as a united modern progressive secular nation. Interestingly, certain sections of the Congress are spreading the word that Obama said what he said as he was influenced by the comments voiced by Congressmen when a Congress delegation called on him prior to his departure from India. This may be wishful thinking, but the fact remains that the time has come for the government to take

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Storm in a teacup

Kuldip Nayar

The only good thing Prime Minister Indira Gandhi did in her repressive rule during the Emergency was to include the words, secularism and socialism, in the preamble of the Constitution. Morarji Desai who succeeded her had all the changes she made in the Constitution deleted, but retained the amendment to the preamble.

The Jana Sangh, the earlier incarnation of the BJP that had merged with the Janata Party, raised no objection. Both L.K. Advani and Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Jana Sangh stalwarts who had joined the Janata, were among the enthusiastic leaders to retain the words of secularism and socialism in the preamble.

It has been apparent that the omission of the two words from an advertisement issued by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting should not be construed as the "real" intention of the government. The ministry has admitted its mistake. The matter should have ended there and then.

But the controversy has been kept alive by BJP chief Amit Shah. He has said at a press conference that the old preamble is the real one. However, the Information and Broadcasting Minister Arun Jaitley has stated that what held the field was the new version of the preamble which omits the mention of socialism and secularism.

The confusion has been confounded by Law and Justice

Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad who stated that the omission of words, secularism and socialism, gives an opportunity to debate the matter all over again. It is a pity that the Law Minister should say so without realizing the sanctity of the Constitution. That a liberal person like him should say it is all the more reprehensible. The matter was debated fully when the two words were included.

The only inference one can draw from this episode is that the Rashtriya Swayansevak Sangh, which guides the party, wants the words "secularism and socialism" dropped. For them, at least the word 'secularism' is an anathema. Because of the countrywide furore the BJP has not pursued the matter. Maybe, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who stayed silent in public, advised the party that the country was not yet ready to jettison secularism and socialism. The RSS probably considered it a reverse, not the defeat and will comeback to this agenda when the climate is favourable.

True, the lessening support of the Congress, which is ideologically secular, has adversely affected secularism. But the party and the ideology are not synonymous. In fact, secularism has suffered because the Congress deviated from it in action. In its race to grab power, the party pushed ideals into the background.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi's commitment to the

ideology has never been in doubt, nor was that of her son Rahul Gandhi's. But there are many state leaders who do not hesitate to take a parochial line for the sake of votes. She is reportedly unhappy but is afraid of taking action against them because their exit from the Congress may hit the party in a way which may be fatal.

The Congress is in the midst of gathering information from the ground, according to its leader Anand Sharma, and may come out with a report in March. Yet what it does not realize is that it has lost contact with the workers who are disillusioned that the Congress has distanced from the ethos of secularism and socialism in pursuit of power at any cost.

Mahatma Gandhi is still the icon. But the party has given space to such elements who are trying to put up a memorial to pay homage to Nathuram Godse who shot Gandhi dead. His name was nowhere in the picture till recently. But a few days ago an underpass at Alwar, Rajasthan, was sought to be named after Godse. The Congress and other secular organizations, including the leftist parties, should analyze their action and the way in which they have been pushing their programme because Godse represents an ideology which smacks of Hindutva that Mahatma Gandhi fought against tooth and nail.

Socialism became the socialist pattern during Jawaharlal Nehru's lifetime because he felt that the ideology was difficult to practice. The concept has got so diluted over the years that the public sector undertakings which were supposed to attain the commanding heights are at the backburner. Over the years, the

private sector has been encouraged by different political parties because the industrialists provide the money for elections. This nexus cannot be broken until there are drastic electoral reforms to lessen the role of money.

Welfare is not dependent on socialism, but egalitarianism is. If the industry and business expand, at least the wealth will increase. But the nexus between politicians and the bureaucracy does not allow rapid progress. Red tape apart, corruption at every step saps the energy which can be infused for the society to go ahead.

Communalism is the real problem. The nation's strong reaction has stopped the '*ghar wapsi*' movement. Christians are still the target. But their number is limited and does not count much in electoral politics. Otherwise, the BJP government would not have dared to declare even the festival of Christmas into a Good Governance Day! As the archbishop at Delhi said, the measure was the result of a hate-campaign.

The Muslims, nearly 15 per cent in the country, have not got their due, particularly in jobs. But they have been able to stall the relentless efforts to push them aside. Their vote comes in good stead to them. If they do not fall prey to the mechanizations of Akbaruddin Owaisi, who is trying to attract Muslims in the name of religion, the realization that there is no go from secularism will take roots.

Yet the nation has to ponder over seriously how it is being forced to compromise with communalism, the opposite of the ethos of freedom movement. How many of us today remember Maulana Abul Kalam

Azad and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the Frontier Gandhi, who stood boldly during the hay days of the Muslim League? They were visionary and unlike the present leaders saw the redemption of multi-cultural and multi-religious society that India is.

(Continued from Page 2)

tangible steps to erase the opinion that Mr. Modi is indifferent to the demand for assuring the nation that he does not intend to promote divisive politics in the country.

The controversy erupted when the government used the facsimile of the original preamble to the Constitution in a Republic Day advertisement. That document did not contain the two words in question. They were inserted only in 1975, years after the Constitution was adopted. The advocates of the demand for the deletion of the words argue that since the entire Constitution is inherently secular, the use of the specific word is unwarranted. However, this is fallacious since the implications of the government dropping them from the document are far-reaching and potentially adverse to the national secular ethos. The subject is best dropped and treated as a closed chapter in the national discourse.

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This is treason, Mr Prime Minister

Rajindar Sachar

An unimaginable crisis is gripping our country. Only a straight forward clear declaration by the Prime Minister can clear it. I am referring to the advertisement issued by Government of India's I.&B. Ministry on Republic Day carrying in the background a watermark of the preamble to the Constitution. But a devious interloper was done by publishing Preamble as it was in 1950, thus deliberately omitting the words "Socialist" and "Secular" from the Preamble which are there since 1976. This interpolation clearly shows that the BJP Ministers are trying to flaunt their status of being corporate friendly and stooges of the RSS Boss. I have no problem with how the Ministers present themselves. But Indian government would be guilty of serious constitutional lapses and can not be allowed to continue if by its word or action it conceals the mandate of the present Preamble containing secularism and socialism. In that context Union Government would be an interloper because the Supreme Court has clearly held that the "Preamble is the key to the Constitution" and therefore the objectives of "Socialism" and "Secularism" must govern any programme and policies of the Government of India.

The perverted suggestion that "Socialism" and "Secularism" were not in the original Preamble and were incorporated in 1976 is ludicrous because government have to follow the constitution as it exists at any present time and not in the past. But then RSS tutored BJP government is

also telling us that it will not accept the invention of airplane in the present but only in "Udankhatola" thousands of years back – but perversely it would at the same time ridicule the suggestion that by same logic Persia and Arabs must have invented aeroplane because of the mention of the Flying Persian carpet hundreds of years back.

The strained argument that the word socialism was not in the original Preamble, as I said, immaterial. This fatuous explanation shows ignorance of facts and the law. Thus it is recorded that at the time of framing Constitution, it was clearly understood that in India we were setting up socialist state. This is brought out specifically by Dr. Ambedkar who in reply to Professor K.T. Shah who wanted 'socialism' to be incorporated in the Constitution at the drafting stage. Dr. Ambedkar while refusing to do so for technical reasons explained "that socialism as such was already included in the directive principle." He explained thus; "what I would like to ask Prof. Shah is this: "If these directive principles to which I have drawn attention are not socialistic in their direction and in their content, I fail to understand what more socialism can be."

As for equally fatuous argument of the effect of incorporating socialism in the Preamble in 1976 the Supreme Court pointed the fallacy as far back as 1983, thus; "Though the word 'socialism' was introduced into the Preamble by a late amendment of the constitution that socialism has

always been the goal is evident from the Directive Principles of State policy. The amendment was only to emphasise the urgency."

May I also remind the Prime Minister and his colleagues that as per article 75(4) of the Constitution of India they took oath before entering upon their offices which requires them to swear in the name of God that they will bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India as by law established. The oath covers the Preamble to the Constitution as existing at the time of taking oath and not to the original Preamble or Constitution as framed in 1950. Anyone suggesting to the contrary would be taking the ludicrous stand that the oath would not oblige the Ministers to follow the mandate of over 100 amendments to Constitution since the original Constitution of 1950. President Obama would have been horrified by this interpretation of Union Ministers because it would mean that the 14th Amendment to U.S.A. Constitution brought in almost a hundred years after the original Constitution (from which we have incorporated Article 14 of our Constitution, and which is the sheet anchor of equality and non-discrimination for any citizen). If that was the interpretation Obama could never have been the President because original USA Constitution did not have 14th Amendment which was one of the biggest weapons for ending racial discrimination in U.S.A.

BJP leaders are speaking in contradictory terms. While Venkayya

Naidu says that government is for secularism in the preamble, his colleague and a lawyer Ravi Shankar Prasad says government wants to delete it. There can be no hedging on secularism. In point of fact to even talk of deleting the word "Secularism" from the Preamble would not only be sedition but would be an impossible exercise. This is because the Supreme Court in Bommai's case (1974) has categorically held that 'Secularism is a part of Basic Structure of the Constitution' and Preamble is a part of the provisions of Constitution."

In Keshvanand Bharti case (1973) Supreme Court has also held that the power to amend (Article 368 of the Constitution) does not enable parliament to alter the basic structure of the frame work of the Constitution. Thus secularism being a part of basic structure of the Constitution is non amendable. In point of facts and the law Secularism being the basic structure of the Constitution must be held to have been incorporated automatically in the Preamble to the Constitution right from the beginning in 1950.

No. Mr. Prime Minister, mere denial and that too contradictory is not enough. A covert attempt to undermine the force and strength of Preamble cannot wish away the fears in the country and especially amongst the minorities. A full throated public repudiation in "a Man ki Bat" and T.V. spread by the Prime Minister that his government unequivocally and without any hesitation believes in and assuring the public that it will uphold and carry out the mandate of Secularism in the present existing Preamble of the Constitution of India. Any wavering or inaction by the Prime Minister on this

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Why should Colonel Rais have to die?

Sandeep Pandey

The picture of Colonel M. N. Rai's daughter bursting out while saluting her deceased father who sacrificed his life while fighting terrorists makes one think did Rai have to really die? Why are our leaders not able to solve the Kashmir problem and our border problems with Pakistan and China so that our soldiers and officers (and for that matter even that of Pakistan and China) do not have to die every other day?

In October 2014, two slums in Lucknow were displaced by the administration because the CM was to visit one and the Lokayukta wanted the other to be removed. Scheduled caste community of stone cutters and Muslim percussion instrument dholak makers mostly lived in the slums. They were given houses by the state government body District Urban Development Agency in a central government scheme Basic Services for Urban Poor. Over 150 families who had come to Lucknow from the villages, where they lived as landless artisans and found it difficult to make both ends meet, were living in makeshift structures which were not insulated from vagaries of weather, suddenly became the happy owners of flats which cost Rs. 1.62 lakhs for the government, by paying about ten percent of the amount.

One day in January 2015 a dholak maker was charging his mobile phone by taking an illegal connection from an electricity line. A stone cutter asked him to remove the illegal connection. In the process of removing the connection there

was some sparking which fell on the child of stone cutter. What ensued was an unpleasant scene where lathis rained from the stone cutters' side provoking an equally violent response from the dholak makers. Some wise men and women from both communities intervened to bring the conflagration to an end but not before several people from both sides had their heads and other body parts split.

Wise men and women decided to call a meeting to sort out the issue. After pouring out their hearts to accuse each other, when it was asked to find a solution, person after person suggested that stone cutters be segregated from dholak makers. Under the influence of the atmosphere created by the religious fundamentalists in the country some openly asked for separation of Hindus and Muslims. A question was put to them at this stage. Did the origin of the trouble have anything to do with their different identities? The answer was obvious no. Then another question was posed. Will the segregation of communities solve or aggravate the problem? A wise man Mohammed Salim was quick to realize the truth and responded that segregation will increase the animosity between the communities.

India and Pakistan were created on the basis of two nation theory. Hindus and Muslims were thought by some to be two separate nations which could not exist together. India chose to remain secular. But the separation did not end the woes. It was probably the beginning. Today India and Pakistan possess

Stop ceasefire violations and hold peace talks

nuclear weapons which can cause mass destruction. The enmity has multiplied many times over. A lesson was to be learnt from the history.

The daily wage earners soon realized their folly. The stone cutters and dholak makers decided to live together. There are dholak makers living amongst stone cutters and stone cutters living amongst dholak makers. It was decided that people who rained lathis will apologize and pay for the cost of treatment of the persons whom they hit and take them to the hospital for treatment.

Is it not possible that India and Pakistan to find a solution to the Kashmir problem? Needless to say the Kashmiri interest will have to be kept in mind. In fact, the Kashmiris should be at the centre stage in deciding a solution. They should find a solution for themselves. And Kashmiris should include Kashmiri Pandits who have mostly left but would like to return. There is no reason if India and Pakistan create a conducive atmosphere why the Kashmiris cannot arrive at a solution which is in their best interest.

Once the Kashmir problem is solved there will be only a few issues like river water disputes left to be resolved. A number of Indian and Pakistani citizens living in border areas will be very happy if the pestering problem is permanently solved. Once normalcy is restored slowly the two countries can withdraw their armed forces and create an atmosphere in which it may be possible to live without them. Similarly, it may become possible one day to denuclearize the sub-continent.

As civilized nations we have no choice but to move in this direction

(Continued on Page 8)

As we know, the Indo-Pak border is yet again witnessing ceasefire violations. These violations have only been increasing and have claimed many precious lives of innocent citizens and soldiers on both sides.

We believe that these incidents of exchange of fires are causing loss to the dignity of human lives. They also represent the non-serious commitments of iterating peace by those in power in both the countries. The dangerous by-products of these cross firings further result in loss of property directly and enmity, jingoism, and sub conflicts indirectly. Conflict between these two countries is long running and is very cruel, undemocratic and inhumane because the violence it creates affects the citizens on both sides of the border physiologically and psychologically. People at large are learning jingoism and hatred instead of basic lessons of life: peace, love and humanity.

Not only this, the conflicts have also damaged the two countries economically. We are witnessing how billions of dollars these governments are spending over fighting with each other, while same number of people in both countries are still living with lack of food, water, education and health care. Sadly, India and Pakistan do not chose fighting poverty over fighting senseless wars.

All of this is nothing but just foolishness along with lack of

political will and vision. The citizens on both sides of the border have now come to understanding that there is so much scope of development between the two nations. Enforcing the governments to not only start talking, but talking positively and fruitfully is very much required.

We all, citizens of India and Pakistan, hereby endorse the demands and the appeal made in this letter:

We all, citizens of India and Pakistan request and appeal the respective governments to start positive talks and to make an imprint of peace in the time and to create history in coming years by declaring permanent peace between India and Pakistan.

We know, We believe and We hope that it is possible and it can happen.

1. Stop the ceasefire violation and cross firings immediately and hold a talk of higher officials of armed forces of both sides
2. Organise a 'Peace Talk' on government level in India/ Pakistan to address the ways to stop ceasefire violations and other results of conflict
3. Resume 'Indo-Pak Friendship Bus' immediately and provide adequate security to passengers
4. Provide the safe stay to civilians of border areas as reports are coming that many villagers are fleeing from their home.

Endorsed by : Ravi Nitesh, Devika Mittal, Aliya Harir, Krishnakant Chauhan, Mazher Hussain, Kamla Bhasin, Sharmila Karki, Ram Puniyani, Samina Bano, Ovais Sultan Khan, Madhvi Bansal, Iqbal Alavi, Beena Sarwar and others

Indian Youth

Sankara Narayanan

A survey, Yuva Nagarik Meter, was conducted by Children's Movement for Civic Awareness (CMCA), a Bengaluru-based NGO, covering about 10,000 high-school and college students from 11 cities across the country. The study covered 6,168 students and 757 social science teachers from 330 high schools and 4,374 students from 220 junior colleges across 11 state capitals, including six metro cities (Delhi, Bangalore, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Mumbai and Kolkata) and five non-metro cities (Bhopal, Jaipur, Lucknow, Patna and Guwahati).

The idea behind the survey — was not only to find out whether the young Indians knew and understood what democracy truly meant and to also show how these youngsters were growing up and what values and attitudes they possessed pertaining to Rights and Responsibilities, Democratic Governance, Adherence to Civic Rules, Gender Equality, Diversity and Social Justice and Environmental Conservation, etc. Furthermore, the NGO also wanted to see the effect of formal education on youth and hence two types of student groups were chosen — one from schools and the other from junior colleges.

The survey threw up many shockers. There are alarmingly negative attitudes of youth across the country towards democracy and social diversity.

Around 67% of college students said India should have only one strong political party at the Centre

to rule the entire country and 53% students agreed that military should rule India for some years. 'The state the country is in, we need an authoritative leader. We need someone who tells us what to do', said a student. 74% do not know that legislature is responsible for enacting laws.

However, there were others who held the opposite point of view. "I am disappointed. We will be the future generation, driving the country in different fields. We have to go to our roots and eliminate these things," said a student at the Welinkar Institute. But they are in a minority.

According to Yuva Nagarik Meter, the overall democratic citizenship score of young India is merely 21%. The report also shows that non-metro cities fare better than metro cities in the aggregate scores. This shows that the youth do not have a critical appreciation of the liberties and freedom one enjoys in a democracy. It shows the cynicism and disillusionment with the political scenario, but doesn't justify the preference for an authoritarian government or military rule.

The survey shows a wide prevalence of gender-biased attitudes and stereotypes among the young population of urban India. According to the findings: around 39% girls and 43% boys agreed that women had no choice but to accept a certain degree of violence, while 52% agreed that the main role of women was to do household chores and raise children.

On issues such as eve-teasing and sexual harassment, 55% students in the age group of 15 to 19 agree that the way women dress and behave provokes men.

36% girls and 44% boys admit that dowry is a practice in the community and feel they should accept it. 65% of students favour prohibition of meeting between boys and girls belonging to different religions at public places.

Around 50% students across the country and 62% students in Mumbai showed intolerance towards migrant workers from other states. 45% social science teachers agree that in urban areas most problems are caused by migrants. At the same time, 43% students said it was alright to violate rules because one could always get away by bribing official, while 38% said it was fine to violate rules because the penalty was small," the survey said.

The youth are supposed to be idealistic. Yet there is no compassion or even wisdom in their thoughts and attitudes. Forget the political parties. It's the parents, the teachers and the young people themselves who are at fault. If you are not open to new ideas, not able to introspect and willing to question age old beliefs, you are doomed as a generation.

Most views expressed by the youth are utterly extra-constitutional and shockingly undemocratic; against gender equality, secular ethos, social justice, human rights, basic civility and rule of law.

State must ensure water accessibility to all

Debadityo Sinha

with inputs from Himanshu Thakkar (SANDRP)

The findings establish two things very clearly. One: The type of education being imparted to the youth in our educational institutions. Two: Country mirrors the rulers. By rulers, I mean the politicians, bureaucrats, judges, industrialists, businesspersons, professionals, teachers and God men.

Acharya Kripalani once told, "Gandhiji created men out of clay". Perhaps our modern rulers create clay out of men.

(Continued on Page 6)

if we are not to keep losing the precious lives of our citizens like Colonel Rai. Why should people like him or the J&K police constable Sanjeev Singh have to die and why should families like theirs have to be deprived of their beloved members? And we should not forget that two more lives - that of militants - were also lost in this incident. They were human beings too. They have families too.

Some people like to join the jingoistic cry and like the idea of other people sacrificing their lives and becoming martyrs for their country. They should be asked would they like to become martyrs? It is easy to eulogize distant martyrs but quite a difficult thing to offer one's own life.

Why should people have to die anyway? We should endeavour to build a world in which there will not be any need for anybody to become martyrs. All people should be able to live their life fully with enjoyment. Values like liberty and fraternity should be realized for all. Let us work towards an enmity free and arms free world.

In a landmark judgment dated December 15, 2014, Mumbai High Court bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and A S Gadkari have ruled: "Right to get water is an integral part of right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution of India..."

A rejoiced Sitaram Shelar¹ of petitioner Pani Haq Samiti noted in press release on the day of the judgment, "Reinforcing the intrinsic relationship between water and life, the judgment established that the right to water is as fundamental as the right to life... Pani Haq Samiti will continue the struggle towards ensuring that those living in slums access their right to water." Through this case, the apathy of the middle class and a few mainstream political parties towards those living in slums has become evident. Adv Mihir Desai representing Pani Haq Samiti has been instrumental in reinforcing the fact that water is a right and cannot be seen within the purview of slums and illegality alone. Samiti says: "For all those fighting for the right to water in the country, this is a historic judgment. This is the first time that it has been stated that in order to realise Article 21, access to water is essential. Till date there has been no law in India that mandates water to all. The judgment is a great impetus to movements across the country fighting for the basic rights of people."

The impact of lack of water has impacted both, people as well as

the MCGM. Negative impacts of the lack of water supply that have been borne by the Corporation include: an increase in the amount of unaccounted for water (UWF); emergence of the water mafia through which illegal connections and leakages increased; increased contamination of water lines; lastly, revenue that could be earned by the MCGM was being pocketed by the water mafia. Various studies conducted by YUVA, TISS and other organizations on the impact of lack of access to water in slums has found that: Access to water has been only through the water mafia; while buildings are provided 1000 litres of water for Rs 4, the water mafia charge Rs 1000 for 1000 litres of water in slums – water has become a financial burden as 30 to 40 percent of a family's income was spent on water.

While the cities of India are undergoing a transition phase in the form of rapid developments of modernized apartments, industries and commercial complexes, the ingress of labor and job seekers from other parts of the country, added to the fact that availability of land is now a highly contested resource – the urban areas has seen a prolific development of the informal settlements or the slums.

As per census of India, "Slum" has been defined as residential areas where dwellings are unfit for human habitation by reasons

of dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangements and design of such buildings, narrowness or faulty arrangement of street, lack of ventilation, light, water or sanitation facilities or any combination of these factors which are detrimental to the safety and health. 17.4% (137 lakhs) of Indian households are slum, out of which only 49.65 lakhs of households are 'Notified Slums' as per the latest census of 2011. In many Indian cities and towns facing the challenges of increasing populations and expansion of urban areas, direct access to clean, affordable and reliable drinking water is a significant challenge, especially to the poor who live in slums. As per the WHO-UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program's Report of April, 2014, only 51% of the urban households have coverage of piped on premises supply of drinking water and 46% are covered by other improved sources.

Most of the slum dwellers in Mumbai lack the basic necessities of life. Despite the fact that many slums have been notified by the government, one tap is shared by more than thousand persons in some of the slum compared to an average of 52 persons per tap.² The number of slums in Mumbai which came up after the year 2000 were officially prevented from provision of Municipal water supply.

In 2012, a Public Interest Litigation (no 10 of 2012) was filed by Pani Haq Samiti³ and others (vs Brihan Mumbai Municipal Corporation and others) in the Bombay High Court challenging the State Government Circular dated 4th March, 1996 which provides that the Local Authorities shall ensure that the water supply is not released to any unauthorized constructions.

On the basis of this circular, the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) prohibited regularized water connections to nearly 30 lakh people living in post-1995 slums in the city. The petition also challenged a rule framed by Mumbai Municipal Corporation which initially provided that the water shall be made available to the structures in existence in slum areas till 1st January 1995, deadline of which is extended till 1st January, 2000. The question was whether the slums which illegally came up after 1st January, 2000 are entitled for water supply or not?

The State Government, however, in their reply stated that there is nothing illegal in the policy of State Government not to grant water supply to residents of illegal slums since the same is being done as State does not want to encourage the construction of such illegal slums and people occupying such illegal slums. The State Government showed concerns that any relief to the petition would mean encouraging the construction of the illegal slums, some of which are in difficult areas of the city like hills where provision of water supply is impossible for the Municipal Corporation. The concerns of encroachment of CRZ areas and forest lands by slums were specifically pointed out to the court and argued that it will lead to irreparable damage to the environment.

In a Chamber Summons filed in support of the contention that the notion that criminals or anti-social elements are staying in the slum areas is without any foundation, the fact that around 4,426 constables and 81 Inspectors of Mumbai Police lives in Slums as per April, 2006 data also came into light. The occupants

of post 1st January 1995 slums include employees of Government itself as well as the employees of the Municipal Corporation and other Authorities.

Throwing light on the fact that the Municipal Corporation is supplying water to the unauthorized occupants to the buildings in Mumbai which do not have occupation certificates or completion certificates on humanitarian grounds, the judgment observed, 'Humanitarian considerations are applied to only a category of unauthorized occupants. The unauthorized occupants of constructed buildings are protected by providing water supply, but not the persons residing in slums. We are mentioning this only to point out the approach of the Municipal Corporation.'

'In a situation where State Government encourages the creation of jobs, allows the bringing in of migrant labour and work force, makes the city of Mumbai and attraction for job-seeker, the State has done nothing to provide low cost housing in the city', the judgment quoted a para from the application.

Defining the limitation of Article 21 of Constitution of India to protection of such illegal constructions, the Court stated that the Authorities are under legal obligation to ensure that the illegal constructions do not come up and if they come up the same are effectively and expeditiously demolished by following the due process of law. But, State cannot deprive a citizen of his fundamental right to food and water which is an integral part of the right to life guaranteed under Article 21 on the ground that he is in occupation of an illegally constructed hut.

| S.No. | Million Plus Cities | Proportion of Slum HHs to Total Urban HHs (%) ⁽⁴⁾ |
|-------|----------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Greater Visakhapatnam M Corp. | 44.1 |
| 2 | Jabalpur Cantt (CB) | 43.3 |
| 3 | Greater Mumbai (M Corp.) | 41.3 |
| 4 | Vijayawada (M Corp.) | 40.6 |
| 5 | Meerut (M Corp.) | 40 |
| 6 | Raipur (M Corp.) | 39 |
| 7 | Nagpur (M Corp.) | 34.3 |
| 8 | Greater Hyderabad M Corp. (GHMC) | 31.9 |
| 9 | Kota (M Corp.) | 31.8 |
| 10 | Agra (M Corp.) | 29.8 |

| Top 5 States reporting Slum Households | |
|--|---|
| State | Proportion of Slum HHs to Urban HHs (%) |
| Andhra Pradesh | 35.7 |
| Chhattisgarh | 31.9 |
| Madhya Pradesh | 28.3 |
| Odisha | 23.1 |
| West Bengal | 21.9 |

While the court directions are certainly a landmark judgment which provides the Right to Water as an integral part of the fundamental right under Article 21 of the constitution, but it may not be of any help in eradication of the 'Water Poverty' taking into account the situation of slums in Mumbai. The court directions have made it clear that the provision of water supply to such illegal slums may not be at par with the law abiding citizen who is occupying lawfully constructed premises having occupation or completion certificate. It has further stated that the Municipal Corporation is free to provide the water at higher rate than the rate which is charged from authorized construction, which means the slum residents may need to pay higher rates for the water.

In cities like Delhi, the informal settlements depend on community level sources of water supply like community stand posts, hand pumps and tankers. The tankers

are one of the major water supply sources but have no fixed timing. The households dependent on hand pumps have 24 hours of water supply but the quality of water is poor due to contamination of groundwater. Households depended on community level water supply have to spend more than one hour to fetch water, many times wasting their sleep as the duration is early morning or late night hours. But there is a high level of readiness to pay if provided improved services.⁵

In such scenario the emphasis by the court for provision of drinking water through public booths on the basis of prepaid cards might be an alternative option for such areas. But it must be ensured that the water supplied by the Municipal Corporation is affordable, reliable in quality as well as accessible to all the households.

Many cities of India like Delhi, Bangalore and water scarce towns

like Barmer in Rajasthan are already under the implementation stage of such water booths and the drinking water is provided 24 x 7 at rate of Rs. 5 per 20 liters of water. Last year Delhi Jal Board, the government authority responsible for providing water to Delhi colonies initiated installation of water kiosks in several slums and resettlement colonies with an initial rate of 30 paise per liter.^{6,7} But most of the households still prefer the DJB tankers instead of the water kiosks for day to day work, largely due to the cost involved which is otherwise free in case of tankers.⁸

The judgment provides a just basis for the smart cities that the government is trying to push. It is indeed possible to have smart cities without cities being dependent on mega dams and river linking projects⁹. Such mega dams or river linking projects are neither necessary nor just.

The Pani Haq Samiti Press statement noted, "Restating that water supply is mandatory despite the legality of structure, the Court ordered the MCGM to submit a water supply proposal on or before February end 2015. As an advice to the MCGM, the Court reiterated a Pani Haq Samiti suggestion that could be included in the proposal, i.e. instead of providing individual connections, group connections could be provided for every 7-15 families as per MCGM water rules. This would help in management of water supply to all areas." The order adds: "We direct the Municipal Corporation to file an affidavit of compliance on or before 2nd March 2015."

The judgment can have far reaching implications not only

for slum dwellers of Mumbai, but millions of others all over India.

End notes:

- 1 He is also Program Director (Maharashtra) of YOUTH FOR UNITY & VOLUNTARY ACTION (YUVA).
- 2 Slum Conditions in Mumbai with Reference to the Access of Civic Amenities, IIPS Mumbai, ENVIS center, Volume 5, No. 1, March, 2008
- 3 A collective of activists, organizations, institutions and slum dwellers)
- 4 Housing Stock, Amenities & Assets in Slums- Census, 2011, Dr. C. Chandramouli, Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India
- 5 Profiling Informal City of Delhi, Water Aid, 2005
- 6 <http://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/draw-water-from-atms-for-30-paise-under-delhi-jal-boards-new-initiative/>
- 7 <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-500-water-atm-s-proposed-in-delhi-city-2003173>
- 8 <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/not-many-takers-for-water-kiosks/article5950438.ece>
- 9 <https://sandrp.wordpress.com/2015/01/13/water-smart-mumbai-open-letter-to-cm-devendra-fadnavis/>

(Continued from Page 5)

course either on account of false sense of prestige or stubbornness would only divide the country into mutual suspicion and thus damage the progress of the country. The public statements of Shiv Sena, the ally of BJP, reflects the danger of silence on the part of Prime Minister Modi. He must therefore speak out immediately because to speak is a moral duty and to keep silence a sin and unforgivable.

Tale of a resignation

Following are edited extracts from Jayanthi Natarajan's letter dated November 5, 2014 addressed to Sonia Gandhi, president, Indian National Congress:

I want to place on record, that from December 20, 2013, until now, I have still not been told by you, why I was asked to resign from the Council of Ministers, nor have I ever been asked or given an opportunity to explain, if indeed I had committed any wrongdoing. On the other hand, the then Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh wrote a letter to me, accepting my resignation, in which he praised the excellent work I had done as Minister, and what he termed my valuable contribution as Minister.

In these circumstances, it was clearly not the Prime Minister nor my work in Government, which led to my ouster as Minister. Thus it still baffles me, why I was humiliated so brutally.

To recall the sequence of events, I would like to record, that I was carrying out my duties as Minister of State (I/C) Environment and Forests in the routine course, when suddenly that day on December 20, 2013, the then PM, Dr. Manmohan Singh summoned me to his office. When I entered he stood up from his chair, looking tense and grim, and uttered these exact words. He said "Jayanthi, I have been told by Congress President, that your services are required for party work." I was puzzled, and I said, "Yes Sir. So what should I do?" He replied, "She wants you to resign." I was shocked and said, "Resign Sir? But when?" He replied "Today." I once again asked him if this was what the Congress president wished. He answered in the affirmative.

Unsuspecting, and trusting you totally, I did not utter a single word, but smiled at him and said I would comply with the wishes of the Congress President.

I was so guile free, that I honestly believed that you wanted me to work for the party, and that it was an honour to be so chosen. I did not for a second at that time, imagine the consequences of resigning just 100 days before the elections were due, and what would lie in store for me in the future. I trusted you with my life, and even more importantly, with my reputation, my career and the legacy of my family.

Thereafter, I asked for time to meet you. However, I was told that I could talk to you on the telephone. During our conversation I repeated what the Prime Minister told me, and you reiterated that I should resign and do Party work. Within half an hour of meeting the then Prime Minister, I sent in my letter of resignation, stating that I would like to resign from the office of Minister, due to my desire to devote myself to party work, ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. As mentioned earlier, Dr. Singh immediately accepted my resignation, and in that letter profusely lauded my contribution to the government.

The next day my resignation was headlines in the media, and all the initial reports correctly reported that I had stepped down for party work. By the afternoon, to my shock, I received information that persons from the office of Shri Rahul Gandhi

were calling the media and planting stories that my resignation was NOT for party work.

My sources were impeccable, and I felt unease. Thereafter, the media was flooded with negative stories about me. The same day, namely, the day after I resigned, Shri Rahul Gandhi addressed a FICCI meeting of industrialists, where he made uncomplimentary references to delays in environmental clearances, and the adverse effects upon the economy, and assured the corporate world, that the party and government would henceforth ensure that there would be no delays, and bottlenecks for industry. After being alerted by the media, I saw the entire speech on YouTube. It was then that some in the media questioned me if I had been asked to resign immediately, to enable Shri Rahul Gandhi to address FICCI and the corporate world with the news of my resignation in the background.

An assurance was sought to be given to the corporate world that they need no longer worry about environmental clearance delays and that bottlenecks would be removed, although throughout my very brief tenure, I strictly followed the laws and rules and tried to protect the environment, in keeping with the legacy of Smt. Indira Gandhi and Shri Rajiv Gandhi, who first brought in the Environment Protection Act. Since I had only followed this line of our party, I could not understand why I had been asked to resign within half an hour on the previous day, especially since I had never been told of any issues prior to December 20, 2013. Some analysts speculated that I might be projected as the focal point for the perceived

failure of the economy at that time.

What followed was a hysterical vicious false and motivated campaign against me, in the media, orchestrated entirely by particular chosen individuals in the party. There was not a single word of truth in what was said, nor was there a single concrete fact.

I was never a bottleneck, nor was I ever responsible for unwarranted delays in major projects, and I can prove this at any time. I was shattered by the attack upon me, and bewildered. I wrote a passionate message to Shri Rahul Gandhi, about my removal as Minister, and his speech, at FICCI, and asked him what wrongdoing I had committed to warrant this treatment. I said, that I should have been asked for an explanation, IF I had done anything wrong, as even a murderer has his say in court, and here I don't even know what, if any wrong doing was committed by me. I told him that my family legacy and my name would be forever ruined, and all I had done was my duty. I asked him to tell me, what wrong I had committed. I asked for time to meet him. He replied that he was "running a little busy" at that time, but that he would meet me a little later.

Despite several requests, that day never came. Not till this minute. I took a break of 10 days, and went to my sister's home to recover.

When I returned, in the first week of January 2014, I was given an appointment to meet you. During our meeting, I explained my agony to you, over the attack which had been unleashed upon me and asked what I had done wrong. You replied

that the elections were coming up and I was required for party work. I told you that the media was keen I should speak to them in view of the huge speculation over my resignation, but you specifically told me not to meet the media. From that day until now, I have honoured that word. But from that day until now, I have neither been given party work, nor have I been given an opportunity to meet you, despite several requests.

In fact, later in January, I was again shocked and distressed to receive a telephone call from Ajay Maken, Head of Congress Media cell. He informed me, that my name was being removed from the list of party spokespersons, that the decision was taken "at the highest level" and other work would be assigned to me. I have served as party spokesperson for over 10 long years during very difficult times. I have defended the party day and night, 24 hours a day despite huge domestic problems, including my mother suffering from a brain tumour, and ultimately dying after suffering for 3 long years, during which I not only served as her principal caregiver, but also constantly travelled to Delhi to serve as party spokesperson, without even being a MP.

Just two days ago, Shri Vasant left the Congress and formed his own party. It was only on the day before Shri Vasant left, that I received my first ever communication from AICC in the form of a telephone call from Shri Motilal Vora, who wanted to know what my stand was regarding Shri Vasant, and what my future course of action would be.

Wider role of teaching

Amartya Sen

I also want to say a few things about the wider role of teaching — in linking different nations and different cultures together. Teaching is not just a matter of instruction given by teachers to their individual students. The progress of science and of knowledge depends in general on the learning that one nation, one group of people, derives from what has been achieved by other nations and other groups of people.

For example, the golden age of Indian mathematics, which changed the face of mathematics in the world, was roughly from the fifth to the 12th century, and its beginning was directly inspired by what we Indians were learning from work done in Babylon, Greece and Rome. To be sure, there was an Indian tradition of analytical thinking going back much further, on which the stellar outbursts of mathematical work in India from around the fifth century drew, but we learned a lot about theorems and proofs and rigorous mathematical reasoning from the Greeks and the Romans and the Babylonians. There is no shame in learning from others, and then putting what we have learned to good use, and going on to create new knowledge, new understanding, and thrillingly novel ideas and results.

Indians of course were teaching other Indians. Perhaps the most powerful mathematician of ancient India, Brahmagupta, would not have been able to do such dazzling work without his having been influenced by the ideas of his own teachers, in particular Aryabhata, the pioneering leader of the Indian school of mathematics. Alberuni, the Iranian mathematician, who

spent many years in India from the end of the 10th to the early years of the 11th century (and helped to make Arab mathematicians learn even more from Indian mathematics than they were already doing) thought that Brahmagupta was perhaps the finest mathematician and astronomer in India, and possibly in the world, and yet (argued Alberuni), Brahmagupta could be so productive only by standing on the shoulders of the great Aryabhata, who was not only an extraordinary scientist and mathematician, but also a superb teacher. Learning from each other continued over centuries, involving — in addition to Aryabhata and Brahmagupta — Varahamihira and Bhaskara, among many others.

And just as Indian mathematicians learned something from Babylonians, Greeks and Romans, they also taught some brilliantly new ideas to mathematicians elsewhere in the world. For example, Yi Xing [I-Hsing], who lived in China between the seventh and the eighth century, and who was, as Joseph Needham describes him, probably the finest Chinese mathematician of his time, knew all the relevant Indian texts. The Chinese mathematicians as well as the pioneering Arab mathematicians, including Al Khwarazmi (from whose name the term “algorithm” is derived), all knew Sanskrit and the Sanskrit literature in maths. What we are admiring here is not Indian mathematics done in splendid isolation (that rarely occurs anywhere in the world), but mathematics done with a huge role of international and interregional exchange of ideas. Indian research was deeply influenced by the knowledge of foreign works on the

subject, and in turn, Indian maths influenced mathematical work even in those countries, including Greece and Rome and Baghdad, from where Indians themselves had learned many things.

Let me end with an example. The history of the term “sine” in Trigonometry illustrates how we learn from each other. That trigonometric idea was well developed by Aryabhata, who called it *jya-ardha*, and sometimes shortened it to *jya*. The Arab mathematicians, using Aryabhata’s idea, called it “*jiba*,” which is phonetically close. But *jiba* is a meaningless sound in Arabic, but *jaib*, which has the same consonants, is a good Arabic word, and since the Arabic script does not specify vowels, the later generation of Arab mathematicians used the term *jaib*, which means a bay or a cove. Then in 1150, when the Italian mathematician, Gherardo of Cremona, translated the word into Latin, he used the Latin word “*sinus*,” which means a bay or a cove in Latin. And it is from this — the Latin *sinus* — that the modern trigonometric terms “sine” is derived. In this one word we see the interconnection of three mathematical traditions — Indian, Arabic and European.

Teaching and learning are activities that link people together. Even as we celebrate science and research, we have to recognise the role of teaching and that of learning from each other — from our teachers, from our colleagues, from our students, from our friends, and from our fellow human beings. There is something extraordinarily great in these interconnections.

(extracts from his remarks at the Infosys Science Prize ceremony held in Kolkata on January 5, 2015.)

Politics of fundamentalism and hate

In the wake of the 2015, India is seeing an upsurge of hate and fundamentalism on one hand and outright suppression of the right to free speech and expression on the other, with vigilante groups and non-state actors imposing censorship through hooliganism and assertive fundamentalist voices, in the name of nationalism with the tacit support of the State.

This republic day, the advertisement by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (DAVP22201/13/0048/1415) portrays an outdated version of the Preamble of the Indian Constitution when the words Socialist and Secular were not inserted by the 42nd Amendment. Some of the fundamentalists have also openly endorsed this error on the part of the Ministry saying that India is not a secular country! On the same day, there was a so-called public uproar regarding the issue of Vice President of the Country not saluting in the republic day ceremony when the flag was being hoisted. The public debate and the media attention forced the Vice President to issue an official statement stating that his actions were guided by proper protocol. The irony of situation is that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting have not yet issued any statement with a clarification, at least, or an apology, at best.

People of the country have also witnessed “the death of the ‘author’ Perumal Murugan” this year, when his book Mathorubhagan was opposed for allegedly portraying the Kailasanathar temple in Tiruchengode and women devotees in bad light and demands of his

arrest were made. Not just the author was made to delete all controversial portions and submit written apologies, he was also forced to leave his home town and he has now decided to give up writing altogether.

In Kolkata, on the evening of 31st January, 2015, members of Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha, resorted to hooliganism and agitation against Bangladesh country and eventually forced the shutting down of the stall by the Department of Tourism of Bangladesh at the ongoing Kolkata International Book Fair. The issue was regarding the sale of a tourist map which showed parts of Kashmir within the borders of Pakistan. While the map may be an issue to raise questions or even democratically agitate, the way the entire Book Fair was hijacked by this hooliganism was undemocratic. Hate mongering through repeated shouting of slogans such as ‘Bangladesh Murdabad’ was

clearly an attempt to shame the very notion of democracy.

National Alliance of Peoples’ Movements strongly condemns the actions in all the events highlighted above and other events where the freedom of speech and expression, as envisaged by the Constitution of India, is being trampled through hooliganism and spreading of fundamentalism and hatred. We would like to bring the attention of the State authorities to these important matters and request them to take necessary actions so that the public space is not disturbed by the overtly hate mongering actions of the fundamentalist groups. We also call upon the citizenry to strongly condemn the actions of those in power who are trying to hijack and force public views and discourses and jeopardize the tolerant and understanding fabric of multi-cultural, geo-political land called India.

- **Medha Patkar, Prafulla Samantara, Dr. Sunilam, Aradhna Bhargava, Suniti SR, Suhas Kolhekar, Prasad Bagwe, Gabriele Dietrich, Geetha Ramakrishnan, C R Neelkandan, P Chennaiah, Ramakrishnan Raju Arundhati Dhuru, Richa Singh, Sister Celia, Rukmini V P, Vimal Bhai, Jabar Singh, Anand Mazgaonkar, Krishnakant, Kamayani Swami, Ashish Ranjan, Mahendra Yadav; Faisal Khan, Kailash Meena, Amitava Mitra, Sujato Bhadra, B S Rawat, Rajendra Ravi, Madhuresh Kumar, Kanika Sharma**

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After the murder...

After the murder of Mahatma Gandhi on January 30, 1948, the RSS was banned on February 4, 1948. It was banned for anti-national activities and the government communiqué (issued by the Home Ministry headed by Sardar Patel) banning the RSS was self-explanatory:

“In their resolution of February 2, 1948 the Government of India declared their determination to root out the forces of hate and violence that are at work in our country and imperil the freedom of the Nation and darken her fair name. In pursuance of this policy the Government of India have decided to declare unlawful the RSS.” (Cited in Justice on Trial, RSS, Bangalore, 1962, p. 64.)

The communiqué went on to disclose that the ban on the RSS was imposed because,

“Undesirable and even dangerous activities have been carried on by members of the Sangh. It has been found that in several parts of the country individual members of the RSS have indulged in acts of violence involving arson, robbery, dacoity, and murder and have collected illicit arms and ammunition. They have been found circulating leaflets exhorting people to resort to terrorist methods, to collect firearms, to create disaffection against the government and suborn the police and the military.” (Ibid, pp. 65-66.)

It is well-known that the then Home Minister, Sardar Patel, had a soft-corner for the RSS and

continues to be a favourite with the RSS. However even Sardar Patel found it difficult to defend the RSS in the aftermath of Gandhiji’s assassination. In a letter written to the head of the RSS, Golwalkar, dated 11 September 1948, Sardar Patel stated:

“Organizing the Hindus and helping them is one thing but going in for revenge for its sufferings on innocent and helpless men, women and children is quite another thing... Apart from this, their opposition to the Congress, that too of such virulence, disregarding all considerations of personality, decency or decorum, created a kind of unrest among the people. All their speeches were full of communal poison. It was not necessary to spread poison in order to enthuse the Hindus and organize for their protection. As a final result of the poison, the country had to suffer the sacrifice of the invaluable life of Gandhiji. Even an iota of the sympathy of the Government, or of the people, no more remained for the RSS. In fact opposition grew. Opposition turned more severe, when the RSS men expressed joy and distributed sweets after Gandhiji’s death. Under these conditions it became inevitable for the Government to take action against the RSS... Since then, over six months have elapsed. We had hoped that after this lapse of time, with full and proper consideration the RSS persons would come to the right path. But from the reports that come to me, it is evident that attempts to put fresh life into their

same old activities are afoot.” (Ibid, pp. 26-28.)

Hindu Mahasabha and RSS were jointly responsible for the murder of Father of Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, this fact was further corroborated by Sardar Patel in a letter to a prominent leader of Hindu Mahasabha, Shyama Prasad Mookerjee on July 18, 1948. Sardar wrote:

“As regards the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha, the case relating to Gandhiji’s murder is subjudice and I should not like to say anything about the participation of the two organizations, but our reports do confirm that, as a result of the activities of these two bodies, particularly the former, an atmosphere was created in the country in which such a ghastly tragedy became possible. There is no doubt in my mind that the extreme section of the Hindu Mahasabha was involved in the conspiracy.

“The activities of the RSS constituted a clear threat to the existence of Government and the State. Our reports show that those activities, despite the ban, have not died down. Indeed, as time has marched on, the RSS circles are becoming more defiant and are indulging in their subversive activities in an increasing measure.”

(Letter 64 in Sardar Patel: Select Correspondence 1945-1950, Volume 2, Navjiwan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1977, pp. 276-277.)



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Moment of truth

S. Viswam

A day after his spectacular landslide electoral victory in Delhi, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Arvind Kejriwal called on the President, the Prime Minister and the Union Home Minister. One would not be surprised if all these three dignitaries told him that with power comes responsibility and that this time he needs to take governance more seriously than he did during his earlier stint as Delhi's Chief Minister. Indeed, a significant bit of advice that his erstwhile mentor and guru, Anna Hazare, gave him was not to repeat the mistakes of 2013. Arvind Kejriwal begins the first year of the five years in office that his grand victory assures him with the blessings of the nation amid hopes that his tenure will be as different from the common run as has been his politics and political style. The after-effects of the political earthquake, some call it the electoral tsunami, are likely to be felt for a long time.

Delhi is after all an overgrown village or a bloated municipality at best, and elections to the 70-member assembly have never been a national trend-setter. However, that kind of

generalization has been rendered both unwarranted and inappropriate by the outcome of the just-concluded polls. The verdict is on the same scale, pattern and sweep as that scored a year ago by Prime Minister Modi. Much was and is expected from Modi, whose clout sadly has begun to wane. Much is expected from Kejriwal if only because by challenging, significantly and successfully, the Modi-BJP clout the AAP has sounded the clarion for battle.

Indeed, some common threads of opinion and assessment run through the reaction to Kejriwal's electoral performance. Both the AAP's grand sweep and the BJP's humiliating debacle (a mere three seats in a house of 70) were unexpected, both are staggering in nature, and both in their own ways are eye-openers. The staggering nature of the former has catapulted its leader into the position of Modi's principal political adversary and hence the potential leader of the national opposition, particularly since the Congress failed to open its account in Delhi and in any case is fast becoming a spent force. The

Between the lines

Rebirth of Aam Aadmi

Kuldip Nayar

staggering nature of the BJP defeat represents huge setbacks for both Modi and his Sancho Panza, Amit Shah whose body language, if not articulation, suggests that they are electorally invincible. Both the BJP and the Modi-Shah duo are not invincible, they can be beaten by other forces if they combine in themselves the virtues that have made Kejriwal the champion.

The second common point is that contrary to the BJP's counter that the Delhi polls constituted a referendum on Modi's rule in the last nine or ten months Delhi was under central control, it was very much so. Modi led the campaign and addressed rallies. Votes were solicited in Modi's name. Modi chose the BJP's chief ministerial candidate and stood by her side as she campaigned. Modi did not consult the local BJP ranks and leaders while selecting Kiran Bedi and dumping her on the party cadres. Modi took on Kejriwal himself and pitted his political clout against Kejriwal. It is Modi who lost not Kiran Bedi, and not so strangely Kiran herself has washed her hands off the defeat by declaring that it was the BJP and not she who lost. Her husband has said that the BJP cadres did not work for her at all and hints that the workers may well have sabotaged her chances.

The third common point is the BJP and its candidates paid dearly for their arrogance. One reason why Kiran Bedi lost in a constituency regarded as the BJP bastion which has returned the party in three successive polls was the deliberate withdrawal of cadre support because she was an outsider imposed on the locals. She herself looked down on them, it would seem.

(Continued on Page 3)

It is, indeed, instructive to analyze why the ruling Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) was decimated at the polls in Delhi. But the more important point to know is how the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has emerged with a bang: 67 seats in a house of 70! The BJP is down to just three from the 32 it had won in the December 2013 assembly election.

Who's the AAP? It is a secular, left-of-the-centre party which may become an alternative in the country, replacing the Congress which is languishing. Some time ago a set of motivated people came from different fields and joined Gandhian Anna Hazare in his campaign for the appointment of Lokpal in order to fight corruption at high places. The movement engulfed the entire country in no time because the campaign had permeated all segments of the society.

How the government beguiled Hazare and his associates to circumvent its undertaking to appoint an ombudsman is another story. Yet, there is no doubt that his movement attracted many idealists in the society at that time. And Arvind Kejriwal was one of them.

He was among the many who aspired for a clean and transparent polity. Although the movement was suppressed, it never allowed the idealism go out of the public gaze. That was when the AAP was born

and it refocused its attention on the issue at hand. The party contested the election and was briefly in power.

But how and why the AAP got more attention this time was because the people were sick and tired of the two main political parties, the Congress and the BJP. The AAP, despite facing the apathy of the public, stuck to its path and managed to catch the imagination of the people once again to be voted to power with an unprecedented majority.

Much will now depend on Kejriwal and his associates and how they pursue the ideals they have adumbrated. The Delhi electorate has pinned its hope in AAP because the people believed that the party can deliver. The two main political parties do not evoke optimism and both the Congress and the BJP look like the relics of the past.

People are looking for an alternative and the Delhi election has thrown open one such opportunity. It is, however, too early to think that the politics of values, which goaded the people to participate in the freedom movement, can return.

Whether or not the AAP leaders realize it, they have become the centre of attention as well as hope. They can become an option at the

centre in the next Lok Sabha elections in 2019. But it will be a different journey and, to traverse it, the AAP will have to remain focused on values which constitute the basic structure of our Constitution.

True, the Delhi election was not a referendum on Prime Minister Narendra Modi. But it was the BJP that had made it by putting his photos on every bit of publicity material it released. The many crores of rupees advertisements which the party released in newspapers and on hoardings displayed in Delhi had the photo of Modi along with Kiran Bedi who was seeking election.

Nonetheless, it would be too simplistic to believe that the induction of Kiran Bedi as the chief ministerial candidate was the cause of the BJP's defeat. Perhaps, it made some difference. But the vote was against the BJP and its ideology of Hindutva. The party still does not want to face the fact that the spell of Modi has waned. The BJP itself looks jaded and stuck in the old mould of religious superiority. The voters swung towards them last time not because of their ideology but because they were promised development, the economic betterment of the people. Almost 10 months of the Modi government at the centre has made little difference to the life of an ordinary man on the street.

Both the BJP and the Congress, which did not win a single seat in the Delhi election, must introspect hard and change their policies. The ideology of Hindutva does not sell in a society which is pluralistic if the BJP were to analyse the causes of its defeat. The vandalism of

churches is suspected to be the handiwork of extremists in the party. The campaigns like *ghar wapsi* or the projection of Nathuram Godse, who assassinated Mahatma Gandhi, do not go down well in a country that takes pride in being secular.

The Congress, stuck in dynastic politics, has little hope of a revival. The party was a movement and had all its qualities. Today, it is distant from the people. The belated efforts of Rahul Gandhi to address rallies or give speeches are too little, too late. He should cultivate the media. But he hates to hold a press conference or give an interview.

The rout of both the Congress and the BJP should make them go back to the drawing boards. If they do that honestly they would realize that they are distant from the ground realities. Even if they do not move left, they have to find a solution to poverty and unemployment. Modi's free enterprise has not given any dividends so far. There is no running away from the reality that one third of the people are living below the poverty line.

The RSS, the BJP's ideologue, takes pride in saying that the rule of Hindus has returned after many decades. This is not a solution but the problem. All segments of society should be associated with the development. One, however, feels that the minorities are being left out purposely.

India, as Mahatma Gandhi said, is a bouquet of flowers. He was emphasizing the plurality of the society. The Constitution assures equality to all before the law, whether Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs or

Christians. But it is a pity that we are going away from that principle. The sooner we retrieve ourselves to that basic requirement, the lesser arduous would our journey be towards a democratic, secular and socialist polity.

(Continued from Page 2)

The fourth common point is that the campaign exposed the BJP leadership to the charge that there were wide gaps between promise and performance. Modi's sole talking point was that his focus on development would usher in *achhe din* very fast. In practice, the BJP focused on divisive politics, *ghar wapsi*, more Hindu children, and communal polarization, all patently with the knowledge and consent of the top helmsman, Modi. The poll outcome is a rejection of divisive politics and a reminder to Modi that he has abandoned the development platform midway.

Fifthly, the Delhi result confirms that the Indian voter knows his mind. This is yet another election where he has delivered decisively. He has shown that he cannot be bamboozled any longer with sweet talk only, he insists on exercising the full value of his ballot as well as the people's mandate.

Lastly, by pushing the Congress out of the score board the polls have sent an important message to the party. The party ruled Delhi for a decade, but it could not withstand Arvind Kejriwal's onslaught. The good work done by Sheila Dixit in modernizing Delhi and making it a great capital city is down the drains as is the clout of the once-mighty party. Sonia and Rahul would be well advised to do a quick organizational re-vamp.

Delhi Assembly Elections 2015

Delhi Election Watch and Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) have analysed the self-sworn affidavits of all 70 newly elected MLAs in the Delhi 2015 Assembly Elections :

Final party position: Aam Admi Party — 67, Bharatiya Janata Party - 3

Vote Share and Margin of Victory

- *Average Vote Share of MLAs:* The average vote share of all newly elected MLAs is 55%.
- *MLAs with a vote share of 50% or more:* 55 (79%) out of 70 MLAs won with a vote share of 50% or more.
- *MLA with the highest vote share:* Prakash of AAP won with the highest vote share of 71% from Deoli constituency.
- *MLA with the lowest vote share:* Kailash Gahlot of AAP won with the lowest vote share of 35% from Najafgarh constituency.
- *Average Margin of Victory:* On an average an MLA won with a margin of victory of 22%. (Total votes polled for winner-Total votes polled for runners up/Total no. of valid votes)
- *MLA with Highest Percentage of Margin of Victory:* Sandeep Kumar from Sultanpur constituency of AAP won with the highest margin of victory i.e. 56% with a margin of 64439 votes.
- *MLA with Highest Margin:* Mahinder Yadav of AAP from Vikaspuri showed the highest margin (votes polled for winner — votes polled for runners up) of 77665 votes.
- *MLA with Lowest Percentage of Margin of Victory:* Kailash Gahlot from Najafgarh of AAP won with the lowest margin of victory i.e. 1% with a margin of 1555 votes.
- *Total number of votes polled for NOTA:* The total number of votes polled for NOTA were 35924 votes i.e. 0.40%.
- *Constituency with highest percentage of votes polled for NOTA:* Model Town constituency

recorded the highest percentage of votes polled for NOTA, i.e. 0.66%.

- *Constituency with highest number of votes polled for NOTA:* Matiala constituency recorded the highest number of votes polled for NOTA i.e. 1102 (0.47% of total votes).

Criminal Background

- ***MLAs with Criminal Cases: Out of the 70 MLAs, 24 (34%) have declared criminal cases against themselves. 23 (34%) AAP MLAs out of 67 MLAs have declared criminal cases while 1 (33%) out of 3 BJP MLAs has declared criminal cases. Out of 70 MLAs in the Delhi Assembly elections in 2013, 25 (36%) MLAs had declared criminal cases against themselves and in the 2008 Delhi Assembly Elections 29 (43%) out of 68 MLAs analysed had declared criminal cases***

There were no MLAs who declared heinous criminal cases like murder, attempt to murder, crimes against women etc which is a welcome change and is unusual as compared to the rest of the country.

- *Candidates with Criminal Cases who lost:* 91 out of 673 candidates with criminal cases, including 60 candidates with serious criminal cases like murder, attempt to murder, crimes against women etc lost the Delhi Assembly Elections, 2015. Candidates with criminal cases who lost the elections include 21 INC candidates, 26 BJP candidates, 12 BSP candidates and 1 AAP candidate. This is a welcome sign.
- *Chances of Winning for Candidates with a clean record:* The chances of winning for a candidate with no criminal cases against him/her in the 2015 Delhi Assembly Elections is 8%. This has increased from 7% chances of winning for a candidate with a clean record in 2013 and 6% chances of winning for a candidate with a clean record in 2008.

- *Chances of Winning for Candidates with a criminal record:* The chances of winning for a candidate

with a criminal record in 2015 Delhi Assembly elections is 21%. In the 2013 Delhi Assembly elections the chances of winning for a candidate with criminal cases was 19% and in the 2008 Delhi assembly elections it was 26%.

Financial Background

- *Crorepatis MLAs*: Out of the **70** newly elected MLAs, **44 (63%)** are crorepatitis. Out of the **70** MLAs in **Delhi 2013 assembly elections**, **51 (73%)** MLAs were crorepatitis and in the **2008 Delhi Assembly elections**, **47 (69%)** out of 68 MLAs analysed were crorepatitis.
- *High Asset MLAs*: Out of the 70 newly elected MLAs, **11 (16%)** MLAs have total assets worth more than Rs. 10 crores.
- *High Asset Candidates who lost the elections*: 186 candidates who had declared their total assets worth more than Rs. 1 crore lost the 2015 Delhi Assembly elections. Out of these candidates who lost, 51 candidates had assets worth more than Rs. 10 crores, 13 had more than Rs. 20 crores, 7 had more than Rs. 30 crores and 1 candidate, Manjinder Singh Sirsa of SAD from Rajouri Garden Constituency had total assets worth Rs. 239 crores.
- *Average Assets*: The average assets per MLA for Delhi 2015 assembly elections are Rs. 6.29 crores. In 2013 the average assets per MLAs were Rs. 10.83 crores and in 2008 the average assets per 68 MLAs analyzed were Rs. 2.81 crores
- *MLAs with High Liabilities*: A total of **10** MLAs have declared liabilities of Rs. 1 crore and above.
- *MLAs with High Income as declared in ITR**: **2** MLAs have declared total annual income of more than Rs. 1 crore.
- *MLAs who have not declared Income Tax Details**: **5** MLAs have not declared their self income tax details.

Comparative Analysis of Assets of Re-elected MLAs

- *Number of Re-elected MLAs*: Number of re-elected MLAs analysed in the Delhi Assembly 2015 elections is 22 (21 AAP MLAs and 1 BJP MLA).

- *Average Assets of re-elected MLAs in 2013*: The average assets of re-elected MLAs in 2013 were Rs. 2.24 crores. Average assets of 21 AAP MLAs in 2013 were Rs. 1.51 crores.
- *Average Assets of re-elected MLAs in 2015*: The average assets of re-elected MLAs in 2015 are Rs. 2.38 crores. Average assets of 21 AAP MLAs in 2015 are Rs. 1.58 crores.
- *Average growth in assets of re-elected MLAs from 2013 to 2015*: The average assets growth of re-elected MLAs is Rs. 13.69 lakhs i.e. by 6%. The average assets growth of 21 AAP MLAs is Rs. 6.66 lakhs i.e. by 4%.

Other Background Details

- *MLAs with Education Qualification of 12th pass or below*: 24 (34%) MLAs have declared that they have an education qualification of 12th pass or below. In 2013, 33 (47%) MLAs out of 70 MLAs and in 2008 29 (43%) out of 68 MLAs analysed had declared that they had an educational qualification of 12th pass or below.
- *MLAs with Education Qualification of Graduate or above*: 43 (61%) MLAs have declared that they have an education qualification of Graduate or above. In 2013, 36 (51%) MLAs out of 70 MLAs and in 2008 37 (54%) out of 68 MLAs analysed had declared that they had an educational qualification of Graduate or above.
- *MLAs who have declared their age between 25 to 50 years*: 49 (70%) MLAs have declared their age to be between **25** to 50 years in 2015. In 2013 40 (57%) out of 70 MLAs and in 2008 28 (41%) out of 68 MLAs analysed had declared their age to be between 25 to 50 years.
- *MLAs who have declared their age between 50 to 70 years*: 20 (29%) MLAs have declared their age to be between 50 to 70 years in 2015. In 2013 28 (40%) out of 70 MLAs and in 2008 40 (59%) out of 68 MLAs analysed had declared their age to be more than 50 years.
- *Gender Details of MLAs*: In 2015, Out of 70 MLAs, 6 (9%) MLAs are women while in 2013 there were 3 (4%) MLAs who were women.

For posterity : Political unity in support of corporate

Prem Singh

Heard the Akashvani broadcast of the recognized, national political parties on 2nd February. In the broadcast of the Congress, CPI, CPM and NCP, the attempts to vitiate the communal atmosphere were primarily mentioned as well as the appeal to defeat the communal forces was made. Whatever else was said in the broadcast of the BJP and the Aam Admi Party (AAP), there was not even a word about the communal incidents in the city. The broadcast of AAP was read by Manish Sisodia keeping in mind the 'Hindu interest' and staked the claim to form the government. None of the seculars present objected to this omission. Instead, in view of the strong possibility in the poll predictions about AAP's win, they put their weight in favour of AAP. They have given Arvind Kejriwal the complete liberty to take care of the feelings of the Hindus. They know that the election cannot be won solely with the Muslim vote.

We have not raised this discussion about the broadcast to discuss the secular-communal question. Instead we have picked up this episode to discuss a major political change in the guise of protecting secularism. The unity of the Marxists, socialists, champions of social justice, Gandhians and a lot of people from the civil society in favour of the win of Arvind Kejriwal is a big achievement for the corporate establishment of India and the world.

After Manmohan Singh, the Congress isn't of much use to the Corporate establishment. The

Congress is stuck to Rahul Gandhi and the corporate cannot trust him as much as Manmohan Singh or Narendra Modi. Rahul Gandhi's attempt at associating the Dalits and Adivasis with the Congress on economic issues are recorded in the registers of the corporate establishment. The corporate establishment is not ready to tolerate even a token gesture in the benefit of deprived sections. However, it knows very well how to communalise them.

The corporate establishment do not have any faith even in Sonia Gandhi now, who makes least some arrangements for the relief of the poor under the pressure of some of her advisors. Just like they needed Modi along with and after Manmohan Singh, they now need Kejriwal with and after Modi. A man born from the womb of corporate capitalism and can fool the hardworking populace and successfully protect the interests of the corporate establishment. The corporate establishment does not need a safety valve for its protection. The progressive and secular camps have become united in its favour.

The corporate establishment knows that the Congress has gotten the support of the seculars by nurturing them. Thus nurtured, the secular camp cannot come to an end suddenly with Modi's win. They will have to be joined to someone else apart from the Congress. They have firmly joined Kejriwal. Those who were the secular soldiers of Sonia till now are without hesitation the

secular soldiers of Kejriwal now. It does not need to be stated that the unconditional support of the seculars for Kejriwal is not just for the current Delhi Legislative Assembly elections. They have been in support of Kejriwal since the beginning. Even though they do not talk anymore of converting or calling him a Marxist/socialist or a Gandhian. They feel relieved that he is against crony capitalism.

It cannot be said how much the AAP's win in the Delhi Legislative Assembly elections will be able to stop the communal BJP or how much the secular parties in other states benefit. But this much is certain that the socialist ideology will become even more marginalised in the political discussions. The circus of the lack of ideology will become even more prevalent. The elections will become synonymous with the deception of the poor with even more speed.

There seems to be no possibility right now, but if any future generation tries to investigate by going to the bottom of the neo-colonial slavery, it will come to know that the neo-capitalists alone were not responsible for this. Unity was established in the mainstream politics of the country, according to which the neo-capitalist slavery came about. Kishan Patnaik, who brought to attention the hole in the slave mentality of the intellectuals of India, all of whom are from the progressive and secular camps, has said that it is not normal for man to accept the

(Continued on Page 7)

For the future of AAP

As a sympathiser who wishes to be both critical and constructive, I hope the AAP will be continuously inventive. Its idea of an ombudsman for the party was a creative one. Corruption and drugs were two great issues that it raised in a brilliant manner. It also raised issues about how much should one pay for education, water, electricity if they are to remain public goods. Politics as the search for public goods must now look at services in terms of a new audit of access, quality, participation, everydayness, instead of mere economics. The citizens as user and consumer must have a say in the nature of service provided.

In the first few months, the AAP set the tone and style for such audits. It emphasised that audits in a slum and audits in the middle class areas have to be metered differently. It asked that corporations like Reliance treat the oil they process as part of a commons of resources. These were path-breaking themes which went beyond World Bank pieties.

The AAP also has to rescue livelihood issues from technocratic and managerial notions of the economy which seek to emphasise security and profit. By raising the logics of livelihood, it raises the question of how the marginalised people in a society perceive the mainstream definition of a problem. The idea of livelihood is more complex than employment. Livelihood links life, lifeworld, life cycle, lifestyle to issues of access, quality, and participation. It opens citizenship out to the world of problem-solving instead of treating every problem as a technical answer to a technical question to be solved

only by a technocrat.

One sees this most clearly in the debates about nuclear energy. By raising the debates in Kudankulam to a national status, the AAP has showed that local problems are not locally bounded. It argued that fishermen as citizens had the right to respond to the location of a nuclear plant; that their protest did not verge on nuclear illiteracy but showed that citizens could raise technical issues rationally and passionately. The AAP's ombudsman, Admiral (retired) Laxminarayan Ramdas, has an impressive track record on linking security to issues of livelihood, sustainability and democracy. The politics of livelihood and sustainability should be the party's running preoccupation.

The party needs to realise that reworking party politics is not enough. It has to reinvent the city, not as a smart city, but as an inclusive

urbanism which understands the role of the migrant and the power of informal society.

The party must also realise that the culture of politics needs a theory of politics of culture. **It must take stands on issues like gender, religion, science on an active case-to-case basis, according to context.**

Deep down the AAP must learn to listen to the silent screams of politics and amplify and translate them. By moving beyond the politics of the gaze, which created structures of planning and surveillance, to the politics of listening, it becomes open to the language of suffering, obtaining a sense of the diversity of world views. Its very inventiveness and everydayness make it the party of the future. The challenge before it is to sustain this politics of hope. In redefining politics and reinventing democracy lies the real future of the AAP.

—Shiv Visvanathan in *The Hindu*

(Continued from Page 6)

state of slavery. I am not saying this on the eve of the Delhi elections but for a long time that in this era of crisis the largest minority of India has a big role to play. However, the Muslim leadership has not paid attention to

it. I still believe that if there is to be a true struggle against the neo-imperialism, it will be with the strengthening and participation of the minorities. It should be hoped that this will happen certainly and soon.

Jayalalithaa won a massive mandate in TN state polls in 1991 (96%) trouncing DMK to dust. In the very next election in 1996, she was routed by DMK (94%). The open exhibition of wealth and opulence during her foster son's marriage was one of the reasons for Jayalalithaa's crushing defeat.

Modi's notorious jacket, with his name written all over, attracted cheers and jeers equally. Many had downplayed its effect and said it was only performance that counted. But a senior journalist observed, "The jacket would come to haunt Modi the day his down slide starts". I never expected that day would come so soon.

This is also a warning to the AAP.

—Sankara Narayanan

Caste Pride

Musahar and Gaud Saraswat Brahman on same foot?

A. K. Biswas

On May 20, 2014 Jitanram Manjhi was sworn in as the 23rd Chief Minister of Bihar. On the previous evening, I received a phone call at Calcutta from Minapur Banglatola, a hamlet in Muzaffarpur district, North Bihar. The caller, one Binda Devi, a Musahar woman, informed me: “Apna aadmi will take over as the Chief Minister of Bihar tomorrow.” Referring to Jitanram Manjhi as “apna aadmi” in Bihar parlance, she was stating that the leader to occupy the top seat belonged to her caste. The excitement and jubilation over phone of the rustic woman was quite palpable.

In 1994, as the Commissioner, Tirhut Division as well as Saran Division stationed at Muzaffarpur, I visited this village inhabited by Musahars, locally referred as Musahartola, to familiarise myself with their socio-economic conditions. Barely literate, Binda was an enthusiastic volunteer enlisted by the district administration in the literacy drive. The villagers, illiterates and landless agricultural labourers, had too many grievances to ventilate before me. The literacy of this caste in Bihar was not even two per cent then.

But Binda Devi’s pride over Jitanram taking over as the State’s Chief Minister skyrocketed. No Musahar leader hitherto steered the destiny of Bihar’s 100 million people. Though a number of leaders of the community were Ministers, MLAs, MPs earlier but none rose to this

height yet. Jitanram had filled that vacuum. Binda told me that she along with her caste men and women would go in large numbers to Patna in a few days to felicitate the new Chief Minister. This was indeed an event of felicitation and celebration.

Dean Nelson’s report from Delhi for the British daily, *The Telegraph*, articulates their excitement aptly: “India’s lowest ‘untouchable’ caste rejoices as ratcatcher sworn in as Bihar Chief Minister. For centuries the Musahar ‘untouchables’ have caught and eaten rats to stave off hunger—now one of their fellow ratcatchers is the most powerful man in Bihar.” On a broader canvas he also adds: “While Narendra Modi’s rise to Prime Minister was aided by his origins as a tea boy and several Dalits have broken through the caste barriers to become powerful political figures—B.R. Ambedkar, the revered author of the Indian Constitution, and Mayawati, former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh – none of them can match the rise of Mr Manjhi.”

Catching and eating rats by Musahars “to stave off hunger” is widespread as a perception, which may not be very appropriate or true. They were highly valued as labourers by colonialist and native indigo planters in large parts of Bihar until indigo was replaced by the discovery of a chemical substitute in Germany. Further, Musahars in thousands were engaged for extermination of rats as a part of the official drive when plague carried off millions of people

in Bihar for as many as three decades beginning 1899. Undoubtedly they made valuable contributions, often risking their own life, in combating the dreadful death by killing rats, which are the vectors of black death. This role is rarely acknowledged by their countrymen for reasons not far to seek. The image of ratcatching, I am confident, was aimed to “stave off” crimes. They rather preferred to eating rats than resorting to crime for survival in natural calamities, epidemic, pestilence, etc. In the colonial era, let it be noted, the Musahars were rarely visible in criminal courts and records when many castes, high and/or low, were deeply involved in crimes.

Elite journalist equals illiterate woman in caste pride

“Big day for my Goa. Two GSBs, both talented politicians become full Cabinet Ministers. Saraswat pride!!”

GBS implies Gaud Saraswat Brahmins two of whose induction on November 10, 2014 into the Union Cabinet propelled a journalist to flaunt his pride in public. Often personal achievement or tragedy, in the past, has been projected on an extraordinary canvas by certain sections. When Rajdeep Sardesai was attacked for his tweet, he wrote a column in *The HindustanTimes* in his defence. “Is expressing pride in a community’s achievements a sign of casteism as the critics suggest? Casteism is when a caste identity is

used to promote hatred and separateness towards the other, when it creates social barriers based on occupation, marriage or inter-dining. My tweet was aimed at highlighting a piece of trivia which I believed was interesting: of the four Cabinet rank Ministers sworn in, two belonged to a small Brahmin community with no real political base.”

The telecaster and many like him prove Dr B. R. Ambedkar prophetic and relevant almost daily in some corner of the country. “A Hindu’s public is his caste. His responsibility is only to his caste. His loyalty is restricted only to his caste... There is no appreciation of the meritorious... The capacity to appreciate merits in a man apart from his caste does not exist in a Hindu. There is appreciation of virtue but only when the man is a fellow caste-man.” Rajdeep’s brimming pride was packaged and presented as “Saraswat pride” equivalent to Goa’s pride! Nobody has yet gone gaga over Jitanram Manjhi. The journalist paraded in his column several GSB cricketers, film stars and directors, dramatists, theatre personalities, educationists, businessmen and entrepreneurs etc. lauding them for their contribution to the nation. This is axiomatic truth that no Hindu—high or low, rich or poor, intellectual or illiterate—looks beyond caste. What is the actual difference between an illiterate woman and an elite journalist with intellectual pretension in the given case?

In less developed communities, there is drought in their icons. Those few are rarely held in esteem by advanced communities within the wider canvass of the Hindus, save and except in rarest cases. In the

‘Quit India’ Movement of 1942 Bihar had witnessed a violent upheaval against the British Government. Lathi-charges, teargas shelling, and firings, besides detention were resorted to on a large scale to contain and suppress the patriotic movement. Many people died and many more were rendered incapacitated for life. A Dusadh widow, named Akli Devi of Sandesh police station in Shahabad district, participated as a volunteer in the ‘Quit India’ Movement. She was shot dead by the police while protesting against the British rule.¹ My efforts to know about this fearless freedom fighter yielded no results. Administrative and police officers posted in the district (now bifurcated into four districts Bhojpur, Rohtas, Kaimur and Buxar districts)—besides political leaders and social activists—could not enlighten me about the Dusadh freedom fighter. Many freedom fighters and/or their relatives (not excluding concubines of the freedom fighters in some cases) enjoy privileges and benefits bestowed under a scheme of the Union Government as a mark of respect for their sacrifices. Alas! Akli Devi has been erased from the pages of history and public memory. Not a village, a market place, a rural road or a primary school has been named after her.² Whenever I have thought about her, I have felt appalled to figure out what had exactly propelled Akli to the vortex of a political movement that was marked by mindless brutalities against its leaders and volunteers across India. Did the widow leave behind a son or a daughter to mourn her loss with pride in silence? My efforts brought no answers. During President’s Rule in Bihar in 2005, a proposal with Governor Dr Buta Singh’s approval was submitted to the Railway

Ministry for prefixing Akli Devi’s name to the Arah railway station to commemorate her supreme sacrifice for national independence. It did not materialise nor was it expected to in the caste-conscious country. Though she had voluntarily and fearlessly faced British bullets for the freedom of the country, her sacrifice remained officially yet unacknowledged unlike others.

A Musahar woman enforced prohibition in Champaran

The Dusadh widow may not be the only one to be trashed into the dustbin of history. An illiterate and rustic Musahar woman, Girija Devi, a resident of her “dirt-poor village of Bhirkia-Chhapaulia” in East Champaran district, was invited to New York to speak on February 27 at the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs’ “50th Commission on the Status of Women”. What did she do to receive a noble call as this? The British Broad-casting Corporation’s February 16, 2006 report said: “Alcoholism is rampant among Musahar men, who end up spending more than half of what they earn on cheap locally brewed liquor. This hurts the women and children most... Girija Devi decided to pick up the gauntlet and launch a war against alcoholism a few years ago. Leading a group of women, she demolished local liquor vends and toddy pots hung on the trees by their men. When the sorority found the men drinking, they shaved their heads, garlanded them with shoes and paraded them around the village to shame them into kicking the bottle.” Her crusade, like charity, began at home. Her “husband Singheshwar Majhi was the first alcoholic to face her wrath.... Her untiring efforts have led to 125 Musahar villages in

East Champaran to become ‘alcohol free’.”³ What an incredible accomplishment the government never attempted!

But the tragedy of this big story is not the media’s breaking news. In the end, Girija Devi could not reach New York. She did not get her passport in time. The travel document incidentally was delivered to her the day she was due to address the august world body across the Atlantic. This happened during a period the media was overwhelmingly addicted to the sonorous song and dance around “good governance and development” in the post-Laloo-Rabri Bihar. The same bureaucracy, coupled with the Ministry of External Affairs, dashed the honour the Musahar woman would snatch for the nation. But who cares if a Musaharni was deprived an opportunity to address a UN Session though this was a reflection of the same over-hyped good governance? The best administration is the one that caters to the needs and aspirations of the last and the lowliest. India is million miles away from that utopia.

Caste in Cricket:

Sports is not only a game of physical stamina coupled with mental alertness but also a field where caste runs amuck. History and mythology bear ample testimony to prove the point to the hilt. In 1994, a Bengali cricketer, Prashanta Baidya, residing in Maharashtra, was selected for Team India. The East Zone was represented on the Board of Cricket Control for India (BCCI) selection committee by Sambaran Banerjee. A former Bengal captain, Banerjee, when he returned to Calcutta, was approached by newsmen for his reaction on Prashanta’s inclusion in

the Indian team. His startling comments—“OK. But I would have really been happy had a Chatterjee or a Ganguly, or a Bose instead were selected”⁴—went unheeded in West Bengal. Understandably, though Prashanta did not lack cricketing abilities in the estimation of the selection committee, he did not have the sheen in his caste tag to enamour the Bengali selector, who, thankfully, was not alone to determine the fate of Team India. But Banerjee might not be the solitary player in the dirty caste game against the underprivileged. There are many of his ilk in every branch of games and sports, nay, in every sphere of human activity. They are ever on the lookout for Chatterjees or Gangulies, or Boses in their respective domain in every inch of India. Caste functions like a well-knit trade union. Cricket, Banerjee believes, is the exclusive pasture of his caste men. He seems to be an impeccable replica of archer-trainer Drona of the Hindu epic Mahabharata. Sambaran, a kulin, could be more like the GSB and Chitpawan Brahmins in western India.

Soma Biswas (May 16, 1978) is a Bengali athlete in heptathlon. She rose to fame when she won the silver medal in the 2002 Asian Games in Busan, South Korea and in the 2006 Asian Games, Doha. She won the 110 m hurdles, the 200 m and the 800 m during that heptathlon.⁵ But West Bengal’s Sports Minister Subhas Chakraborti under Buddhadeb Bhattacharya had disparagingly compared Soma to an animal (goat) that is unfit for harnessing in agricultural operations! Such a philistine outburst aptly focuses on the mindset of the two aforesaid Bengali Brahmins against a low caste man or woman. But no public outcry or condemnation

greeted them in either case. The Sports Minister did not hesitate to humiliate a woman athlete of international standing.

This brings Babaji Palwankar Baloo (March 1876-July 1955), lauded as ‘the Rhodes of India’ by the contemporary media, cricket lovers and fans to our attention. A Chamar of Dharwad, Maharashtra, he was the first untouchable to leave a glowing imprint on the world of Indian cricket. He is forgotten for he does not have cheer-leaders like Rajdeep Sardesai in his community to highlight his legendary actions on field. Acclaimed as the “father of Indian spin bowling”, his fame soared to such heights that this untouchable was serenaded on elephants through the streets of crowded towns, garlanded in public gatherings, eulogised in unequivocal language by the media when his bowling ensured defeat after defeat of English cricket teams in Poona, Dharwar, Bombay and Calcutta. His admirers included Maharashtrian stalwarts, for example, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Gopal-krishna Gokhale, Madadev Ranade among others, some of whom were paragons of uninhibited orthodoxy though. Baloo’s cricketing sparks were portrayed by his countrymen as patriotic efflorescence as also outbursts.

An avid cricket lover, “Jagadindranarayan Ray, the Maharaja of Natore of district Rajshahi (now in Bangladesh), had invited Baloo to come to Bengal to coach his team.”⁶ Another account suggests that he had also recruited untouchable cricketers of repute, Shivaram, Ganpat, Vithal—all three Baloo’s brothers—and Sempre from Karachi for his team.⁷ The Maharaja challenged the Calcutta European

Cricket Club. The team of Hindus included wicket-keeper K. Seshachari from Madras, fast bowler H. L. Sempre from Karachi besides spin bowler Palwankar Baloo and his brother batsman Shivaram from Bombay. The European team was defeated in 1907(?). This synchronised with the ongoing swadeshi movement in Bengal.⁸

Fertile Bengal never suffered from barrenness in giving birth to the likes of Sambaran Banerjee in any era. The Natore Maharaja had, therefore, faced orthodox elements arraigned against him for inviting untouchables from Bombay and Karachi. But the Maharaja trampled those toxic elements without a second thought. Imagine the patriotic euphoria that greeted the victory of the Hindu team over the European at a time when Bengalis were agitating against the partition of Bengal! In passing we may refer to the great excitement and jubilation at the Mohun Bagan Football Club, Calcutta defeating the East Yorkshire Regiment 2-1 in the final of the IFA Shield in 1911. The victory was attributed to “Bengali masculinity”, a fight against “British imperialism”. They also described the English defeat as “a triumph of Indian nationalism” of the “ongoing freedom struggle”.⁹

Despite severe odds staring in the face of the untouchable Chamars, three brothers (Baloo, Vithal and Shivaram) had enormously enriched and glorified Indian cricket by their unruffled commitment to the game laced by sweat and toil at home and abroad. The discomfiture of Baloo who used to be served tea during intervals separately in disposable clay cups while Hindu players in porcelain could be imagined. He was chosen for “an all-Indian team to tour

England in 1911, consisting of Parsis, Hindus, and Muslims, captained by a Sikh”. The tour was a failure. But Baloo’s was a stunning success. His “outstanding performance” comprised “114 wickets at an average of 18.84 runs per wicket, 75 of which were in first class matches”.¹⁰ Three early matches were played against Oxford University at the Parks, the Marylebone Cricket Club at Lords and Cambridge at Fenner’s. Against Oxford, Baloo claimed five wickets for 87 runs, against MCC he took four wickets for 96 whereas he returned the superb figures of eight for 103 runs.¹¹ The spectacular performance of the untouchable player definitely did not go down well with ossified Hindu elements as one expects in a casteless society. The curse of India is untouchability, a byproduct of caste which benefits these elements. Cricket is one of its myriad victims. Nicholas Lezard writes in *The Guardian*, a British daily, May 3, 2003: “The Untouchables were learning the game, their Raj employers not being sniffy about caste. The first indisputably great Indian player, Palwankar Baloo, was a Chamar, a caste loathed by others as they work with cattle hides... Baloo learned to work with leather in quite a different way.” The daily refers to an exquisite tribute paid to this cricketer by a contemporary: an over from Baloo contained “six deliveries—each a different menace and yet looking as harmless as the morning dew on a grass blade”. This tribute illuminates his world of cricket, if prejudice did not vitiate the attitudinal approach of the Hindus afflicted by the caste virus.

Four cricketers—all brothers, Baloo, Shivaram, Ganpat and Vithal, all gift of the Palwankar family—

graced and empowered Indian cricket greatly in its infancy. But despite their spectacular performances they were treated nothing better than dirt and undesirable. Their performances, however, were not considered adequate to qualify themselves for captaincy of Indian cricket teams. Ramachandra Guha writes: “Baloo though senior was deprived of captaincy. He retired and then the matter was hushed up. Shivaram retired before such a question could crop up in his case. Then came the turn of Vithal. But time and again he was put down. His juniors were thrust over his head. No wonder the Hindus failed—miserably failed—yet the diehards could not listen to justice and reason. But the force of circumstances was too great and after a lot of haggling at long last they liberalised themselves enough to throw the captainship at Vithal.”

Merit and caste

With the adoption of India’s Constitution, the Union Public Service Commission came into being in 1950. The same year the first examination for recruiting IAS etc. was held. It was conducted in two parts—written and interview—as against three parts now. A Bengali Scheduled Caste, Achyutananda Das, not only made it to the IAS, his aggregate score was the highest (613 out of 1050) in the written part. In viva voce, however, he was awarded the lowest marks (110 out of 300) of all the candidates recommended for appointment. In the merit list he was the 48th or the last candidate. Aniruddha Dasgupta, Baidya by caste, also a Bengali and bhadralok, an euphemism for upper caste, despite the worst aggregate or the lowest marks (494) in the written

examination amongst all those who qualified for interview, obtained, astonishingly, the highest (88.33 per cent of 300) marks in the personality test. When the pen of the bhadraklok could not impress his examiners, how did he enamour the Interview Board with his personality? This remains an enigma unanswered yet.¹² During the interview, the janam kundli or full personal details of candidates are disclosed to the interviewers. Both the underdog and the lapdog were, I guess, interviewed outside areas of their studies and knowledge, which might be largely unfair to test one's mental ability, moral aptitude and alertness, judgment, decision-making, etc.¹³ The fact remains that the gap in marks in the written examination between the chhotalok (lowborn) and bhadraklok was 119. In no subject, the latter scored 119 marks.¹⁴ Candidates know too well how a gap of even one mark makes their fortune in an open national level competition.

In its interview the bhadraklok not only made up the huge gap but far exceeded also the scores of the first Scheduled Caste in the IAS. Dasgupta's position in the merit list was 24th and was offered the Indian Foreign Service. In the first year itself, thus, the UPSC tainted itself and shook the confidence of underprivileged candidates in its impartiality. If the candidates' caste identity and other details were not placed before the Interview Board, the result of the first SC IAS perhaps could have been different. Irrespective of merit or virtue, hatred against low castes is universal and integral to the Hindu ethos. The beneficiaries actually perpetuate caste and its abuses in India.

Tailpiece

Perhaps in 1992(?) a young Rajdeep Sardesai, then a private TV correspondent, met me at Muzaffarpur and spoke to me at length on many social issues having bearing on the political-administrative life and culture of Bihar. He unequivocally denounced caste politics indulged in the State by the then Chief Minister to establish himself as the messiah of the backwards, minorities, Scheduled Castes and tribes.

Footnotes

1. In reply to a question in the Bihar Legislative Council in 1946, Dr Srikrishna Sinha, the Prime Minister of Bihar, read out a list of casualties in Shahabad district during the 'Quit India' Movement. His list, based on the report of the Superintendent of Police of Shahabad, contained the name of a solitary woman who was killed in police firing. She was Akli Devi.
2. In Calcutta, a locality has been renamed after a rank communalist of Barisal district (now in Bangladesh) by the Calcutta Municipal Corporation as a freedom fighter.
3. BBC News, Sunday, February 19, 2006, India's feisty untouchable woman.
4. Ananda Bazar Patrika, August 8, 1994, Calcutta.
5. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soma_Biswas
6. Boria Majumdar, 'Hulla Baloo in Poona Gym', Outlook, April 23, 2003.
7. Ibid.
8. Ramachandra Guha, Cricket and Caste.

9. Boria Majumdar, "Mohun Bagan's 'battles' against the Raj", The Times of India, August 15, 2013.
10. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palwan...>
11. Guha, op. cit.
12. A. K. Biswas, 'Case of an IAS Topper, Fate of a Scheduled Caste Candidate', Mainstream, vol. XXXII, no. 5, December 18, 1993. <http://www.ambedkar.org/research/Ca...>
13. During his second term as the Governor of Bihar (1993-98), I had occasion to have the benefit of a discussion with Dr A. R. Kidwai, who was previously Chairman, UPSC (1973-77), at the Raj Bhavan, Patna. According to him, a candidate should be asked questions in areas conversant to him and be allowed to express his mind candidly so as to form an impartial opinion about his personality, education and values. It is unfair to put riddles to a candidate and puzzle him out of wit.
14. Ibid.

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Preamble, Secularism and Constitution

Irfan Engineer

It is a fact that the words “secular” and “socialist” were not included in the preamble in the Constitution adopted by the Constituent Assembly (CA), but after you graduate, you do not tell the world that your qualification is matriculation. Nor does one affix our photo taken when one was born on driving licence and passports. Likewise, after liberating ourselves and constituting ourselves into a democratic, socialist and secular nation, and after a bitterly fought freedom movement in which thousands sacrificed their carriers, liberties, enduring physical injuries inflicted by the colonial state and sacrificed even their lives, we cannot pull out a picture of our birth (socio-political structure in ancient period) and say we are a Hindu Rashtra with words socialist and secular missing in them. Hindu Rashtra would be anti-secular and we are witnessing the ideology being forced by the state even on unwilling, which include women, adivasis, dalits, workers and liberals within the Hindu community.

Though the words secular and socialist were added later, there was no doubt in the minds of people birthing the Constitution that they were creating a secular and socialist Constitution, even though the words were consciously not used. The word “secular” as we understand now, at the relevant time carried more of a birth mark connoting non-religious if not anti-religious phenomena. Those who parented the Constitution looked upon secularism not as irreverence

towards faith or turning away from religion, but freedom to profess practice and propagate religion. Lok Nath Mishra asked how would it sound (if the word secular was used) when Art. 19 (Article 25 of the final Constitution) gave citizens right to propagate religion! In spite of strong objections from the right wing elements, the right to “propagate” religion alongside the right to “profess and practice” religion was retained in the then Art. 19.

H V Kamath wanted the preamble to begin with the words — “In the name of God, we the people of India...” A. Thanu Pillai intervened and opposed Kamath’s amendment stating it would amount to compulsion in matter of religion and would be contrary to freedom of faith. Rohini Kumar Chaudhury wanted to amend Kamath’s amendment and have the opening words as “In the name of Goddess”. Pandit Hridaynath Kunzru also opposed Kamath’s amendment on the ground that collective could not be forced on anybody and it would be contrary to the Preamble which promised freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship to everyone. Kamath pressed for division and his motion was defeated 41 (Ayes) to 68 (Noes). All other variations of Kamath’s amendment like — addition of words “in the name of Parmeshwara”, “By the grace of Supreme Being” etc. met the same fate — defeat by voice votes. Brajeshwar Prasad made a strong appeal that the word “secular” should find place in the

Constitution as the national leaders had laid greatest stress on it and it would “tone-up the morale of the minorities”.

Thus, even though the word “secular” was not introduced into the preamble as the word then understood was different than the way we in India used it, the right to profess, practice and propagate religion along with rejection of amendments to introduce words “In the name of God” signified the middle path that Constituent Assembly wanted to tread.

Similarly, there were amendments to introduce the words “socialist”. However socialism too then was associated with state control of all means of production and abolition of private property, which could not have been the way forward for India then. Maulana Hasrat Mohani made a strong pitch that India in the preamble should be called “Union of Indians Socialistic Republics” on the line of USSR. Shibban Lal Saksena moved the amendment which among other things constituted “Bharat into a Sovereign, Independent Democratic, Socialist Republic...” whereas Brajeshwar Prasad wanted “to constitute India into a co-operative commonwealth to establish socialist order...”. All the amendments were negative. However the Constitution has provisions for affirmative action for the women, children, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, other socially and educationally backward classes. The Constitutional parents also thought it prudent to include

Part IV on Directive Principles of State Policy in which, among many other things, the state would try to pursue the policy under which “the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good” (Art. 39 (b)) and “the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment” (Art. 39 (c)). In his address on 25th November when the Constitution was finally ready, Dr. Ambedkar described the Constitution as ‘social democracy’. He said:

“We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well. Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy.”

The Constituent Assembly left subsequent generations to introduce the words “socialist” and “secularism” into the Preamble of the Constitution. Dr. Ambedkar quoted Jefferson in his final adoption address to the Assembly:

“We may consider each generation as a distinct nation, with a right, by the will of the majority, to bind themselves, but none to bind the succeeding generation, more than the inhabitants of another country.”

Dr. Ambedkar had apprehended the contradiction of having a Constitution that propounds equality of all citizens amidst huge social inequalities: “On the 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be

recognizing the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we

will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has to laboriously built up.” We need to remember those words of wisdom of Dr. Ambedkar.

Violence in Kerala

We, the undersigned, strongly condemn the unprecedented communal violence at the end of January, 2015, in Tuneri, Vellur and Kodanjeri villages, Nadapuram, in Kozhikode, Kerala, in which more than a hundred Muslim families and homes have been singled out, attacked, and crores worth of property destroyed. We are utterly horrified, and outraged, that violence of this extent has received scant attention from the media, electronic, print or even social.

Recently, on 21st January 2015, a local murder was instantly transformed into a communal conflict. Shubin Bhaskaran, a 19 year old DYFI activist, resident of Vellur, a village dominated by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) was stabbed to death by an Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) activist, Teyyampadi Ismayil, with the help of his brother Teyyampadi Muneer. Ismayil is known to have criminal antecedents and was once jailed in accordance with the ‘The Kerala Anti-Social Activities (prevention) act, 34/2007’ (Goonda Act). The aftermath of this cold blooded murder, a personal settling of scores between two individuals

was instantly communalised, and in a manner that is reminiscent of communal violence in other parts of the country, especially Gujarat, 2002, and Muzzafarnagar, 2013. In the three days following Shubin’s death, Muslim houses in Vellur and surrounding villages were singled out, marked by black flags and sheets and were systematically attacked with explosives, chemicals and other inflammable materials. 48 houses are completely destroyed, while 34, partially. According to an initial assessment property worth 40 to 50 crores of rupees is destroyed. Anecdotal evidence suggests that approximately 150 wells in this region have been made unusable by stuffing them with chemicals and burnt furniture, making long term habitation of these homes, and cultivation, impossible.

Women, some of whom are pregnant, were intimidated at knife points and threatened with “Gujarat like consequences” of stabbing and burning when they resisted the attackers attempting to loot their houses. These are homes where Muslim men are largely absent and away in the Gulf. What is equally chilling, and distressing, is that all

Muslims in this region have fled their homes, and are seeking shelter in the homes of relatives in nearby areas.

We find it condemnable that the CPM is playing down the role of its party workers in this area. This is a region that has complex political - caste, community and party - configurations, and it is unlikely that BJP workers could either have identified the Muslim houses of these CPI (M) dominated areas or have singlehandedly wreaked this kind of damage as alleged by the Marxist party. North Kerala, in post-Independence India, has witnessed sustained violence for decades along party lines. In the past this has been between CPI(M) and RSS workers, or sympathisers. What is frightening is that now it has taken an anti-Muslim turn. Party affiliations have long masked underlying, and changing, configurations of caste and community. In a climate of increasing communal polarisation in the country, it is imperative that everyone who cares about India's future, its secular fabric, and social justice, condemn such despicable modes of sectarian violence.

We also demand that speedy action be taken, the culprits in this communal attack be brought to justice, and adequate compensation be paid to the families of the affected. Most importantly, we demand that peace be restored so that Muslims who have fled their homes and fear for their lives can return, and live in safety, and with dignity.

—G. Arunima, Centre for Women's Studies, JNU & P. K. Yasser Arafath, Dept. of History, University of Delhi

“From Sharmila, Make By India Campaign”

Human Rights Committee of Manipur Students' Association, Delhi has launched one month campaign on 26th January, 2015 at the University of Delhi which will conclude on the 28th of February, 2015.

The campaign aims to showcase:

- Indian National Congress strongly opposed the British colonial law- Armed forces special powers ordinance 1942. The same INC passed the Armed Forces Special Power Act in 1958 after some amendments in the Parliament.
- The BJP resolved that they will never repeal as long as India exists.
- The regional political parties like Trinamool congress, AIADMK, DMK, BSP, Samajwadi, Janata Dal Parivar, BJD continue to support this draconian law. AAP has no difference on AFSPA.
- Most of the Indian thinkers, scholars, personalities, journalists have chosen the conspiracy of silence. Majority of the Indians continue to ignore AFSPA. 95 per cent of the Indian intelligentsia believes that India could not sustain without AFSPA.
- Most Gandians who believe in non-violence hate Irom Sharmila and people's struggle.
- Indian political ideology and political thoughts, arthasastra, religious texts justify everything and anything to sustain in the name of politics and security of the state.
- Casteist, sexist and racist mentality does not allow to sense the pain and trauma of the people under military regime, its politics and the practice of AFSPA.
- India hopes to produce more economy, entrepreneurship, business and compete with other countries around the world to make India a producing

economy and proposes “Make in India” programme. But in the case of Manipur and other military controlled areas, it produces more police personals, Village Defence Force (VDF), Special Police Officers (SPO), which again produce more brutality and oppression to the people.

- After the annexation of Manipur by Dominion of India, in the last 65 years, the once self sustained Manipuri economy has now become completely dependent on the import economy based on National Highway.
- India makes Irom Sharmila who is now carrying the longest hunger strike in the history of mankind. She has been on fifteen years of fast against AFSPA.

—Bipinchand Pheiroijam.

Books by Surendra Mohan

1. **Vikas Ka Rasta: Nai Arthik Neetiyon ka vishleshan..**Price 600 rupees.
2. **Samajwad, Dharma Nirapekshata aur Samajik Nyaya** Reissued as second edition; Price 500 rupees
3. **Vartaman Rajneeti ki Jwalant Chunautiyan.** Price 400 rupees.
4. **Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia ki Neetiyon:** (This booklet was published late last year.) Price 25 rupees.

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Congress sans Gandhis

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**Drop the Ordinance:
Stop Land Acquisition**

There is a right way and a wrong way to do things, just as there is a right time and a wrong time. It would seem, judging from the political and media reaction to Rahul Gandhi's unexpected decision to go on leave, that on both counts he is off course. Senior Congress leader and party spokesman Digvijay Singh faults Rahul on the timing while grudgingly conceding that everyone needs an occasional break. Other parties, all of whom are adversaries, say that it makes no difference to the Congress and they add uncharitably, to national politics, whether the young man is on duty or on leave. However, the general feeling seems to be that Rahul could not have chosen a worst moment for going on leave, ostensibly to do some self-introspection and to diagnose the ills his party is suffering. He could have deferred the exercise by a few weeks and taken a short sabbatical a few days before his party's April conclave.

The handful of reasons cited by all and sundry seem neither here nor there since they range from the plausible to the bizarre, one of them going to the extent of citing his impending marriage. Though there has been talk off and on the issue of his marriage, there is no hard

evidence to indicate the certainty or the timing of the joyous event. The media has speculated on the identity of the "lucky lady" but it was just speculation and nothing more. Another reason cited is that the mother and son do not see eye to eye on organizational issues and that the mother frowns upon the growing group of young political activists surrounding the son. Yet another factor cited is that Rahul has no heart any longer in the kind of politics his party is championing and that he wants to radicalize the Grand Old Party's rather worn-out ideology. And also, it is said that Rahul had planned a sabbatical two months ago but his mother had asked him to defer it till the Delhi assembly polls. The real reason? You pays your money and you takes your choice.

If the news of Rahul wanting to seek seclusion for a spot of introspection to reflect on the recent events and the future course of the party has entered the main national discourse, the reason is not far to seek. The Congress is on the decline in spite of or possibly because of the mother-son leadership. The Congress has been unlucky at electoral politics, and has been losing state after state to the BJP. In the Delhi assembly polls,

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Between the lines

Should PM visit China?

Kuldip Nayar

it did not even open its account. The fact that the BJP fared equally badly and was trounced by the Aam Aadmi Party is just another matter. The recent reverses suggest that there is something very very wrong with a party which has played a notable part in India's political history. Another reason for concern is that nobody in India wants a secular party to lose consistently to a communal party. Besides, as a political entity the Congress is still well-knit organizationally, it is cadre-strong, its ideology is sound and its direction is right. All it needs is a swift and healthy revival and grow strong enough to challenge the Sangh parivar whose fortunes are on the ascendant.

Narendra Modi campaigned on many slogans, but one of the platforms was to usher in a Congress-*mukt bharat* (A Congress-free India). The Sangh Parivar would no doubt reinforce this platform with the suggestion that the Congress should be freed from the mother-son stranglehold on the party. Within the Congress itself, there are groups that are advocating the radicalization of the party on new structures that exclude the Gandhis. The family, according to these groups, has outlived its utility, its vote-catching potential is worn out, and that the family is turning into a dictatorship. To such groups, a fall-out is a blessing. The Gandhis themselves ought to hasten organizational elections in the April AICC so that a new leadership can take over. The idea of a Congress sans the Gandhis is worth pursuing if only as a strategy to democratize the party and re-vamp it to face the new challenges organizationally and ideologically.

Full marks to the arrogance of China! It summons the Indian envoy at Beijing and conveys its displeasure over the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Arunachal Pradesh. The territory is part of India and was never claimed by China till some years ago when it attained the military prowess worth the name.

Beijing told our ambassador Ashok Kantha that Modi's visit "undermined China's territorial sovereignty right and interests." Not long ago, Beijing had begun stapling visas of the people of Arunachal visiting China to indicate that it was a "different" territory as if it was not part of India.

New Delhi has borne the humiliation quietly then and has done it so now after the Indian Prime Minister has visited part of his own country. This is, however, the first time that Beijing has publicly expressed its unhappiness. It has in the past accepted without demur the maps showing Arunachal Pradesh as India's territory. So far the dispute has been over a small territory between Arunachal and the China border. The status of Arunachal has been seldom questioned.

Again it is a part of arrogance when the important message is conveyed through Chinese vice-Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin, who says: "Modi's visit undermined China's territorial sovereignty, right and interests. Such act by the Indian side artificially amplified differences between the two countries on the

border issue and thus went against the principles and consensus that the two sides reached on properly addressing the issue."

Thus far New Delhi has stood firm to the appreciation of the country. It has rightly gone to the extent of saying that the Prime Minister would be visiting Arunachal again. The message would have gone home clearly if New Delhi had announced the date also. True, the Prime Minister's engagements have to be scheduled beforehand. But a departure could have been made in view of the importance of the problem. The message would have been loud and clear.

In fact, the BJP, if not the government, should have inspired a debate whether the Prime Minister should visit China in May, as scheduled, to convey the nation's annoyance as well as concern. That India cannot be taken for granted is something China should be made to realize.

Probably, New Delhi does not face the rumpus it would cause if the PM's visit is postponed, if not cancelled. But China has given enough of provocation to make India reconsider the visit. China's arrogance should not go without being rebutted.

Matters about the territory relate to India's sovereignty as they should not be taken lightly. Prime Minister Modi should find an early opportunity to tell China that the territorial integrity was not

dependent on relations between New Delhi and Beijing. In fact, it is the other way round. The future of Sino-India relations would improve if there was a consensus on each other's sensitivity over the territorial sovereignty. China is in occupation of a substantial part of Indian Territory in the northeast.

New Delhi's suspicion of China's aggrandizement was well founded because India has been prey to the betrayal of trust. In a letter to state chief ministers, India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru said:

"If we cannot have a real peace and cooperation between nations in the world, the next big thing is to try and avoid the outbreak of war on a large scale in the hope that this may give the world an opportunity some time later of arriving at peaceful settlements.

"If however war broke out, then we shall keep out of it also. It will be some gain if a part of the earth's surface is kept out of this terrific conflict between giants. This is the reason why we have refused to align ourselves with either of the two great power blocks and why we are not agreeable to joining either the Middle East Defence Organisation or the South East Asia one."

Still Nehru was one person who at that time could avert the conflict and he did. Modi does not enjoy the same status in the world, nor has he the vision. Yet he is in a position to stall, with the help of the newly-won friend, President Barrack Obama. The ambition of Beijing to dominate the world affairs is nothing new. It has always wanted to be a Sultan and treat the world as its durbar.

I recall how angry were the
(Continued on Page 4)

A crisis in governance

Rajindar Sachar

A deep somnolence, lack of direction and absence of commitment to the constitutionally directed philosophy of social justice seems to be enveloping the major existing political parties enhancing the danger of BJP policy of divisiveness and pro-capitalist policies spreading in the country. This is shown by the lack of any response and consistent policy and programme from the leftist and secular parties. That may explain the gushing congratulation they have showered on Aam Admi Party (AAP). No doubt AAP is entitled to all praise over its massive win in Delhi. But for any political party and individual to so believe and act that AAP can be a instrument of change in political and social life of the country is like wanting to see a rainbow in the sky during the afternoon blazing sun. I say this because AAP believes in private economy being the solution to the country's ills and poverty. It so specifically said in its Manifesto that: "Government should not be in the business of running business". "AAP is not against capitalism as such but only crony capitalism" – this is a wrong thinking. By just emphasizing crony capitalism the evil and the unsuitability of capitalism for the development of our country is deliberately papered over – evil of the capitalism itself is the real danger.

The urgency and danger of open onslaught by Big Business on the sanctum of Indian State has exploded in our face by the recent widespread Corporate Sector spying in the innermost offices, including the highest, of Union of India,

in Oil, Coal, Power Ministries and in security related nuclear arsenals. Secret Papers of the yet to be announced Budget have also been leaked.

This action is more awesome than a mere spying. Modi government is all praise for Corporate Sector. It publicly professes that the country can only progress through the instrumentality of private sector. If with all the favours from Modi Government, the highest in the corporate sector are on a path to destroy the inner sanctity of the corridors and policy making State, B.J.P. needs to scrutinize more closely its open alliance with Corporate Sector.

It is still more worrisome when it is known that another complaint against the same corporate company has been pending enquiry notwithstanding the complaint by Enforcement Directorate (ED) made in 2013 to Reserve Bank of India, about the legality of a loan of over Rs. 6000 Crores given to the dummy of this very corporate giant. And still ironically the Union Minister of Finance has announced that he plans to do disinvestment to the extent of Rs. 45000 Crore in Financial Year 2016 by selling a part of holding of family silver of public sectors like ONGC and even of State Bank of India and other public sector corporations, amongst others to these very private companies. He has also announced that his tax policies will be corporate friendly.

The Government has unashamedly announced that it will not appeal against Bombay High

Court judgment or amend the law retrospectively to nullify the effect of Vodafone judgment by Supreme Court (which many eminent jurists say requires reconsideration even ignoring Solicitor General's advice to file appeal) which shows such close link with corporate lobby. The loss from change of law will continue to deprive Union Government of tax receipts from future transactions also, and will be a big drain in our economy.

Recently in Parliamentary recess Union Government slyly issued ordinance especially land ordinance to almost pulverize the provisions of new Land Acquisition Act. The Supreme Court had said that in spite of the ordinance the Acquisition would lapse, if compensation has not been paid within the stipulated time as, the ordinance does not have specific retrospective effect. But as the government is committed to bring in the amendments to help the Big Business; it has no blushes to give assurance to big Business that it will change the law retrospectively, to help them rather than the farmers. This apprehension of landholders arises from the much publicized scheme of Modi Government expediting its scheme of Delhi-Mumbai corridor which will result in displacement of thousands of farmers and other residents. This is one of the cruelest of ventures by the Corporate Sector friendly Modi Government and is already being opposed by Narmada Bachav Andolan, Socialist Party (India) and other human right organizations.

Another urgent matter calling for attention is the inhumanity against the poor in Delhi who though on paper have the right to free treatment in some of the private hospitals who had been allotted land at concessional rates, (as directed by the Courts in a Petition filed by

Peoples Union for Civil Liberties) the position is that 40 per cent beds remain vacant.

Another scandal continuing from the U.P.A. government in 2015 is of Special Economic Zones – 50 per cent of allotted land remains unused. Parliamentary Standing Committee in 2007 had estimated a revenue loss of Rs. 1.75 lakh Crores from tax holiday granted between 2005 and 2010. The SEZs were touted to lead to export boom and earn foreign exchange. The reality is that less than 48 per cent of existing SEZs are engaged in export activity – but only 3.8 per cent of exports came from these zones in 2013-14. How deceitful can you get.

Any party who seeks to speak for the poor in the country should be ashamed at the gross deprivation and

(Continued from Page 3)

former army generals at Beijing where I touched upon at a meeting that China was still in control of India's territory. Their reply was hawkish when they said: "You have forgotten the lesson we taught you in 1962."

Nehru was wrong in recognizing Tibet as part of China. By doing so, he probably thought that he would strengthen his relations with Beijing. But its then Prime Minister, Chou En-Lai, was only exploiting Nehru's contacts to be known in the world. Once his purpose was served, Chou En-Lai showed his real face when he attacked India in 1962.

By all means we should have good relations with China but not at the expense of our territory. What purpose would Modi's visit serve when Beijing is not willing to recognize Arunachal Pradesh as part of our territory? It is still not too late

inequality persisting in our country. According to the 59th round of NSSO report estimates the average net worth of the top 10 per cent of the population in India was 380 times that of the bottom 10 per cent. The net worth could support consumption for 23 years for the top bracket and less than three months for the bottom one. The report said that the total billionaire wealth represented about 10 per cent of India's GDP in 2012. Can this vulgar inequality be allowed to continue? If Modi's economic pattern is allowed to continue it will become worse. Only socialist oriented policies can checkmate it. Will the so-called secular and progressives make a joint programme front along with trade unions and farmers' unions to meet this challenge by the combined onslaught of partnership of Global and Indian corporate giants?

to make China realize that it cannot get away with the insult it heaps on India by not recognizing Arunachal Pradesh as an integral part of our country.

Relations between India and China are important for peace in the region. But China has to be as much sincere as India has been. But one gets a feeling that Beijing wants to talk from the point of strength and can see its efforts to encircle India. It has given a generous assistance to Nepal and is in the process of setting up a port at Sri Lanka. Beijing is also trying to win over Myanmar.

India would be the last country to object to good relations with its neighbours. But if the intention is to use them as a lever to pressure New Delhi, it smacks of ulterior motive. This does not speak of friendship, which India wants to cultivate.

On Aam Admi Party

Qurban Ali

It is, indeed, instructive to analyse why the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was decimated at the polls in Delhi. But the more important point is how the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has emerged with such a bang: 67 seats in a house of 70! The BJP is down to just three from the 32 it had won in the December 2013 Assembly election.

What's the AAP? It is a secular, left-of-centre party which may become an alternative in the country, replacing the Congress which is languishing. Some time ago a set of motivated people came from different fields and joined Gandhian Anna Hazare in his campaign for the appointment of Lokpal in order to fight corruption at high places.

The movement engulfed the entire country in no time because the campaign had permeated all segments of the society. How the government beguiled Hazare and his associates to circumvent its undertaking to appoint an ombudsman is another story.

Yet, there is no doubt that his movement attracted many idealists in society at that time. And Arvind Kejriwal was one of them. He was among the many who aspired for a clean and transparent polity. Although the movement was suppressed, it never allowed its idealism to go out of the public gaze. That was when the AAP was born and it refocused its attention on the issue at hand. The party contested the election in Delhi and was briefly in power.

But the answer to the question of how and why the voters handed such an incredible mandate to the AAP this time is that the people were sick and tired of the two main political parties - the Congress and the BJP.

The AAP, despite facing public apathy, stuck to its path and managed to catch the imagination of the people once again to be voted to power with an unprecedented majority. Much will now depend on Kejriwal and his associates and how they pursue the ideals they have adumbrated. The Delhi electorate has pinned its hope on AAP because the people believed that the party can deliver.

The two main political parties do not evoke optimism and both the Congress and the BJP look like relics of the past. People are looking for an alternative and the Delhi election has thrown open one such opportunity. It is, however, too early to think that the politics of values, which goaded the people to participate in the freedom movement, can return.

Whether or not the AAP leaders realise it, they have become the centre of attention as well as hope. They can become an option at the Centre in the next Lok Sabha elections in 2019. But it will be a different journey and, to traverse it, the AAP will have to remain focussed on values which constitute the basic structure of our Constitution.

True, the Delhi election was not a referendum on Prime Minister Narendra Modi. But it was the BJP that had made it so by putting his photos on every bit of publicity

material it released. The hundreds of thousands of rupees worth of advertisements which the party released in newspapers and on hoardings displayed in Delhi had the photograph of Modi along with Kiran Bedi who was seeking election.

It would be too simplistic to believe that the induction of Kiran Bedi as the chief ministerial candidate was the cause of the BJP's defeat. Perhaps, it made some difference. But the vote was primarily against the BJP and its ideology of Hindutva. The party still does not want to face the fact that Modi's spell has waned.

The BJP itself looks jaded and stuck in the old mould of religious superiority. The voters swung towards them in the last election not because of their ideology but because they were promised development, the economic betterment of the people. But almost 10 months of the Modi government at the centre have made little difference to the life of an ordinary man on the street.

Both the BJP and the Congress, which did not win a single seat in the Delhi election, must introspect hard and change their policies.

If the BJP analyses the causes of its defeat, it will find the ideology of Hindutva does not sell in a society which is pluralistic. The vandalism of churches is suspected to be the handiwork of extremists in the party. The campaigns like ghar wapsi or the projection of Nathuram Godse, who

assassinated Mahatma Gandhi, do not go down well in a country that takes pride in being secular.

The Congress, stuck in dynastic politics, has little hope of a revival. The party was a movement and had all its qualities. Today, it is distant from the people. The belated efforts of Rahul Gandhi to address rallies or give speeches are too little, too late. He should cultivate the media. But he hates to hold a press conference or give an interview. The rout of both the Congress and the BJP should make them go back to the drawing boards. If they do that honestly they would realise that they are distant from the ground realities.

Even if they do not move left, they have to find a solution to poverty and unemployment. Modi's free enterprise has not given any dividends so far. There is no running away from the reality that one third of the people are living below the poverty line.

The RSS, the BJP's ideologue, takes pride in saying that the rule of Hindus has returned after many decades. This is not a solution but the problem. All segments of society should be associated with development. One, however, feels that the minorities are being left out purposely.

India, as Mahatma Gandhi said, is a bouquet of flowers. He was emphasising the plurality of society. The Constitution assures equality to all before the law, whether Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs or Christians. But it is a pity that we are going away from that principle. The sooner we return to that basic requirement, the less arduous would our journey be towards a democratic, secular and socialist polity.

A win for alternative politics or...

Sujata Mohapatra

Aam Aadmi Party won the assembly election in Delhi with a thumping majority. Securing 67 out of total 70 assembly seats AAP registered an astounding victory unheard of in recent days. It has emerged as a rallying point for all anti-BJP and anti-Modi forces to neutralize the dominance of Narendra Modi-Amit Shah duo in the political arena. AAP not only stopped the winning juggernaut of BJP but also created hope for all the regional political parties to fight the saffron dominance effectively in the coming elections. The unsolicited support from Nitish Kumar, Prakash Karat and Mamata Banerjee to the Aam Aadmi Party in Delhi election only highlights the nervousness and anxiety of these parties over the outcome of the Delhi election. The election was a watershed in Indian polity for the simple reason that it has raised the survival question for the grand old Congress party and has given hints for replacing it with the emerging AAP. Although it is too early to predict the political discourse and write off the Congress party, it is very genuine to assume that the AAP experiment has opened up a new chapter in Indian polity.

AAP has fought the election on the premise of alternative politics which has the key elements of Swaraj, anti-corruption and accountable governance. In a polity dominated by personality cult, high command culture, money and muscle power AAP is vetted to be different in form and substance. Hence, it is highly essential to scrutinize the recent Delhi election to find out

the import of the victory of AAP in terms of substantive change or only a win in electoral battle in line with the Assam Gana Parishad of the past. Moreover understanding the electoral victory of AAP will provide clues for the future of the nascent party as well as its capacity to change the political discourse of the country.

Aam Aadmi Party declares that it is for Swaraj where the citizens will have a say in the day to day affairs of the country. The federal structure will be vertically deepened to the level of Mohalla Sabha and Ward Sabha and financial power will be given to the local committees to manage day to day governance. AAP proclaims that its candidates in the election will be decided by the local cadres of the party. It had shown the sample of its people centric governance model by asking the public to give their consent for a Congress supported government during 2014 government formation exercise as it had no majority on its own. Apart from mandate from the public for all its decisions, AAP did not allow tainted candidates to contest on its tickets. Its disclosure of sources of political funding and placing them in the website for public scrutiny opened up another chapter of transparent politics in Indian history. Exposing the political-administration-corporate nexus AAP leveled charges against the mighty industrial houses and promised of accountable, corruption free governance in the state. As a people's government its leadership abhorred VIP culture and operated

from modest accommodations sans the red beacon culture. The performance of AAP in the 2014 election proved the fact that people had accepted its pledges as genuine and necessary for the impending changes.

Is it reassuring of the fact that the outstanding victory of AAP in 2015 is again a reconfirmation of the values that it stands for? Is it a vote against the BJP? Is it a result of effective electoral management? It is a fact that BJP has lost in 2015 only 1 per cent of its previous vote share of 2014 assembly election. Although it has done very badly in comparison to the Lok Sabha election where it captured all the seven seats, still it is too early to assume that the result is a negative vote on the performance of the eight month old Modi government at the centre. Even Aam Aadmi Party as a matter of strategy kept the Delhi election local and did not draw the Prime Minister into the fray. Therefore, as already most of the election analysts are out with the opinion that the result is a positive vote for AAP and is not as much a negative vote for BJP, we are to decide between the remaining two causal factors i.e. the values of AAP or the electoral management as the deciding factor in the outcome. Of course both the factors overlap each other at times. But still it is desirable to determine the key trending factor.

Going by the developments preceding the election it is hard to believe that the focus of AAP's foray in any way was related to its professed ideologies. In order to give a solid fight in Delhi the party decided not to fight any other election either in Hariyana or in Maharashtra which took place before the Delhi election negating the local urge to register their presence as an

alternative discourse. Again keeping winnability as the criterion some of the candidates in Delhi election were imported from other parties and given tickets even though the local volunteers were against them. Even election funding is under cloud as the funds received from some companies now were under suspicion as donations from money-laundering fronts. The entire election was fought keeping Arvind Kejriwal as the sole mascot. It was a direct projection of Arvind Kejriwal as the chief minister before the election itself. You cannot find a single poster having other leadership mentioned. Shanti Bhusan, the founding advisor of the party openly revolted against these perceived improprieties and Prashant Bhushan, the member of the political affairs committee, bemoaned the erosion of the values for which the party stood for. Overall the rhetoric of ideological high ground was sinking in the reality of political necessities. The song *Panch Sal Kejriwal* in itself was the proof of the individual centric fight that AAP fought in the election which led it to the outstanding performance. Even the entire social media campaign veered around Arvind Kejriwal and instead of the policies and programmes it was the person who drew all the attention.

So the entire AAP victory comes down as a result of astute electoral management by the party. Whether the preparation of the manifesto through the Delhi Dialogue process which provided a semblance of Swaraj, or pitting Arvind Kejriwal against Jagdish Mukhi and Kiran Bedi AAP managed to create a situation of comparative honesty against its opponents. Even AAP's huge mobilization of volunteers, door to door campaign, promise of discounts on tariffs of electricity and

water and end of inspector raj on the business community generated good support for the party. The honest admission of the party about its earlier resignation as a mistake also endeared it to the electorates. Of course the self-goals by the BJP in the form of personal accusations, communal flaring, overestimation of its previous performances and thrusting an outside person as the chief ministerial candidate aided the effort of the AAP to sweep the election. Media played its role by discarding Congress as a serious contender in the event. In the bipartite contest it was advantage AAP as it had time and resources as well as the perception of being victimized by both the national parties.

It is too early to be judgemental on AAP's performance as the outcome of election management only. Its future course of action, democratization of the party and decision making process, space for the dissent and role of the volunteers in deciding the matters in the party will uncover its ideological convictions. Even its performance like bringing Janalokpal act, Swaraj act, accountable governance, transparency in dealings and delivering on the promises in the manifesto will be the key indicators about its approach towards a participatory model. Hence, we will be waiting for a verdict on AAP as a new dawn or as an aberration in the beaten path. For the time being, it can be safely assumed that the victory rests upon a better electoral management in anticipation of structural changes towards Swaraj which is a long way to go for AAP. Let other political parties follow AAP and learn how to manage elections.

Indian Agriculture: Dangers Ahead

Dr Raj Kumar Sen

It is not needed at all to highlight the importance of agriculture in the Indian economy considering the dependence of more than 60 per cent of the workforce on this sector even after nearly seven decades of independence. It is a paradox that though Ganga-Jamuna Doab region is one of the most fertile regions of the world, historically this has been not only the habitat of largest number of poor people but also this area has been frequently visited by notorious famines and shortage of foodgrains. Though in the ancient periods famines were the results of lack of communication and information, yet such things happened even under the British Rule. The British period was marked by two most notorious famines during its beginning and the end, which were known respectively as '*Chhiattorer monwantar*' and '*Panchaser monwantar*' both of which are suspected to be man-made and claimed large number of human and other lives. In other words though India is a fertile land in terms of its agriculture yet this sector has to suffer quite often from dangers of shortage and crisis and for the Government of India both before and after independence the agriculture sector appeared to be a continuous and significant problem. Just after independence the official policy was to initiate a 'grow more food' program and in the first five year plan the main emphasis was on agriculture and irrigation. The total availability of foodgrains was much less than its demand and the situation became serious in the

1960s, when India had to divert her resources due to aggressions in 1962 and 1965 from China and Pakistan respectively. Naturally she had to depend on imported foodgrains to feed her population and in this situation the ignominious PL-480 Act of USA played a significant role in the import of wheat. In those days official propaganda through various media like the cinema and posters urged the people to save the foodgrains preferably by discarding the third loaf after eating the first two. As no nation can survive for long in such a precarious situation from ship to mouth, the Government of India had to search for a long-term and permanent solution of this problem through import and adaptation of new forms of wheat and paddy to obtain a breakthrough in agricultural production. Thus Indian agriculture which was suffering for long from several dangers since the beginning of the British rule and continued even after the achievement of independence, initiated the era of the first green revolution which was really revolutionary in quantitative terms during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Green Revolution

India had taken the policy of Green Revolution in 1969 when dwarf sized wheat was invented in Mexico by Norman Borlaug and as a consequence, production of wheat increased quite rapidly. Gradually similar revolution took place also in the production of paddy, and together the increased production

of wheat and paddy were the main results of Green Revolution in the country. After 45 years of experience of Green Revolution we are now all aware about the positive impact of this revolution on the food front. The positive side of it is quite simple, namely, increase in the productivity of selected crops where the technique of this revolution has been applied. However, it was also clear that the initial increase in food production could not be sustained and the increase in food production took place with a falling rate.

GATT (General Agreement on Traffic and Trade) first introduced the concept of production of Intellection property in its eighth round in 1986. According to this Act 27(3) (B), products which will be invented or reproduced in laboratory should be patented. This Act also tells that the patented power should be equally distributed among reproducer, cultivator, society and production institution. But this Act had been replaced by the Seed Bill, 2004. The Bill tells that the government would control the quality of seeds. Actually this Bill wants to reduce the power of farmers on production of seeds. As we know the HYV seeds displaced the local seeds which were regarded as less productive. But such local seeds were developed in different areas according to the natural factors. The HYV seeds were of high productive nature of a singular type. This feature, by disobeying the traditional connection between the seeds and

nature, led to an almost extinction of such local seeds as were used so long by the cultivators. Again artificially higher fertility was brought in the land with the help of chemical inputs leading to the destruction of the natural fertility of land. The soil became gradually hardened.

Land in West Bengal was always fertile, especially in the Gangetic plain, due to annual floods leading to sedimentation that increased land fertility further. But the large scale irrigation system based on big dams blocked the flow of water and canal irrigation widely used through them led to salinity and reduced fertility of the land. Due to the lack of irrigation system at the public level, the private sector irrigation system became dominant which led to other difficulties like social and environmental problems.

Before the green revolution, the straws of the traditional paddy were used for thatching of the roofs of village cottages, but the straws of the HYV paddies are short and fragile, unsuitable for thatching the roofs. So, gradually tin replaced straws for such purposes. But it is found that the temperature inside the rooms with roofs made by tin is higher than that made by straws and as a result food that is cooked in the morning could not be consumed in the evening. Hence cooking is to be done twice a day leading to nearly doubling of the fuel cost and the tin roofed cottages led to health hazards due to extra heat increase in causing an increase in medical expenses at times. In fact the expenses of the green revolution products increased from all sides, i.e. the cost of HYV seeds, chemical fertilizers, chemical pesticides, pumped underground water, agricultural equipments, etc. In other words while there was an

increase in the quantity of output, the expenses also increased. As a result, this increasing cost made the situation for the small, marginal and landless farmers unbearable and in many cases they had to leave cultivation as their livelihood. This also led to increasing inequality among rural farmers and also an increase in the number agricultural labourers compared to farmers.

Before Green Revolution there was nearly one lakh varieties of paddy which were cultivated, but in 2000 varieties were reduced to nearly 50-60 thousand only. These gene based technology forced the farmers to cultivate the HYV paddy in the name of increasing productivity. As a result the diversified varieties of paddy have become almost extinct.

Second Green Revolution

The declining rate of agricultural productivity and production specially in case of wheat and paddy becomes an endangering problem to such an extent that the government, agriculturists and the neo-liberal economists are seriously thinking about the Second Green Revolution or the Evergreen Revolution of 2006, with the hope that the strategy would lead to self-sufficiency in food. The origin of this strategy took place as an enterprise of the Washington consensus for perpetuating the business interest of the American MNCs in the fields of seed production, production of chemical fertilizers, food processing organizations, marketing and so on. The official version of the second green revolution is based on the so-called success of the first green revolution which has already disappeared within the first four decades of its inception. Again, the first green revolution has been proved to be unsuitable in the long

run, yet there was a limited right for the farmers for the use of inputs and technology. This has also led to eviction of the small farmers from agriculture and substantially reduced the diversity in agricultural products and various classes of it.

Compared to this, the second green revolution is emerging in the era of capitalist globalization with the objective of unbridled capitalist exploitation with the help of the private capital of both domestic and foreign and western large scale MNCs. This revolution has used seeds with artificially modified genes which are the patented property of a few MNCs of the world. These seeds are of a termination type where the farmer has no right to collect new seeds by cultivating the old ones. Every year the seeds have to be purchased from the respective companies as well as the required fertilizers, pesticides etc. So the freedom of cultivation in agriculture is being curtailed. Again as MNCs are the owners of this seed, they will be able to sell them at their discretion. Thus the Indian farmers have to be in bondage with these MNCs.

In the agricultural sector India is one of the seventeen mega diversity countries. In fact the largest gene bank is the main asset in the research of bio-technology of gene. It is obvious that in the name of cooperation, the MNCs want to exercise control over this invaluable gene assets in India as it would be possible for them to produce new genetically modified seeds by using the gene and sell them throughout the world by taking advantage of the patent act. Indian farmers will be like outsiders in their own land and will be compelled to purchase the asset of their own country from the

MNCs at a high price. Again due to this technology the fertility of land is lost rapidly and the underground level of water declines beyond use. Within a short period, fertile fields would be converted into barren lands. These private companies would then turn focus on some other fertile lands.

So, in the name of agricultural development and increased production, the whole agricultural system and the food market will be handed over to the MNCs by removing them from the control of the government and the cultivators; side by side the cultivators will be ousted and will be converted into agricultural labour and the agricultural seed will be brought under the full control of the big capitalists to maximize the exploitation of capital from agriculture. Thus, this second green revolution has started this process to convert Indian agriculture and farmers to achieve this objective.

Bt Technology

A few words more may be added here about the introduction of the Bt brinjal, Bt cotton and other GM seeds and recent debates and protests associated with it. A large number of farmer organizations and NGOs have questioned the entire testing on various aspects of Bt and GM technology. Protests have been introduced against the use of Bt and GM seeds technology. A large number of farmers committed suicide in Andhra and Vidarbha due to pressure of loan for cultivating the precious GM grains.

National protest against the introduction of a large number of food products based on BT technology, specially in case of Brinjal, rice, etc. has resulted in the

postponement of such experiments on the part of official authorities but not abandoned. It is a matter of doubt whether in the long run such products will help to meet the hunger or actually reduce the nutrition base of the human beings.

Eastern India

We have already noted in the previous section the new type of dangers to Indian agriculture threatened by the declared second green revolution. But such dangers are more crucial for Eastern India for a number of reasons. It is well known that the Lower Gangetic plains are extremely fertile and naturally saturated with water. The natural wealth of this area has attracted the imperialists again and again to have a control over them since the ancient days. Naturally, in the present period, these resources will not escape this clutches of globalization which is trying to capture most of the developing countries of the World under the present unipolar world. In this neo-liberal capitalism, the market economy is guided by the concern of profit maximization only and the consideration of environment protection and sustainable development cannot be any issue in this process. Since 2003 Government of India wanted to transfer nearly 17,300 crore cubic litres of water from Ganga-Brahmaputra-Mahanadi Basin to the drought prone area of Southern India. However due to the strong public opinion against this proposal this strategy has been modified to some extent. Now the water of Eastern India will be transferred to other states remaining concealed within agricultural products in the form of vertical water. As a consequence of first Green Revolution and intensive cultivation during the last four decades in extensive areas of

Haryana, Punjab and Western U.P., the soil is now less fertile and saline and the underground water storage also is diminishing rapidly. Hence, for the Second Green Revolution we require new areas for cultivation and have now the target is Eastern and North-Eastern India. It has been estimated that in India with the help of inter-state agricultural trade nearly 15 per cent of total water used in agriculture is also transferred. In fact, since the time of first green revolution the conventional pattern of agriculture is changing substantially and substituted by products like paddy, sugarcane, etc. where water requirement is quite high and cultivated primarily in states with a low level of agriculture. The existing supply of water through large dams could not meet the requirement and hence the shortage is filled up from underground water. Consequently, the underground water is used in a much greater quantity than what enters into the soil through rainfall. The areas previously known as food bowl in India are now facing a danger of infertility and diseases like cancer in states like Punjab and Haryana leading to more and more farmer suicides. We know that the second Green Revolution has been formulated in the context of Indo-US knowledge contract made in 2005 and is dependent on Gene technology. We have already noted that such products are dangerous for the biodiversity pattern of the Indian subcontinent.

In the words of India's former President K R Narayanan, it is necessary to redefine the traditional pattern of water used in Indian agriculture and for this purpose if we can co-ordinate modern science with traditional technology for water conservation, then it will lead to the

maximum welfare of the maximum number of people.

Finally, in conclusion, it can be said that Indian Agriculture had to face various types of dangers in different phases since the British period and this situation is still continuing even in the second decade of the 21st century. However, such dangers and/or sources of them changed in different periods when the nature and character of Indian agriculture radically changed in terms of natural resources like land, water, environment and also in terms of its ownership, management and technology. In the first phase, India was dependant on import of foodgrains. In the second phase, it depended on imported seeds and technologies which led to increased productivity at the cost of invasion (both social and physical) mostly under public initiative. In the third phase, agriculture came under corporate rule and led to gene based products, the results of which are still uncertain and facing new dangers. Such dangers are more pronounced in the eastern region for their surplus waters which are targeted for exploitation under the present globalization. India has numerous experiences of success stories at the micro level which await exploitation in various areas to improve agriculture so that India can restore her position as a food basket in future.

Lastly, the recent promulgation of ordinance about the acquisition of land for industrialization has added a new dimension in India. Though officially stated that it has been promulgated to ensure a balance between economic development and protection of cultivators' interest in India. But the critic says this ordinance has put the clock back

before the enactment of 1894 Act for land acquisition as it has given a number of advantages to the industrialist and the corporate sector to acquire land of any type and also they can retain it for a longer term. This ordinance goes against the attitude of the West Bengal Government which fought against the acquisition of multi-cropped fertile land for the sake of industrialization.

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What is an Eligible Suicide?

Sankara Narayanan

The Marathwada region of Maharashtra is known for its perennially parched weather. The divisional commissioner has reported as many as 93 farm suicides in this region in the last 45 days since January 01 2015. Last year, the region had reported 569 farmers' suicides as against 207 in 2013. Crop failure and debts are considered the main reasons for farm suicide. This is common in an area where the single crop pattern is in practice.

The delay in distribution of compensation is the biggest reason for the farmers to take the extreme step. Besides, the vicious cycle of crop loan in combination with erratic monsoon in the region leaves the farmers with no option but to take the extreme step.

In Marathwada, a committee of each taluk comprising the tehsildar, police officer, taluk agriculture officer, sarpanch and a panchayat samiti member probes a suicide case to confirm if the death was due to debt burden. A farmer committing suicide is eligible for compensation only if he possesses land and is debt-ridden. Moreover, he should have taken loan **only** from nationalized or co-operative banks and registered money-lenders. There has to be follow up from the banks concerned for the repayment of the loan.

The title holder of the land is the head of the family - normally an elderly male. What will be the fate of the dependents of a young

son or daughter or daughter-in-law who cultivated the land and committed suicide due to crop loss? Share cropping farmers don't possess the land. In case such a farmer commits suicide due to crop failure, his family is not eligible for compensation.

As per the above guidelines, the kin of a farmer having no debt but lost his crops due to bad weather and ended his life will not get compensation. Height of cruelty is the case of a farmer who borrowed money from a mahajan/sahukar (unregistered money lender) and committed suicide due to crop loss.

While the state officials and ministers are not rejecting food grains cultivated by a landless farmer or a debt-less farmer or the one who borrowed money from unrecognised money lenders, why should such factors deny the kin of a farmer who ended his life to get compensation?

The administration across India at the outset rejects a farmer's death as a suicide. When established, it will deny that the suicide is due to crop failure or debt burden. It will take out the whole history of the farmer to link his premature death to his drinking and gambling habits. His matrimonial discord because of his wife's extra marital relationship or his family feud with his father and brothers is very often cited as the reason for his suicide.

Families of nearly half of the farmers in Maharashtra who have

committed suicide over the last four years are not eligible to get even the paltry Rs one lakh compensation thanks to government rules. Out of the total 5,698 suicides registered in rural Maharashtra since 2011, especially in Vidarbha and Marathwada regions, spouses of 2,731 victims have been found ineligible to receive government aid -either because the deceased did not have a bank loan against the cultivation planned in that season or did not own a piece of land.

Farm labourers or marginal farmers having no direct access to banks were getting no attention although they too shared the agony of a failed monsoon. Though the situations vary, the issues remain the same in their lives. The case rejection or ineligibility had gone up since 2008 and there was a need to tackle the issue more scientifically. But every trick within and without the book is tried to deny the compensation to the kin of a farmer who committed suicide.

Moral of the story: A farmer who intends to commit suicide because of crop failure and debt burden should take all precautionary steps to establish his extreme step an 'Eligible Suicide' to enable his kin to get compensation after his demise.

The peculiar phenomenon called farm suicide was not noticeable during British rule or the native rule till 1995. The liberalisation unleashed in 1991 laid the foundation for this torrid affair.

Public expenditure on agriculture was drastically cut and the farm sector was thrown at the mercy of market forces. India became a signatory in multilateral fora like World Trade Organisation and Intellectual Property Rights regimes. While doing so, the central govt did not ever bother to consult the state govts or the farm associations. Central government has been signing regularly Free Trade Agreements with various nations keeping the states and farmers in dark. Net result is the horror of three lakh farm suicides from 1995 to till date.

Politicians of all hues are responsible for this sorry state of affairs. During poll season, every political party's heart beats for the farmer. While Arvind Kejriwal brought out figures of farmer suicides in Gujarat, Narendra Modi repeatedly lamented about farmer suicides under UPA regime. However, a look at the government data on farmer suicides since 1995 to 2012 shows that no party has succeeded in putting a stop to this scourge.

In its previous stint in power the NDA fared much worse than the Congress. It saw a 31 per cent increase in farmer suicides compared to the previous regime. Under UPA's next five years the figure marginally increased by 2 per cent.

Maharashtra has the worst record for farmer suicides. During 1995-1999, the BJP-Shiv Sena regime saw 10,000 farmers take their lives with an increasing trend year on year. From 1,083 farmer suicides in 1995, the regime witnessed 2,409 farmers taking their lives in 1998. The following Congress regime was

worse. Between 1999 and 2003, over 16,000 farmers committed suicide in the state. In the next nine years of Congress-NCP rule in Maharashtra, a whopping 33,702 farmers ended their life.

In Madhya Pradesh, BJP's second showcase state after Gujarat, the situation has been no better. During the Congress regime of 1998-2003 under Digvijay Singh, over 13,000 farmers committed suicide. Since then, over 22,000 farmers have committed suicide in MP under the BJP regime.

In Andhra Pradesh, another farmer suicide bowl of India, both TDP and Congress, which have ruled the state during the period, are in the same boat. During TDP's regime of 1995-2003, over 16,000 farmers committed suicide. In the following 10-year regime of the Congress's Rajasekhara Reddy and others this figure increased to over 21,000.

In Karnataka, between 1995 and 1999 under Janata Dal government headed by HD Deve Gowda, over 10,000 farmers committed suicide. This increased to 12,000 in the next regime under Congress's SM

Krishna. Between 2004 and 2012, under two years of Congress and rest of BJP rule, over 18,000 farmers ended their lives.

Modi regime's refusal to implement its promise of Minimum Support Price as per Swaminathan Committee's recommendation and its direction to the states to delay the procurement due to paucity of space in godowns forced the farmers in all states to sell their produce to private traders at a loss varying from Rs 500 to 600 per quintal. Adding insult to the injury is the ordinance on land acquisition forcing the farmers to the Eminent Domain era of 1894.

During all these unbearable rural stress and misery, mainstream media in general and electronic media in particular and the informed Indians are discussing the death of Sunanda Pushkar and the historic victories of India over Pakistan and South Africa endlessly. Not a single captain of India Inc nor an economic expert even cursorily touched these state-sponsored farm deaths. What a caring and grateful nation towards its farmers who serve the food on our tables!

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Drop the Ordinance: Stop Land Acquisition, Ensure Land Rights

More than 350 organizations and networks of farmers, workers, tribals from all the states of the Country including National Alliance of People's Movements, All Indian Union of Forest Working People, All India Kisan Sabhas, Ekta Parishad, Kisan Sangharsh Samiti, Narmada Bachao Andolan, Yuva Kranti, Campaign for Survival and Dignity, Chhattisgarh Bachao Andolan, All India Agricultural Workers' Union, Bharatiya Khet Mazdoor Union, Sanyukt Kisan Sangharsh Samiti, INSAF, Delhi Solidarity Group, Ghar Bachao Ghar Banao Andolan, Agragami Kisan Sabha, Jan Sangharsh Vahini, National Fish workers Forum, Punjab Kisan Union participated in the protest action on February 24.

The farmers questioned the Prime Minister as to what kind of "Ache din" does he envisages for the millions of small agriculturalists of the country if lakhs of farmers are displaced by mega projects, thousands of hectares of land is handed over to private companies and corporates and the food-security is threatened by acquisition of multi-cropped farmland. Despite a roaring protest at the Parliament Street by thousands of farmers, the Government has introduced a Bill in the Lok Sabha to legislate this Ordinance. This, the farmers said is condemnable and undemocratic.

Anna Hazare, who sat all day along with the activists of the different movements said that farmers and workers will have to prepare for a long term struggle and be prepared to even go to jail. He

called for a nation-wide movement against the corporate loot of the land, which feeds the whole country. Government must withdraw the ordinance is what we all demand and they must do it.

Addressing the massive gathering, Medha Patkar challenged the 'electoral promises' of the ruling party, which was part of the parliamentary process leading to enactment of the Land Acquisition and Rehabilitation Act, 2013. Now in 'power' it is seeking to sniff away the soul of the Act, by removing the key provisions of "consent" & "social impact assessment" and manipulating the definitions of "private entities" and "public purpose", purely to promote business interests. Stating that the interests of farmers is supreme in a agricultural economy like India, Anna Hazare gave a clarion call to the farmers that this is nothing less than a Do-or-die' battle, it is the second war of independence, a war for freedom from repressive government, oppressive laws and corporate control over natural resources.

Hannan Mollah, spoke about the need for united movement and said that the BJP-led NDA Government had brought the draconian Ordinance to suit the interests of the Corporates and Land Mafia. He said the BJP Government's move will be defeated and struggles will be launched at all sites of unjust land acquisition.

Atul Anjaan, said this Protest Rally is just the beginning and there will be need to launch a prolonged struggle. He said the BJP

Government which is a Government of the Corporates, land mafia and builders' lobby has dared to bring an ordinance worse than the British Colonial Act of 1894. He said it was a political battle and also emphasized the need to speak to all Political Parties to defeat the Government move in Parliament too.

Representatives of numerous farmers organizations, tribal rights groups, workers movements vented their rage at the Modi Government's anti-people agenda and open invitation to profit-makers and looters to plunder the country's resources - land, coasts, rivers, fish, minerals etc. Thousands of farmers also shouted out slogans that they do not need "crumbs of compensation". The Ordinance nullifies the most significant provisions of the 2013 Act and takes it back to the pre-1994 days. The same is unacceptable, they said. NDA government has only been launching schemes for the corporates and private businesses but nothing of significance for farm sector and farmers, it was felt.

Speakers also said that similar to the British, the present Government is trying to "divide" the farmers and rulers in the interests of the Adanis and Ambanis, who have fuelled the election campaign of the BJP. However, we shall stay united in our demand for a complete revocation of the Ordinance, they said. If Ambani, Adani are on your side, Birsa Mundas are on our side, roared an adivasi woman leader. All the protestors expressed a common resolve that "We will not let Modi-Govt. snatch our rights and take

India back to pre-independence days”.

Various speakers condemned the unparliamentarily ‘Ordinance Raj’ in every sector, be it land, coal, mining, insurance, motor vehicles and derided the Governance through ordinance mechanism, by-passing both the Parliament and the People. Leaders and representatives of various political parties and their affiliated organizations also expressed their solidarity with the demands of the farmers and demanded that the Ordinance be revoked. Rajinder Sacher, Adv. Sanjay Parikh and many other academicians, advocates, activists visited the dharna site and expressed solidarity.

Various Farmers Organizations including Akhil Bhartiya Kisansabha, Agragami Kisan Sabha, All India Agricultural Workers’ Union, Bharatiya Khet Mazdoor Union etc. and People’s Movements have resolved that the struggle against the Ordinance shall continue, rather intensify in the days to come in every state and every district. While hundreds of Gram Sabhas across the country have already passed resolutions, thousands more shall do so shortly. “We will not allow NDA Government to legislate this Black Ordinance by brute force, “they resolved.

A delegation including Hannan Mollah, Atul Kumar Anjaan, Medha Patkar, Sunilam, Roma Malik, Rakesh Rafik, Vijoo Krishnan and Harpal Singh met the President in the evening and exhorted him to resolve the ongoing impasse in the interests of the toiling peasants of the country.

–NAPM

Our Constitution and Secularism

Some persons are saying that the word ‘Secularism’ was not in the Constitution when it was adopted. Since it was inserted in the preamble, it may as well be dropped by another amendment, they say.

Those fellow citizens should understand that it is not a question of one word in the preamble. The whole tenor of our Constitution is secular, right from the beginning. In Art .5 It is stated, “At the commencement of the Constitution, very person who has his domicile in the territory of India and (a) who was born in the territory of India, or (b) either of his parents was born in the territory of India, or (c) who has been ordinarily resident in the territory of India for not less than five years immediately before commencement, Shall be a citizen of India.” There is no discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, religion, sex, etc.

Art. 14 states that all citizens are equal before Law. It needs to be noted that, barring personal law regarding marriage, succession, etc, all Indian laws are applicable to all the citizens of India. For example, Indian Penal Code, Contract Act, Transfer of property Act, Land revenue and Police Cods of all the Stats are similarly applicable to all the citizens of India.

Arts. 15 and 16 are much more specific. Art. 15 states that there will be no discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, religion, sex, place of birth, etc. regarding entry to public places like roads, railways, water sources, hotel, cinema halls (whose ownership may be private) that are frequented by the public at large.

Art. 16 says that there will be no discrimination on the basis of caste,

creed, sex, etc. regarding recruitment to public services, from top to bottom, (except those seats reserved for SC/ST, where entry is restricted to persons belonging to respective castes/tribes.) Discrimination is not permitted on the basis of religion. So it is secular.

Right to vote in the elections to Lok Sabha/Vidhan Sabha (or Panchayat Raj) elections is also secular. (Art. 326)

In Schedule III, in the form of oath to be taken by persons holding high offices like President/Rajyapal/ Chief Justice, etc, it is provided that oath may be taken in the name of God or “I solemnly affirm” without mentioning God.

Thus secularism runs throughout the all important provisions of the Constitution.

Art. 25 does says that citizens are free to practice, preach and propagate their faith or religion. People may pray or worship any God of their liking if they feel that is gives them strength to face any calamity in life, help maintain mental peace and get incentive to moral behaviour. Religion aims at sublimating mind and soul of the believers. But it has nothing to do with this-worldly or mundane matters like hunger and agriculture, sickness and medical treatment, trade, communications, birth and marriage, defence, etc. They are all similar for all human beings. So they are to be regulated , not by the dictates of scriptures or priests, but by the elected representatives of the people. That is secularism.

–Pannalal Surana



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J & K: Ominous portents

S. Viswam

**Towards
emotional integration**
Kuldip Nayar

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Vibhuti Patel

Budget and Vulnerable Sections
Bharat Dogra

Once you take away the land ...
Sankara Narayanan

A question for Kejriwal
Kalpana Sharma

**South Asia Women's Concerence
on Violence**

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“Poles apart” is a pithy expression in the English language that illustrates the truth that the North Pole and the South Pole are so far apart that they can never meet. Yet, politics being the art of the possible, Kashmir’s People’s Democratic Party (representing the North Pole) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (representing the South Pole) have actually come together in a political pact to form a government in the northern sensitive state of Jammu and Kashmir. The PDP-BJP pact is described as an alliance by the PDP leadership and as an experiment by the BJP. Whatever the nomenclature, the encouraging factor is that a PDP-BJP government is in control of a state where the assembly poll result pointed to a coalition of the PDP and the BJP as the best solution to a “hung situation” in which two parties had swept the polls in their respective areas of influence.

The coalition government derives its legitimacy and authority from a common minimum programme of action drawn up by the leadership of the two parties. The alliance government raised high expectations if only because the common minimum programme masks a handful of contentious issues that have dominated J & K’s political discourse

for the last several years. The fact that the government is headed by a 79-year-old politician, who has held the CM’s post for three years on an earlier occasion, and who till now was described as a “moderate” in politics brought up in the Congress tradition was cited as the new dispensation’s special feature.

Yet, to everyone’s surprise and disappointment, the state and the chief minister came under a wrong political focus within a day of his assuming office when Mufti Muhammad Sayeed publicly thanked Pakistan, the opposition Hurriyat and even Kashmiri militants for “allowing” the assembly elections to be held peacefully in the state and not creating impediments to the conduct of polls in the form of violent actions. For a veteran politician who is familiar with the issues that create controversies in J & K, the statement was clearly out of line and politically quite incorrect. The implication clearly was that the government of India, administration of the state and its voters, the election commission were all in Pakistan’s and the Hurriyat’s debt and obligation for enabling the people of the state to exercise their franchise, a right and privilege which the Constitution of India has bestowed on them. It could

not be shrugged off as an innocuous and casual comment made light-heartedly.

Between the lines

Towards emotional integration

Kuldip Nayar

The kind of storm which the statement unleashed was only to be expected. The BJP, the alliance partner, was stunned into silence, and the NDA home minister took his own time to react. Predictably, Parliament was in uproar and eventually the prime minister came under pressure to react. Narendra Modi told the Rajya Sabha that he strongly disapproved Mufti's remarks and outlined India's position clearly by affirming that the credit for the success of the polls went to the people of Jammu and Kashmir who had turned up in large numbers with overwhelming courage. From the reactions, it was clear that Mufti was totally isolated and that he was in the minority of one to claim that outsiders could influence Indian elections in the manner described by the Mufti.

Interestingly, the prime minister went out of the way to assure the country that the basis for the J & K government was the common minimum programme only and no other platform. He asserted that his own government would move ahead with zero tolerance for terrorism.

The alacrity with which the political class, including the National Conference of Kashmir censured the CM showed that the damage control exercise was effective. The new government needs to be sensitive to the embarrassing situation caused by the CM's comments and demonstrate better sense in the future. Admittedly, the alliance is fragile and the two partners should ensure that no extraneous issues detract from the positive impact on public opinion

(Continued on Page 5)

Power makes strange bedfellows. Mufti Mohammad Sayeed who heads the Jammu and Kashmir government has joined hands with the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP). Yet his victory in the state assembly elections primarily has been on the plank that he will not allow the BJP to enter the valley. That he has gone back on the electoral promise is not any different from what leaders of other political parties do.

Former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Omar Abdullah sounds churlish when he says that the two had a prior understanding. Yet his surprise over their coalition is shared by the naïve who do not know how the political deals take place. This is, however, the first time that the BJP has entered the valley as a ruler, without winning any seat there.

The presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the oath-taking ceremony only underlines the jubilation of the BJP over getting a niche. This may turn out to be only wishful thinking. A party with Hindutva on its agenda has little chance of any showing at a place where the population of Muslims is more than 95 percent.

Mufti can claim that he has won the support of the BJP despite his anti-BJP electoral plank. But in the process he has furrowed deep the differences between the valley, predominantly populated by the Muslims, and Jammu, having a substantially large Hindu population. His desperation to form the government may have

aggravated the divide.

It is not understandable why he stated that the separatists, militants and Pakistan have helped him in letting the elections to be held in the state? Left to them they would not have done so. The separatists boycotted the polls, not to help Mufti, but to underline their stance that the polls under the supervision of Indian Election Commission were a farce. New Delhi had deployed the security forces in such a number that the elements trying to disturb the scene would have been crushed. Probably, the militants, depleting in strength, did not want to risk getting crushed.

Pakistan is playing a long-term game. It realizes that it cannot take Kashmir from India by force. The two wars have shown this. After the defeat in 1965, then Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto told me in an interview that they have "learnt the lesson from history" and would not challenge India on Kashmir on the battle field.

In 1971, the war was confined to Bangladesh. Islamabad did nothing to disturb the Kashmir side although it would have meant opening a second front to divert India's attention. In any case, the war between the two countries is now ruled out because both are nuclear powers.

However, by mentioning separatists and elements from across the border, Mufti has tried to placate the valley where pro-

(Continued on Page 8)

Union Budget 2015-16

Vibhuti Patel

The Union Budget (2015-16) has subsidized the corporate sector by providing the tax reductions and sops. The wealth tax (replaced by a 2 per cent surcharge) and the phased reduction of corporate tax have made the richer sections of the economy jubilant. The burden of indirect taxes is going to break the back of poor women. Macroeconomic measures proposed in the budget are detrimental to the working class and marginalized sections of the economy. With respect to more allocation for social sector, paralysis has been generated by neo-liberal analysis. Instead of raising the direct taxes from rich sections to fund the Railway budget, public-private partnership (PPP) model is promoted to further the cause of corporatization of transport and make the masses pay more for the transport services. The budget has demanded the diversion of pension funds and MP Local area Development (MPLAD) funds thereby absolving the government from any direct responsibility to enhance financial support for regional development and pensioners. Reduction in financial allocation for Panchayati Raj, the Union Budget makes a mockery of democratic decentralization in the absence of financial decentralization, the local self government bodies become ineffective and the talk of 50 percent reserved seats for women in the rural and urban local self government bodies becomes an empty rhetoric of 'empowerment of women'.

The state is increasingly withdrawing from the social sector in which the financial allocation has been reduced from 16.3 percent

2014-2015 (budget estimates) and 15.06 percent revised estimates, 2014-15 to 13.7 percent of the current budget outlay for 2015-2016. Financial allocation for women's needs gets reduced in the current budget as the percentage of allocation for women and child development remains stagnant at 0.01 percent of the total budget. This budget fails to translate gender commitments of the government into budgetary commitments as the financial provisions for gender concerns have reduced from 4.19 percent of the estimated total budgetary expenditure in 2014-2015 to 3.71 percent of the total expenditure in the current budget.

Gender budgeting

In the Union Budget 2015-16, there has been nearly 50% percent decrease in the allocation of the Ministry of Women and Child Development over the revised budget of 2014-15. Even if we add the Rs. 1000 Cr for the Nirbhaya fund and Rs. 100 Cr for the *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao* fund to the ministry's allocation, there is still a decrease of more than 1/3rd allocation in the total amount allocated for women and child development. The Gender Budget has been drastically slashed by 20 per cent (less by Rs. 20,000 crore). Major chunk of gender budget is cornered by Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) with an aim of population stabilization and to meet the targets of 'two-child norm'.

MGNREGS, a major safety net for poorest of the poor women has received a major blow. For women headed households where main

economic burden of the family is shouldered by widows, separated, single and deserted women the survival struggle will be more painful and extremely arduous due to symbolic increase in budgetary allocation for Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme in the context of galloping inflation. The Finance Minister stated that he will only allocate an additional Rs. 5000 Cr to the scheme if there is an increase in the revenue receipts of the government.

The women's organizations have been demanding universal social security coverage for all women workers. But there is no special focus on the needs of working women, especially in the unorganized sector, in this budget. Though the budget has provided for a pension, old age pension and social safety net fund, the allocation for finances for these much needed schemes is highly insufficient. There is a virtual phasing out of schemes like shelter homes for single women, one stop crisis centres and there is only a meager allocation of Rs. 30 Cr for hostels for working women. The scheme for improving the working condition women and child labour has also got a slight increase.

As far as the allocations for women safety are concerned, the budget increases the Nirbhaya Fund by Rs. 1000 Cr. But let us not forget that last two years' budgets, 2013-14 and 2014-15, allocations under Nirbhaya fund were not utilized as the government has no concrete plan of action to create structures, channels and mechanisms to use this fund.

Health and nutrition

In the Economic Survey presented along with the budget, criticizes the PDS systems and argues for the uniform application of the cash transfer scheme through JAM (Jan Dhan- Aadhar and Mobile network) as a means of implementing food subsidy. Experience shows that this policy measure has failed to ensure proper nutrition for women as it cannot ensure adequate food for them.

The allocations under the ICDS and Midday Meal Schemes have come down by half, from over Rs. 16,000 crores to Rs. 8,000 crores only in the Union Budget. The government made an empty promise of increasing the allocations for ICDS by Rs. 1500 Cr on condition of increase in revenue receipts. The gender budget in the health sector has been reduced by 17.9 percent over last year's revised estimate. The budget perceives women only as reproductive beings, as a result overall health needs of women and girls are neglected. There is nothing in the budget for elderly women.

Budgetary allocation for housing and urban poverty alleviation has been reduced from Rs. 6,008 crores in the previous year to Rs. 5,634 crores in the current budget. Financial allocation for the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) has reduced to 5.5 per cent as against mandated 8.2 per cent. Thus, as compared to the previous year's budget, the current budgetary allocation for tribal development is short of Rs. 5000 crores. For SCs it is 8.34 per cent instead of the mandated 17 per cent (less by Rs. 12,000 crore). No serious consideration is given to urban habitat for 380 million urban people living in subhuman condition.

Education of girls

The disregard for girls' education is also evident in this budget. The overall gender budget for school education has come down by 8.3 percent over last year's revised estimate. The budget for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has been reduced by 9.5 percent. The much touted Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Abhiyan gets only Rs. 100 Cr which is a mockery of this important slogan.

The Rail Budget must give priority to increase the number of women's compartments and prevent men from encroaching in them, improve lighting in all compartments, toilets and on railway platforms and outside railway stations, post policewomen and have a special helpline for women commuters. Moreover, the ministry must give top priority to cleanliness, affordable and safe food, sufficient toilets, clean drinking water and adequate health services on railway coaches and platforms. Most of the cases of kidnapping of women and children take place at the railway stations. Hence, budget for 'Women's Help Desk' functioning 24 X 7 must be created to cover all major railway stations and junctions throughout the country.

Social security

India's commitment to universal social security does not offer much in reality. In spite of high maternal and child mortality rates in our country, there is nothing on universal maternity benefit. In spite of hundreds of thousands of women involved in subsistence production, neither Economic Survey nor the budget recognizes women farmers. Budget talks about the raised agriculture credit target by Rs. 50, 000 crore to Rs. 8.5 trillion for 2015-16 fiscal and also announced financial support to enhance irrigation and soil health for

higher agriculture productivity. Lot in the budget is being talked about farmers, small farmers but nothing on women farmers.

The allocation for infrastructure sector Rs 70,000 crores, but it doesn't talk about the investment for reduction in the daily grind of unpaid care work done by women in terms of cooking, cleaning, caring, collection of fuel, fodder, water, looking after live-stock and kitchen-gardening. It is high time that budget recognizes, reduces and redistributes the women's unpaid care and non-care work. Women pedestrians need footpaths, women vendors and entrepreneurs need market places, women commuters need affordable and safe transport, rest rooms and public toilets, elderly women in half way homes, but the union budget is not bothered about these crucial concerns of women.

Conclusion

It is clear that the toiling poor, majority of who are women, are the major casualty as the budget hardly offers anything in terms of

Protective Services- Sabla, Swadhar-scheme for women in Difficult Circumstances, Ujjawala Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of Trafficking, One stop Crisis centre for women and children survivors of violence on a 24 x 7 x 365 mode, night shelters for homeless women and children, short stay homes, welfare of working children

Social Services-ICPS, JSY, GIA, Creche, CFNEUS, Kishori Shakti Yojana, Nutrition Programme for adolescent Girls

Economic Services such as schemes for training and skill

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Budget and Vulnerable Sections

Bharat Dogra

One of the most important aspects of budgets of Union and State governments is whether these contribute to the betterment of weaker sections and vulnerable groups in the country. Therefore budget analysts try to examine the budgets from the point of view of their impacts on the poorest people and weaker sections, farmers, workers, homeless people and slum dwellers, dalits, tribals, women and children.

In the Union Budget for 2015-16 we see clearly that very big cuts have been made in some priority social programmes and areas.

The ICDS budget has been cut from Rs. 16000 crore to Rs. 8000 crore, the mid-day meal budget from Rs. 13000 cr. to Rs. 9000 cr. while the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan budget has been reduced from 28000 crore to Rs. 22000 crore. There are reductions also in drinking water, health and family welfare.

The outlay for Women and Child Development Ministry has been reduced from Rs. 21193 crore in the previous year to Rs. 10351 crore this year. The overall allocation under gender budgeting has also gone down significantly.

The budget for the scheduled caste sub-plan was reduced from Rs. 50548 crore (Budget estimate 2014-15) to Rs. 33638 crore (Revised estimate 2014-15) to Rs. 30850 crore (Budget estimate for 2015-16). The budget for tribal sub-plan has been reduced from Rs. 32386 crore

(Budget Estimate 2014-15) to Rs. 20535 crore (Revised Estimate) to Rs. 19979 crore (Budget Estimate 2015-16).

At the same time the ability of state governments to make higher allocations has been increased as, on the basis of the recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission, the share of the states in Central taxes has been increased from 32 per cent to 42 per cent.

So the question is whether the steep fall in several social programmes can be made up by higher allocations in these areas by state governments.

To answer this question we'll have to take a close look at the budgets of various state governments in the near future. However as the cuts made in the Union budget are quite steep for some priority programmes, it seems unlikely that loss in the Union budget will be fully made in the state budgets in most states.

The Union Budget could've made more efforts to raise larger resources so that the central allocation for social priority programmes could be maintained despite the higher share in the tax pool for states recommended by the finance commission. India's tax-GDP ratio can certainly be increased from the existing level of 17 per cent. This is much lower than the tax-GDP ratio of other BRICS and G-20 countries (the tax-GDP ratio exceeds 30 per cent in most of these countries). To increase tax collection more reliance should be on direct taxes as these

are more progressive, impacting the rich more and helping to reduce inequalities.

However the Union Budget doesn't have any firm proposals regarding this. Instead of increasing the share of direct taxes, the share of indirect taxes has been increased. Wealth tax has been abolished and steps to reduce corporate tax have been initiated. These trends will increase inequalities and it will be more difficult to raise resources to meet the priority need of vulnerable sections.

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that the new government has made. In this context, Mufti Sayeed would do well to rein in the hotheads in his party who suddenly raised a demand and a controversy for the return of the mortal remains of Afzal Guru, sentenced to death for the December 13, 2001 attack on parliament.

(Continued from Page 4)

development, and provision for credit, infrastructure, marketing etc. which are critical to women's economic independence and autonomy. E.g. STEP Support for Training and Empowerment of Girls, working women's hostel.

Regulatory services which include institutional mechanisms for women's empowerment, such as State Commissions for Women, women's cells in Police Stations, awareness generation programme etc. which provide institutional spaces and opportunities for women's empowerment. E.g. Child-line Services.

Once you take away the land ...

Sankara Narayanan

Those who vociferously support the Land Ordinance brought by the NDA government list the following plus points among many others: (1) It will fetch better compensation to the farmers. (2) Stalled rural infrastructure like schools, hospitals, road-power-irrigation projects, etc. will get a boost (3) Industrial projects will provide employments to the rural people (4) Defence projects will enhance nation's security.

The opposition parties are blamed for sabotaging a well-intentioned step by Modi Sarkar. Choice abuses like anti-nationals are liberally sprinkled at the critics. The trouble started only from the farmers across the nation. Bhartiya Kisan Sangh, farm wing of the ruling party, is in the forefront of this agitation. Anna Hazare and other political parties joined the protest in due course. Apart from the farmers, tribals, Dalits and fish workers also came to Delhi in the middle of February in large numbers to protest against the bill. If Congress alone opposed this Bill, Modi's job would have been made easier. It will be like a Rahul Gandhi campaigning against the BJP in an election.

Better Compensation?

Compensation whether fair or unfair is not everything. Once a hookah smoking zamindar, Chaudhary is now pulling a rickshaw in the streets of Delhi, after exhausting the meagre compensation received. His land is now decorated with multiplexes acquired in the name of public purpose. In Haryana, many a parents who received hefty compensation for their lands are a worried lot. Their wards

are harassing them for money to purchase cars and motor cycles. These youth are sleeping all through the day and spending their night hours in clubs. How long will this sustain is the parents' anxiety. Such compensation which destroys them culturally, socially and economically is no substitute for sustainable livelihood-based rehabilitation.

The government now proposes to give 'good compensation' equal to four to six times the market rate. This was hugely publicised by the UPA too. Actually what is provided for in the law is that for rural areas they will give two to four times of the market value and that too is left to the States to decide. States are defining the market value as decided by the guidelines set by the tehsildar, which is kept so low that it is nowhere near the real market value which is five to 10 times more.

Section 87 in the 2013 Act said that if an official violates any provision in the law for social impact or seeking consent or paying compensation and rehabilitation and so on, then the affected person could file an FIR. Now the Ordinance has changed that and it says for this the farmer will have to seek the permission of the head of the department or the State government. Over decades, people have been waiting for full-fledged livelihood-based rehabilitation which is neither fully promised in the new Bill nor is there in the 2013 Act of the UPA.

Employment: a big hoax

The record of the industry providing employment to those displaced is shameful. Rather their

livelihood avenues were destroyed duly turning them economic refugees in their own places. Nearly 40 million people have been such victims since 1947. About 40 per cent of them are tribals. Tribals and Dalits ruined by the modern India's projects taking out a peaceful Janadesh yatra from Bhopal to Delhi a few years ago to meet PM Manmohan Singh seeking rehabilitation and resettlement tells the real misery.

Vast majority of farmers want to quit farming as farming is hardly economically viable. The crisis in agriculture has taken form of catastrophe in the last two and half decades, forcing thousands of farmers to commit suicide year after year. Still if the farmers remain in farming there must be some reasons which are far stronger than emotional.

The Census 2011 data reveal that actually the share of cultivators in total working population has gone down in the last decade by 6.8 percent. But the share of total workers engaged in agriculture has come down only by 3.3 percent. Instead what has happened is the cultivators have become now agriculture workers. The share of agriculture workers in total working population has increased from 26.5 percent in 2001 to 30 percent in 2011.

Why are the people not coming out of agriculture? The answer is simple because the other two sectors i.e. industry and service sectors are not able to absorb more people in spite of the growth in their share in the total economy. The share of

agriculture and allied sectors in the GDP of the country has declined from 23.2 percent in 1999-2000 to about 13.9 percent in 2013-14. At the same time share of non-agriculture sectors have grown to more than 85 percent. Yet the non-agriculture sectors provide employment to less than 50 percent of the workforce. The best available estimate puts the share of employment in non-agriculture sectors at 51.2 percent in 2011-12. The service sector, with 59.9 percent share in the GDP, provides employment to only 26.9 percent of the working population.

Additionally, whatever non-farm employment opportunity are available for most of the poor illiterate, semi-literate or less educated workers are of low paid jobs, in unorganised and informal sectors, without any job security or workplace facilities, safety measures and social security. In order to get access to those jobs, people are forced to live in urban slums, in small rooms, without basic amenities like clean and safe drinking water, sanitation and health and education services.

Obviously the poor farmers know that once their land is gone there is hardly any employment opportunity available for them in non-agriculture sectors and whatever employment is available is of extremely bad quality.

Infrastructural projects

The government should explain us how many state schools, hospitals, power-irrigation-road projects are stalled for want of land. It is a clever ploy to confuse the issue. Why should a farmer lose his land for a private school/hospital or private power project which is created purely for private revenue? Can the farmer get admission for his children in such posh schools? Will

he be allowed enter the hi-fi hospital proposed to be built in his land? The state is shamelessly acting as *dalal* for such private business ventures which have nil relevance to the would-be victims.

Social Impact Assessment (SIA) is the first pre-conditional phase before any rehabilitation. It is an analysis of the impact of the project on displaced peoples' livelihoods, whether they would become jobless with cash but no permanent source of livelihood; whether their relationship with natural resources, the ecosystem will be affected; whether their community integration, as in the case of tribals and even non-tribals in rural India, will be shattered and they would be dispersed, as also, the effect on forests, fish and the food security when agricultural lands are going to be taken away. Under the Constitution, gram sabhas and panchayats have the right to planning and management of land, water, electrification, etc. Without granting that primacy to the local units, to take away hectares of land for mega projects is undemocratic.

The maximum land acquisition and maximum social impact will be in irrigation projects; but those have been excluded from SIA and consent.

‘If consent of farmers and SIA clause are incorporated in respect of a defence project, Pak will come to know about the project. It will jeopardise the national security,’ observes Arun Jaitley. It is just ridiculous. In which age is our FM living? Assuming this is true, why are these clauses given a goodbye in the case of other public and private projects? If the project is not started in five years, the land has to go back to the farmers as per 2013 Act. Citing the possible delay in nuclear power plants, the lands acquired

for all projects are permanently kept under the promoters as per the Ordinance. What sort of justice is it?

Public Sector Undertakings acquired lands much beyond their needs decades ago. Defence establishments are notorious in this aspect. This vast area of hundreds of thousands of hectares of land available right now with the state can easily be used for defence projects without any difficulty. But governmentt wants only farmers' land. Perhaps PSU's surplus land is reserved for projects like Lavasas!

The surplus unused land available with Indian Railways can accommodate industrial corridors for decades to come. Why can't that land be detached from railways?

Of the 576 Special Economic Zone (SEZ) projects approved, 392 were notified but only 170 are operational. While less than 48 percent of the existing SEZs are engaged in export activity, only 3.8 per cent exports came from these zones in 2013-14. Out of the 45,635.63 hectares of land notified for the development of SEZs, actual operations took place in only 28,488.49 hectares or 62 per cent of the land acquired. In a scathing comment, CAG says ‘Acquisition of land from the public by the government is proving to be a major transfer of wealth from the rural populace to the corporate world.’ With 50 per cent land lying idle, many developers had put the land to other industrial uses or used it for building real estate hubs and even mortgaged it to raise finances. Why not the Commerce Minister releases this land for the infrastructure needs?

In a scathing indictment, the Supreme Court, while quashing the notifications for land acquisition in

Greater Noida, observed thus in July 2011: “Do you think judges live in a fool’s paradise? Look at your own (builders) brochure. It is saying about swimming pool, spa, tennis court, badminton court, beauty parlour, Ayurvedic massage, etc. All these are for poor people? Land is given for development which must be inclusive. The State is taking advantage of the law against the poor. A sinister campaign is made by various State governments. The State is doing a totally anti-people thing. The purpose of the land acquisition was being defeated. The poorest man in society should benefit in the public interest but you [State] are responding in such a way that the poor are driven out. What farmers get are lathis and litigation. Men are arrested and women are raped. In the name of globalisation poor people are marginalised; why are terrorist activities increasing? Why so many people commit suicide? They are pushed to the wall. [The] Land Acquisition Act has become an engine of oppression for the common man. You [State] have virtually demolished every area for the benefit of a particular society for which you work. There is greater danger to society. They take to crime. Once you take away the land, you deprive the next five generation of farmers of their livelihood.”

PM says, “Planning Commission is a vintage organisation in the free market era”. But in the market economy regime, can the state act as a land broker to dig holes for the corporates to plant money yielding trees?

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Pakistani elements thrive. Similarly, his demand for the return of Afzal Guru’s remains is aimed at placating the Muslims in the valley. Radicals among them are pushing even the pro-Islamabad line on the plea that Pakistan is essentially a Muslim country.

Mufti’s own election campaign was not bereft of Islamic streak or the identity politics. Over the years, the Kashmiris’ alienation from India on the one hand and the feeling of helplessness of its population in becoming an independent country on the other has left the field open for the Islamic propagandists. The liberals are depleting in strength, literally every day.

The main reason is that the Kashmiris have not yet realized that India would never accept another division in the name of religion since the Hindu majority Jammu would like to either integrate with India or become a union territory. But New Delhi would never allow yet another Muslim country on India’s border.

The Kashmiris’ demand for independence is suspect since the general perception is that it is another ploy to join Pakistan ultimately. The separatists’ proximity to Islamabad has deepened the suspicion. India’s cancellation of a meeting between its foreign secretary and that of Pakistan may have been an overreaction. Yet it was meant to convey that the nearer Islamabad goes to the separatists, the farther it will be from New Delhi.

There was a time when Yasin Malik was acceptable. But his conduct—hostility instead of opposition—has wound up his lobby in India. He has not only hardened himself but definitely changed the complexion of India-Pakistan friendship which he appeared

to champion. Mufti has rightly described the PDP-BJP coalition as historic. But if the coalition remains only a method to share power, the long-term perspective will be lost.

That is: how the state once again becomes secular as was the case at the time of Sheikh Abdullah? The Hurriyat has disfigured its own image by going too close to the state’s Jammiat Islami. Unfortunately, the Hurriyat is not yet realizing the mistakes and persisting in taking a stance which mixes religion with politics. Unless it corrects its course it would not count much in the reconciliation process between India and Pakistan.

The visit of Indian foreign secretary S. Jaishankar to Pakistan was one way of conveying that the cancellation of talks between the foreign secretaries was a reaction to the situation prevailing at that time, not a long-term policy. This has become amply clear from the talks that Jaishankar had with his counterpart Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry at Islamabad. The two sides must shed pride and prejudice and sit across the table to take up the long neglected agenda: Jihad against Poverty. There are, in fact, no other more pressing issues for the two countries than ameliorating the living conditions of the people on both sides.

It is a pity that even after seven decades of independence both are bent on wasting the limited resources at their disposal on buying weapons than spending them usefully on welfare measures. Mufti should associate New Delhi with this cause because he occupies such a position that where Modi would pay heed to him. Emotional integration of people in Jammu and Kashmir is essential not only for development but also for the secular ideology.

A question for Kejriwal

Kalpna Sharma

On February 11, a day after the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) thundered into power in Delhi, early morning walkers noted something interesting. An elderly man, dressed in kurta pajama, a garland of marigolds around his neck, a Gandhi *topi* and muffler and holding a *jhadoo* was walking in the park. He was beaming. Most who saw him smiled, laughed, shook his hand. This was in Mumbai, many miles from Delhi.

The Delhi victory sent out waves of optimism around the country even if this scenario will not be replicated elsewhere, at least not in the immediate future. Most people accept that AAP should be given a fair chance this time to demonstrate how different it is from other parties.

Yet, even as I grant that, I still have a grouse. Thirteen months ago, when AAP came to power for a brief period, I had asked why it did not consider calling itself the Aam Aurat Party, or even the Aam Insaan Party. The point I was trying to make then was that *aadmi* might mean every person but its use is also a reflection of the automatic assumption that terms like ‘man’ or ‘aadmi’ automatically include women.

Perhaps this question is now redundant. Yet, we must still ask why women continue to be absent in AAP. Where are the women, Arvind Kejriwal? How is it that in your cabinet, even if it is small, you could not find place for even one woman? Is making a woman the

deputy speaker an adequate token towards gender balance? I think not.

The need to strive for gender balance — still a very long way off in most institutions — is because it reminds us that one half of humanity deserves representation. AAP could argue that it was so focused on winning as many seats as it could that it gave tickets to people who would win rather than ensuring that enough women got tickets. If that is the argument, then how can we assume that AAP represents ‘alternative politics’ as the wise men of the party continue to proclaim? Is this not the excuse used by most mainstream political parties to deny tickets to women?

In this respect, AAP unfortunately does not represent any kind of alternative as this is virtually the norm. Apart from Delhi, seven other states have no women in their cabinets — Telangana, Puducherry, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. Nagaland, Puducherry and Mizoram further distinguish themselves by not having a single woman member of the legislative assembly.

Not surprisingly, the three states with women chief ministers — Rajasthan, West Bengal and Gujarat — have a higher percentage of women in the cabinet. The excuse that there are not enough women to choose from for the cabinet is also not sustainable because even states with a higher percentage of women MLAs do not necessarily have more women in the cabinet.

In the final analysis, does any of this really matter? Is it not more important to ensure that the people we elect — men or women — are not corrupt and are sincere in their commitment to ‘serve the people’, a promise that so readily rolls off their tongues during election campaigns? Yes, and No. Yes, because that is stating the obvious. But No because if we are a representative democracy, then all sections, including women, should play a part in governance. If first time male MLAs, or even MPs, can become cabinet ministers, what stops women from being appointed to such positions? If the attempt to have a caste balance, for instance, ensures that some men get cabinet posts, why not women?

Actually, there are no excuses. The exclusion of women is not always deliberate; it is unthinking. It happens because those who decide, usually men, fail to accept that the inherent disadvantage that the majority of women face in entering politics needs to be compensated by some amount of preferential treatment.

In time, perhaps this kind of preference will not be needed. In many countries around the world, women are now making their way as equal partners and do not need a leg-up. But in many instances, the initial space created did help.

So to come back to Arvind Kejriwal and AAP in Delhi, I accept that the huge mandate they got is

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Violence: A Human and Political Predicament A South Asia Women's Concurrence

Mrinal Gore Interactive Centre for Social Justice and Peace in South Asia Keshav Gore Smarak Trust, in collaboration with Advanced Centre for Women's Studies of Tata Institute of Social Sciences, had organized the conference in Mumbai on December 5-7, 2014. Following are edited excerpts from the report of the conference prepared by the organisers

Violence is outrage against the autonomy of a person's body and mind. It's an attempt to demean his/her personality; an attempt to break his/her free will by using one's might to put the person into constant state of tension, humiliation and subjugation.

Violence can occur in person to person, inter personal relationships, within the family, in societal situations, group violence (either against a person or another group) and state violence against a specific group. So, essentially violence denies the notion of natural human rights in terms of sanctity and integrity of a human person, as well as constitutional right.

The way in which women of South Asia have been subject to systemic violence at various times in the process of the construction of the South Asian nations is a reality and history we need to confront and collectively engage with, before we are able to imagine and begin to live in a violence free society.

The most apparent form of violence, though, is physical but is not limited to it. To mention a few: it has psychological, structural, sociological, geopolitical dimensions and multiple manifestations. In any country, those seeking to vitiate the sociopolitical atmosphere, create

hate, mass hysteria by means of rhetoric, by using the concept of righteous indignation. In this heightened state of mind groups take upon themselves the task of punishment. Many a times it is a punishment for the <other>. Ethnic violence, religious violence, takes upon a primitive shape and as such the punishment to the other male members of any group is rape of the womenfolk, and ethnic cleansing. Right from the historical past, wars in the past to our era of group violence and caste wars, the same situation prevails. The honour of patriarchy is thus defined in terms of women's chastity and caste purity.

The various levels of attacks on women do not always spring from lust but from the macho image and its mind set given to the menfolk by tradition. The arrival of women in the public space - their success and gaining the seats of power - gives rise to jealousy and insecurity. The only answer to this state of mind takes form of character assassination of her in the public space or direct/ and indirect attacks on her physical self. There is an exaggerated vision of women's success and the assertion of women's rights and aspirations that has given rise to patriarchal anxieties. The idea of chivalry is replaced by crude hostility in the present times.

In order to create a peaceful environment, a person has to acquire peace with oneself to arrive at a state of nonviolent mindset that would unleash the forces and create new relations based on mutual respect and dignity.

In this Conference we discussed a South Asian masculinity from Buddhist, Islamic and Hindu social constructions, the social construction of a South Asian masculinity in its Buddhist, Islamic and Hindu versions, especially though not only in a majoritarian religious framework.

Inaugural Session:

Prof. Pushpa Bhawe welcomed the gathering on behalf of the Mrinal Gore Centre. She emphasised that because of our colonial past and a hegemonic western influence we have not had the time and patience to develop our own perspective, so when in South Asia we look at our own problems we do not have a reasoned explanation leaning on our experiential present. Many countries in South Asia have had this feeling of self-inadequacy but in recent past we have asked probing questions which in their turn have offered a fresh outlook and a significant critique of the complex happenings around us.

While conceptualising this conference we had a feeling that

there are commonalities as well as differences between South Asian ethos and we felt no matter what is the political context in a particular country we must have people to people dialogue on fundamental issues.

Prof. Neela Dabir, welcomed the delegates on behalf of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. She spoke about her experiences of working with women (victims of domestic violence) and wished that the Centre will consider violence in family especially against women as one of their focus areas.

Reflecting on the theme of the conference our keynote speaker Nimalka Fernando from Sri Lanka, expressed that we as people have been struggling to build a South Asian solidarity that transcends nationalities. She said that we have fallen short of advocating for reforms and solutions rather our strategies were defined by the context of the political situation. She also said that we needed to talk much more about the victims of violence especially women to highlight that the state is patriarchal. In this context she urged the gathering that we had to overcome our own shortcomings and reimagine a South Asia. This is because violence is embedded in the nation state.

The response of movements and civil society should be rational and independent of State response and it should steer clear of the structured internationalism.

Plenary 1: Philosophy of Violence and the Aspirations for Peace

Prof. Ilina Sen shared that the issue of violence against women is very visible in India. She pointed out that in the recent past, the “Nirbhaya

Case”, has brought national as well as international attention on the subject of violence against women in India. She further expressed that structural and societal violence still continues in various forms. She expressed that political violence has been built into our histories. She asserted that in the process of building the nation state, women were treated as chattels. For example, she brought to the attention of the audience that in the formation of Bangladesh as a country, rape on a huge scale was carried out. Thus she reiterated that women have always suffered sexual violence in situations of border dispute and armed conflict situations.

Dr. Sen added that India has a history of ‘resource grab’. In the globalization era, people who lived in areas where there were resources were displaced. Indigenous people have been dispossessed and now live in inaccessible areas and their rights are constantly violated.

She expressed that there is an imminent need to understand these complexities while talking about violence practiced against women. For example, in the past few decades, AFSPA has violated the privacy, body and space of women. Hence the dominant development paradigm perpetrates violence, in a sense national security is at the cost of women’s security. She ended by urging the audience to include these dimensions in the construction of violence against women.

Meghna Guhathakurta from Bangladesh, provided a conceptual overview of violence and peace building. She pointed out that the acts of violence are often described as acts of irrationality but when we look deeper, it is structured in two

ways “patriarchy” and “class”. She pointed out that patriarchy and class marginalize women in terms of their access to resources. She argued that the inequalities that emerge are not static structures but those get configured and reconfigured.

Ms. Guhathakurta mentioned that during times of conflict, housewives may become breadwinners and norms and values underlying gender relations get restructured. Women and men are not merely passive recipients of tradition but they are also active agents who can choose to reaffirm these relations or to challenge them. When the element of violence dominates, it affects formation of civil society, and individual psyches. She said that in order to establish creative mechanisms, the stakeholders ought to be heard, whether it is majority or minority. Finally, she challenged the audience to find ways and means to address the root causes of violence: patriarchy and unequal distribution of resources.

Milind Bokil expressed that violence is part of human nature. Hence it cannot be resolved easily. He said that violence is apparent in variety of ways in South Asia due to the deep rooted culture, social structure, polity and economy. He said that people in the name of religion have become violent in the recent past and put forward few strategies to address it.

Some of the strategies he proposed include encouraging inter-caste/religious marriages, introducing gender security regime, etc.

Plenary 2: Narratives Women’s Experiences

Saroja Sivachandran from Sri Lanka, spoke about the war that

took place between the State of Sri Lanka and the LTTE that ended on 18th May, 2009. She said that during the war period, people moved to places like Kilinochini, Mulathive and Bhavaniya in Northern Sri Lanka. Women and children were continuously displaced to different places. They experienced violence, harassment during the war period and later were witness to the massacres. She pointed out that war was not fought according to the rules of the UN Conventions. For example, according to UN resolution 1325, women and children have to be protected during the war and the Sri Lankan Government failed to abide to the rules of the Convention.

Saroja highlighted the statistics on missing, killed and abducted people during war and post-war period. She narrated an incident in which common people of Tamil minorities were being killed both by LTTE and the State during a camp transition process. She said that the State committed acts of violence through its military against the people of its own country.

In the post-war development, the State sponsored welfare camps were also protected and monitored by the military. She said that the camps didn't accommodate families rather it had separate camps for young girls, young boys, women and children. She said that women and young girls were being raped by the military personnel. She also highlighted that the military has occupied the land of the people in northern part of Sri Lanka and land rights are violated.

She advocated for the removal of military from the post-war zone and wants other aid organizations to provide social interventions and

rehabilitations for the people in the post-war zone.

Shanur Shaikh narrated her life incidence that questioned her identity as a Muslim. She said that on the day of the election result, i.e on 31st May 2014, communal violence was triggered in her locality where majority of the residents are Hindus. On the morning of the next day, she saw vehicles of ordinary people damaged by some of the Hindu political groups and she was confused whether to report to this incidence to the police. Though as an advocate she felt that she should do her duty but was wary because of her own minority identity. She also witnessed violence in the nearby bakery shop that was owned by a Muslim. Always working for the betterment of the society with a secular mindset she posed the question of identity politics and need for its resolution.

Farida Khan said that she had never seen communal violence in her life before the Dhuliya incident. She became conscious of her own religious identity after the incident. In October 2008, the Dhuliya communal riots had created a scary situation in her life. She was asked to leave the village. A Maratha woman, who gave her shelter, assured her that she will be safe. She found even children were raising slogan against the Muslims. She questioned Hindu-Muslim relationship during those times and wished that there is communal amity.

Workshop 1: Violence within Women and their Stratification

Swati Dyahadroy initiated the discussion by talking about the practices of the state that give rise to fundamentalist agendas which in a way contradicts the principles of the

Constitution. She talked about the Hindu nationalist project of creating a role model of good mother-good wife by giving examples from "Promodini". She challenged the idea of Stree Shakti and the patterns of women's entry into public space as it does not pose any challenge to the patriarchal structures.

Zeba Imam talked about minority identity and the Constitution by reflecting on the recent incidents and agitations that occurred in Aligarh Muslim University regarding women's access to the college library. She talked about how the entire discourse turned into a protectionist agenda rather than a matter of appropriate use of physical space.

Sangita Thosar spoke about the increasing incidence of violence among dalit women over the years. She threw light on the fact that control of sexuality is a tool of caste patriarchy and dalit women face both public as well as private patriarchy where upper caste women are essentially subjected to private patriarchy.

The group members in the workshop discussed the idea that «identity» as a category should be treated with a broader view. They deliberated on the fact that it is not just how we understand identity, but whose identity we are concerned with is an important question.

Workshop 2: Hierarchy and Hegemony in Public and Private Space

Sujata Chavan, argued that the violence on women is due to their subordinate status in the society and the insensitivity of the administrative system. She proposed three main perspectives

of understanding violence against women: 1) Individual – attributes violence to individual behavior. Interventions include individual counseling; 2) Sociopsychological – examines the social institutions causing violence. Interventions are in providing shelter, healthcare, counseling support to violated women; 3) Feminist – examines the structures of power that cause violence against women, especially patriarchy. Interventions are to improve the overall status of women in society, dismantling the power structures

She noted that the Domestic Violence Act, 2005 enforced in October, 2006 is an important measure provided by the state to address violence in the personal sphere. The Act has provisions such as legal support, shelter and counseling. Dr. Chavan highlighted that most of the women who face violence are in the reproductive age group of 18 to 35. She mentioned that the Act considers all forms of violence including physical, mental and emotional. She pointed out that patriarchy operates in the courtroom and that it was critical to work towards bringing about gender sensitivity among the members of the legal system such as judges, police.

Nasreen Contractor mentioned that sexual violence is a manifestation of people, communities, nations, regions. She argued that even though women have entered the workplace, there is discrimination. Sexual violence is in the form of unwelcome sexual behavior that is intended to offend, humiliate and intimidate persons in lower/weaker positions in the hierarchy. She quoted the example of ‘Gauhar Khan controversy’. Gauhar was a

young woman who was slapped by an unknown man in public because he found the way she dressed to be offensive. Ms. Contractor pointed out that in the public sphere; a woman’s primary marker of identity is her body which symbolizes the honour of her community. She emphasized the need to focus on making men gender sensitive.

Nandini Manjrekar pointed out the need to unpack the word ‘hegemony’. She said that Antonio Gramsci defined hegemony as not absolute power, but a commonsensical understanding that this power is valid and justified, even ideal. What we understand as ‘commonsense’ is a construct, created through different mechanisms.

She stated that South Asia is a historical region, with cultural affiliation but politically divided. South Asia has conflicts based on caste, ethnicity, military, etc. She mentioned that in 2002 riots the Muslim women’s bodies became the sites of interreligious violence. She concluded by noting that in times of conflict, the community closes in on itself, resulting in more oppressive conditions for women.

Workshop 3: Religion, Culture and Custom

Nirja Bhatnagar said that each word, namely “Religion”, “Culture” and “Custom” are hegemonic and highly patriarchal. She further argued that “State” is also equally patriarchal in the South Asian Context. She pointed out that India today is moving towards Hinduism as its state religion and Hindutva as its political ideology. She posed some questions such as “how can we engage with a state that perpetrates violence”? and “why do women

bear the brunt of conflict?”. Ms. Bhatnagar called for the need to fight violence by raising consciousness of the ordinary people.

Saroja Sivachandran from Sri Lanka mentioned that Buddhism is considered as the state religion in Sri Lanka and other religious groups are perceived as the minority community in Sri Lanka. She argued that religion played a dominant role in the elections in Sri Lanka. She said, culture is deeply imposed on women, and Hindu women are expected to dress “modestly” in saris. She said that the law ultimately gave men the advantage. She substantiated this argument with the recent Domestic Violence Act 2005 in Sri Lanka. She said that divorce rates have increased and no system of social security is ensured for women. She concluded by saying that religion, culture, and custom are deeply interlinked and women find it hard to escape from these.

Saloni Singh from Nepal said that only country which has never been colonized was Nepal. She said, that country had internal conflicts, insurgency, and has recently seen democratic governance. She added that Nepal is more secular and there is a very harmonious relationship with Muslims living in the country.

Saloni argued that culture in Nepal was transformed by women. Due to war, most women became bread earners, and they took decisions. But when the issue of representing in constituent assembly came, women were sidelined. She pointed out that there is an urgent need to look at role of gender in all levels and structures if we were to engage in peace building.

Workshop 4: Globalisation, Corporate Profit and Violence

M.J. Vijayan spoke on the physical aspect of violence and how it supports corporate profit, i.e. direct economic violence. He gave many examples to show the linkage between structural violence and physical violence. He argued that violence operates on the platform of class, caste and gender. He concluded his arguments by pointing to the gap between academic knowledge and knowledge produced at ground realities.

Wandana Sonalkar agreed with Vijayan's remark that academia has failed to answer the questions of ground realities. She spoke of the functions of global capital and its influence on violence. She listed four of them: 1) Militarization of capital; 2) Primitive accumulation based on Marxian theory; 3) Accumulation by encroachment; 4) Encroachment in areas like household, care economy and marketing of intimate source. She argued that media is restructured under the umbrella of corporate which has its own language that mediates the views on violence against women.

Day 2: Plenary 1: Fractured Modernity and Globalisation

Prof. Vibhuti Patel argued that 'modernity' as a paradigm is supposed to inculcate rational behaviour, scientific temper, respect for plural beliefs, tolerance towards multicultural lifestyles, ethos of liberal humanism by way of greater access to education and reforms in the social sphere, equality, liberty, democratic governance, nondiscriminatory behaviour and challenging the hierarchies based on class, caste, race, ethnicity, religion and gender.

However, there are manifestations of fractured modernity which have resulted in actions like attacks on dalits, religious and ethnic conflicts, dowry murders, glorification of sati, acid attacks, killing of childless, single, widowed, deserted or elderly women as witches, crimes in the name of honour, moral policing, female genital mutilation, denial of education to girls, sexual violence on girls and women and apartheid in housing.

Prof. Patel pointed that the rise of cultural nationalism and identity politics has empowered Khap Panchayats. Further the caste and community leaders conduct their internal kangaroo courts to give savage and barbaric verdicts to all those who deviate from antiquated 'norms'. She explained that social construction of 'honour', 'prestige', and 'identity' has given the Khap Panchayats the authority for control over sexuality, fertility and labour of women.

She compared the colonialism and post-colonialism scenario and pointed out that the situation is same as in the post-colonial economies, governments attack the livelihood base of the poor countries by draconian forest laws, land grab, commercial crop for agro business and racist migration policies. All these have resulted in hunger, misery, informal sector work force, women as last colony and war mongering.

Prof. Patel accounted neoliberalism as a global force which has utter disregard for people and entire civilizations. She then compared post-modernism and conservatism and proposed that right wing understanding has a static view of history and it cashes on

the feeling of disappointment with modernization.

She said the current reality seems to be more worrisome. For many critics, nonwestern culture and practices are at risk of being overwhelmed by homogenizing 'McDonaldization'. She said that there is a process of individualization which inhibits class distinctions but inequalities by no means disappear. There is a shift from the system of standardized full employment to the system of flexible and pluralized underemployment. She concluded stating that globalization of industrial society will have political systems that lose their function, corporate capitalism reigns supreme status, migration might transform the nature of symbolic exchange and life conditions of people throughout the world, these changes are not necessarily at the expense of local culture.

Global modernity does not break with its colonial past but reconfigures it. The major challenge for the new community is how to resolve the tension between economic growth, uneven development and fractured modernity.

Prof. Wandana Sonalkar argued that modernity in South Asia on the one hand has choices in consumerism and technology offered by global capitalism and on other hand we see assertion of religion in an aggressive way.

She quoted a study from the book "Fractured Modernity" by Sanjay Joshi, which studied the middle class families in Lucknow in 20th century. The findings of the study gave insights that though middle class families spoke about their democratic values and rights to make one's own life and not to

adhere to the social order of the feudal elite, still those families showed assertion of traditions and wanted their women to be submissive to the household. Thus middle class asserts equality of opportunity against the feudal classes at the same time they reassert their religious identity and are anti-dalit.

She pointed out that duality of such processes always existed and is even seen in the ethos of nationalistic movements. She said, today we see resurgence of capitalism and consumerism of the worst kind embracing technology i.e. social networking sites. On the other hand, asserting religious identity in alarming way.

Then, Dr. Sonalkar dwelt on the Third World phenomenon - the concept of third world was conceptualized by the advanced capitalism. Now the concept is no more valid, especially after

the Independence of India, the nationalistic struggles have embraced some of the socialistic agenda's such as: 1) Fight against the neo-colonialism of advanced countries. 2) Against the establishment of global economy.

She called for a need to re-imagine South Asia for which it is important to look at: 1) A Common South Asian Vision. 2) Re-evaluation of diversity of the cultures.

In the context of India, Dr. Sonalkar mentioned that the rise of right wing politics combined with embracing capitalism is going against the Right of Livelihood of people. She said, if we think of development in India or in any South Asian country for that matter, it should be sustainable development with protected livelihood.

She included a comment on how the media plays a role in politics of

a nation. She mentioned the study by Arvind Rajagopal, in which it is shown that the Ramayana serial telecasted in television lead to Ramajama Bhumi Movement and later demolition of Babri Masjid.

She said that Dr. Ambedkar's role in framing the Constitution is a progressive step in the South Asian region embedded with a nationalistic fervour and values of equality and also his way of introducing progressive Hindu Code.

She spoke on the importance of self-assertion of dalits, women assertion in public, recognition of their capabilities which is usually controlled by corporate forces. She concluded stating that globalization and global capital can lead to aggressive accumulation on one hand, and dispossession on the other.

(to be concluded)

(Continued from Page 9)

a sign of people wanting change, and perhaps even a different type of politics.

Having said that, I still think if AAP really wants to pioneer an 'alternative politics' it cannot overlook the importance of gender. Making promises to deal with women's safety, something that all parties do, does not address the issue. The party needs to acknowledge that a gender perspective is needed in all aspects of governance, that inclusive politics means making an effort to include women in decision-making, and that the perspective such an inclusion facilitates is good in the long run for everybody, women and men.

- The Hindu

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AAP: Same to same

S. Viswam

Is AAP going Janata way?
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Sandeep Pandey

The myth of the Muslim population bomb
Qurban Ali

South Asia Women's Conference on Violence

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Time was when the central leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party sought electoral support on the ground that the BJP was “a party with a difference” (from other traditional parties). When the BJP sighted power, it proved to be “a party with differences” (just like other traditional parties). History is repeating itself. This time, the party in focus is the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) which seems to be going the way of all flesh. It is caught in a crisis of confidence, of leadership, inner party democracy and is behaving much like India's other older traditional parties. The AAP's troubles are its own making.

Paradoxically, the party ought to be on a roll. It is less than a month that the AAP bulldozed its way through the elections for the Delhi Assembly and won 67 of the 70 seats leaving just three for the BJP. Its other rival, Congress, did not even open its account. AAP has formed the government and is riding high hoping to force the centre to grant statehood to Delhi. Yet, it is in the grip of a depressing power struggle and personality squabbles and dissension within its leadership and ranks. It is showing itself up as a house very much divided even though it is enjoying all the trappings of power.

The AAP chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, who also happens to be the AAP chairman or president or convener, whatever the title, has proved to be the personality over whom a cult is being raised. The ranks also gave vent to the growing feeling that Kejriwal was being dictatorial in his outlook and actions and intolerant to criticism. Party workers started commenting openly that success had gone to Arvind's head and had made him swollen headed! Proof is in the pudding, it is said. The two founder-leaders who identified themselves openly as Arvind's critics were soon ousted from the political affairs committee, and word was being spread that this was a prelude to their ouster from the national executive itself. The two rebels were Yogendra Yadav and Prashant Bhusan. Both appeared to have fallen from grace for having suggested that Kejriwal encourage inner-party democracy and decentralize his authority. Even though the two offered to quit the political affairs committee voluntarily, a formal resolution was moved in a specially convened meeting and voted upon, thus heaping humiliation on the two. On Tuesday March 10, the leadership made known its strategy of ridding the party of dissent and dissenters. A statement issued by four

Between the lines

Is AAP going Janata way?

Kuldip Nayar

“senior” leaders justified the ouster of Yogendra and Prashant on the ground that the two had tarnished Arvind’s image by levelling baseless allegations against him and urging voters to teach a lesson to Arvind by defeating the party and not make any donations to it. The two and Prashant’s father, Shanti Bhushan a founder himself, were said to have indulged in anti-party activities to bring about the party’s defeat in the polls.

The AAP was a rare phenomenon in Indian politics. It stood for a radical change in the system and it advocated ethical values. It was truly a party with a difference. Kejriwal’s popularity rested on the fact that he campaigned for reforms and gave promise of integrity in politics. Indeed he pleaded for the conversion of Aam Aadmi Party ideals into a progressive reformist movement. Soon, the public welcomed the emergence of the AAP as a blessing, and this sentiment was reflected in the voting for the Delhi Assembly. Kejriwal’s first and all-too-brief stint in power when he resigned as chief minister of Delhi after just 49 days was put down to inexperience. The electorate was ready to give him another chance. A solemn duty devolves on Arvind Kejriwal to reunite the party and convert it into an effective instrument for fulfilling the promises made by him and his associates to the electorate. The AAP was seen as a radical instrument of change and something like a fresh breeze of hope and promise. Dissent has brought a bad name to the party and Kejriwal himself. What is at stake is the future of a movement that campaigned for and stood for ethical politics and ethical leadership. If dissent is not tolerated, the party would cease to be democratic.

When movements convert themselves into political parties they lose their original shape. The ethos of collective leadership takes a backseat and the personal assertion comes to the fore. Power gets concentrated in one person. In real, the leadership acquires the meaning of one-man rule, which becomes synonym for the party.

It was expected that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) would be different because it was a product of people’s aspirations. The well entrenched political parties like the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) were run down because they had become part of old furniture. When people see the AAP going in the same direction they feel betrayed because they thought that the party would introduce a new way of thinking, a fresh approach to politics: transparent, clean and open.

Unfortunately, the one-man cult has taken over the party. Granted, Arvind Kejriwal was bound to occupy the central position because he was elected to lead the party which swept the polls in Delhi. Yet the ethos of Aam Aadmi Party demanded that he would act as a leader of the equals. This is where the fault lies. Kejriwal tends to concentrate power in himself. Not only that, he was seen behind the ousting the two co-founders of the party, Yogendra Yadav and Prashant Bhushan from the Parliamentary Affairs Committee, the apex body for the decision making.

That Kejriwal had a majority in the party’s executive committee does not mean that he would be the sole

spokesman. Once where there is a trial of strength even the executive committee gave him a divided verdict, 11 to 8.

Every day new disclosures are coming in the open. One is that Kejriwal had manoeuvred to oust from the AAP the critics of his style of functioning. The second is that he is using his official position of Delhi’s Chief Minister to bash his critics. I hope that all this is not true and the inner democracy that the party promised is intact. But the functioning is disconcerting.

The party’s inner Lokpal has also expressed his unhappiness over the manner in which the AAP is functioning. He has expressed his helplessness. It is heartening to know that he is not accepting defeat but suggesting to appoint an inquiry committee for a probe. Probably, he should have threatened to quit the job to jolt the party and make it realize that the functioning of Kejriwal is far from healthy.

The AAP is a child of a movement which Anna Hazare initiated against corruption. Why has he not taken up on himself the task to ensure that those who control the party act to complete the task of appointing Lokpal (Ombudsman) at the Centre to eliminate corruption in high places. Instead, Anna Hazare has run away from his responsibility and hidden his failure behind a movement on a land bill.

Probably, Anna Hazare realizes that his word would not be respected. This is precisely what the Gandhian

Jayaprakash Narayan felt. He had founded the Janata Party which had appointed Morarji Desai as the Prime Minister. The fact is that Morarji did not listen to him should not have made JP withdraw from the field. He should have joined issue with Morarji, who was only a creature of the J.P. movement.

I recall telling JP that the people voted at his behest and expected him to intervene to make the Central government work according to the movement ideals. He did not contradict me but explained that his health did not allow him to go to the public again. This was another way of admitting that he did not want to join issue with Morarji lest the Janata Party should get a bad name.

This was JP's rationalization. He knew Morarji would not listen to him. I thought I would approach Morarji. When I told him that JP would have come to Delhi but his health did not allow him to do so. I thought I had given a sufficient hint. Morarji understood what I wanted to convey. He said in anger that JP was mistaken that he would go to meet him. "I did not go even to meet Gandhi. JP is not above him", said Morarji. It is not surprising that the Janata Party cracked up and practically died.

Anna Hazare can end the obsession of Kejriwal to kill dissent. The fact that he sits on dharna with Anna Hazare on a Land bill should not hide the fact that Kejriwal wants to oust the critics from the party. Yogendra Yadav and Prashant Bhushan are among the founders of AAP. Kejriwal has seen to it that they are out of the decision making bodies. He does not realize that they have a large following of their own. He should not emulate the example

(Continued on Page 9)

Capitalism is the real danger

Rajindar Sachar

A deep somnolence, lack of direction and absence of commitment to the constitutionally directed philosophy of social justice seem to be enveloping the major existing political parties, enhancing the danger of BJP policy of divisiveness and pro-capitalist policies spreading in the country. This is shown by lack of any response and consistent policy and programme from the leftist and secular parties. That may explain the gushing congratulations they have showered on the Aam Admi Party. No doubt, AAP is entitled to all praise over its massive win in Delhi. But for political parties and individuals to so believe and act that AAP can be an instrument of change in political and social life of the country is like wanting to see a rainbow in the sky during the afternoon blazing sun. I say this because AAP believes in private economy being the solution to the country's ills and poverty. It so specifically said in its manifesto that the "government should not be in the business of running business". "AAP is not against capitalism as such but only crony capitalism" — this is a wrong thinking. By just emphasising crony capitalism as the evil, AAP ignores the unsuitability of capitalism for the development of our country. The evil of capitalism itself is the real danger.

The urgency and danger of an open onslaught by big business on the sanctum of Indian State has exploded in our face as is clear from the corporate sector spying in the highest, innermost offices of the Union of India — in the Oil, Coal, Power Ministries and in security-related nuclear arsenal. Secret papers

of the yet-to-be-announced budget were also leaked.

This action is more awesome than mere spying. The Modi government is all praise for the corporate sector. It publicly professes that the country can only progress through the instrumentality of the private sector. If with all the favours from the Modi government, the highest in the corporate sector are on a path to destroy the inner sanctity of the corridors of the State, the BJP needs to scrutinise more closely its open alliance with the corporate sector.

It is still more worrisome when it is known that another complaint against the same corporate company is pending inquiry, notwithstanding the complaint by the Enforcement Directorate made in 2013 to the RBI about the legality of a loan of over Rs 6,000 crore given to the dummy of this very corporate giant. And still ironically the Finance Minister has announced that it plans to do disinvestment to the extent of Rs 45,000 crore in the financial year 2016 by selling part of the family jewels like ONGC and even the State Bank of India to these very private companies. It has also announced that its tax policies will be corporate friendly.

The government has unashamedly announced that it will not appeal against the Bombay High Court judgment or amend the law retrospectively to nullify the effect of the Vodafone judgment, which many eminent jurists say requires reconsideration as the Solicitor General's advice to file an appeal has been ignored. This shows the

close link with the corporate lobby. The loss from the change of law will continue to deprive the Union Government of tax receipts from future transactions also, and will be a big drain on our economy.

Recently the Union Government slyly issued ordinances, especially the land ordinance, to almost pulverise provisions of the new Land Acquisition Act. The Supreme Court had said that in spite of the ordinance the acquisition would lapse if compensation was not paid within the stipulated time as the ordinance did not have any specific retrospective effect. But as the government is committed to bring in the amendments, it has no blushes to give an assurance to big business that it will change the law retrospectively to help them rather than farmers. This apprehension of landholders arises from the Modi government's plan to expedite its scheme for the Delhi-Mumbai corridor which will result in the displacement of thousands of farmers and residents. This is one of the cruelest ventures by the corporate-sector friendly Modi government and is already being opposed by some parties and human rights organisations.

There is another urgent matter calling for attention. The poor in Delhi have the right to free treatment in private hospitals which were allotted land at concessional rates but only on paper despite the fact that 40 per cent of the beds remain vacant.

Another scandal continuing from the U.P.A. government since 2005 is of Special Economic Zones - 50 per cent of the allotted land remains unused. The Parliamentary Standing Committee in 2007 estimated a revenue loss of Rs. 1.75 lakh crore

Ram Sundar Das

Former Bihar Chief Minister and veteran socialist Ram Sundar Das breathed his last on March 6, 2015 in Patna at the age of 95 years. He was a senior leader of Janata Dal(U). Ram Sundar Das was admitted to the Patna Medical College and Hospital on March 4 due to age-related problems. Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar immediately rushed to Ram Sundar Das' home at Kankarbagh in Patna after learning about his death. Nitish Kumar announced state funeral for the former Chief Minister. Ram Sunder Das will be remembered as a true socialist who fought for the betterment of dalits, backwards, minorities, women and downtrodden sections of the society.

Ram Sundar, son of Shri Teni Das, was born on 09 January 1921 at Gangajal village of Sonpur in Saran District of Bihar. He was educated at S.P.S school of Sonpur, in Saran, Bihar and Vidyasagar College, Calcutta. He remained Matriculate only since he left the College to join the Freedom Movement. Ram Sundar Das played an active role in the 1942 Quit India Movement

He was married on 6th September, 1956 to Smt. Savita Devi and had two sons and one daughter. He was associated with Congress Socialist Party. Ram Sundar Das was Secretary, Congress Socialist Party, Sonpur, 1945-48; Member, District Executive Council, Praja Socialist Party, 1952-68; Member, Provincial Executive Council, Praja Socialist Party, Bihar, 1956-67.

He was elected to Bihar Legislative Council, 1968-77 and Bihar Legislative Assembly from

General Assembly Seat of Sonpur, Saran, Bihar in 1977-80. During 1977-79, he was Chairman, Committee for the Welfare of SC & ST, Bihar Legislative Assembly. He was Chief Minister of Bihar from April 1979 to February 1980 and served Bihar Legislative Assembly again in 1990-91. He was elected to tenth Lok Sabha in 1991 as a Janata Dal nominee and again in 2014 when he defeated Ram Vilas Paswan, but in 2014, in the parliamentary polls held in 2014 year, he lost to latter.

Ram Sunder Das also held position as Secretary, Praja Socialist Party, Bihar; Member, National Executive Council, Praja Socialist Party; Member, Executive Council and Parliamentary Board, Janata Party; Member, Executive Committee and Political Affairs Committee, Janata Dal. In 2008, he was Member, Committee on Installation of Portraits/Statues of National Leaders and Parliamentarians in Parliament House Complex. He was re-elected to 15th Lok Sabha (2nd term) in 2009. He was Leader, Janata Dal (United) Parliamentary Party, Lok Sabha, 2009-2014.

He had helped found (i) Harijan Gandhi Gramin School; (ii) Railway College Sonepur (Saran) Bihar; (iii) Mahila Maha Vidhyalya Sonepur, Saran; (iv) Ram Sunder Das High School, Kharika, Saran; and (v) Two colleges in Dighwara, P.O. Dighwara, Saran, Bihar. Ram Sundar Das was also President, Bihar Banihar Sangh; Member, Hind Mazdoor Sabha, Bihar; Member, Board of Directors, Bihar; Small Scale Industries Association.

(Continued on Page 9)

–Qurban Ali

Why doesn't the RSS emulate the Mother?

Sandeep Pandey

People associated with RSS and Hindutva ideology feel that with Narendra Modi's government coming to power now they can openly talk about things which they could not do earlier. A number of these things are controversial. On the other hand some religious institutions of minorities have been attacked. The aggressors have become bold. The situation is so serious that Barack Obama, who was proclaimed as a personal friend by Narendra Modi, gave a lesson in religious tolerance to Indians. First, during his speech in New Delhi and then again upon returning to Washington D.C. He said if Mahatma Gandhi were to be alive today he would have been shocked to see the current state of religious intolerance in the country. India is known as a country which provides protection to religious minorities persecuted in other parts of the world. For a country known for its diversity it is a matter of shame that somebody from outside should come and teach it about religious tolerance and inclusivity.

It is unclear whether Narendra Modi approves of the controversial statements emanating from the Sangh Parivar, but it is certainly going to adversely impact his efforts to seek FDI when India's image is sullied abroad. When Modi said that there should be no violence in the name of religion, which it took him 13 years to say, it appeared that there would be some lull.

But it looks like Modi has no influence over RSS bigmouths. The

RSS chief has now criticized Mother Teresa for not being a social worker but having done what she did with the objective of bringing people to the folds of Christianity.

Mother Teresa cared for all those people on the street who were uncared for because there was simply nobody to take care of them. Most of us try to ignore if not despise any destitute who we see on street.

Mother Teresa had dedicated her life to the destitutes who were abandoned by the society. She was a very brave person. We're not talking of the bravery required to attack somebody. In fact, that is madness. It requires great courage to speak to a downtrodden person giving her full respect as a human being. Ordinary people would not know how to talk to her, leave aside know how to help her. Mother Teresa embraced such people who most ordinary people would not be able to stand for more than a couple of minutes. Such bravery was also displayed by Baba Amte. Baba, a medal winning wrestler, ran away from a maggot infested leprosy patient. But later he felt ashamed for his act and went back to pick up the patient and started serving him along with his wife. Today the entire Amte family, even after Baba gone, is engaged in service of diseased and dispossessed.

If it is true that some people who were served by the Mother Teresa's organisation Missionaries of Charity became Christians why should there be so much ruckus about it? When they were lying on street

nobody cared for them. Mother gave them a home and a life of dignity. They were able to fulfil the basic requirements of their human body and soul necessary to keep one alive with dignity.

If Hindutva organisations are so much concerned about people getting converted to Christianity because the Christian missionaries are helping them, why don't the Hindutva organisations do the same thing? If they are really concerned about people leaving the folds of Hinduism they should serve these people in a manner such that they don't feel the need to leave Hinduism. But quite clearly they are not able to do so and hence raise hullabaloo. How many people does that RSS have of Mother Teresa's calibre, who came very close to being pronounced as a saint?

The kind of work Mother Teresa did requires very deep commitment. Baba Amte had the same kind of commitment. But RSS is more interested in politics rather than service even though they call themselves a social and cultural organisation.

Secondly RSS cannot serve these people giving them full dignity because most of the down trodden would belong to dalit castes, at the very end of the caste hierarchy. A factor responsible for poverty not going away from India is its caste system. How will the society which considers certain sections untouchable be ready to serve

(Continued on Page 9)

The myth of the Muslim population bomb

Qurban Ali

If the Hindutva brigade is to be believed, India will become a Muslim majority country by 2035. Qamar Waheed Naqvi sifts through available data to set the record straight.

Will Muslims outnumber Hindus by 2035 and become the majority in India? Several search results on Google warn how the Muslim population in the country will expand to 92.5 crore, while Hindus will shrink to 90.2 crore by 2035. By 2040, Hindu festivals will no longer be celebrated. There will be large-scale conversions and genocide of non-Muslims, and by 2050, the Muslim population will increase to 189 crore and India will become a Muslim country.

For many years, the Sangh Parivar has been carrying out this propaganda through pamphlets, social media posts and blogs. In October 2013, at a meeting of the national working committee of the RSS held in Kochi, joint general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale made an appeal to Hindus to give birth to at least three children. Recently, BJP MP Sakshi Maharaj and VHP leader Sadhvi Prachi reiterated it by appealing to Hindu women to produce four children. At a function to mark the 50th foundation ceremony of the VHP in Bareilly, its leader Praveen Togadia reportedly said, "Why all this fuss over the matter of producing four children? When Muslims produce children, no one says a word. Muslims keep four wives and produce 10 children. If you talk about having two children,

then make a law. And take action against those who have more than that."

Shankaracharya Vasudevanand Saraswati of Badrinath's Badrikashram went a step ahead and appealed to Hindu women to bear 10 children to ensure that the community keeps growing and does not become endangered.

Several questions arise here. Are Muslims intentionally increasing their number so that they become the majority in India one day? Do Muslims really keep four wives? Do Muslim women actually give birth to 10 children? Is polygamy the major reason behind their growing numbers? Do Muslims never adopt family planning and consider it against their religion? Will Muslims outnumber Hindus in the future? And will India ever become a Muslim country?

Interestingly, this propaganda machine does not afflict just India. The fear has gripped certain sections in Europe, too. They claim that the way Muslims are growing in number across the world, Europe will turn into 'Eurabia' some day. Let us analyse the veracity of these claims.

The government's report on Census 2011 is going to be released soon. The report was prepared a year ago but the UPA government withheld its release in the wake of the 2014 General Election. The Congress-led government feared that the statistics in the report might give Hindutva forces an opportunity to

carry out another vicious propaganda campaign and create trouble for the government. In spite of this, the report was leaked. Recently, the leaked report has been published again.

According to this leaked report, the Muslim population has increased from 13.4 percent to 14.2 percent. For the first time, the Hindu population has gone below 80 percent.

In 1961, Muslims were 10.7 percent and Hindus 83.4 percent. In 2001, the Muslim population rose to 13.4 percent and the Hindu population decreased to 80.5 percent. The leaked report suggests that if the Muslim population has gone up, the number of Hindus must certainly have gone below 80 percent.

On the surface, the figures appear threatening and the Hindutva brigade is using it to stir fear among the Hindus, inciting hatred against Muslims.

But this is only half the truth. There is another side to the story, too. There has been a notable decline in the decadal population growth of Muslims. In 1991-2001, the Muslim population increased by 29 percent, whereas in 2001-11, the increase was only 24 percent, though it is still much higher than the average national decadal population growth of 18 percent. But if the Muslim population growth is closely analysed, one will find that the trend of having small families is on the rise. Spread of education among Muslims will subsequently slow down the population rise.

Myth 1

Muslim women produce 10 children

The data collected by the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) is a blow to the propaganda spread by the Hindutva brigade. The three surveys were conducted in 1991-92, 1998-99 and 2005-06. We can easily view the change in fertility rate and major trends of family planning and use of contraception during the past 15 years.

In 1991-92, the total fertility rate or TFR (the number of children a woman produces in her child-bearing age) of Hindu women was 3.3, while it was 4.41 for Muslim women. In 1998-99, it came down to 2.78 for Hindus and 3.59 for Muslims. In 2005-06, the TFR of Hindu women was recorded at 2.59, while for Muslim women it was 3.4. Clearly, there has been a steady decrease in the fertility rate of Muslim women during the past 15 years.

Let us simplify the figures to understand it better. Suppose there are two samples: 1,000 Hindu women and 1,000 Muslim women. According to the data above, if one Hindu woman produced 3.3 children in 1991-92, 1,000 Hindu women would have produced 330 children. Similarly, 1,000 Muslim women would have produced 441 children, that is, 111 babies more than the Hindus. In 1998-99, 1,000 Hindu women gave birth to 278 children, while the number of Muslim children was 359, i.e., only 81 more than Hindu children. The decrease is quite apparent. And finally, in 2005-06, 1,000 Hindu women gave birth to 259 kids, while the same number of Muslim women bore 340 children. The difference again comes to 81.

Here, two things are clear. One, the total fertility rate of Muslim women has constantly declined between 1991 and 2006. In fact, the decrease in the TFR of Muslim women between the second and third NFHS was not much behind that of Hindu women.

In 1998-99, 1,000 Hindu women gave birth to 278 children and in 2005-06 they bore 259 children; i.e., 19 children less. For 1,000 Muslim women, the difference was exactly the same with 359 children in 1998-99 and 340 in 2005-06.

Secondly, Muslim women can produce only one child more against their Hindu counterparts, though the average comes to even less than one (0.81).

It turns out that the myth of Muslim women producing 10 children is utterly baseless. The fact is that Muslim women produce less than four and even 3.5 children on an average. Their fertility rate was 3.4 in 2005-06. And looking at the trend, it must have slid further now.

However, it is true that the fertility rate of Muslim women is still higher than the Hindu women. Why is it so? The figures of NFHS have the answer. The data clearly backs the fact that the fertility rate is high among the poor and uneducated section. It comes down as we go higher up in terms of economic prosperity and education level.

If we look closely, we notice that with increase in education, the fertility rate witnessed a steep fall and went below the replacement level of 2.1. Let us define replacement level here. If a couple has two children, their children will replace them after their death. That is, if each

couple produces two children, the population will remain stable. But since as per the natural birth rate, the number of girls is less than boys, the fertility rate for the replacement level is taken at 2.1. That is, as long as the fertility rate is 2.1, the population will remain stable. If the fertility rate is below 2.1, the population starts decreasing.

Anyway, the figures clearly show that with rising levels of education, the fertility rate dips.

The Sachar Committee report sheds light on the state of illiteracy and poverty among Muslims. If attention is paid on improving the condition of Muslims, it will certainly lead to a decline in the fertility rate.

Myth 2

Muslims are against family planning

The figures revealed by NFHS have busted completely this myth that Muslim families do not adopt family planning; that they are against it, calling it un-Islamic.

The data collected in the NFHS reveal that Muslim women are readily acquiring modern methods of contraception such as condom, IUD, pill, sterilisation, etc. In fact, there has been a rise in the incidence of such usage.

There is a rising awareness among Muslim women about contraception though they still lag behind Hindu women in terms of family planning. However, while the use of modern contraceptive methods among Hindu women increased from 37.7 percent in NFHS-1 to 44.3 percent in NFHS-2, going up by 6.6 percentage points, among Muslim women this figure

went up from 22 percent in NFHS-1 to 30.2 percent in NFHS-2, an increase of 8.2 percentage points.

Similarly, the increase in the use of contraception among Hindu women was 5.9 percentage points between NFHS-2 and NFHS-3, while it was 6.2 percentage points for Muslim women, 0.3 percentage points more than the Hindu women. According to NFHS-3, 21.3 percent Muslim women and 39.9 percent Hindu women underwent sterilisation. In case of family planning, the same holds true. The more prosperous and educated a family is, the more are its chances of practising family planning.

According to NFHS-3, only 34.6 percent women in the poor sections were adopting modern means of contraception. Among the middle class, the number is much higher at 49.8 percent, and in the higher classes, it was 58 percent.

Hence, the myth that Muslims do not practise family planning turns out to be baseless, too. Until a few years ago, it might have been true. But during the past 30 years, the view regarding family planning among Muslims across the world has changed.

The fact is that the fertility rate has dropped heavily in several Muslim countries. Bangladesh and Iran have set a wonderful example in this regard. In Iran, the fertility rate has gone down from eight to two and it is believed that if it continues this way, the population will begin to decline.

According to a study carried out by PEW Research Center in 2011 titled *The Future of the Global Muslim Population*, the fertility

rate in 49 countries and territories with a Muslim majority was 4.3 in 1990-95, which is expected to drop to 2.9 in 2010-15 and further to 2.6 in 2020-25 and 2.3 in 2025-30, i.e., a little over the replacement level of 2.1. It means that if the fertility rate follows this pattern, not only will the Muslim population become stable after 2040, it will, in fact, begin to decline.

According to a policy review by prominent demography experts Nicholas Eberstadt and Apoorva Shah (*Fertility Decline in the Muslim World: A Veritable Sea-Change, Still Curiously Unnoticed*, 2011), the past three decades have witnessed a decline of 41 percent in the fertility rate in these 49 Muslim majority countries, while the average drop in the global fertility rate was recorded at 33 percent. Around 22 Muslim majority countries recorded a decline of 50 percent or more in their fertility rate. Of these, 10 countries recorded it at 60 percent, while in two countries — Iran and Maldives — it was more than 70 percent.

Clearly, Muslim countries have not only realized the need for population control and family planning but are, in fact, running a comprehensive campaign in this regard. However, it is true that certain Muslim countries and a few ignorant Muslims do claim that children are a blessing from god and if god allows them to be born, he alone will sustain them.

But all population-related studies across the world, including India, have drawn one conclusion — the fertility rate is quite low in prosperous countries and among prosperous sections of society.

The economic condition is possibly a factor behind it, too. For poor families, more members mean more earning hands. As such, if population is to be controlled, there is a need to improve the economic condition of poor people.

Myth 3

Polygamy is leading to a spike in Muslim population

According to recent figures, the sex ratio among Muslims is 936:1,000; i.e., for every 1000 males, there are 936 females. It means 64 Muslim males in every 1,000 will remain unmarried. Now, if some Muslim men practise polygamy, it would decrease the number of women further and as many more men would have to stay single because the number of women is less.

Polygamy can lead to an increase in population only if women outnumber men. Let us understand it with an example. Suppose 100 out of every 1,000 Muslim men wish to take a second wife. In that case, 1,100 women are needed. But the number of women is only 936, which means only 836 men will be able to marry, while the rest 164 will remain single. Hence, this belief that the practice of polygamy among Muslims is causing their population to rise is false. It would be possible only if the sex ratio were skewed in favour of women, which is not the case.

Secondly, if the number of women is 936 and the fertility rate is 3.4, the number of children born will remain 936×3.4 . It means polygamy may increase the number of members within a family, but it will not affect the overall population since the number of women and the fertility

rate are constant. Another point that is often ignored is the fact that the life expectancy is nearly three years more for Muslims as compared to Hindus. In 2005-06, the average age of Hindus was 65 years, while it was 68 years for Muslims. In layman's terms, a Muslim lives three years longer than a Hindu on an average.

In addition to this, the mortality rate of Hindu children under five years of age is 76, while it is 70 for Muslim children. Statistics suggest that the child mortality rate among Muslims has remained consistently lower than among Hindus. These factors also contribute in boosting the Muslim population.

Population rise is an issue of serious concern. But the solution is not what the RSS, Togadia or the Sangh Parivar have to offer. The solution is that the government creates awareness and takes development to each and every doorstep as soon as possible, provides education facilities and runs a comprehensive campaign of family planning programmes. The government needs to make people understand the gravity of the issue. Things will change. After all, didn't the polio campaign succeed, too?

(Continued from Page 3)

of Morarji Desai who destroyed the Janata Party, which had nominated him the Prime Minister, but did not accommodate others.

It looks as if the AAP is going the way of Janata Party. It is a pity that the supporters of Kejriwal, instead of correcting his authoritarian methods, are going for the critics. Kejriwal should know that if the experiment of AAP fails, it would take years for the alternative to the Congress and the BJP to build..

(Continued from Page 4)

due to the tax holiday granted between 2005 and 2010. The SEZs were touted to lead to an export boom and earn foreign exchange. The reality is that less than 48 per cent of the existing SEZs are engaged in export activity - but only 3.8 per cent of exports came from these zones in 2013-14. How deceitful can you get?

Any party that seeks to speak for the poor should be ashamed at the gross deprivation and inequality persisting in our country. According to the 59th round of the NSSO report estimates, the average net worth of the top 10 per cent of the population

(Continued from Page 5)

them? The RSS may fulfil their material needs, may get them medical treatment, may feed them, etc. but will never treat them with respect and give them an equal status. For example, people sitting outside the temples are fed like beggars, whereas the same people if they go to a gurudwara would be allowed to enter the premises and fed properly with full respect. People at the bottom rung of Hindu caste hierarchy experience discriminatory behaviour against themselves and hence whenever they get a chance they would like to leave it.

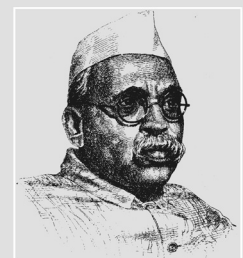
Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was one such person. He declared that even though he was born a Hindu he would not die as a Hindu and he converted to Buddhism along with a number of his followers. Nobody can forcibly change somebody's religion. And every person has a right to choose a religion which she thinks appropriate. Our Constitution gives our citizens this right. When a respectable figure like Dr. Ambedkar could not be

in India was 380 times that of the bottom 10 per cent. The net worth could support consumption for 23 years for the top bracket and less than three months for the bottom one. The report said that the total billionaire wealth represented about 10 per cent of India's GDP in 2012. Can this vulgar inequality be allowed to continue? If Modi's economic pattern is allowed to continue, it would become worse. Only socialist-oriented policies can checkmate it. Will the so-called secular, progressive parties make a joint front along with trade unions and farmers to meet this challenge from the combined onslaught of partnership of global and Indian corporate giants?

prevented from leaving the folds of Hinduism, we can imagine the indignity that an ordinary dalit must feel as a result of caste system. Even today inhuman work like getting into a sewer to clean it or manual scavenging is done by only dalits.

It would have been better if RSS and affiliates learned from Mother Teresa rather than try to belittle her.

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South Asia Women's Conference on Violence – II

Plenary 2: South Asian Masculinities

Prof. Kamla Ganesh started by saying that in a Conference on Violence and Peace and in a session on masculinities we cannot avoid the old discussion about the correlation between masculinity and violence and whether it is innate or learnt behaviour. She gave an insightful introduction to the hitherto least explored area that is culture and South Asian masculinities. She revisited the field work done by Margaret Mead in 1930 for her seminal work *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*. Prof. Ganesh pointed out that the study done by Mead reiterates that culture dictates the way sex and gender are seen in different societies. She then dwelt on Prof. Leela Dube's work related to socialization of girls in Indian society and examined the contested idea that sex roles are natural.

She urged the audience to come over the bipolar category of male and female and look at sexual variations as a continuum. She referred to the efforts made by the LGBT movement of late. She pointed out that in South Asia; masculinity is manifested through patrilineal and patriarchal arrangements. The nexus between religion, culture and polity disembowels people to understand masculinity. A distorted image of masculinity relating to size of penis, ability to satisfy women, produce children, etc are propagated in the society.

In branding certain behaviour as *mard* and *namard*, the society reinforces the predominant view. When male members of the society often produce violence, society is mute and remains a silent spectator.

Prof. Ganesh pointed out that in the recent past, a phenomenon called new masculinities is observed. New masculinities emerge from men's organisations fighting cases related to violence against men. By not including women in debate and discussion, the organisations, namely interest groups act as counter to the feminist movement. She ended by saying that there is a need for a platform where both men and women can discuss the issues and develop a pan South Asian perspective on masculinity.

Sheema Kermani from Pakistan used multiple mediums like songs, poetry and video commentary to put forth her view on violence and masculinity in the South Asian society. She began with an analysis that society uses tradition, culture and religion to tame women and control their sexual and other forms of life. She read the poem "They said I should not sing and dance..." to bring to light the struggles of girls and women in our patriarchal society. Through the video commentary titled *Imprisoned Princess*, she pointed out that aggression, war and militarization are aggressive masculine tendencies to dispossess and humiliate women. She highlighted the cry of women who grieve on disappearance of young men in Pakistan as result of war. She lifted the spirits of the participants by saying that women will not budge to these cruel forces. They will arise and fight for their rights.

Narrative Plenary 3: Women's Experiences of Violence and Peace

Sugandhi Francis shared about her personal history and her struggle with her ex-husband, in-laws and other family members and dwelt on how she overcame the challenges.

She believes that change should come from one's self first. Ms. Francis opined that upper caste women rarely partake in struggles and social action. She urged women from every aspect of life to fight against exploitation.

Rohini Raman shared a comparative study on honour crime in Bangladesh, Pakistan and India. The study showed the extent of similarity of the crimes across borders and irrespective of one's religion and culture, violence against women is perpetrated in the name of honour. She even pointed out that during the presentation of the report by the UN Special Rapporteur on Women; the Indian Government was in denial about the honour killing practices in India.

She expressed that the society should allow women to choose the partners they want to marry and material gifts in the form of dowry and social sanctions cannot be the compensation package.

Taran Khan spoke about the connection of violence with mental health in the society of Afghanistan. Through the case narrative of Husna Afgani, she brought to light the near hopeless situation of women in Taliban occupied Afghanistan. Husna lost her father at a young age and was married to Ajaz, a Talibani Mulla who treated the young girl as a machine producing children. In a short span of time they had five children and in the meantime Ajaz was arrested. Though Husna took up some job and managed her home, she could not raise her children as normally as one would like to do.

From her presentation one could understand the pattern of aggression and hysteria perpetuated in Taliban

occupied Afghanistan. This can be connected to the larger reality of violence in the country.

Dr. Gabriele Dietrich started with a thought provoking question: whether a non-violent mode of production can be attained in the South Asian region? She commented that the capitalistic mode of production has resulted in financial crisis and fascism. She pointed out the classic case of Sri Lanka, where the neo-liberal politics has resulted not only in peasants' upheaval but also in ethnic violence and war.

She spoke about the growing distance between the haves and have not's and the rich-poor parity. She opined that it is due to this situation, the productivity cannot improve, as the rich have accumulated wealth and the poor have become dispossessed. She also said that such capitalistic modes of production will beget colonization of women, adivasis and dalits - the most marginalized sections of the society. She proposed to find solutions to this situation through democratic means and strategies.

Plenary 4: The Human Rights Approach to the Problem of Violence

Justice Suresh emphasized that human rights provisions in the Constitution should be accessed and exercised more by people of the country. He suggested that human rights approach can be a meaningful framework for development. He also pointed out that human rights are obligation of the State. He encouraged the audience to seek solution through legal-constitutional means.

Dr. Meera Velayudhan shared her views on violence on women and dalits in the society. She

pointed out that the structural and cultural framework disallows these marginalised sections to challenge the powerful elites. She asserted that there is a need for new laws which are protective of the marginalized and said that an amendment in CrPC is called for.

Dr. Velayudhan argued that people instigating communal violence should be dealt firmly by the law. She ended by revoking the ethos of the Constitution and asserted that life and dignity of individuals should be protected by all means and at all costs.

Jyoti Punwani started by saying that the greatest violator of human rights is the State. She pointed out how landless, labourers and poor adivasis are displaced by the state. She highlighted the case of police encounters as murders. Jyoti called for re-evaluation of the death penalty.

Workshop1: Fractured Modernity

Anagha Tambe started the discussion with the idea of moral policing. She stressed that "Love Jihad", "Kiss of Love" are all part of fractured modernity where the middle class uses moral policing as a fundamental force to retain the culture and tradition. She said that all these perspectives are located in the non-modern classes and questioned whether the middle class shares the same non-modern status. She pointed out that though middle class claims to be modern and secular it continues to attach itself to certain conservative stands.

She took 'Khap Panchayats' as an example to argue how tradition is used for brutality and caste assertion. She also pointed out how love-cum-arranged marriages

happening in recent times are based on social mobility rather than on the basis of individual compatibility. Towards the end of her deliberation she mentioned how public spaces like malls and coffee shops have become sites of public display of affection and privatised space is only accessible to a particular class of people.

Meghna Guhathakurta presented the phenomenon of fractured modernity in the context of Bangladesh. She mentioned that education system in her country is fractured into two streams such as school with vernacular language and Islamic schools (madrasas). She pointed out that Islam is a growing religion in the country and narrated how development in Bangladesh started with Nehruvian view and recently shifted towards privatisation.

Workshop 2: Labour and Migration

Dr. Bindulakshmi spoke on the informal sector and how women's labour is understood in the society. She pointed that the phenomenon of casual labour is increasing due to migration of poor people. She said that migration is often confused with trafficking, that hampers women's mobility.

Based on a study, she described how women felt more empowered when they are working in spin yards and in factories and how they felt good of going out for work and being paid for it. Dr. Bindulakshmi ended with a question related to safety of women in work situations.

Dr. Meena Gopal dwelt on the issues faced by bar dancers in Indian cities. She highlighted that these women did not directly come to this field by choice but slowly

entered here as they did not get proper remuneration for working in the factories and some were forced by families to bring in extra income. Most of these women are single earning members of their families and have to handle other social relations. Dr. Gopal ended by stressing the need for understanding the case of bar dancers within the labour dimension.

Workshop 3: Food and Health Security

Dr. Asha Achuthan started the discussion with a critical note on the language used by the state in health policies that stereotype women's body as a site of reproduction. She mentioned that the dual war with the State and policies by the feminist movement is still a challenge. She critiqued that the population polices of the country had a target and incentive approach and questioned the concept of development.

Prof. Ilina Sen argued how privatization of health has increased the cost of drugs. She pointed out how population policy didn't consider the redistribution of resources. She shared her experiences in Chhattisgarh of how small farmers use the indigenous knowledge to protect the crops without the incentives from the state. She argued the debates around the acquisition of land by the state are less challenged.

Workshop 4: Manifestations of Violence in State, Social, Cultural, Economic and Political Institutions

Karamat Ali talked about the need for cooperation between the South Asian nations. He spoke about the shared colonial history of these nations and they are also prone to violence. All of these nations thus have a part colonial, part feudalistic past and are thus prone to inter as well as intra state violence.

The boundaries shared by these nations, too, are arbitrary lines drawn by the erstwhile colonial rulers and are not yet fixed. The uncertain nature of these boundaries results in frequent territorial disputes. Thus, to ensure peace between the South Asian nations, it is essential to clearly demarcate the boundaries and settle the border disputes. Maritime borders too, need to be fixed so that unsuspecting fishermen don't become political prisoners and add to the animosity between countries like India and Pakistan.

Another issue confronting all the South Asian nations is of majoritarian violence. The identity of the majority religion assumes a national identity. The persons belonging to the minority faiths thus become victims of violence, whether they are believers or not. Religious leaders of all faiths are especially implicated in instigating communal violence. The concepts of "majority" and "minority" also inadvertently reinforce communal beliefs. Hence there is a need to redefine our conception of secularism itself.

He stated that ethnic, religious and border disputes have also led to increasing militarisation and nuclearisation. The state uses the archaic colonial "weapon" of sedition against anyone who dares to speak out against its militaristic, centralist and majoritarian policies. All of this is embedded in the neo-liberal nature of development which has resulted in large amounts of illiteracy, dispossession and poverty. He proposed that the South Asian nations need to come together and cooperate. He said that we need to form a South Asian Union and have more mutually beneficial initiatives.

Lalita Ramdas, stressed on the need for a vibrant and active civil society, which would encourage

people to people contact. Since patriarchy is an issue which cuts across the borders of these nations, she questioned the women's movement for having failed to take up the issues related to militarisation, nuclear arms race and for having failed in demystifying the link between nationalism and militarism. She pointed out the role of the corporate and military nexus in "keeping the fires burning".

Ms. Ramdas said that apart from its shared colonial history, the south Asian region also bears the brunt of climate change. The worst affected due to global warming and climate change, are women and children. In drought prone areas, women have to walk for miles to collect water. The civil society organisations, especially the women's movement, in all South Asian nations need to come together on issues of climate change and global warming. The focus of her presentation was thus on co-operation on shared issues, instead of focusing on controversial issues.

The discussion which followed focused on questions of intra state issues like weakening of the federal democratic structures in these nations and vacuum created by this. It was felt by the participants that civil society actors need to push for change, enhance dialogue across borders and promote a mindset change. The common ground for such co-operation is the environmental and peace movements.

During the day a **Cultural Dialogue between India and Pakistan** happened through **Neela Bhagwat**, vocalist and **Sheema Kermani**, danseuse

Day 3 Plenary 1: South Asian Networks and Country Contexts

Jatin Desai welcomed the speakers and initiated the discussion

with connectivity and its politics as a site of concern among the South Asian countries. He mentioned that growing right wing politics in India is a biggest challenge threatening the countries in South Asia.

Taran Khan shared her experiences as a filmmaker and journalist in Afghanistan. She shared that media can be a strong tool to negotiate with the countries. She gave the example of sisters (Roya and Alka) who have set up a film house called the Royal Film House in Kabul that works as a medium for women to express their voice and articulate women's issues.

Meghna Guhathakurta situated her talk around the theme of connectivity. She said that Bangladesh has both legal and illegal migrations. Most of them migrate to Maldives and India respectively. She pointed out that India is concerned only with bilateral relations and not open to multilateral relationships with countries. She viewed lack of Indian publisher for Bangladeshi literature as one of the biggest challenge of recent times as it limits the Indian readers to know about the situation in Bangladesh. She concluded with a request for funded exchange programmes for improving the capacities of civil societies.

Karamat Ali briefed the audience about the networks of different labour and trade unions from 1992 till recent days. He shared the recent developments among labour unions such as South Asia networks for garments workers and South Asia networks for floor wage in garment factories. He highlighted the importance of using SAARC as a platform to build networks among South Asian countries to discuss issues concerning labour, minorities

and dalits, women's issues, religious fundamentalism, etc. He raised the issue related to visas especially between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh that challenges the connectivity in South Asia.

He brought to light the state support to fringe groups in Pakistan which creates terror. He argued that in a multinational country like Pakistan, religion or religious identity cannot constitute the State. He pointed out that for intra country autonomy and development, peace should prevail in the region and the respective states and their agencies should desist the urge to destabilize neighbouring countries. In this context, Dr. Ali felt the need for a strong SAARC, which will strengthen our true identity, that of South Asian.

Saloni Singh began with the fact that Nepal was the only south Asian country which was never colonised. The rulers of Nepal were benevolent too. However, after 1951, for the next thirty seven years, autocratic regime prevailed. The people's organisations challenged the regime and because of their efforts a democratic regime was born. However in the 1990s, violent conflicts broke out and people were terrified.

Ms. Saloni pointed out to the role of the women during these conflicts. She said that the women's organizations had a big role behind the peace accord with the Maoist camp. She highlighted the networking skill of the Nepalese women and felt that it is important to recognize the efforts of women in democratization of the country.

Nimalka Fernando straightaway came to the point that the emergence of the nation state concept is the

villain for the insecurity and violence in the region. She critiqued the official SAARC forum as a stage for leaders and demanded that the voice of people be heard. In this context, she referred to the South Asian people's declarations passed earlier. She lobbied for a visa less regime and articulated her dream of pan south Asian identity. She stressed that we cannot allow the army to take over the lives of the citizens and rightly said that it was time to demilitarise the region for security and peace in south Asia.

Gajanan Khatu noted that globalization in India has created much inequality and thus increasing the scope for violence and inequality. He highlighted that the national income has arisen 16 fold in the last 20 years. However the budgetary allotment for key social security and welfare is very low. He lamented that the trickle down theory of growth has resulted in lack of concern for social issues.

The right wing politics, policy and lack of inspiration for key reforms in administration have left the country in deep trouble. He also pointed out that the new middle class has lost touch with the toiling masses. He urged the young people to connect with the marginalised and bring in the necessary reform.

The Way forward for an Imagined South Asia Free of Violence and Misogyny

Karamat Ali pointed out that mapping of existing South Asian initiatives taken by individuals and groups can be one of the prime agenda for the Centre. He mentioned that such exercise can identify gaps and strengthen the networks among the civil societies. He suggested that People's SAARC based in Delhi has an official research platform

that can facilitate in mapping process and he wanted the Centre to become a monitoring partner for SAARC as none of the civil society organizations has volunteered for the same.

Prof. Iina Sen felt that the Mrinal Gore Interactive Centre for Social Justice and Peace in South Asia can engage as active partners in the South Asian academic component in teaching programmes of TISS. She said that two courses, namely in M.A in Development Studies and in M.Phil in Women's Studies address regional issues in papers such as "South Asian Geopolitics" and "Women in South Asia – Feminist Engagement and Writings" respectively. Apart from these courses focusing on the issues of South Asia, there was scope to evolve the academic programmes of TISS further with a focus on South Asian studies. There was also a scope at TISS to build up library resources of books published in various South Asian countries which are not always easily accessible outside of individual nation states.

She extended an invitation for students outside the TISS to attend her course "Women in South Asia – Feminist Engagement and Writings". She contrasted the ideas of friendship, peace and secularism among the people of South Asia countries with disputes raging on the nation state level, for as seen between India and Pakistan on one hand, West Bengal and Bangladesh on other hand. She mentioned that cultural exchange can be a site for strengthening the relationship among the countries, in which TISS and the Mrinal Gore Interactive Centre for Peace and Justice could play a part.

Varsha Rajan Berry drew out that the Centre should be a platform

for continuous dialogue, networking and campaigns against the injustice in the context of South Asia, particularly in the context of greater polarisation and politicisation of ideologies and debates.

She said that this space of political discourse has diminished in the last couple of years or at best has been limited to annual events. If we truly want a way forward for South Asia free of violence and misogyny, we all have to be continually engaged in processes of political discourse amongst civil society. The Centre aims to provide a platform for this debate and discussion and be a pressure centre to evolve and campaign for a better understanding.

She expressed that the Centre could work on specific thematic areas such as crimes in the name of honour, migration of women and renewal of connectivity in the South Asian region.

Karamat Ali emphasised that the Mrinal Gore Interactive Centre for Peace and Justice should have one of its agenda to address issues on militarization. He argued that there is increase in the militarization in South Asian Countries and proposed that the centre should engage with SAARC.

Admiral Ramdas, peace activist, addressed the audience and mentioned the importance of having a humanist perspective in handling issues in South Asia. He said the lack of just perspective has limited development and progressive civil society.

Lalita Ramdas proposed that the Centre should deal with questions of climate change and global warming as a strategic position to address critical issues such as anti-war, anti-nuclearization and anti-

militarization. She expressed her concern of how State is promoting the above process and has become a source of continuous war and violence. She emphasises that feminist movements need to address issues of women and environment in the context of South Asia.

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Footprints of A Crusader

(The Life Story of Mrunal Gore)

by

Dr. Rohini Gawankar

The making of Mrunal is a wonderful story told lucidly by her friend of six decades, and a renowned academician, Dr Rohini Gawankar, who could see Mrunal through all the stages of her life since Rashtra Seva Dal days during the 1940s. She describes all the twists and turns in Mrunal's momentous lifespan, all the struggles she waged in an enveloping manner, and every historic event she encountered in an interesting style without resorting to any kind of exaggeration, making the subject larger than life or belittling anybody else.

–Bhai Vaidya

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While Senior Police officials were busy celebrating 'International Women's Day' at the City Police Commissioner's Office on Thursday, a girl aged around 20-25 years was publicly beaten up by her parents in Ulsoor.

Passers-by were mute spectators to the incident. She was rescued only when two women rushed to help her before alerting the police.

The victim was beaten up by her father Rajaram, a sub-inspector with Madurai (Tamil Nadu) Police. Rumours of the victim's alleged "affair" triggered the incident and the parents said that they were "teaching her a lesson". Her mother, a teacher by profession, did not give a helping hand.

Originally from Madurai and currently working in Bengaluru, the victim has denied the rumours.

Her parents wanted to force her to move back to Madurai and arrange a wedding as soon as possible to someone of their choice as she had brought "shame upon the family".

The Ulsoor police reached the spot after 30 minutes. Meanwhile, the victim had taken shelter in a car along with the two women who rescued her. The police later took the victim and her parents to the police station. They were let off after counselling.

"This is a minor incident and a family matter. Also, no complaint has been filed," said an Ulsoor police station officer.

—*The Hindu*

Outrageous

The outrageous, senile statement on blog by Justice Katju Calling Gandhi Ji "an British Agent who did great harm to India" being the raving of out of office frustrated individual deserves to be rejected with the contempt it deserves. By this statement Katju has qualified himself to be the fittest successor to Mohan Bhagwat, RSS Chief. Had Churchill been alive he would have embraced Katju and included him the senior most position in his cabinet of 1940.

—Rajindar Sachar

Beyond Doubt: A Dossier on Gandhi's Assassination

Compiled and Introduced by Teesta Setalvad

The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi on 30 January 1948 was a declaration of war and a statement of intent. For the forces who conspired in the killing, the act was a declaration of war against the secular, democratic Indian state and all those who stood to affirm these principles, as well as an announcement of a lasting commitment to India as a 'Hindu Rashtra'. It was also an act to signal the elimination of all that India's national movement against imperialism stood for.

Beyond Doubt is a dossier of historical and critical documents that aims to contextualize the politics, motivations and circumstances behind the assassination of Mahatma. Attempts to legitimize the act of killing and to celebrate the killers have re-doubled since May 2014, following the coming to power of the new regime in New Delhi. The time is right, therefore, to set the record straight.

The visceral hatred directed against Gandhi and the denigration of everything he stood for need to be recounted if we are to understand the political nature of that dastardly act. This book attempts to weave together archival documents from Government of India records relating to developments after the assassination, with translation of works in Marathi,

Gujarati and Hindi de-constructing the ideology responsible for the political killing. While several of the documents have appeared before in issues of *Communalism Combat*, this compilation presents new material on the subject. The first English translation of Jagan Phadnis's book,

Mahatmyache Akher, forms part of the dossier, as do Y.D. Phadke's analysis of attempts to legitimize Gandhi's killing and Chunibhai Vaidya's analysis of Pradeep Dalvi's play on Godse. It also covers the recent controversy over the destruction of files relating to Gandhi's assassination by Government of India.

Price: Rs 450

To order copies of the book, please contact: Tulika Books, 35 A/1 (ground floor) Shahpur Jat, New Delhi 110 049. Email: tulikadelhi@gmail.com



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Tedious neighbours
Kuldip Nayar

**Budget 2015–16:
What is in it
for the People?**
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Minorities feel insecure

S. Viswam

Terrorism has no nationality and no boundaries. But there is certainly a method in the madness of its manifestations. It shows no mercy or partiality for its victims. Its targets include temples, mosques, churches and synagogues. Earlier this month, twin suicide bombings at two Lahore churches in Pakistan left 15 dead and more than 70 injured. Such events are possible in Pakistan because the state encourages a kind of religious majoritarianism in which one religion is preferred to all others. India is a secular nation and is expected to be tolerant of all religions. *Sarva dharma sama bhavana*: treat all religions as same. However, it is sad that in secular India we are witnessing events and developments that point to the emergence of religious intolerance.

A church is desecrated and demolished in Hissar in Haryana. A 72-year-old nun is raped in a shocking episode in West Bengal's Ranaghat in Nadia district causing anguish and dismay among the people. Incidents targeting Christians and Muslims are reported from many places. Haryana's newly elected BJP chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar proposes to introduce compulsory teaching of the Bhagwad Gita in schools. He announces harsh punishments for

cow slaughter. The Maharashtra government, under BJP control, bans possession, sale and consumption of beef. The BJP senior leader Subramaniam Swamy declares that God resides only in temples and no other shrines and that mosques are not religious shrines. All this is a pointer to the BJP's encouragement of religious majoritarianism. Distressing.

Even more distressing is the fact that there is a widespread perception among the minorities that Prime Minister Modi and the NDA government are indifferent or even patently hostile to the concerns of Christians and Muslims and other minorities and are endangering their safety and security. The Archbishop of Kolkata declares his unhappiness over the slow pace of the ongoing probe into the rape of the old nun. A convoy headed by chief minister Mamata Banerjee going to the hospital to see the nun is gheraoed and forced to turn back. The mounting attacks on minorities figure in both houses of parliament where, cutting across party lines, members demand action against those perpetrating violence against minorities. Members said that ruling party politicians made inflammatory speeches and incited people to act against one another.

Between the lines

Tedious neighbours

Kuldip Nayar

Reflecting the strong feelings which organized violence against the minorities has evoked among the Christians was an article, followed by interviews, of the retired senior police officer Julio Ribeiro, last week. "Whenever I meet people of my community, he said, I sense a certain fear in them. That was not there before. The Christian community feels it is under a siege. The Modi government was voted in to bring development for all, but in the last nine months we have heard only ghar wapasi, love jihad and the attack on churches. Right-wing fringe groups are over-active. If Modi wants he can put them down. He did so once but immediately thereafter Mother Teresa was verbally attacked and her image tarnished. Modi must tell his people enough is enough. He has to do it as he is the PM and he has to uphold the Constitution.

One cannot avoid the impression that fundamentalist Hindutva elements, which Ribeiro describes as fringe elements, have become more emboldened to carry out their intimidating activities under the BJP rule. The RSS makes provocative statements. Minorities are feeling unsafe. The well-known Olympic player and medal winner Mary Kom says for instance that crimes against women and minorities are on the rise after the new government took over.

It is unfortunate that while Modi himself has told parliament twice and has issued statements himself, his associates make conflicting statements. The RSS refers to the Hindu Rashtra campaign on all available fora. This generates a sense of fear among a section of the society. The Prime Minister must respond positively to the lament of citizens like Ribeiro and Mary Kom

(Continued on Page 15)

Our neighbouring countries are getting curiouser and curiouser. Pakistan is determined to free Zia-ur Rahman Lakhvi who had masterminded the Mumbai attack in 2008 when some 165 people were killed at Hotel Taj through the sea, near the Gateway of India. The court has released him due to lack of evidence. This is despite the clinching proof that India has provided against him.

Either Pakistan is whetting the evidence that New Delhi provides or the judge hearing the case has been under pressure. Whatever the fact, the ends of justice are not being served. So far India's uproar on the freeing of Lakhvi has forced Islamabad to keep him inside the prison. But how long can the government do so? When there is no evidence against him he is bound to come out of the jail.

Islamabad does not seem to care for the sensitivity of India. Naturally, this attitude has disappointed New Delhi and has become one more point of friction between the two countries. The tenacity and persistence with which Islamabad is protecting Lakhvi make one suspect that he is not a non-state actor but very much part of Pakistan's nefarious plans. On the one hand, Islamabad wants good relations with us and, on the other it is all the time fomenting trouble on one pretext or the other.

Things in Bangladesh are not improving either, because of the

continuing militancy in the public and political affairs. But here vengeance takes top place, without any realization that the ultimate harm comes to the country. People's interest is sacrificed daily at the altar of political wrangling. Unimaginable things are affecting peace.

Take the case of Dr. Kamal Hossain who may reportedly be tried for sedition. He was the first foreign minister of Bangladesh. Even otherwise, his name evokes respect and admiration. He brings back the memory of the days when people in East Pakistan struggled and wrested freedom from the distant and despotic rule of West Pakistan to establish Bangladesh. Yet, he is suspected of treason.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina knows no bounds when it comes to wreaking vengeance against her critics. She harassed and hounded Muhammad Yunus, the Nobel laureate, for Grameen Bank devoted to micro-financing. He had dared to find an alternative to the two Begums, Sheikh Hasina and Khalida Zia of Bangladesh National Party.

Dr. Kamal Hossain was not hassled. His dignified response was that to be told now in 2015 that a sedition charge would be brought against him is a matter of shame not only for him but also for the nation as well as the person who said this.

When in the wilderness at Delhi, I once asked Sheikh Hasina why she

(Continued on Page 15)

Budget 2015–16: What is in it for the People?

Neeraj Jain

The Union Budget, which is a yearly affair, is a comprehensive display of the Government's finances, in which revenues from all sources and expenses of all activities undertaken are aggregated. It also contains estimates for the next fiscal year called budgeted estimates.

- i) Union Budget = Total Receipts = Total Expenditures
 - Union Budget for 2015–16 = Rs 1,777,477 crore
- ii) Total Receipts = Total Revenue Receipts + Total Capital Receipts
- iii) Gross Tax Revenues = Tax Revenue (Net to Centre) + States' share of Central Tax Revenues
 - Total Gross tax revenues for 2015–16 = Rs 1,449,500 crore

Of the total gross tax revenues of the government, a portion is transferred to the states. The remaining is what shows in the Union Budget.
- iv) Revenue Receipts = Tax Revenue (Net to Centre) + Non-tax Revenue

Tax revenues include direct taxes (income tax, corporation tax, etc.) and indirect taxes (customs duties, excise duties, sales tax, etc.). Non-tax revenues include profits of public sector enterprises, interest receipts on loans given by the government (to public sector enterprises, state governments, etc.), and income such as sale of spectrum.
- iv) Capital Receipts = Non-debt Capital Receipts + Debt Receipts

Non-debt Capital receipts include disinvestment income and return of loans. Debt receipts are government borrowings. The government borrows when its total receipts (revenue receipts + non-debt capital receipts) exceed its expenditures. The borrowings are also called the fiscal deficit.
- v) Total Expenditure = Plan Expenditure + Non-Plan Expenditure
 - Plan Expenditure = Rs 465,277 crore
 - Non-Plan Expenditure = Rs 1,312,200 crore
- vi) Plan expenditures are estimated after discussions between each of the ministries concerned and the Planning Commission. The Demands for Grants of the various Ministries show the Plan expenditure under each head separately from the Non-Plan expenditure.

Plan Expenditure = Total Budget Support for Central Plan + Central Assistance for State and UT Plans

- Total Budget Support for Central Plan = Rs 260493 crore
 - Central Assistance for State and UT Plans = Rs 204784 crore
- vii) Non-Plan Expenditure = Non-Plan Revenue Expenditure + Non-Plan Capital Expenditure
- Non-plan revenue expenditure is accounted for by interest payments, subsidies (mainly on food and fertilisers), wage and salary payments to government employees, grants to States and Union Territories governments, pensions, police, economic services in various sectors, other general services such as tax collection, social services, and grants to foreign governments. Non-plan capital expenditure mainly includes defence, loans to public enterprises, loans to States, Union Territories and foreign governments.

Analysing the Budget

Soon after taking over the reins of the Finance Ministry in May last year, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley had declared that the immediate focus of the government would be on curbing the fiscal deficit. His predecessor, P. Chidambaram, had brought down the fiscal deficit from 4.8 percent in 2012–13 to 4.5 percent in 2013–14; and then set a target for further reducing it to 4.1 percent for the year 2014–15 in his interim budget presented just before the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. Jaitley, in his first budget speech in July 2014, vowed to adhere to this “daunting” fiscal deficit target.¹

While presenting the first full budget of the new government on February 28, 2015, the Finance Minister proudly announced that the government had succeeded in sticking to the fiscal deficit target of 4.1 percent of the GDP for the year 2014–15. He further declared that in the financial year 2015–16, the fiscal deficit would be brought down to 3.9 percent, and then further to 3.6 percent and finally to 3 percent in 2016–17 and 2017–18, respectively.²

That India must bring down its fiscal deficit to near zero if it wants to become an economic superpower in the near future has become an economic gospel today. All the leading establishment economists, each and every economist associated with international financial institutions, every renowned management guru—all are in agreement that high levels of fiscal deficit relative to

GDP adversely affect growth. For the last more than two decades, ever since India began globalisation in 1991, controlling the fiscal deficit has been a key aspect of budget making of the government of India. In seeking to bring down the fiscal deficit to below 4 percent of the GDP and further to 3 percent of the GDP by 2017–18, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley is only walking down the path set by his predecessors in the Finance Ministry.³

Fiscal Deficit

Fiscal deficit is just another term for government borrowings of various types. The government borrows when its expenditures exceed its receipts of all types.

- Fiscal Deficit = Government expenditures – Receipts
- Receipts = Tax Revenues (Net to Centre) + Non-tax Revenues + Non-debt Capital Receipts

Humbug of Finance

The fact is, the economic theory that the government must balance its expenditure with its income, that is, must bring down its fiscal deficit to near zero, is plain humbug. John Maynard Keynes, considered by many to be the greatest economist of the twentieth century, had demonstrated long back that in an economy like India, where there is so much poverty and unemployment, the government should enlarge the fiscal deficit and increase its spending, it is beneficial for the economy.⁴ Even the governments of the developed countries like United States and Japan, when faced with recessionary conditions, have resorted to huge levels of public spending and high fiscal deficits.

Then why is the government of India so keen to reduce its fiscal deficit? Because it gives it an excuse to reduce its expenditures on the poor and transfer the savings to big corporate houses!

In other words, and this may sound amazing to many of our readers, none of our Finance Ministers, from Arun Jaitley to P. Chidambaram, have been/are really keen about reducing the fiscal deficit. This is obvious from the way they have been handling the various components of the fiscal deficit. The fiscal deficit is the excess of the government's expenditures over receipts. Even a cursory look at the policies being pursued by the government of India reveals that it is giving away lakhs of crores of rupees as subsidies to the rich. Had it really been concerned about the fiscal deficit, it could have easily reduced these mind-boggling give-aways. But these concessions are dubbed as 'incentives' and are justified in the name of promoting growth/development/entrepreneurism. On the other hand, the concessions

given to the poor, which are aimed at making available essential welfare services like education, health, food, transport, electricity, etc. to them at affordable rates, are given the derisive name 'subsidies' and are being drastically reduced in the name of containing the fiscal deficit. Not only that; these essential services are also being privatised—resulting in fabulous profits for the private sector.

A closer look at Modi government's 2014–15 and 2015–16 budget figures will make our point clear.

Tax Concessions to the Rich: 2014–15

Every year, for the past several years, the budget documents have included a statement on the estimated revenue forgone by the government due to exemptions in major taxes levied by the Centre.

The 2015–16 budget documents reveal that for the year 2014–15, the government gave away Rs 5.49 lakh crore in tax exemptions/deductions/incentives to the very rich. (The write-offs as mentioned in the budget are actually Rs 5.89 lakh crore. From that, we have deducted the Rs 40,434 crore forgone on personal income tax, since this write-off benefits a wider group of people.)⁵ These major write-offs are in direct corporate income tax, customs and excise duties. These tax concessions given to the rich exceed our fiscal deficit for 2014–15 (Rs 5.13 lakh crore)!⁶ Had Jaitley really been concerned about reducing the fiscal deficit, he could have reduced these concessions given to India's richie rich.

These tax concessions are being given to some of the richest people in the world. Forbes, the oracle of business journalism, puts out a list of the world's billionaires every year. Its 2014 list included the names of 56 Indians, with a collective net worth of \$191.5 billion.⁷ That is equivalent to Rs 11.8 lakh crore, more than double our fiscal deficit for 2014–15. (Calculated assuming \$1 = Rs 62)

The obscenity of these tax concessions becomes evident from just a single statistic: in 2014–15, the single biggest chunk of customs duties forgone was on diamonds and gold, accounting for Rs 75,592 crore.⁸

It is because of these huge tax concessions to the rich that the government's gross tax revenues for the year 2014–15 have fallen short of the target. Jaitley had set a target of collecting gross tax revenues to the tune of 10.6 percent of the GDP for the year 2014–15. The revised estimates for 2014–15 show that there has been a shortfall in tax revenues to the tune of Rs 1.13 lakh crore, and hence the gross tax revenues as a percentage

of the GDP has been revised downward to 9.9 percent.⁹

Despite this fall in gross tax revenues, how has the government succeeded in achieving the fiscal deficit target of 4.1 percent of the GDP?

It has succeeded in this mainly due to huge cuts in the government Plan and non-Plan expenditure. For 2014–15, the total Plan expenditure (including both Central Plan expenditure and Central assistance to states) was budgeted at Rs 575,000 crore. However, the revised Plan expenditure figure is only Rs 467,934 crore, a massive decline by Rs 107,066 crore. This revised Plan Expenditure of the Government of India for 2014–15 (Rs 4.68 lakh crore) is less than the total tax concessions given to the rich in 2014–15 of Rs 5.49 lakh crore!

The Non-Plan expenditure also fell in 2014–15, and thus the total Budget expenditure declined by Rs 113,734 crore in the last fiscal year.¹⁰

With the government more than keen to transfer lakhs of crores of rupees to corporate coffers through means like tax write-offs, public–private–partnerships, loan waivers, provision of land at subsidised rates, electricity duty waivers, and so on, obviously, the axe on Central Government spending has to fall on social sectors. And that is precisely what has happened. The revised estimates for 2014–15 show that the government slashed its budgetary spending on schemes for the most vulnerable and marginalised sections of the Indian society by as much as 15 to 40 percent, to meet its fiscal deficit target! (Table 1, fourth column; the various heads are explained later in this essay.)

The Coming Year

In the run-up to the budget, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley repeatedly asserted that the economy is constrained by “fiscal deficit in revenue.”¹² But as we have seen above, this has not prevented him from giving lakhs of crores of rupees of tax concessions and other sops to corporate houses.

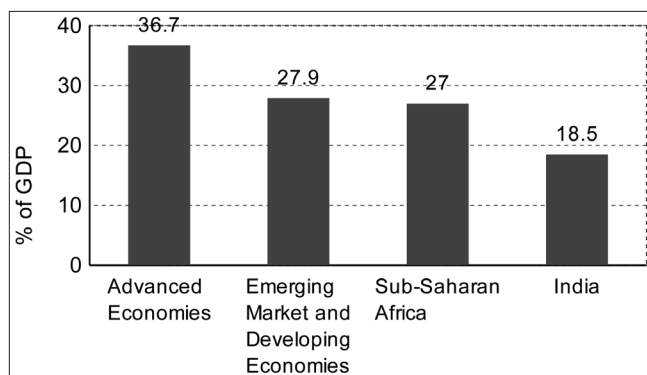
It is because of these huge tax giveaways to India’s richie rich that India’s combined tax-to-GDP ratio for Centre and States put together is among the lowest in the world. India’s tax–GDP ratio, at around 18% of the GDP, is far below not only the ‘advanced economies’ (36.7%), but also the ‘emerging market and developing economies’ (27.9%). Even the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, considered to be one of the poorest regions in the world, have a tax–GDP ratio of 27% (Chart 1).

Table 1: India’s Budget, 2014–15 and 2015–16: Reduction in Expenditures on Vulnerable Sections¹¹
(in Rs crore)

| | 2014-15 BE | 2014-15 RE | Reduction: BE – RE (%) | 2015-16 BE | Reduction: [2014-15 BE] - [2015-16 BE] |
|---|------------|------------|------------------------|------------|--|
| Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan | 50,548 | 33,638 | 33 | 30,851 | 39 |
| Tribal Sub-Plan | 32,387 | 20,536 | 37 | 19,980 | 38 |
| Schemes for Welfare of Children | 81,075 | 69,888 | 14 | 57,919 | 29 |
| Budgetary Resources Earmarked for Women | 98,030 | 81,984 | 16 | 79,258 | 19 |

It is thus obvious that there is a huge scope for increasing tax revenues in the country. However, instead of taking steps to increase its tax revenues, the government has been giving yet more tax concessions to big business, and consequently the tax-to-GDP ratio of centre and states combined fell to 17.9 percent for 2013–14 (BE).¹⁴

Chart 1: General Government Revenues, % of GDP, 2007–11¹³



For 2014–15, the Central Government had projected the tax-to-GDP ratio for Gross Central Tax Revenues at 10.6 percent (itself a huge fall from the peak of 11.71 percent reached in 2007–08). However, due to the huge tax concessions given to corporate houses and the consequent fall in tax revenues, the actual tax-to-GDP ratio came to only 9.9 percent.¹⁵ Consequently, the combined centre+state tax-to-GDP ratio has come down further to about 15–16 percent.¹⁶

Despite such a low level of tax revenues, in the 2015–16 budget, Jaitley has announced a reduction in corporate tax rates from 30% to 25% over the next four years, starting from the next financial year. This is expected to provide corporates a total tax relief bonanza

of Rs 2 lakh crore: Rs 20,000 crore in the first year, Rs 40,000 crore in the second year, Rs 60,000 crore in the third year and Rs 80,000 crore in fourth year.¹⁷ The Finance Minister has stated that the reductions in tax rates would be matched by removal of tax exemptions and incentives for corporate tax payers—these exemptions/concessions led to a total revenue loss of Rs 62,399 crore in 2014–15.¹⁸ But whether this will actually take place is to be seen—in all probability, given the absolute pro-corporate nature of the government, nothing of this sort is going to take place.

He has also deferred the implementation of the General Anti-Avoidance Rules or GAAR for a further two years. The first time GAAR was attempted to be introduced was in 2012; since then, first the UPA government and now the BJP government have been postponing its implementation. The GAAR is meant to address important issues such as abuse of tax treaties, use of tax havens for the purpose of reducing tax bills and other clever tax avoidance arrangements that are draining the country's resources. Several other countries around the world, including the BRICS nations of Brazil, South Africa and China, have introduced GAAR; but the Indian government is not willing to put in place legal mechanisms to check the widespread tax evasion that multinational corporations indulge in.¹⁹

On the other hand, to compensate for this loss in revenues, the Finance Minister has announced an increase in service tax rate from 12.36% (including cess and surcharge) to a flat 14%. This is a very regressive way of increasing tax revenues. As is well known, a progressive system of taxation implies that individuals and corporations pay taxes according to their ability to pay. Direct taxes are levied on incomes, such as wages, profits, property, etc., and so fall directly on the rich; while indirect taxes are imposed on goods and impersonal services, and so fall on all, both rich and poor. Therefore, a progressive system of taxation implies that the government would collect its tax revenues more from direct taxes than indirect taxes. Even in unabashedly capitalist countries from South Africa to Brazil to Mexico, the direct tax revenue as a percentage of total revenue varies from 55% to 65%. But in India, for every Rs 100 collected by the government as tax revenues, only around Rs 30 comes from direct taxes (and the rest, Rs 70, from indirect taxes).²⁰ The latest taxation proposals of the Finance Minister to augment indirect tax revenues while giving yet more direct tax concessions only further increase the regressivity of the tax structure in the country. According to the Finance Minister, his tax proposals will result in a direct tax loss

of Rs 8,315 crore, and an indirect tax gain of Rs 23,383 crore, resulting in a net revenue gain of Rs 15,068 crore.²¹

Cuts in Central Budget Outlay

The low revenue collections (as shown by the low tax-to-GDP ratio), combined with the keenness of the Finance Minister to reduce the fiscal deficit, has made him reduce the Plan Expenditure and the Total Budget Outlay.

**Table 2: India's Budget, 2014–15 and 2015–16
Reduction in Total Budget Expenditure and Plan Expenditure^{xii}
(in Rs crore)**

| | 2014-15 BE | 2014-15 RE | Reduction: BE – RE (%) | 2015-16 BE | Reduction: [2014- 15 BE] - [2015- 16 BE] |
|---------------------|---------------|---------------|------------------------------|---------------|--|
| Budget Outlay | 17,94,892 | 16,81,158 | 6.3 | 17,77,477 | 1 |
| Plan Expenditure | 575,000 | 467,934 | 18.6 | 465,277 | 19.1 |

As a proportion of the size of the Indian economy, the magnitude of Union Budget for 2015–16 (estimated size Rs 17,77,477 crore) has declined to 12.6% of the GDP. This figure was 13.3 percent for 2014–15 (Revised Estimates) and 14.1 percent for 2014–15 (Budget Estimates).²³

Worse, the government's projected Plan Expenditure has declined by a whopping 19 percent over the Budget Estimates for 2014–15. This is the first time that the Plan budget has been reduced, implying that the government is consciously cutting its spending.²⁴

But that does not mean that the government is reducing its sops to the corporate houses. The Budget 2015–16 announces:

- i) A significant increase of Rs 70,000 crore in investment in infrastructure in 2015–16 over the current year. A special focus is on building highways. The Budget increased the total Plan Expenditure of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways from Rs 28881 crore in 2014–15 (BE) to Rs 42913 crore in 2015–16, an increase of Rs 14032 crore.²⁵
- ii) The formation of a National Investment and Infrastructure Fund and tax-free bonds for raising funds for investment in rail, roads and irrigation. The Finance Minister stated that the government will ensure an annual flow of Rs 20,000 crore to the NIIF.²⁶

iii) The Finance Minister also emphasised the need for a revamp of the Public–Private–Partnership model. Calling the present model “weak”, he proposed that the government would need to further protect the private sector against investment risks in the infrastructure sector, and stated that the “sovereign will have to bear a major part of the risk.”²⁷

This last statement is absolutely amazing. As it is, under the existing PPP model, the government has been transferring mindboggling sums to the private sector. The private partner in this very special partnership is guaranteed a minimum rate of return on its investment (the government making up for any shortfall in profits), is given land and other resources at concessional rates, is often even provided the investment money by the government in the form of long term loans at concessional rates. To give an example, one form of PPP subsidy is what the government calls ‘Viability Gap Funding’ (VGF). In the name of making their investments ‘viable’, the government of India provides a direct subsidy to investors in the infrastructural sector of up to 40% of the project cost!²⁸ As of March 31, 2012, the total cost of projects completed, under implementation or in the pipeline under the PPP scheme was nearly Rs. 13 lakh crores.²⁹ These projects are in highways, ports, airports, railways, power, urban infrastructure and other sectors. Assuming that most of these projects are receiving VGF grants @ 40% of the investment, the total public ‘subsidy’ to these projects works out to more than Rs. 5 lakh crores.

Apart from VGF funding, the government also gives several other types of incentives to investors in the infrastructural sectors under the PPP model. Thus, private corporations building expressways and metro projects are additionally being given vast amounts of real estate for commercial use. Thus, in the case of the infamous Yamuna Expressway built by Jaypee Group under the PPP model, the Group was allowed to acquire five parcels of land along the expressway, each of 500 hectares each, for township projects. The expressway cost the Jaypee Group roughly Rs. 13,000 crores. The Group must have got 40% of this, that is, Rs. 5200 crores, as investment subsidy. But the real bonanza for the company was the 2500 hectares of land allotted to it—it acquired this land from farmers for around Rs. 1500 crores (at the rate of around Rs. 5 lakhs to 60 lakhs per hectare), and its present market value has zoomed to a whopping Rs. 1.5 lakh crores!³⁰ That is some deal!

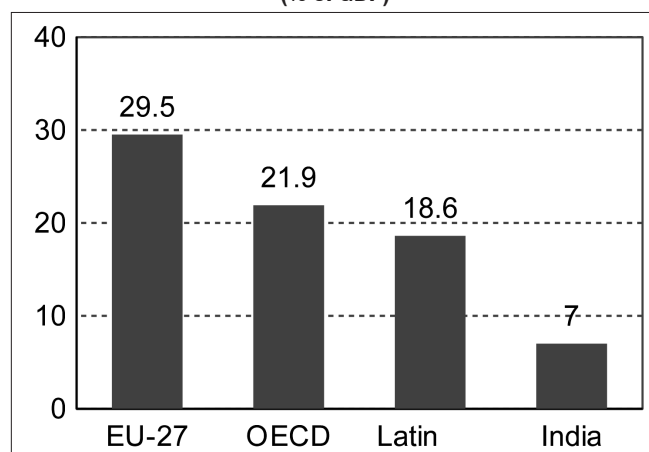
Axe Falls on Social Sector Investments

With Plan Expenditure slashed by as much as 20% over the previous year, and the government continuing

to provide huge subsidies to corporate houses, obviously, the brunt of the cuts in government spending have been borne by the social sectors in Jaitley’s 2015–16 budget.

As it is, the total public social sector expenditures of the government of India are very low! Jaitley and his predecessors in the Finance Ministry and the ‘Chicago boys’ who are their economic advisors are all blithely lying when they claim that the subsidies to the poor are very high! The total social sector expenditure of the government (Centre and States combined) of India is barely 7% of the GDP. (Of this, the Central government’s share is barely 2% of the GDP.) In comparison, the average public social sector expenditures of the 34 countries of the OECD is around 20% of the GDP, and for the EU-27 is even higher at around 30% of the GDP. The average public social sector expenditures for the 21 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean has been rising and is presently 18.6% (in 2009–10).³¹

Chart 2: Public Social Sector Expenditures of Developed Countries and India, 2010 (% of GDP)



Most developed countries have a very elaborate social security network for their citizens, including unemployment allowance, universal health coverage, free school education and free or cheap university education, old age pension, maternity benefits, disability benefits, family allowance such as child care allowance, allowances for those too poor to make a living, and much more. Governments spend substantial sums for providing these social services to their people. People in the developed countries consider government investments on social security to be their right. In recent years, millions have come out on the streets in these countries to protest government attempts to reduce social sector spending. In contrast, in India, the propaganda dished out by the intellectuals–politicians–bureaucrats and the media condemns government spending on the people as subsidies, as being wasteful, inefficient, benefiting

the wealthy rather than the poor, promoting parasitism, and so on; and so people do not consider government spending on social services to be their right, and there are no mass protests when school / college fees go up, or health care costs go through the roof, or bus fares skyrocket.

It is because of Indian government's very low social sector spending that the Human Development Report released by the UNDP ranks India near the bottom with regards to overall human development. India's Human Development Index ranking fell from 119 in 2010 to 135 in 2014 (in a list of 187 countries). According to the *UN Human Development Report 2011*, 53.7 percent of the Indian population is "multidimensionally poor"—a measure that captures how many people experience overlapping deprivations in living standards, health and education, and how many deprivations they face on the average.³²

And yet Delhi's Badshahs are further reducing the government's social sector expenditures. In its budget 2015–16, the Indian government has further reduced its already low expenditures on social services. As shown in Table 1, government spending on the vulnerable and disadvantaged sections—women, scheduled castes and tribes, and children—has taken a big hit in 2015–16, by as much as 20–40 percent over the budget estimates for 2014–15. Consequently, the Central government spending on social services has fallen from an already low 1.92% of the GDP (excluding food subsidy) in 2013–14 to 1.68% of the GDP in the 2015–16 BE. Including food subsidy, it has fallen from 2.74% of the GDP to 2.57% of the GDP (Table 3).

Table 3: Social Sector Expenditures by Union Government³³
(in Rs Crore)

| | 2013–14 | 2014–15 RE | 2015–16 BE |
|---|----------|---------------|---------------|
| Total Expenditure under Social Sector Ministries/Deptts. (Excluding Food Subsidy) | 217565 | 235662 | 236722 |
| Total Expenditure under Social Sector Ministries/Deptts. (Including Food Subsidy) | 310882 | 359028 | 362195 |
| GDP at Current Market Prices (2011–12 series) | 11345056 | 12653762 | 14108945 |
| Share of Social Sector Expenditure (Excluding Food Subsidy) as % of GDP | 1.92 | 1.86 | 1.68 |
| Share of Social Sector Expenditure (Including Food Subsidy) as % of GDP | 2.74 | 2.84 | 2.57 |

Demystifying Devolution to States

The government is claiming that the government has not reduced the expenditure on the social sectors in

actuality, as these cuts in Plan Expenditures would be more than compensated by the increase in states' share of Central taxes, from 32 percent to 42 percent. The Centre has accepted the recommendation of the 14th Finance Commission (FFC) to increase the share of the states in divisible pool of central taxes from 32 percent previously to 42 percent.

But the Centre, in a deft sleight of hand, has managed to keep the total transfers to States at nearly the same level as previous years while increasing States' share in Central taxes by drastically cutting its spending on Central Assistance for State and Union Territory Plans! This becomes obvious from the Table 4 below. The share of States in Central Taxes is to go up from Rs 3.82 lakh crore in 2014–15 (BE) to Rs 5.24 lakh crore in 2015–16 (BE). However, the total Central Assistance to States and Union Territories for Plan Spending is going to decline sharply from Rs 3.38 lakh crore in 2014–15 (BE) to Rs 2.05 lakh crore in 2015–16 (BE).

The Centre has unbundled the schemes and programmes for which it provides assistance into three categories. It would continue to fully fund those schemes which are mandated by legal obligations (e.g. MGNREGA) or are backed by Cess collection (e.g. funds for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Mid-Day Meal from the Parambhik Shiksha Kosh), and some schemes targeted at poverty alleviation. Some Centrally sponsored schemes would be implemented with a changed pattern of sharing of resources, with States contributing a higher share. Finally, for a few of the prevailing schemes (e.g. Backward Regions Grant Fund, Model Schools scheme, etc.), Central funding is to completely stop; if states want, they can continue these schemes from their own resources.

Table 4: Composition and Structure of Transfer of Resources to States³⁴

| | 2014–15 BE | 2015–16 BE | Change (%) |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| States share of taxes and duties (1) | 382216 | 523958 | +37.1 |
| Non Plan grants and loans to States (2) | 70019 | 108630 | +55.1 |
| Central Assistance for State and UT Plans (3) | 338408 | 204784 | –39.5 |
| Total Union Resources transferred to States (1+2+3) | 790643 | 837372 | +5.9 |
| GDP at current market prices (2011–12 series) | 12653762 | 14108945 | |
| Total Union Resources transferred to States as % of GDP | 6.25% | 5.94% | |

As a result, the net increase in spending capacity of the States (combined for all States) in 2015–16 (as compared to 2014–15 BE) is projected to go up by only 5.91% or Rs 46729 crore.

On the other hand, the Centre has cut its total Plan Expenditure by 20 percent or Rs 1.1 lakh crore, which is more than double the increase in Central transfer to the States. The cuts in spending on social sectors, as given in Tables 1 and 5, are even steeper, by 20 to 40 percent in most sectors, and even going up to 50–70 percent for the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Department of Land Resources and the Ministry of Panchayati Raj. There are only two important schemes, both backed by Central legislation, where the allocations in Budget 2015–16 have not been cut: the outlay for food subsidy and the outlay for MNREGA. It is another matter that the allocations are insufficient.

Therefore, it is obvious that total Central + State government spending on various social sectors is going to take a big hit in this financial year. Additionally, as several analysts have pointed out, the government projection for its tax revenues are much inflated. The Centre expects the gross tax revenues to go up by 15.8 percent in 2015–16 BE as compared to an actual increase of 9.9 percent in 2014–15, even though it expects the GDP to go up by 11.5% in 2015–16, the same as in 2014–15. That is highly improbable.³⁵ Therefore, in all likelihood, the Centre's gross tax revenues in 2015–16 will be below the target set for the year, and therefore the actual Central government spending on social sectors is going to be much below the already low spending levels planned for this fiscal.

Table 5: Trends in Tax Revenues, 2013–14 to 2015–16³⁶

(in Rs crore)

| | 2013–14 | 2014–15 RE | Change | 2015–16 | Change |
|--------------------|-----------|---------------|--------|-----------|--------|
| Gross Tax Revenues | 1,138,734 | 1,251,391 | 9.89% | 1,449,490 | 15.83% |

The class nature of the various State governments and the Central government are the same. Even if there has been a slight increase in devolution of funds to the states, it is very doubtful if the states are going to pass on this increase to increased social sector expenditures; as we have discussed elsewhere, various state governments too are competing with each other to give subsidies to corporate houses for setting up projects in their states!³⁷

Closer Look at Cuts in Social Sector Expenditures

Let us take a more specific look at the cuts faced by the various ministries related to the social sectors.

Table 6: India's Budget, 2014–15 and 2015–16 Reduction in Budget Expenditure of Social Sector Related Ministries³⁸
(in Rs crore)

| | 2014–15 (BE) Plan Expenditure | 2015–16 (BE) Plan Expenditure | Reduction in Plan Size (%) |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Ministry of Human Resource Development: | | | |
| Department of School Education and Literacy | 51,828 | 39,039 | 24.7 |
| Of which: Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan | 28,258 | 22,000 | 22.1 |
| Department of Higher Education | 16,900 | 15,855 | 6.2 |
| Ministry of Women and Child Development | 21,100 | 10,287 | 51.2 |
| Ministry of Health and Family Welfare: | | | |
| Department of Health and Family Welfare | 30,645 | 24,549 | 19.9 |
| Department of Health Research | 726 | 713 | 1.8 |
| Department of AIDS Control | 1785 | 1397 | 21.7 |
| Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation | 13,237 | 3,607 | 72.8 |
| Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation | 15,260 | 6,236 | 59.1 |
| Ministry of Agriculture: Department of Agriculture and Cooperation | 22,309 | 16,646 | 25.4 |
| Department of Agricultural Research and Education | 3715 | 3691 | 0.7 |
| Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries | 2,174 | 1,491 | 31.4 |
| Ministry of Rural Development: Department of Rural Development | 80,043 | 71,642 | 10.5 |
| Department of Land Resources | 3,750 | 1628 | 56.6 |
| Ministry of Panchayati Raj Ministry of Urban Development: | 7,000 | 94 | 98.7 |
| Department of Urban Development | 16,508 | 15,676 | 5 |
| Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation | 6,000 | 5,625 | 6.3 |

Reduction in Gender Budget:

The Gender Budget Statement (GBS), first introduced in Union Budget 2005–06, captures the quantum of budgetary resources earmarked for women by various departments and ministries. There is a sharp decline in the magnitude of the GBS, by a whopping 19% as compared to the Budget Estimates for 2014–15, reflecting

the reduced priority for women in this year's Union Budget. Although the list of schemes in the GBS is very long, the reality is, most of these interventions are only on paper, as reflected in the fact that they are very meagerly funded—of the 59 schemes meant exclusively for women, as many as 54 schemes have allocations of less than Rs 100 crore!³⁹

Reduced Expenditure on Children

India is home to about 442 million children aged 0–18 years, who constitute 39 percent of the country's population. The total allocation for child oriented schemes has been sharply reduced by 30% in this year's budget as compared to last year's budget estimate. The most important scheme oriented towards children is the Integrated Child Development Scheme; however, the allocation under this scheme has cut by as much as 54 percent, from Rs 18391 crore in 2014–15 BE to Rs 8449 crore in 2015–16!⁴⁰

Resources Earmarked for Dalits and Adivasis

The Scheduled Caste Sub Plan (SCSP) and Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) were started in the 1970s with the aim of channelising funds from the general sectors in the Central Ministries towards the development of the Dalits and Adivasis, at least in proportion to their share in the total population. The population share for the Dalits was 16.6 percent and for Adivasis was 8.6 percent according to the Government of India Census 2011. While the allocations for SCSP and TSP never reached the stipulated norm of 16% and 8% respectively, in this budget they have fallen even more sharply, by 38–39 percent. The allocation for SCSP has fallen to just 6.6 percent and the allocation for TSP to a lowly 4.3 percent of the total Plan expenditure for 2015–16!⁴¹

Abandoning the Health Sector to God

The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends that countries should allocate at least 5% of the GDP for public health services. The advanced countries spend more than this; public health care spending as a percentage of GDP in 27 advanced economies rose from 5% to more than 7% over the period 1990–2008; while public health care spending in several emerging economies is between 3 to 5 percent of GDP.⁴² In contrast, India's public health expenditure in India (Centre and states combined) was only about 1.3% of the GDP in 2013–14, and is amongst the lowest in the world, even lower than sub-Saharan Africa.⁴³

This has forced citizens to bear the brunt of health spending. India has amongst the most privatised health systems in the world—households undertake nearly

three-fourths of all the health spending in the country (72%), public spending accounts for just 28%.⁴⁴

Because of this low level of public spending, India's health system is in "crisis", warn the editors of *The Lancet*, one of the world's most respected medical journals. India has not succeeded in controlling many infectious diseases, including tuberculosis, malaria, kala azar, filariasis, dysentery, typhoid, hepatitis and Japanese encephalitis. Malaria alone kills nearly 2 lakh people in India every year. Around 3 lakh people die of TB every year in the country, nearly 1000 a day. According to the WHO (2008), of the total number of deaths due to disease in a sample of 192 countries across the world, India accounted for nearly one-fourth of the deaths due to diarrhoea, more than one-third of the deaths due to leprosy and more than half of the deaths due to Japanese encephalitis. Of the seven million children who died before the age of five in 2011 in the world, one-fourth of these child deaths (1.8 million) took place in India. The bulk of these deaths are preventable, with an appalling one-third of the deaths being due to pneumonia and diarrhoea alone. India also accounts for one-fifth (56,000) of the 287,000 maternal deaths in the world in 2010, according to a UN report. Even as India has failed to tackle these long standing health challenges, it is also faced with another epidemic, of chronic diseases (like cardiovascular diseases, mental health disorders, diabetes and cancer). More than 50% of the deaths in India occur due to chronic diseases, with cardiovascular diseases being a major contributor. As a *Lancet* study points out, it is possible to address this challenge too, many inexpensive strategies are available, but again their implementation would require strengthening the public health system.⁴⁵

Despite this appalling situation, the Union Budget 2015–16 has cut the already low allocations for the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare by 16%, or about Rs. 6000 crore (from Rs 37965.7 crore in 2014–15 BE to Rs 32068.2 crore in 2015–16 BE).⁴⁶

Accelerating Commercialisation of Education

Inaugurating the budget session of the Parliament on February 23, 2015, President Pranab Mukherjee stated on behalf of the BJP government that education would be the 'priority of priorities' for his government.⁴⁷

And yet the allocations for education in the Budget 2015–16 have been slashed by as much as 16.5% as compared to the 2014–15 estimates. The allocations for even the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Mid-Day Meal Scheme—two of the most important schemes

for elementary education that are to be fully funded by the Central government—have been slashed. The SSA is the main scheme of the Central government for implementing the Right to Education Act and universalise education. Total allocation for the SSA has been cut by 22%, while allocation for the “National Programme of Mid Day Meals in Schools” has been chopped by 30%. The country’s ruling classes are not even willing to spend money on providing a decent nutritious meal once a day for the country’s children!

Table 7: Budgetary Allocations for Education, 2014–15 and 2015–16⁴⁸

(in Rs crore)

| | 2014–15 (BE) | 2015–16 (BE) | Reduction (%) |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Ministry of Human Resource Development | 82771.1 | 69074.76 | 16.6 |
| Department of School Education and Literacy | 55115.10 | 42219.50 | 23.4 |
| <i>Of which:</i> | | | |
| Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan | 28258 | 22000 | 22.1 |
| Mid-Day Meal Scheme | 13152 | 9236.4 | 29.8 |
| Department of Higher Education | 27656.00 | 26855.26 | 2.9 |

Drinking Water and Sanitation

The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) is one of the most heavily publicised programs of the Central government, endorsed by the Prime Minister himself. It includes both the National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP) and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA). It has both a rural and an urban component.

While the entire BJP political leadership, from the Prime Minister to the Finance Minister, have been harping on Clean India, the government is simply not willing to fund the Swachh Bharat Mission. It has cut the budget for the SBM by more than half! The government is hoping the states would make good the deficit from their funds!⁴⁹

Table 8: Budgetary Allocations for Swachh Bharat Mission, 2014–15 and 2015–16⁵⁰

(in Rs crore)

| | 2014–15 (BE) | 2015–16 (BE) | Reduction (%) |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation | 15266.85 | 6243.87 | 59.1 |
| National Rural Drinking Water Programme | 11000 | 2611 | 76.3 |
| Swachh Bharat Abhiyan | 4260 | 3625 | 14.9 |

Rural Development

As per Census 2011, nearly 83 crore people in India are living in rural areas, which constitute about 69 percent

of the total population of the country. Therefore, all-encompassing development of rural areas is crucial for development of the country.

The BJP had declared in its election manifesto to the 16th Lok Sabha that the government would focus on improving village infrastructure. But as is obvious from the Table 8, total allocation for the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) has been cut by 12.5%.

Table 9: Budgetary Allocations for Ministry of Rural Development, 2014–15 and 2015–16⁵¹

(in Rs crore)

| | 2014–15 (BE) | 2015–16 (BE) | Reduction (%) |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Ministry of Rural Development | 83852.46 | 73332.58 | – 12.5 |
| Department of Rural Development | 80093.33 | 71695.08 | – 10.5 |
| <i>Of which:</i> | | | |
| National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) | 3858.6 | 2382.7 | – 38.2 |
| Indira Awas Yojna (IAY) | 16000 | 10025 | – 37.3 |
| Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna (PMGSY) | 14391 | 14291 | – 0.7 |
| Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) | 34000 | 34699 | + 2 |
| Department of Land Resources | 3759.13 | 1637.50 | – 56.4 |

The most important programs under the MoRD are the Indira Awas Yojna (IAY), the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna (PMGSY) and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA). The Union government is seeking to transfer the IAY and the NRLM to State Governments, and so allocations for both these schemes has been slashed by nearly 40 percent.

The flagship program of the MoRD is the MNREGA. On paper, this program, that is legislatively supposed to be fully funded by the Centre, has escaped the steep cuts that have been made in social sector spending of the Central government in the 2015–16 budget. The outlay for this program in the Budget 2015–16 has been pegged at Rs 34699 crore, 2 percent more than the allocation for 2014–15.

The reality is, the Centre already owes the states Rs 6000 crores on account of wage arrears already paid by the state governments due to shortfall in Central funding. Even without taking account of inflation, if the centre wanted to maintain the MGNREGS at the same absolute level as in the previous year, the minimum outlay it should have provided is Rs 46,000 crores (consisting of Rs 34,000 crores plus Rs 6000 crore arrears plus Rs 6000 crore shortfall that caused the arrears in the first place);

the fact that it has not done so but kept the provision at roughly the same level as last year, implies therefore a massive actual cut, of 32 percent!⁵²

Apart from this shortfall, the present MNREGA programme is very inadequately funded on other accounts too. According to National Sample Survey data for 2009–10 and 2011–12, around 19 percent of rural households sought work but did not get employment under the MNREGA. Even those who got employment did not get the mandated 100 days of employment. In 2013–14, MNREGA provided 219.72 crore person-days of employment to 4.78 crore households, which works out to an average wage employment of 46 person-days a year.⁵³

The states had projected an estimated 278 crore person-days of work for 2014–15, amounting to an estimated cost of Rs 66,000 crore. The Ministry of Rural Development too had accepted this figure. However, the budget allocation for 2014–15 was only Rs 34,000 crore.⁵⁴ Now, in 2015–16, the budget allocation for this crucial scheme to provide employment to the rural poor has further declined in real terms over this low allocation made in 2014–15.

Allocations for Food Security

This is yet another important programme whose allocations have not been cut by the Central government in Budget 2015–16, at least on paper.

Table 10: Budgetary Allocations for Food Security, 2014–15 and 2015–16⁵⁵

(in Rs crore)

| | 2013–14 | 2014–15 (BE) | 2014–15 (RE) | 2015–16 (BE) | Increase (%) |
|---|----------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution: Food Subsidy | 92,000 | 115,000 | 122676 | 124,419 | +8.2 |
| GDP at current market prices (2011–12 series) | 11345056 | 12653762 | 12653762 | 14108945 | |
| Food Subsidy as % of GDP | 0.81 | 0.91 | 0.97 | 0.88 | |

Even within the frame of the National Food Security Act, these allocations are not enough. According to

the Government of India, as of now the Act is being implemented only in 11 states, that too partially. Therefore, a full roll-out of the Act would considerable more budgetary support as compared to the food subsidy bill in 2014–15. However, Jaitley has increased the food subsidy budget by only Rs 2000 crore for this year, implying that the government is not anticipating any increase in the quantum of grain to be distributed through the PDS this year (and is assuming that grain would be procured at the same prices as last year).⁵⁶

Actually, the National Food Security Act is a very inadequate act. It only partially addresses the huge problem of mal / under-nutrition in the country.

- Firstly, the Act provides the poor only starvation foodgrains. While the Indian Council for Medical Research recommends that an adult requires 14 kg of foodgrains per month and children 7 kg, the bill restricts the entitlement to only 5 kg per person per month!
- Secondly, the Act provides only for cereals, with no entitlements to other basic food necessities such as pulses and edible oil required to combat malnutrition—whose prices have soared in recent years.
- Thirdly, the Act does not provide even this limited coverage to all the poor—it expands the percentage of the population that would be provided subsidised foodgrains through the PDS to 67%, but as has been pointed out by economist Utsa Patnaik, 75% of the rural population and 73% of the urban population are unable to access the minimum recommended 2200/2100 calories.
- Even states like Tamil Nadu and Chhattisgarh have better food security acts. Thus, for instance, Tamil Nadu has a universal public distribution system, wherein each and every family, whether below the poverty line or not, is entitled to 20 kg rice free of cost. The PDS in Tamil Nadu also supplies other essentials like wheat, sugar, kerosene and tur dal at subsidised rates.⁵⁷

The BJP had in fact criticised these inadequacies of the National Food Security Act in the debate in Parliament when this Act was being passed. Arun Jaitley had stated: “are we substantially expanding the right over what existed prior to this Bill being brought in? Are we substantially increasing the outlay? The answer is ‘no’...” Murli Manohar Joshi had even moved an amendment demanding that “every person ... shall be entitled to 10 kg of food grains, two and a half kg of pulses and nine hundred grams of cooking oil per person per month.” The BJP election manifesto for the elections

to the 16th Lok Sabha had promised “Universal Food Security”, saying that it is integral to national security.⁵⁸ However, after coming to power, the BJP has made a complete U-turn on this issue too.

The BJP – Twin Brother of UPA

The Budget 2015–16 is not only a continuation, but also an acceleration, of the neo-liberal policies being followed by the previous UPA government. Since 1991, ever since India began globalisation and opened up the economy to foreign multinationals, successive governments at the Centre have been running the economy solely for the profit maximisation of giant foreign and Indian corporations. The Modi–Jaitley government too is: i) transferring lakhs of crores to foreign and Indian business houses in the name of promoting GDP growth; ii) cutting welfare expenditures on the poor—whose aim is to provide the bare means of sustenance to the poor at affordable rates—in the name of containing the fiscal deficit, and privatising and handing over these services to private corporations for their naked profiteering.

The BJP government does not only want to destroy the secular fabric of India, the socialist vision of our nation’s founding fathers embedded in the following Directive Principles of our Constitution is also under attack:

- to build an egalitarian society and a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life [Article 38 (1)];
- to strive to minimise inequalities in income [Article 38 (2)];
- to ensure that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity [Article 39 (f)];
- to make effective provision for securing education and public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want [Article 41];
- to regard raising the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among the primary duties of the State [Article 47].

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and restrain his followers. His statement to parliament last February was sound and welcome. He had said that everyone has the undeniable right to retain or adopt the religion of his or her choice without coercion or undue influence. What is needed is that this thought must be enforced in letter and spirit. That is all that is expected of India's prime minister.

(Continued from Page 2)

was opposed to Dr. Hossain. "He has stabbed me in the back," she replied. His only fault was that he had criticized her as an elderly statesman and a colleague of her father, Sheikh Mujib-ur Rahman, the founder of Bangladesh.

Dr. Hossain was the person who was flown to London when the defeated Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Prime Minister of West Pakistan, released the Sheikh. Bhutto did not want him to go directly to New Delhi which had helped the Sheikh in his liberation struggle. In fact, when Bhutto offered to release the Sheikh, the latter reportedly asked: "What about Kamal Hossain?" Bhutto said that he too would fly with him.

Dr. Hossain told me that since the destination was not known to him, he did not carry warm clothes and felt uncomfortable when the Pakistan International Airlines landed at London, carrying just the Sheikh and Dr. Hossain, the only two passengers.

That the Sheikh flew to Delhi to thank Indira Gandhi personally for her help is another story. Dr. Hossain stayed back at London to discuss with the British leaders the challenges before the newly-born state of Bangladesh. He could speak on behalf of the Sheikh.

That Sheikh Hasina has gone to the extent of denigrating Dr. Hossain does not surprise me. This is her way of functioning. She should learn from Prime Minister Narendra Modi who does not run down the opposition but follows the policies he has devised. He quietly carries out instructions from the RSS to spread the Hindutva philosophy without making it obvious.

What is happening to vandalize churches is the fallout of the ghar wapsi campaign of the RSS. Two important churches have been destroyed in Delhi itself. But there is no word of condemnation by Home Minister Rajnath Singh or any action by the Home Ministry which is in charge of the capital's law and order. One feels that the BJP government is conniving at what the perpetrators are doing.

The churches are also a target in Lahore. I cannot say that there is a nexus between the governments on either side. But the coincidence is remarkable. Pakistan is a theocratic state, but what about India which has democratic credentials? It means that the Christians are a dispensable minority on both sides.

Mahatma Gandhi, father of the nation, said that if he had not been a Hindu he would have liked to be a Christian. At his prayer meetings, the Bible was read before the Gita. What is most disconcerting is that there is no protest from the Hindu community. Some Christians staged a march in the capital. But the Hindus kept themselves away. Being a majority community it was its duty to have reached out to the Christians. Liberal voices are fewer and muter than before. RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat has said that Christians are coming back to the Hindu fold because they were converted by the British after the first national uprising in 1857.

Sheikh Hasina is petty and brooks no opposition. Yet, the plus point in her favour is the commitment she has to secularism. Even Dr. Hossain would admit that. But that does not hide her autocratic ways. And to go to the extent of proposing a sedition charge against Dr. Hossain is committing a crime which is no less heinous than treason.



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