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A positive turn

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Unpredictability is a constant feature that has marked the course of India-Pakistan bilateral relations. The ties between the two countries have suffered many ups and downs, mostly downs, during the last few decades. One therefore has to be extremely cautious in assessing the state of relations at a given time, for, what is true today may well have changed for the worse by tomorrow. Nonetheless, we need to record and welcome a positive turn last week in the relations, a development that has raised high expectations in both the neighbours. May the present trend in the evolution of relations be sustained for awhile so that we achieve some more clarity and goodwill in relations.

The positive turn came in the form of a surprise. Notably, the two principal players in the high drama that was enacted were also taken by surprise that their interaction would result in a positive turn. What happened on Christmas Day could well have been scripted by a screen writer used to creating dramatic situations. It so happened that the Indian Prime Minister was flying back to New Delhi from Kabul where he had attended the inauguration of the new parliament building. He telephoned his Pakistani counterpart

Nawaz Sharif to greet him on his birthday. Sharif in turn invited him for a cup of tea since he (Sharif) happened to be in Lahore to attend his granddaughter's wedding, telling Mody "you will be flying over Lahore in any case, so you may as well drop in." Mody said yes and flew to Lahore, and thereby resulted the positive turn we have been mentioning above. The brief interaction has added new flesh and blood to an already improved state of relations, the said improvement also having been brought about by an unplanned interaction in Paris on the sidelines of the international climate conference. The time has indeed come to ask how far the two countries can go in turning the positive along productive lines. And that too consistent with the high expectations raised in Islamabad and New Delhi.

Where normalisation of India-Pakistan relations are concerned it is nobody's secret that there are as many detractors and ill-wishers in both countries as there are promoters and well-wishers. Nothing illustrates this better than the fact that even while the world was applauding the then prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee breakthrough visit to Lahore riding a bus from India, Pakistani generals

were planning a war against India launched from the mountains of Kargil! The two countries, the two prime ministers and the people of the two countries need to guard themselves from the mischief-makers in order to give the positive turn a chance. The Lahore “drop-in” visit has been hailed as representing a transformative moment. So, the first step needs to be followed by several more. Some constructive steps have already been taken. The two foreign secretaries are set to meet mid-January. A meeting between the national security advisers is also on the cards—they have already had a session last month in Bangkok. Now is also the time where the bilateral interaction could benefit from its extension to the popular level, by a determined and planned programme of exchanges at various levels, including artistes, journalists, writers, and culture representatives. The important point is not to fritter away the opportunity for initiatives that the Lahore meet has thrown up.

The old adage relating to striking the iron while it is hot has special relevance here. The advantage bestowed by Lahore should not be allowed to be lost through inaction or political lethargy. This is all the more important since detractors in both countries can be depended upon to wreck the Lahore gain if they are given time to do mischief.

What Manmohan Singh could not achieve, although fondly wanting and wishing to, in ten years of power Modi has done in two years at the helm. Prime Ministers in office earlier, including Rajiv Gandhi, tried to break the India-Pakistan logjam. They failed, largely because the atmospherics nor the

domestic political situation favoured adventurism of any kind, even the thought of a breakthrough could not be entertained. The atmospherics favour Modi and hopefully he will continue exploiting them in the

direction of normalisation. Since it needs two hands to clap, we can only hope that Islamabad would also work towards the same goal as will India in pursuit of a common goal of peace and stability.

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India-Pak relations: We can learn to look forward

Rajindar Sachar

A correct and impartial reading of history will show us that the people, who can learn to look forward instead of backwards, need not be condemned to relive the past, and consequently learn to live with each other harmoniously.

There is some hope of lessening tension between India and Pakistan. This follows the visit of India's Foreign Minister to Pakistan and the talk in a cordial atmosphere with Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif. This is welcome because we unnecessarily bring in the past by invoking the wars between India and Pakistan in 1965 and 1971.

The war of 1965 was a no-win for either Pakistan or India. India had to give up its march to Lahore and Pakistan's initial success in Khem Karan was shattered by soldiers like Abdul Hamid (the recipient of the first Param Vir Chakra) and the dogged refusal to withdraw. The patriotism of General Harbakhsh Singh resulted in the Pakistan Patton tank graveyard at Khem Karan in East Punjab. Both the countries agreed to a settlement supervised by a third nation.

The 1971 war was forced on us. The Pakistan army attack on East

Bengal and the refugees fleeing for safety was creating an intolerable burden on India — both because of human rights considerations and massive, almost back-breaking, financial strain of providing relief to the Bangladeshis.

Indira Gandhi tried her best to persuade President Nixon, who was sympathetic to Pakistan, to intervene at an early stage. In July 1971, Henry Kissinger had a stopover in India on a secret visit to China. Indira Gandhi invited Kissinger for a private breakfast meeting for consultation.

However, the evening before, Indira Gandhi telephoned General Maneckshaw, our then Army Chief and told him that she would like him to come and meet her at breakfast the next morning and further told him to come in the Army uniform.

At that meeting, Mrs. Indira Gandhi was persistent in asking Kissinger to plead with Nixon that he should try to restrain Pakistan for what was being done in East Pakistan because the conditions there were becoming intolerable and it was impossible for India to remain silent. Kissinger, however, went on prevaricating and would

not really give a straight answer. Rather, he tried to underplay the situation. Obviously rattled, Indira Gandhi said if that was the position she may have to do something herself, something which she was reluctant to do. At this, Kissinger again expressed his inability on his and Nixon's behalf to do anything and asked her, rather ironically, as to what she intended to do. At that time she stood up and pointing towards the General (who was in full Army uniform) told Kissinger that if the US President could not control the situation then she was going to ask him (meaning the General) to do the same. There was stunning silence for a minute but the sharp message was conveyed to Kissinger. Nixon and Kissinger had their egos deflated and never forgave Indira Gandhi for such an attitude.

India obviously could not take any initiative against Pakistan as that would have been a breach of international law. There had to be proper justification for India to act against Pakistan and hence a wait was necessary.

In the meanwhile, refugees were continuing to pour in from East Bengal. Siddhartha Shankar Ray was in charge of refugee welfare. On one of the usual visits by Indira Gandhi to the border, where a public meeting was to be held to reassure the refugees that they would be looked after properly, she told Ray that after public meeting she would go back to Delhi, and that Ray should stay for some days in Calcutta and come later.

At the public meeting that Mrs. Gandhi was addressing, one of her aides handed her a small paper. She read it and put it in her pocket and continued as usual with her

speech. After the meeting ended, while going to the airport, she told Ray that he should come along with her to Delhi. Ray was a little surprised at this sudden change of his programme. But her followers did not ask questions of Indira Gandhi — there was implicit compliance. After about 15 minutes of the flight onward to Delhi, Mrs. Gandhi leaned back in her seat, a bit relaxed, took out the paper given to her at the public meeting and told Ray: "Pakistan has attacked". At first blush, it would seem strange that Mrs. Gandhi should seem relaxed on knowing about the Pakistan attack. But there was obvious logic. India was reeling under the influx of refugees, yet it dared not attack East Bengal, because then the world opinion would have called it the aggressor. An excuse was necessary and Pakistan had conveniently provided it. Obviously, it was based on the wrong information that our aircraft was still at Pathankot because by then it had been moved to Nagpur.

Fairness demands that we must be objective. War on the East Bengal front was all weighed in favour of India. As General Arora told me, though to start with some hard knocks were taken, it was a smooth march. The whole population of East Bengal was against Pakistan. The movements of the Pakistan army were leaked in detail by the Mukti Bahini and their volunteers to the Indian Army, whose task was made easy. To make matters still worse, the Indian Air Force had no opposition and bombard General Niazi's official residence. One of the Air Chiefs told me: "You can't imagine the panic — the utter helplessness at being bombarded from above by enemy planes, knowing fully well that you cannot even send one plane

to stop them". It was inevitable that Niazi surrendered without taking much time. But let us not gloat over it. We have a history of thousand years of joint living and culture — it would be an unimaginable tragedy to ignore it.

Wrong deduction from history and culture are being spread to fan India-Pakistan hostilities. I do not deny that the history of a people, a state or a nation is part of its culture, its tradition and its identity and they can no more be forgotten than an individual can forget his or her personal history.

I do not deny that those experiences contribute to the present hostility between India and Pakistan. But yet maturity is a process in which those experiences are absorbed and reinterpreted in such a way so as to enable the individual and the nations to live in the present and not in the past.

A correct and impartial reading of history will show us that, the people who can learn to look forward instead of backwards, need not be condemned to relive the past. Let India and Pakistan not ignore this warning, especially when both are nuclear powers.

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Dear Reader

*Wish you a
Happy New Year*

From
Janata Weekly
Team

A Futuristic Multi-Faith Harmony Centre Proposed In Ayodhya

Sandeep Pandey

The Sarva Dharm Sadbhav Kendra Trust proposes to convert the Ram-Janaki temple at Saryu Kunj, Durahi Kuan in Ayodhya into a multi-faith harmony centre where people believing in any religion, as well as those who don't believe in any religion, would be welcome without any discrimination on the basis of religion, caste, gender, race or ethnicity. The idea was initiated by Zafar Saifullah, former Cabinet Secretary of the Government of India, who founded the Trust before his death. Acharya Yugal Kishore Shashtri, the Mahant of the abovementioned temple in Ayodhya is also a Trustee.

The reason why such a centre is being conceived in Ayodhya is because historically Ayodhya, being the birth place of Lord Ram as well as where he ruled, has been a holy place not just for Hindus but for followers of at least four other religions - Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and Islam. Gautam Buddha is believed to have spent four seasons during rainy months, each of them comprising of four months, which is about sixteen months, in Ayodhya. Four of the twenty-four Tirthankars of Jain religion are believed to have been born in Ayodhya, which includes the first Tirthankar Rishabhdev, whose statue has been built here. Mazars of two prophets of Islam, Hazrat Nooh Alhe Salam and Hazrat Shish Alhe Salam have been built here along with a number of Sufi mazars because of which, Ayodhya has also acquired the name of Khurd Mecca. A number of Muslims are

brought from other places to be buried here after their death because Ayodhya is considered to be a holy place for them. The sixth guru of Sikh religion, Guru Teg Bahadur, is believed to have spent two years in Ayodhya. A Gurudwara has been built here in his memory.

As Ayodhya is a holy place for followers of five religions, it would be inappropriate for followers of any one religion to stake a claim here. As Hinduism is the oldest among these religions, most buildings here are associated with this religion. But as newer religions appeared during history, followers of these later religions also carried out their activities here. Some of them stayed here permanently. Hence some other places associated with later religions came up. By and large followers of different religions, not just in Ayodhya but in other places in India also, have tried to co-exist respecting each other's religions. Ayodhya is a fine example of this syncretic culture for which India is famous in the world. Ayodhya, literally means a place of 'no war'. It was located adjacent to Faizabad, which was the capital of province of Awadh, which literally means place of 'no killing'. Hence there is no doubt about the history of people practicing different religions living together in Ayodhya. It is only appropriate that a place dedicated to the idea of communal harmony be built in Ayodhya.

The Sarva Dharm Sadbhav Kendra proposed to be built in Ayodhya will be a model for future

religious centres. In a world where increasingly a need is being felt for living in communal harmony, we cannot continue with the old model where every religious follower believes his religion to be superior to other religions. Some try to convert others to their religion. It is inexplicable why when most religions believe in the concept of one God would they compete with one another? Most clashes and deaths among human beings, except for when the humans have been the victim of nature's fury, have probably been because of religions. There can be no greater contradiction. Religions are supposed to tell us how we may live together in harmony and they become the most serious cause of societal conflict. The teachings of great masters, prophets or incarnations have been on similar lines. Most religions also teach us to take care of less privileged amongst us. But we hardly follow the message of compassion. We take out some time from our material pursuits and fulfill our religious duties more as a formality, hardly caring about the downtrodden. We find some reason to justify their situation and go on with our life.

The proposed multi-faith harmony centre at Ayodhya will provide a space to debate all religious, social and philosophical issues with an open mind respecting a basic rule that what we say should not hurt the feelings of any other human being. Or, we must practice enough care to ensure that we say things on which we don't agree in a manner that it

doesn't hurt anybody's sentiments. This will require a great effort on the part of people who'll run this centre. To ensure that whatever is being discussed is authentic, a resource in the form of a library will be established at the centre with books and other material- audio-visual-digital material - covering various thoughts from all over the world.

But we don't believe that religion is to be observed at a

merely intellectual or spiritual level. Serving the fellow human being, especially the one in need, is the crux of religion and hence of humanity. The Trust will also run a kitchen on the lines of 'langar' in Gurudwaras to take care of the problem of malnourishment in Indian society. The entire centre would be run by volunteers dedicated towards performing service. The Trust will try to take care of education and health-care needs of children,

women, adults and aged. The Trust will empower people by training them in accessing their basic rights from the governments, courts, etc., for example, by using the Right to Information. The income-expenditure details of the Trust would be transparent. The central idea is to present to the world an ideal religious/spiritual centre in the service of all humanity and nature.

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Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel : A National Leader with a Vision and Compassion

K.K.Panda

The contemporary Indian political system is passing through a period of new isolationism. Instead of moving towards a genuinely democratic and human-centred civil society, the Indian social structures, in some parts of the political system, are continuously retreating into ugly tribalism in the form of ethnic crisis. The consumerisation of contemporary life and a declining ethical value system have affected the very structure and process of our administration and civil society. It has not only created a crisis of identity for the people, it has forced them also to withdraw into particularistic belief patterns. The new struggle for economic hegemony has created a climate of inequity, intellectual acquiescence and a psyche of restlessness in both national and international interactions.

A systemic attempt to subordinate social justice to the market forces has created a social and political system in which millions could be found dispensable. Professor Lester

C. Throw, in his book, *The Future of Capitalism*, wrote, "The ideology of inclusion is withering away, to be replaced by a revival of the survival-of-the-fittest capitalism". He said, "If it is to succeed, the capitalism of the future will have to shift from a consumption ideology to builder's ideology". At this hour of human crisis what India needs, and in fact what world needs, is a creative synthesis of basic tenets of religious values and a visionary administrative approach. This alone can reinforce a sense of human solidarity and a common commitment to the core values of human civilization such as respect for life, liberty, justice and equity, mutual respect and caring and integrity and what Gandhi calls a climate of togetherness, a social basis of creative coexistence.

We are passing through a time when almost all political structures are moving slowly but surely towards a climate of political uncertainty. The ruling elites and their external counter-parts are bent on creating a new correlation between economic

power and political process. Our understandings and approaches to national issues are slowly getting colored by chauvinistic, caste and communal moorings. One often gets the idea that as if our supreme representational institute, the Parliament of India, has failed to operate what Dr. Rammanohar Lohia, one of the most enigmatic socialist thinkers said, as the "most sensitive mirror that man's dexterity has yet devised to people's wrongs and sorrows".

At a period like this there is indeed need to remember the mood, method and message of a lovable and multi-dimensional personality like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the architect of modern India. He was not simply a national leader with inclusive vision and an everlasting compassion with transparent honesty and integrity, he was also a political leader always wedded to the ideals of democracy, secularism, socialism and humanism. Over seven decades of our national existence and planning process notwithstanding,

the gaps between our social, political and economic structures seem to be rapidly increasing. Neither our media, irrespective of the ideological streams they represent, nor, the social scientists, academic community and the political activists have been meaningfully sensitive towards the economic, political, and social structural issues. I don't remember to have witnessed any serious parliamentary debate regarding basic issues either by leftists or by the rightists both inside and outside the Parliament during the contemporary phase of our political life. Our Parliament, I often feel, has so far failed to evolve a political culture to create a simple, basic, and meaningful living nation and a productive political and administrative process.

Mahatma Gandhi had once commented, "Parliament is indeed barren. I don't imagine that its nature would change in India. I live however, in the hope that our Parliament will only remain barren and may not give birth to a wicked son. I am suggesting many ways to ensure that the voice of the Parliament is really the voice of the people and not that of the hired voters." The Parliamentarians have yet to imbibe a universal integrated outlook, a composite personality, actuated by the higher values of life. "There is indeed need to remember the mood, method and message of a lovable and multi-dimensional personality of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel who was always actuated by the higher values of life.

Sardar Patel had a holistic vision of religion, administration and civil society. President Rajendra Prasad said in May 1959, "That there is today an India to think and talk about is, very largely, due to

Sardar Patel's strong leadership and political guidance." A quarter-century after Jawaharlal Nehru was selected as the first Prime Minister of India, C. Rajagopalachari said, "Undoubtedly it would have been better if Nehru had been asked to be the Foreign Minister and Patel made the Prime Minister."

Of late, there has been, a lot of misgivings regarding Sardar Patel's approaches towards various issues such as minority community, administrative machinery, division of powers between States and Centre, administrative reforms and civil services. In February 1949, Sardar Patel said, "I have considered myself a soldier in the service of Hindustan and shall be a soldier to the end of my life. May I cease to exist when I deflect from this path of service." He was not a proponent of Hindu rule. He spoke of "Hindu Raj" as "that mad idea". Earlier he said, "Every loyal Muslim must be treated as a brother." He considered the 1947 massacre of Hindus and non-Muslims as "the blackest chapter in the history of India."

Sardar Patel chaired the committees or sub-committees on minorities, fundamental rights and provincial constitutions. His predilections for a strong centre influenced the creation of Article 354 and Article 356 that empower the Union President to take over the administration of a state if required. He was critical of the view that there should be no restrictions on the "press, the lathi and bullet." He was of the opinion that the citizens' right of speech and action had to be balanced by society's rights of order and security.

Sardar Patel always emphasized the role of higher civil service and

administrative reforms to ensure security and development of the political system. It has been observed in a series of studies that in societies, where majority of population lives in poverty, there can be no long-term stability and democracy. The promotion of human rights and values and eradication of poverty are mutually supporting goals. He advocated that a meaningful sense of credibility and commitment in the areas of public policy could be ensured through creative conceptualization of empowerment programmes under guidance of the civil service. Two articles regarding the role of civil service were ensured through Article 311 and Article 314. Mr. Ananthasayanam Ayyangar, who subsequently became the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, was not in favor of these two articles. Participating in the debate, Sardar Patel said, "I am distressed that a senior member like Mr. Ayyangar considers and expresses the opinion that members of the Civil Service (ICS) are enemies of our country. If that is so, it is his business to move a resolution to dispense with them and run the administration in a vacuum." "If they would not have behaved patriotically and with loyalty, then the Union would have collapsed", Sardar opined. Thereafter there was no discussion on these articles.

Just a year before Independence, there appeared some misunderstandings regarding handling of certain serious issues by Jawaharlal Nehru and some letters were brought before him by senior leaders like Mr. D.P. Mishra. In his letter to Mr. Mishra, Sardar Patel had written that, "We are passing through a critical period and our life's work may either yield successful results or our hopes may all be dashed to pieces by sheer foolishness on

our part and the cup which is full of nectar and which is very near our lips may drop down from our hands before we can taste even a drop of it". He considered Nehru's "action in Kashmir, interference in the Sikh election to the Constituent Assembly, his press conference immediately after the AICC, are all acts of emotional insanity and it puts tremendous strain on us to set matters right." Such was the approach and ideas of Sardar Patel for which he was considered by Gandhi and all as the "Iron Man" of India. For his "iron discipline" and visionary approach and "iron discipline" towards administration and civil service, he was respected as the "Patron Saint" that made J.B.Kripalani to comment in 1974 that "Sardar was the greatest administrator we had".

Sardar Patel desired the Indian Civil Service personnel to reorient the bureaucratic apparatus to provide a new direction to the parliamentary-federal constitutional set-up. In the formative phase, two reports: Report on Public Administration (1951) and Report on Efficient Conduct of State Enterprises (1951) made great contributions towards administrative reforms. The Gorwala Committee Report, highlighting the ideas of Nehru, was most popular during mid-1960s-80s. The Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, appointed Morarji Desai as the Chairman of the Administrative Reforms Commission in January 1966. During this phase various administrative units were established in Indian Union and States. Departmental Standing Committees were established to ensure parliamentary control over administration. Since the 1990s, with the shifting of political power from the Indian National Congress to the non-

Congress parties, the Indian political economy underwent a paradigm shift to business liberalism and globalization. The Venkatachaliah Commission was appointed in 2000 to review and recommend changes. This Commission went for a number of revolutionary changes in administration such as imperative of devolution, state guarantee of private and public title to land, freedom of information and restoration of ethical and moral dimension as some of the most crucial issues of governance. The six-member Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC-II) was appointed by their Prime Minister in 2005 to "suggest measures to achieve a proactive, responsive, accountable, sustainable and efficient administration for the country".

Since Independence a number of committees on administrative reforms have submitted their reports but there is an abysmal record of lack of implementation of these reports. The N.N.Vohra Committee had submitted its report on nexus between politicians, criminals, police and bureaucrats in our structural interactions. The latest report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India against ministers and civil servants of government of India regarding 2-G telecom spectrum allocation to corporate private companies has revealed glaring cases of corrupt deals.

A few administrative reforms created under the bureaucratic instruments and the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments like the Panchayat Raj and Nagar Raj do not present a very happy picture. This state of affairs has given birth to a number of anti-corruption and anti-authoritarian movements like the Anna Hazare movement. Sardar Patel was known for finding an amicable

solution to most complicated issues. A man of iron will and absolute fearlessness he redrew the map of India with the princely states joining the mainstream of India. Appealing to the princely states he said, "If at all, any sense of supremacy is required, it would be with common understanding and for common good. We are at a momentous stage in the history of India. By common endeavour, we can raise the country to new greatness, while lack of unity will expose us to unexpected calamities. I hope the Indian States will realize fully that if we do not cooperate and work together in the general interest, anarchy and chaos will overwhelm us all, great and small, and lead us to total ruin."

The political leaders and activists like Sardar Patel have given a new sense of direction to the political debates in India. They have taught us that our vision of development, human rights, reforms and empowerment of the weaker sections must be grounded on values of equity, partnership and shared responsibility. Perhaps the best tribute to this great human being would be to commit ourselves to his ideas and philosophy of life and try to fulfill the unfinished tasks he had undertaken to rebuild India. Let me conclude with a reference to the poem by Dr. Daisaku Ikeda, the leading peace philosopher and thinker of the contemporary world :

"The people are waiting
For our departure
Into a new dawn.
Let us breakthrough
The angry waves of obstacles."

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Institutional Riot System and Culpability in Communal Violence

Irfan Engineer and Neha Dabhade

Whenever confronted by increasing intolerance and increase in incidences of communal violence in the country, the standard response of the BJP leaders and spokespersons is that incidences of communal violence took place even during UPA regime in particular and Congress regimes in general. They point out the anti-Sikh riots in 1984 in Delhi and other states; and various communal incidences that took place when Congress Party was in power. Besides the fact that incidences of communal violence have actually increased in the year 2015 to 650 from 644 in 2014, it would be simplistic to equate the incidences of violence merely on the basis of statistics.

Incidences of communal violence cannot be a stand-alone indicator of culpability of various political parties as their roles and relations to communal violence are different. Communal violence is not a spontaneous incident. Paul Brass dismisses the prevailing notion that riots are simply spontaneous “eruption of angry” of one community against another over some differences. But on the contrary, riots are planned and brought about deliberately by “specialists”. Brass concluded from his study of various incidences of communal violence that a communal riot is planned and executed by “experts” and organized body which he calls Institutionalized Riot System (IRS).

There are important characteristics of institutionalized riot system. To

engineer riots there is recruitment of personnel under the leadership of a prominent political leader. Riots are brought about when ordinary people are mobilized into a mob with provocative exhortations and speeches that heighten anxieties and instill fear of the “other” community. The heightened anxieties and fear of the other community result in keeping away from the targeted “other”, condone violence against the targeted and even participate in the violence against them. The outcome of heightened anxiety and fear of the targeted “other” is – overlooking diversities in beliefs and cultural practices within; overlooking oppressive and exploitative structures within and rallying behind those who are responsible for their exploitation, oppression and marginalization rather than joining ranks with similarly exploited, oppressed and marginalized of the targeted “other”. The provocative speeches and exhortations obliterate the shared values, culture and everything that is common with the targeted community. It results in political consciousness based on “us” and “them” – them being the targeted community. Once the political consciousness is so polarized, the dominant communal elite are secure in their position despite oppressive, exploitative and marginalization structures within that ensure hegemony of the elite. Electoral benefits are immediate benefits and the polarization the long term benefit.

Fallacy of Comparison

This machinery of IRS is built overtime and kept dormant and activated at times when it is convenient to the vested interests. The system is activated when the intentions are to polarize communities in order to reap rich electoral dividends. Thus riots occur “near elections to bring about a change in the political balance” as explained by Paul Brass. So strong is the IRS that it can withstand the good relations built between communities and prevail over saner voices of both the communities. When not occurring before elections, riots can occur as a rehearsal for future violence.

The Hindu nationalists have been systematically engineering communal riots in India and have benefited electorally from them. The Bharatiya Jan Sangh till 1970s and the BJP after 1980s have singularly benefited electorally in the aftermath of the communal violence, with the exception of anti-Sikh riots in 1984 and anti-Christian violence in Kandhamal in 2008. In the former case, Congress leaders led the anti-Sikh violence (PUCL-PUDR, 2003) and benefited electorally therefore, and in the latter case, the snapping of alliance by the Biju Janata Dal, dominant political force in Orissa, with the BJP prevented the BJP from reaping electoral benefits of the Kandhamal riots. The Hindu nationalists have used communal violence for expanding their base geographically as well

as socially. What else explains sections of dalits identifying with the Hindu nationalists who never were enthusiastic supporters of affirmative action for social justice in the form of reservations and even offer apologetic explanations for the caste system?

Outbreak of communal violence during the Congress regime benefitted the Hindu nationalists, resulting into communal polarization and electoral benefits. The culpability of the Congress regime was that of failure to prevent and later control the riots effectively even when the administrative machinery was sufficiently capable of doing so. Post riots, the Congress regimes allowed those culpable in planning, engineering and taking part in the riots to slip through the criminal justice system unscathed, and even untroubled. This emboldened the Hindu nationalists to orchestrate, to escalate the scale of riots. If the Hindu nationalists were guilty of commission, the Congress regimes were guilty of omission. On two occasions major pogroms were organized with virtual impunity (even though just a few foot soldiers being held guilty), – anti-Sikh riots in 1984 and Gujarat in 2002, when the rioters on the streets and the regime in power belonged to the same political party.

Therefore, it would be a fallacy to compare the degree of culpability of BJP and the Congress merely on the basis of number of communal incidences under their respective regimes or number of deaths during respective regimes. The Hindu nationalists were culpable even during the Congress regime as they managed and developed the IRS then. Various Commissions of Inquiry, appointed to find the causes

of riots, have brought out the role of Hindu nationalists in the riots. The role of IRS of the Hindu nationalists can be discerned from the findings of the Inquiry Commissions. The IRS of Hindu nationalists in various places, recruit personnel, indoctrinate them ideologically and mobilize mobs through provocative exhortations and speeches against the targeted ‘other’.

Inquiry Commission findings:

31 inquiry commissions were constituted till date to inquire into 31 communal incidences. The reports of these commissions brought forth some insightful findings in terms of the role of politicians, ideologies and police. Some commissions were unequivocal in fixing responsibilities and spelling out the actors involved in planning and carrying out the communal violence. Justice Srikrishna Commission, which inquired in the Bombay riots of 1992- 93, stated that the riots were fallout of the demolition of Babri Masjid, and provocation of Muslims by blatant celebrations of the demolition through rallies. The Commission observed that there was no doubt that from 8th January 1993 at least, the Shiv Sena and Shiv Sainiks took the lead in organizing attacks on Muslims and their properties under the guidance of several leaders of the Shiv Sena, from the level of ShakhaPramukh to the Shiv SenaPramukh Bal Thackeray who, like a veteran General, commanded his loyal Shiv Sainiks to retaliate by organized attacks against Muslims. The Bombay riots claimed over 2000 lives according to unofficial estimates.

The Shiv Sena was held responsible for the 1969 communal riots in Bhiwandi. The Commission found that the Shiv Sena Chief, Bal

Thackeray, made a communal speech about Bhiwandi and its Muslim inhabitants at a Shiv Sena meeting held in Thana on May 30, 1969. In the course of the public meeting, Bal Thackeray referred to Bhiwandi as second Pakistan and said that such shameful incidents were taking place in Bhiwandi that he was ashamed to speak about them in the presence of ladies. The Madon Commission found the following organizations, among others, guilty of fomenting communal tensions in Bhiwandi in 1969 – 1) Bhiwandi Branch of the All-India MajlisTameer-E-Millat, 2) Bhiwandi Branch of the Shiv Sena, 3) Bhiwandi Branch of the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, 4) BhiwandiSevaSamiti, 5) RashtriyaUtsav Mandal – a front of Shiv Sena and the BJS and 6) Hindu Mahasabha. For the communal riots in Jalgaon, the Madon Commission found the underlying causes of the riots, among others, to be the communal activities of the Jan Sangh and the Shree Ram Tarun Mandal managed by the Jalgaon City Branch of the Jan Sangh. The Jalgaon City Branch of the Jan Sangh and Shree Ram Tarun Mandal displayed boards containing inflammatory writings in different places. Justice P. J. Reddy Commission which looked into the Ahmadabad riots, 1969 stated that the Jan Sangh, the Hindu Mahasabha and other communal minded Hindus were involved in the agitation and had contributed to communal tensions just before the Jagannath temple incident. Jana Sangh workers were found participating in the communal riots in Ahmadabad. Similarly, the Jan Sangh workers and communal minded persons created trouble and spread rumors, and ineffectiveness was witnessed in the manner of counter acting rumors. Substantiating this narrative, the police commissioner of Ahmadabad

deposed before the Commission that the Bharatiya Jan Sangh and other communal minded persons created communal trouble in the city. Over 500 lives were lost in the riots.

Similarly, the RaghubarDayal Commission inquiring into the communal incidences of Sholapur on 17th September, 1967 and 18th September, 1967 in Ahmednagar found that the RSS, Jan Sangh, Hindu Maha Sabha, Majlis-e-Mushawarat, Jamait-e-Islami and Muslim league were active in the incident, as they wanted to use the incident for their political objectives.

The Jitendra Narayan Commission appointed to Inquire into the communal riots in Jamshedpur in 1979, found that the RSS had raised evocative religious issues and roused communal passion. The Commission further found that the RSS played its role in the matter, motivated by the long term political objective of gaining strength for their political wing. The Commissions of Inquiry also blame the police and the administration for the ineffective measures in controlling the riots. None of the Inquiry Commissions blame Congress for spreading hatred or rousing communal passions to engineer a communal riot. Ineffective measures in controlling riots enabled the Hindu nationalists to engineer even more riots and on larger scale. Their IRS strengthened and became more and more fatal.

The Congress regimes must however never be forgiven for non-prosecution of those responsible for planning and organizing riots. Had effective prosecutions been launched after a riot, the IRS would have been dismantled. With the help of the IRS, the Hindu nationalists expanded geographically to the South and

socially bringing in a section of adivasis and dalits within its fold. The 2002 communal riots in Gujarat not only effectively liquidated the Congress in Gujarat but also eventually brought the BJP to power

in the year 2014 with majority on its own. The IRS is still kicking and operating spreading intolerance. However, the civil society has taken on the monster this time.

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Ram Madhav's ramblings

Pannalal Surana

In an interview to the news-channel Al Jazira, Ram Madhav, General Secretary of the BJP and swayam sevak of RSS, said that his organization's desire the formation of Akhand Bharat by unifying India, Pakistan and Bangla Desh. He hastened to add that it is to be realized, not by waging war, but by popular goodwill. He alluded to the unification of Germany and Viet Nam as examples worth emulating.

Well, if such a wide formation at all materializes, that would be beneficial for common people. If acrimonious exchanges between the neighboring countries that may result in bloody wars being averted and there would be peace and orderly public life so that people can attend to their avocations as also develop their personalities meaningfully. So much more resources would be available for providing potable water to the far off villages, for building good schools and for making available preliminary health facilities.

Popular goodwill for affecting such kind of unification can be built if there is spirit of tolerance and mutual respect amongst various religious groups that constitute that particular country or nation. Are the organizations which Ram Madhav is representing mentally prepared to imbibe that spirit?

In the same interview, Madhav

said that the literary people and the scientists who have returned their awards are just a small bunch and they did it to defame the present (NDA) Govt., at the Centre. Some of his colleagues had alleged that it was a manufactured response to a manufactured crisis, and a performance instigated by the Congress and/or Left parties who are in opposition. Such kind of allegations, are unjust and insulting to the persons who are held in high esteem by the people at large. Their responses to the happenings like prevention of musical performance by world-famous Gazal maestro just because he is a citizen of Pakistan, or exerting pressure on BCCI for not arranging Indo-Pak cricket match, or public lynching of Akhalaq of Dadri, were spontaneous and genuine. If persons like Madhav feel that their views are based on wrong notions, they are free to say so. But alleging that they were acting at the behest of some political parties is unjust and insulting their self-respect. The attitude exhibited by those allegations, betray lack of tolerance. Madhav and his comrades should know that mutual respect and tolerance have been the high virtues of Indian society acclaimed by many foreign travelers since two thousand years or so. If Madhav and company cannot carry on that legacy and prefer to indulge in acrimonious utterances, that cannot help build up popular goodwill for formation of

Akhand Bharat.

In the same interview, Madhav further said that we call our way of life as 'Hindu', and there should be no quarrel about it. The quarrel, however, starts when Madhav and his RSS, by emulating the aggressive assertion of Sawarkar, that 'This is a Hindu Rashtra', boastfully say that their aim and object is to make India a Hindu Rashtra. There are many communities residing in this country for generations together who call themselves as Sikh, Parsee, Christian or Muslim. They would never agree to call this nation as Hindu Rashtra. Our Constitution also does not allow that kind of labeling. In the first Article of the Constitution, it is stated that this is Union of India. It may be called as Bharat. Art. 5 states, that any person born in the territory of Indian Union prior to 15th August 1947 or born after that to a woman who was/ is Indian citizen is also a Citizen of India. There is no stipulation that he /she be called as Hindu or Muslim or Christian etc. A Citizen of India is a citizen of India, neither less nor more. If Madhav and his organizations wish to maintain unity of India and also smooth functioning of democracy, they should eschew talking about Hindu Rashtra.

It may be recalled that it was Sawarkar who first aggressively shouted that 'This is Hindu Rashtra' while leaders like Tilak and Gandhi had described this as Bharat or Indian nation. Sawarkar further had stated that such people alone can be called citizens of Hindu Rashtra who consider this land as their Father Land and also Holy Land. Actually, all patriots who had fought the foreign imperialist rule of the British used to call this as Mother Land. Bharatmata ki Jai, or Vande Mataram were their slogans while proceeding towards the gallows. But being as male chauvinist, Sawarkar

termed it as Fatherland. That may be condoned. But saying that only those can be called citizens of this country who consider this as their Holy Land is downright objectionable. Muslims consider Mecca as the Holy land while for Christians, Jerusalem is that one. Why should they be termed as, not citizens of India where many generations of their forefathers had lived and died. No, they cannot be considered as aliens. Article 21 recognizes freedom of citizen to profess a religion of his choice. They are as much Indians as Sawarkar or Golwalkar or Narendra Modi is. No exclusionary attitude may be

nurtured. RSS and BJP would do well to shed allegiance to Sawarkar's term 'Fatherland' and offer loyalty to Motherland. That will be in consonance with the Preamble of the Indian Constitution which has given pride of place to the value of Equality (including gender equality).

Ram Madhav would do well to first pay attention to the duty of maintaining unity of India before nurturing a dream of Akhand Bharat consisting of today's India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Tathastu.

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A Conference on Religious fanaticism and violence

Aruna Burte

After witnessing murder of rationalist Dr. Narendra Dabholkar in 2012, conscientious social consciousness was still under shock when it received another blow when, Com. Govind Pansare was murdered in 2014. Soon enough the murder of Dr. M. M. Kalburgi changed social response to the event of murders. There was something similar in the modus operandi. There was something common in all the three: they all analyzed ritualistic aspect of religion, commented on its exploitative nature and appealed for rationality. They also stood for rights of people ensured by our constitution. After the incidence of lynching of a Muslim over false allegation of consumption of bull/cow, meat precipitated civil society response in various forms. The artists began returning the state honours. Many public meetings, discussions, conferences, protests marked the unrest of civil society. In the same genre that Samata Darshan Pratishtan, Barshi, arranged a conference to oppose 'Religious fanaticism and violence' in Solapur on 12th, December 2015. The meeting began with Mr. R. Swamy from Andur (District Osmanabad) narrating the account of his young daughter who refused to recognize him when he tried to rescue her from Ramnathi Asharam, Miraj, managed by Sanatan Dharma Sanstha in first person. He broke down when he said that he was left to follow court cases now and feels very helpless. Five other parents, including him, have filed a PIL and hearing is going on in Mumbai. He does not have means to follow up the case.

This was, followed by a lecture of Dr. Suresh Khairnar and Mr

Feroze Mithiborwala. The two renowned speakers received rapt attention of the audience. Dr. Suresh Khairnar from Nagpur (President, India-Palestine Solidarity Forum and National Convenor, All India Secular Forum) spoke on religious extremism and violence in Indian context. He presented the case study of Sanatan Dharma Sanstha, which he equated with ISIS. Dr. Jayant Athavale MD, psychiatrist, left his practice and established this variety of extremist organization, Sanatan Dharma Sanstha in early 1990s. It has branches all over India and almost 160 branches outside India. The organization indoctrinates young minds and prepares them even to murder whom they perceive as 'enemies' of Sanatan Dharma Sanstha propounded 'Hindu religion'. Dr. Khairnar attributes murder of Dabholkar to this kind of extremism. He also talked of other incidences of violence promoted by Hindu extremist outfits, referring to Nanded blast and events like death (encounter?) of honest ATS officer Hemant Karkare. Com. Govind Pansare was also questioning these events and fell to the bullets of an extremist. Khairnar also said that without state support no extremist organization could take roots. He had brought piles of evidence-material from various inquiry commissions of which he was a member. Now the war is between Hindus and Muslims and also between Hindus and Hindus. The extremist organizations are propounding certain kind of Hinduism.

Mr. Feroze Mithiborwala has a background of Gandhian, socialist, leftist, progressive ideologies. He is heading many forums and

organizations like the Rashtriya Yuva Sangathan, National Alliance of People's Movement, Bharat Bachao Andolan. He specializes in Middle East geo-politics and is involved in efforts to ensure peace in the region. He visited Syria thrice as part of International delegations during the current war. He gave a detailed account of how the crisis in Syria, is fueled by international forces. He said that the human society is on the threshold of World War III. There is crisis in all religions, but Islam suffers from deep crisis. It is Islam verses Islam again. Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is not fringe organization of the extremists. It is a state power and has an army recruited from 100 nations. It is a reaction to the American foreign policy; it is a question of oil-control; anti-imperialist protest and defining nationalities. It is, made out to be a reaction to the western cultural onslaught and conflict between Shias and Sunnis. America, Saudi Arabia and European countries are tackling the war for the past three years. Recently Russia intervened and they took control of the ground army. Their intervention has brought some sense of sanity in the present crisis. We may not expect any miracle there. But at least some alliances can be forged now. It is important that Muslims in other countries understand this crisis and side with secular democratic forces not only on national but also on international level.

The Conference gave clear message that Indian citizens can consciously intervene and take sides on local and global levels.

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An Officer and a Gentleman

Harsh Mander

(The Ram Shila Pujan programme launched by Hindutva in 1989 was like a hurricane which shook secular India by the roots. Braving the tornado, a district magistrate and a superintendent of police stood by their post in Khargone, a communally sensitive town in M.P. In an exclusive to Communalism Combat, Harsh Mander gives a moving account of a humane and impartial administration's encounter with the storm-troopers of hate.)

The storm – clouds gathered over the entire country with terrifying speed. It was the autumn of 1989, and in the short space of a few tension-racked weeks, the country changed course so fundamentally that the many values and beliefs which held us together as one people seemed to be relentlessly and inexorably swept aside.

The Bharatiya Janata Party and its assemblage of militant Hindutva allies announced the launching of combative direct action to build a Ram Temple at the disputed site of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya. The resort to legal and political processes to achieve this agenda, were pushed to the background, now there would be an open and bloody battle if necessary.

This new mood of belligerence manifested itself in the countrywide Ram Shila Poojan programme. In villages and towns across the country, bricks emblazoned with the name 'Ram', were consecrated, worshipped and aggressively paraded through every lane and by-lane. Finally, they were transported to Ayodhya for the construction of the Ram Temple at the site of the doomed Babri Masjid, which still stood then as a forlorn symbol of India's secularism.

The Ram Shila Poojan programme was launched on September

15, 1989, and was to become a watershed in modern Indian history. For, in the space of the next few days the country was seized by frenzy unprecedented since Partition. Groups of overcharged young men paraded the streets in every town, morning and evening, day after day, aggressively bearing bricks in the name of Ram, throwing acid at Muslims, shouting slogans which were astounding in their virulence, crudeness and naked aggression.

Huddled in their ghettos, the Muslims watched with disbelief and horror which turned quickly to cold terror and sullen anger. For many of them, their faith and hope built doggedly over four decades soured. Avowedly secular governments across the country except West Bengal refused to ban the explosive Ram Shila Poojan programme, the media and intelligentsia were quickly infected by the communal dementia sweeping the land. Even secular voices corroborated with their deafening silence.

In less than ten days, town after town fell in a grim roll call of blood-drenched riot and curfew. The sequence was repeated with aching uniformity – militant processions brandishing Ram bricks shouting hate-filled slogans day after day, violent retaliation by small Muslim groups followed by carnage, deaths, arson and, finally,

curfew. At one point, around three weeks after the launching of the programme, as many as 108 towns were simultaneously under curfew.

It was futile to expect the small district town of Khargone in western Madhya Pradesh to remain untouched by the sectarian fever that had seized the land. An undersized, haphazardly planned town with a population of less than one lakh persons, in an uneasy balance of an almost equal strength of Hindus and Muslims, Khargone is classified in official files as communally hypersensitive.

Records show that the first communal clash took place as far back as 1921 when Khargone was the capital of a tiny and modest principedom. The conflict recurred with frightening regularity over the following decades.

With such an accumulated history of hatred and prejudice between the two communities of the town, it was only a matter of time before the conflagration sweeping the country also seared the town of Khargone. The pattern was the same – belligerent processions everyday charged with slogans of hate. The young DM and SP responded by calling meetings of the two communities, advising restraint, registering strong criminal charges against the processionists,

energising peace committees, preventive arrests and so on. However, these measures, adequate perhaps in normal times, could not ebb the raging flood of communal hatred.

Flash point was rapidly approached in less than a fortnight, when the district wide Ram Shila Poojan programme was to climax in a massive procession in Khargone on September 30, 1989. Late night on the September 29, Bajrang Dal and Vishwa Hindu Parishad volunteers were busy transforming the town into a saffron stronghold, with a profusion of flags, posters, slogans and buntings. Suddenly, out of the darkness, two Muslim youth, their faces masked by *burqas*, appeared on a motor-cycle and flashed daggers, seriously injuring two young men who were painting slogans. In the government hospital, a night-long series of emergency operation saved the lives and limbs of the victims, but the tension in the town was acutely palpable.

Several arrests were made through the night. At dawn, leaders of the various Hindutva factions were summoned to the police station for an emergency meeting with the DM and the SP. The appeals of the district officers for a cancellation or postponement of the Ram Shila Poojan programme that morning were stubbornly rejected, as were the appeals for changes in route to avoid Muslim settlements and mosques altogether.

Already some 25-30,000 Hindutva volunteers had assembled determined and highly charged. The DM and SP realised that any attempt to halt the procession by force was doomed to failure and would only lead to large-scale violence and

killings. The only option seemed to be to let the procession pass with intensive control and regulation.

The procession was unprecedented in size, passion and militancy. All assurances regarding restraint in sloganeering given earlier, in writing by the organisers, were thrown to the winds as the most vulgar and vicious slogans rent the air. Trishuls and naked daggers were flashed. The leaders suddenly attempted to steer the processionists into the heart of the Muslim *bastis* contrary to prior agreement. But they were firmly pushed back to the agreed route.

The seemingly endless procession wound its way through the narrow lanes at a tortuously slow speed, as tension mounted to unbearable levels. As it passed the mosques in particular, the virulence and passion of the sloganeering acquired a new pitch. The executive magistrates and the police had to physically push the frenzied young men forward. No Muslim was seen out of doors.

With about two-thirds of the procession having passed by late afternoon, the DM and the SP began to believe that the explosion had been diffused, at least for that day.

Suddenly, a cluster of young men came running in panic from the direction opposite the procession, shouting that the Muslims had thrown a bomb on the crowd and that a processionist had been killed. The DM and the SP ran to the spot, barely 100 metres away. There they encountered a young man, his chest torn open by a crude bomb, his life quickly ebbing away, the crowd madly enraged. The DM quickly lifted the youth into his car which

was parked nearby and asked the driver to rush him to hospital. He died before the car reached the hospital.

The story of the bomb attack which unfolded later was that the daily and repeated battery of vitriolic sloganeering by mobs of Hindu youth entering Muslim *bastis* had terrorised the community. But a small bunch of eight youth, two of them petty government servants – a forest guard and a *patwari* – decided to resort to a terrorist-type attack.

Their game-plan became clear to the DM and the SP as soon as they reached the spot after the first bomb was thrown. The bomb was hurled on the mob from a small double-storeyed house in a very narrow by-lane which branched off from the main lane through which the procession was passing. The calculation clearly was that the enraged mob would gather below the house for counter-attack when a series of bombs would be thrown on the mob from above, resulting in a large number of deaths.

The DM and the SP repeatedly shouted to the mob that they were taking charge of the situation and that they, the mob, should stay away. Most of the crowd listened and tentatively stayed at bay.

Once below the house, the best course appeared to be to fire at the house from where the bomb was thrown. The SP himself, and an ASI who accompanied him, fired a repeated volley of rounds at the house. This served several purposes. The crowd was satisfied that effective action was being taken and did not insist on taking the law into their own hands.

The gunfire also frightened the conspiring men from throwing any more bombs and one of the young conspirators was caught by the police as he was running away from the house. It was through him that the subsequent police case was quickly solved.

The crowd now began to fan out in every direction with many rushing straight to the Muslim *bastis*. The DM imposed curfew immediately with clear instructions to the police and magistrates on duty in pickets, at all sensitive points in the town, to enforce his directive with a firm hand in the shortest possible time. He authorised them to use force, including resort to firing, if necessary to carrying out his orders.

The DM and the SP jumped into the latter's jeep and drove around the sensitive *bastis*. The SP himself had to fire several rounds. The police resorted to firing at three other places. Curfew was fully imposed in the brief period of twenty minutes.

However, in these twenty minutes, four lives were lost, about a hundred Muslim houses and commercial establishments set ablaze and three mosques desecrated. The deaths were by country made rifles and daggers used by mobs while attacking Muslim *bastis* and one by a bomb thrown by the fleeing group.

Soon, an uneasy calm fell over the city. Additional forces were called from neighbouring districts and permanent pickets established at sensitive points. All executive magistrates were pressed into duty, mobile police patrols scoured the city round the clock. Large-scale preventive arrests and searches were ordered. On the first night itself, 126 persons were arrested, but most of

them were Muslim.

There was no relaxation of curfew for 72 hours with little violation barring the extensive desecration of four mosques on the second night. The anguished Muslim community insisted that this could not have been possible without police complicity.

The DM and SP snatched just two hours of sleep on the second night, inside the police station. That is where they spent the next 19 nights, first on benches under the tree and later, in camp-cots under a tent, fully dressed and ready to rush if a clash was reported. The rest of the time they were out on patrol.

The people of Khargone were to become very familiar with the white Gypsy and its flashing red light endlessly scouring the shadowy and deserted lanes and by-lanes of the city. The control room was assailed by a continuous barrage of complaints about mob assault, all of which were checked out and most of which proved to be just rumours. The press was regularly, briefed, special arrangements were made for the distribution of newspapers from the second day in order to control rumours. The peace committee and responsible leaders of the two communities were pressed into service.

The DM mobilised the services of the Public Works' Department to repair and restore the desecrated mosques with the support of moderate Muslim leaders overnight, before the first two-hour relaxation of curfew. The Muslims wound their way straight to the mosques to offer prayers. The fresh paint and mortar told their own stories to which they responded with low voices and strained, sombre faces. But except for an explosion just before the end

of curfew relaxation, in which none was injured, there was no major setback.

The police force was stretched almost unendurably. Since the commencement of the Ram Shila Poojan programme a fortnight earlier, the armed constabulary had been on continuous vigil in neighbouring districts. With the riots at Khargone, they were hastily bundled onto buses and trucks, driven into the town overnight and immediately deputed to sensitive spots.

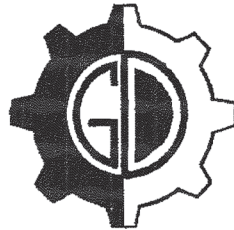
The DM and the SP made it a point to stop at each of the pickets during their night-long rounds, speak to the men about how difficult but important their mission was and occasionally share a cup of tea with them. Later, the two officers would often recall with warmth, how the weary faces of the men lit up with just this exchange as they stood erect and alert at their watch posts. Weeks later, before the men left for the next riot-torn city, the DM persuaded eminent citizens of the town to organise a thanksgiving *badakhana* for the policemen, in which they sat and ate as city elders served them.

Four days after the bomb attack, the DM from neighbouring Indore telephoned to say that one of the seriously injured riot victims, a young man named Ghulam, had died in the medical college in Indore and asked the district officers from Khargone to arrange for the disposal of the body. Communal tension had risen in Indore as well and they could not risk organising the funeral there.

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(to be concluded)

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Nairobi and After
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Modi takes a leaf out of Vajpayees' book

Kuldip Nayar

The best tiding of the year gone by is Prime Minister Narendra Modi's impromptu visit to Lahore, while returning from Kabul. It was, indeed, a welcome gesture that has been applauded all over, particularly in Pakistan. The feeling in that country is that India wants to undo it. Seventy years of Pakistan's independent entity has no removed that fear.

Modi's remark that such visits by both the sides would be a common occurrence is a welcome assurance. Whatever diplomatic hurdles might have come in the way of the two talking to each other to sort out the problems facing them has been pushed into the background.

Unfortunately, the media on both sides continues to be a spoiler. Commenting so much on the visit as on the gesture to probe what prompted him to do so is anybody's guess. The visit was his thinking. Ideas do not have to be prompted by the outsiders.

The applause, even in Pakistan, shows that the act of breaking the ice was overdue. False prestige had stood in the way. Modi spanned the divide to everybody's admiration.

The comment by the Congress, to run down Modi, is absolutely unwarranted. Instead of putting Modi's Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) in the wrong by saying that it had come to appreciate the line which the Congress had adopted for decades, the party said that there was no roadmap.

Years ago, when former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said that he would take a bus to Lahore, he took everyone by surprise. The talks were successful. According to Mushahid Hussain, then the government's spokesman, a time frame was agreed upon to sort out the Kashmir issue. It is unfortunate that intermittent dialogue on the problem has not found any solution.

Kashmir leader Farooq Abdullah showed a streak of his respected father, Sheikh Abdullah, when he said that whatever part of Kashmir is under Pakistan should be part of their territory and ours continue to an integral part of India. In fact, that is the situation on the ground. Any violation of line of control creates tension between the two countries and even a war-like situation.

Modi's meeting with Nawaz Sharif at Lahore should open a new chapter. Both countries should foster not only friendship but take steps to benefit the region economically. There should be trade between the two across the border instead of using Dubai as the place for import and export of capital goods.

Modi's statement after the visit that such an occurrence would be common and they would be coming and going to each other's country without any protocol is what should have been done earlier. Vajpayee was a visionary enough to think of it. Modi appears to be following him because soon after his return from Lahore the first thing he did was to call on Vajpayee. The latter is incapacitated but did say by gestures that what Modi had done was something which he would have himself done.

If Modi is to succeed, he should tell the RSS to give up agenda of *Akhand Bharat* and recognise Pakistan as a sovereign country. It is regrettable that soon after the meeting some statements, particularly by the RSS leaders, brought up the oft-repeated slogan of *Akhand Bharat*. This will only increase the deficit in trust which is really the problem between the two countries.

Unfortunately, the goodwill created by Modi in Pakistan is being dissipated by the build-up in Ayodhya over the arrival of stones from different parts of India. The extremists are once again playing the old game and reviving the Ram temple controversy. It was the demolition of the Babri masjid that made Muslims in India feel that they were not equal citizens. It was as the Babri masjid which widened the gulf between New Delhi and Islamabad.

To revisit the issue would only deepen parochialism in the country.

Historians who gathered for an annual conference have passed a resolution against the arrival of engraved stones in Ayodhya, for a future Ram temple at the site where the Babri masjid once stood. This happened at the ongoing 76th session of the Indian History Congress (IHC) at Malda in West Bengal. "The collection of stones at Ayodhya raises the suspicion of another breach of law," noted the IHC.

Ultimately, it all depends on Modi. He has to control the hotheads in his party and those in the RSS. If they once again talk about building Ram temple at Ayodhya they would defeat the purpose of Modi's visit. The structure of Babri masjid was a testimony to our country's faith in secularism.

One person remarked at the time of the demolition that Mahatma Gandhi was shot at on January 30 but he died on December 6, 1992 when the demolition took place in the presence of BJP leaders L.K. Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi and Uma Bharti. Advani was then sensitive enough to submit his resignation from parliament to register his unhappiness. But subsequently the atmosphere created by the Hindu extremists was that of victory and Advani sheepishly withdrew his resignation.

Happily the foreign secretaries of the two countries are meeting later this month. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's adviser Sartaj Aziz has already said in a broadcast from Pakistan that all problems cannot be solved at one sitting. But there would be a serious effort to clear the

hurdles that crop up off and on in the culmination of concrete results.

Modi, who has taken the initiative, seems determined to normalize relations with Pakistan. That the gesture has been praised in Washington, Moscow and London indicates how anxious is the world that New Delhi and Islamabad should come to an understanding so that the region is not plagued by war or hostilities and it prospers economically. After all, the largest population of the poor lives in this part of the world. Modi, whatever his past, has taken a step towards a bright future. And it should be endeavour of all that he should succeed.

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How fair is death penalty?

Sandeep Pandey

After spending three years in a child reform home, release of one of the culprits in the Nirbhaya rape case, who happened to be a juvenile at the time of crime, the public demonstrations in which parents of Nirbhaya also participated, forced the Parliament to change the Juvenile Justice Act. In the case of heinous crimes now the age for juvenile who can face trial as an adult has been reduced from 18 to 16 years. The prevalent feeling was that even though the accused may have been juvenile at the time of crime, the nature of crime was such that he deserved a harsher punishment. Some people also argued that the punishment should be decided on the basis of whether the crime was committed with an adult mindset.

The Juvenile Justice Board will determine whether the crime was committed with an adult mentality. Upon being found guilty the youth will be kept in child reform home till he completes the age of 18 years. Such convicts will now have to spend 7 to 10 years in jail instead of merely 3 years. The amendment makes it possible for youth between the ages of 16 and 18 years to be even awarded death sentence in the rarest of rare cases of gruesome crime. The irony is that the particular culprit because of whom the law has been changed will escape a more severe punishment but youth between 16 and 18 years of age committing such crimes in future will get more stringent punishments.

The juvenile is not given harsh punishment because it is assumed

that he committed the crime in ignorance and as he matures it is hoped that he'll not commit such crime again. It is improper to change the Act in a fit of emotion. It is quite possible that the amendment in Act will become a cause of injustice for a number of children. The youth from rich families will have a better chance to escape harsh punishment because unfortunately justice in the Indian legal system depends on how well the case is argued in the court of law. Rich people can hire better lawyers by paying high fees. The Juvenile Justice Board in Lucknow took about a decade to determine that Gaurav Shukla, the accused in the Ashiana rape case and nephew of an influential person associated with the ruling party in U.P., was adult at the time of crime.

In case of any crime the scientific way to look at things would be to determine with the help of a psychologist and other experts whether the person who has committed the crime regrets doing so. If the culprit feels any remorse he should be given a chance to reform his life. It is only when no remorse is observed in the culprit that harsh punishments should be thought of as option.

We have to also deliberate over whether making the punishment harsher will deter the potential criminals. The experience so far shows that punishment doesn't prevent crime. In 2004 Dhananjay Chaterjee was hanged for raping and murdering an 18 years old school girl. This implies that any

rapist should be aware that he could possibly be hanged in India. But that hasn't prevented rapes and worse, gang rapes, from taking place in our society. After the Nirbhaya incident for the first time in this country common people took to streets to participate in massive protests. These protests have increased the sensitivity of society in general towards incidents of violence against women, even though the incidents of sexual harrasment may not have stopped completely.

It is unbelievable that the Indian society which considers itself to be a peaceful one, and where examples of hardened criminals reforming themselves, like Valmiki and Angulimal, are present in its mythological history, is demanding hanging of the released Nibhaya case culprit. 103 countries in the world have banned death penalty and 50 other countries have not executed any convict for the last ten or more years. Except for Iran, Sudan, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, a youth below the age of 18 years cannot be hanged. Neither does the international law permit this. Thus by amending the Juvenile Justice Act and making it possible for even a youth of 16 years old to be given a death penalty we have joined the conglomeration of cruellest nations in the world.

Violence against women will only end when the patriarchal and sexist thinking of society changes. Sex education will have to be a necessary part of all school curricula and adolescents should be able to talk freely about the changes taking

place in their bodies with the adult members of family, school and society. Instead of trying to cover up any incident of sexual harassment, which will only protect the culprit, we need to stand firmly with the victim. Recently when a student of Columbia University in New York complained about rape by a German fellow student, the university took the side of victim. One professor

suggested to her to carry a mattress with her all the time as symbol of the burden she was carrying. The girl student carried a mattress wherever she went on campus including inside the classroom. The university authorities didn't prevent her from taking it with her on stage when she went to receive her degree at the convocation. Her demand was that she would carry the mattress as

a symbol of public protest until the male student was expelled from the University. The German student was not expelled and received his degree also at the same convocation as the female student but he had received so much bad publicity that he had great difficulty in getting a job. Such public actions will serve to deter sex related crimes against women.

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‘Clash of Civilizations’ or ‘Alliance of Civilizations’

Bapu Heddurshetti

Donald Trump, who is vying for the ticket of the Republican Party in the coming Presidential elections in the USA, has recently raised a storm by saying that Muslims should be banned from entering the USA. He is reported to have said, “Until we are able to determine and understand this problem and the dangerous threat it poses, our country cannot be the victim of horrendous attacks by people that believe only in Jihad and have no sense of reason or respect for human life.” The statement comes in the background of the shooting spree indulged in by a Muslim couple in San Bernardino, California, USA, recently in which 14 persons were killed and 22 were injured. He is said to have warned of more attacks like on September 11 if strict measures like the one he suggested are not taken. This has to be seen also in the background of President Barack Obama’s plan to bring into the United States as many as 10,000 Syrian refugees fleeing their country’s civil war and Islamic State militants which has been opposed by almost all Republican front runners for the Presidential ticket.

Trump’s statement cannot be, rather should not be, wished away. Trump is not alone in holding such view. He appears to have a lot of support. While 67 per cent of his Republican voters for nomination have said that they agree with Trump, 37 per cent have said that they will vote for him in the primaries. Trump has confidently said that he will be the next President. Former Prime Minister of Australia Tony Abbot has almost echoed Trump by saying that the West should proclaim its superiority over Islam which according to him has a ‘massive problem’. Abbott, who was ousted by Malcolm Turnbull in a Liberal Party coup in September but remains in politics, urged the West to “be ready to proclaim the clear superiority of our culture to one that justifies killing people in the name of God”. “We can’t remain in denial about the massive problem within Islam,” he wrote on the Sydney Daily Telegraph. Angela Merkel, the Chancellor of Germany had once said that multiculturalism has failed.

Is the theory ‘Clash of Civilizations’, propounded by Samuel P. Huntington, in its ‘fault

lines conflicts’ variety – where conflict is not between two states with different cultures but between two cultures within a state - being played out? The phrase Clash of Civilizations’ had been used way back in 1926 by Basil Mathews in his book ‘Young Islam on Trek: A Study in the Clash of Civilizations’. However it became more popular and prominent after being used in a lecture in 1992. Huntington used it in an article that was published in ‘Foreign Affairs’ in 1993, in which he said that what we are witnessing is not a clash of empires but a clash of civilizations.

It is a fact that terrorist groups in the name of Islam have been increasing in number and strength in the past few decades. After Taliban and al-Qaeda, now the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, is spreading its tentacles world-wide. A report produced by ‘Statista’, an agency dealing with statistics, shows that ISIS, is the most violent terrorist group in the world today with its fighters coming from different countries. Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium says that more than 60 jihadist groups spread in

about 30 countries have pledged allegiance to ISIS. According to a UN report 25,000 “foreign terrorist fighters” from 100 countries have joined ISIS or are working for al-Qaeda.

ISIS was founded by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who was in US detention from 2005 to 2009, and who has since declared himself to be the Caliph of the Muslims all over the world without recognition of any geographical boundaries. In its English language journal the ISIS has declared its goal to be to conquer the entire earth so that its flag ‘covers all eastern and western extents of the Earth, filling the world with the truth and justice of Islam and putting an end to the falsehood and tyranny of jahiliyyah, the state of ignorance – all other cultures being ignorant. If ISIS wishes to conquer the whole world and enforce Islam, then Clash of Civilizations is bound to occur. Perhaps that is the reason why the Hizb-ul-Tahrir, an international pan-Islamic political outfit supports Huntington’s views in the book published by it entitled ‘The Inevitability of Clash of Civilizations.’

Nearer home, the ‘Hindutva’ fundamentalists in India also appear to be eager to launch a ‘fault-lines’ Clash of Civilizations. Clash of Civilizations in its ‘fault-lines’ variety was in existence in a dormant state from even before India attained freedom and cost the country a vivisection. As long back as in 1850, the Hindus in Ayodhya, a town in Faizabad district of Uttar Pradesh had been claiming that the Babri Masjid built by a Mughal general on the orders of Babur in 1527, was built after demolishing a temple existing in that place built to commemorate the birth of Rama at

that place. By 1980, the the Vishwa Hindu Parishat took up the claim and started a campaign to construct a temple where the Babri Masjid stood. Lal Krishna Advani who had become the Leader of the Opposition in the 9th Lok Sabha took the cause and started a Rath Yatra from the historical Somnath temple on 25th September 1990 to create awareness among the people about the dispute intending to reach Ayodhya on 30th October. However, in spite of his arrest by Lalu Prasad Yadav, the then Chief Minister of Bihar on 23rd October, the Hindu crowds egged on by the leaders of the BJP demolished the Babri Masji on 6th December 1992. The latent Clash of Civilizations had become patent.

Today with the BJP’s Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister, the Hindutva brigade has started saying that if the Muslims want to stay in India they should give up eating beef and if they want to eat beef they should go to Pakistan, that if any Muslim feels that intolerance is growing in India, he should go to Pakistan. They are not only saying these things but have started acting also. They have started murdering in cold blood Muslims who might have stored beef (?) in their refrigerators. The patent Clash of Civilizations is becoming violent Clash of Civilizations.

There were sharp reactions to Trump’s statement. Democratic Party’s front runner for the Presidential ticket, Hillary Clinton said that Trump’s ideas were ‘reprehensible, prejudiced and divisive’. Republican Party’s another aspirant Jeb Bush said that ‘Trump is unhinged’. Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina told Trump to go to hell. Abbott said that there were numerous “Muslim

leaders who think their faith needs to modernise from the kill-or-be-killed milieu of the Prophet Mohammed.” Turnbull said, Abbott was entitled to his opinion but made clear the vast majority of Muslims were appalled by violent extremism perpetrated by the likes of Islamic State group.

There have been responses to the Hindutva brigades also. More than 500 writers, intellectuals and scientists have returned the honours conferred on them in protest against the rising clime of intolerance. The second most important leader of the BJP, Arun Jaitly, who is also the Finance Minister in the Government, said that these were a ‘manufactured response’. BJP spokespersons challenged on the TV shows as to why these intellectuals did not protest during the Emergency little realizing that a person like Phanishwarnath Renu, a renowned Hindi novelist had returned his Padma Shri and renowned Kannada writer Shivram Karanth had returned his Padma Bhushan. One wonders if Arun Jaitly would have called Rabindranath Tagore’s disavowal of his knighthood in protest against the massacre of Jalianwalla Bagh also ‘manufactured response’.

There have been sharp responses to the theory of Clash of Civilizations also. The responses have been twofold. One, criticizing, condemning and attacking ISIS and the theory of the Clash of Civilizations and two, suggesting, fostering and promoting ideological and intellectual alternatives to the theory.

The Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Abdul-Aziz ibn Abdullah Al ash-Sheikh, condemned the Islamic State and al-Qaeda saying, “Extremist and militant

ideas and terrorism which spread decay on Earth, destroying human civilization, are not in any way part of Islam, but are enemy number one of Islam, and Muslims are their first victims". In September 2014, 126 Sunni imams and Islamic scholars from around the Muslim world signed an open letter to al-Baghdadi, the self-proclaimed Caliph of the Muslims, explicitly rejecting and refuting his interpretations of Islamic scriptures, the Qur'an and the hadith, used by ISIS to justify its terrorist actions. They said in the letter that "the al-Baghdadi and the ISIS have misinterpreted Islam into a religion of harshness, brutality, torture and murder which is a great wrong and an offence to Islam, to Muslims and to the entire world".

The alternatives have come from the liberals and the Socialists. As long back as in 1972, when Hans Kochler, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Innsbruck, Austria, in an essay on Cultural Identity coined the phrase 'Dialogue among Civilizations' as against the Clash of Civilizations. This was a result of his evolving a trans-cultural understanding using hermeneutics – the theory and methodology of interpreting texts. In his letter dated 26th September 1972, addressed to the Director of the Division of Philosophy of the UNESCO, he suggested the holding of an international conference to study the problems of a dialogue between different civilizations. The theme of his lecture delivered on 11th March 2002 at the University of Philippines was After September 11: Clash of Civilizations or Dialogue?

Taking the idea forward, in a letter written in 2001 to the United Nations, the liberal President of Iran, Mohammad Khatami, introduced

the concept 'Dialogue among Civilizations' at the international level. At his initiative, the UN also declared the year 2001 as the 'United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations'.

Nearer home, Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen feels that it would be wrong to contrast the commitment of the west to democracy with the non-western traditions, as neither the western cultures nor non-western cultures are monolithic. Does the fact that Iran which is predominantly Shia dominated country is taking the lead in opposing the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, which is a Sunni outfit, show the 'fault-lines' within Islam and negate not only the concept that Islam is monolithic but also negates Huntington's concept?

However the Socialist Prime Minister of Spain Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, (16 April 2004 to 21 December 2011), who was also the General Secretary of the Spanish Socialist Party, PSOE, took the concept further in 2005 and proposed the concept of an 'Alliance of Civilizations' as against the Clash of Civilizations at the 59th General Assembly of the United Nations.

The feeling of 'alliance' of cultures is not the feeling at the level of top leaders only but has deep roots in the common people and Muslims are no exception. It would be erroneous to think of Muslim community as monolithic. Today the Islamic State is fighting more against the Muslims and Muslim States than with non-Muslims and non-Muslim States.

Recently members of 11 Islamic organizations from Karnataka, gathered in Bengaluru, said that it is not fair to brand the entire Muslim community as terrorists simply because a few individuals are involved in terror activities. Condemning

terror activities being carried out in the name of Islam, members of the organizations including the Jumma Masjid Trust Board, Sunni Students' Federation, Muslim Organizations of India (Karnataka) and the International Sufi Centre, told a press conference: "Just having a Muslim name does not make you a Muslim. The terrorist organizations that have come up today are groups trying to grab power. These are people interested in political and commercial gains,"

Anwar Sharief, the General Secretary of the Islamic Educational Board of India, emphasized, "If anyone is actually a Muslim, he cannot be a terrorist." SSA Khader, President of the Board said that those involved in extremist activities are not only anti-Muslim but anti-Islam as well. The board addresses the issue of young Muslims being influenced by these groups at the grassroots itself. "The biggest gap is in the lack of quality education and many have criticized the lack of monitoring of Madrassas. However, we are taking steps to organize things. We are revising the syllabus of what is taught in Madrassas to ensure that it is the purest form of Islam devoid of personal interpretations that will be taught in the Madrassas," he said. There are about 10,000 Madrassas in Karnataka. However, Khader says that only about 5 per cent are actually 'professional'. He said that if Quran in its truest essence is taught in these Madrasas, in a period of ten years, not a single youngster from Karnataka will fall a prey to the propaganda of the terrorist organizations. He said that the training of teachers in this regard has already begun. He concluded by saying "It is an extremely difficult thing for any Muslim to say that his brother is not a Muslim. But that is

the truth today. Five times a day, we pray for peace. Islam means peace. We are taught to take care of people, without looking at what religion or who they are. Terrorism has no religion. It is all done for self-aggrandizement." I am sure you will find Anwar Shariefs and SSA Khaders in all States in India.

Recently addressing a conference on Islamic unity at Teheran, Hassan Rouhani, the President of Iran said,

"It is our greatest duty today to correct the image of Islam in world public opinion. Did we ever think that, instead of enemies, an albeit small group from within the Islamic world, using the language of Islam, would present it as the religion of killing, violence, whips, extortion and injustice".

If Liberalism is a culture, a civilization, and so is Fundamentalism a culture and a

civilization, it appears the time has come when the liberal Hindus should join hands with liberal Muslims to oppose fundamentalist Hindus and fundamentalist Muslims. Yes, to defeat the 'Clash of Civilizations' which the fundamentalist ISIS and the Hindutva brigade are proposing to achieve ultimately, we need to have an 'Alliance of Civilizations'

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An Officer and a Gentleman - II

Harsh Mander

The DM and SP decided to go to the *thana* (police station) to offer solace to the bereaved family. They encountered the mother weeping inconsolably near the body of her son. The DM said quietly, "We cannot bring back your son, but tell us who was responsible for this and we will ensure that justice is done".

The mother replied angrily: "There is no point telling you the names of the killers. Every time there are riots in Khargone, the same men lead the mobs for looting, burning and killing, but nothing ever happens to them. During the last riots, we were hopeful because the police even took down our statements. We waited for four days but nothing happened. In the end the police did come, but it was we who got arrested. Therefore, we have nothing to say."

The DM promised that this time justice would be done and pressed them for the names. They finally gave the names charging some of the most powerful and respected men of

the district. The DM said to the SP, "Let us round them all up before the body of this boy is lowered into the grave".

It was past midnight when the dead body was taken to the graveyard, a bush-covered wilderness outside the town. Before the body was lowered into the grave, the SP arrived in his jeep, rushed to the DM, who was with the bereaved family and said, "They have all been arrested".

It was about three o'clock in the morning when the DM and the SP returned to their tent in the police station and wearily stretched out, fully dressed, to catch a little sleep. Barely two hours later, they were awakened by an uproar at the *thana* gates. Rubbing their eyes sleepily, they found that the local MLA of the ruling party had arrived with a group of her supporters, all holding curfew passes.

"Injustice, injustice", she screamed along with her supporters,

"We will not put up with this injustice. We will not allow the arrest of innocent people".

The DM quickly understood what had happened and was furious. "Tell me", he asked the MLA, "are you the representative of a particular community or of this town? In the last few days, when hundreds of Muslims were arrested, beaten, dragged by their beards and placed behind bars with no criminal records or complaints against them, I never heard a whimper of protest from you. But when ten persons are arrested for murder, you come charging here and complain of injustice?"

The MLA's protest was only the beginning. That day, the DM came under more pressure than he had experienced in a single day on any issue during his frequently turbulent career. The chief minister telephoned to enquire why there was so much outrage. The DM replied that it was a matter of basic justice and that he would not change his decision. He was relieved that the CM did not get back to him. But from the

state capital downwards, pressure continued to mount.

Late that night, according to their daily routine since the tension in the town had first arisen the DM and the SP sat at the *thana*, reviewing the arrests and releases of the day. With great reluctance, and after considerable probing, the Station House Officer revealed that the ten men arrested the night before, which had led to the detonation of such powerful protest, had been released by the court the same morning.

Further questioning revealed that the police had framed charges against them, not of murder, arson and rioting, but the most minor offence of all – violation of curfew. Not surprisingly, the courts had let them off after a fine of fifty rupees each.

The DM cannot recall being more enraged in his life. Everyone was stunned to see the normally soft-spoken and restrained officer explode, shouting about their deceit and open partisanship, and charging that they were not fit to wear uniforms. He threatened to chase them right up to hell if the ten men were not rounded up again within an hour. The police officers rushed back into town and the ten accused men were re-arrested. This time the DM and the SP personally supervised the preparation of documents for the courts.

However, it was now the turn of the Sessions Court to release the accused on bail within a week. On the other hand, the Muslims, who had by then been rounded up in the bomb case, were refused bail for over a year. The DM went to see the district judge and said: "I have never tried to interfere with the judicial

process. But in this case, with the same offence committed in the same riot, how can there be two openly different standards for people of two communities – one for Hindus, another for Muslims? It is not an ordinary case; it is the question of the faith of a whole community in the system of justice in our country". But the district judge refused to even discuss the issue with the DM.

Complaints also came in about excesses in Muslim *bastis* during the house-to-house searches. The DM visited these houses. It looked as if a tornado had swept through them. Everything inside – TVs, radios, mattresses, furniture, artifacts – had been smashed, torn or burnt by the police. An old woman of about 70 showed to the DM deep *lathi* marks all over her body, from her shoulders down to her ankles. The DM ordered strong action against the guilty policemen. The complaints did not recur.

Several nights after peace had returned to the rest of the town, there was a recurrent complaint from the Hindus of one *mohalla* that stones were being hurled at their homes every night from a nearby mosque. The residents were outraged.

The mosque was so far from the houses of the complainants that it was physically impossible for anyone to hurl stones at them from such a distance. But the residents stubbornly refused to listen to reason because of the blind and wanton irrationality that infects a large majority of otherwise rational citizens in any riot situation.

The SP's suspicion centred around, an elderly resident who was a member of a Hindu communalist organization since his youth. But

there was no proof, until one night, when the DM and the SP rushed to the *mohalla* at 3 a.m. on a fresh complaint and the SP found a broken cup amidst the stones. Without any warning, the SP marched into the house of the elderly resident and found five other cups in his kitchen matching the broken one. And, on the second floor of his house, the SP saw something which neither he nor the DM will ever forget.

Near his bedroom window was a large trunk full of stones. The old man stayed up every night until everyone else in the neighbourhood had slept and then hurled stones at his neighbours' windows. As they gathered angrily outside their homes, he would say, "Look at these hateful people. Even after all that has happened, they are still throwing stones at us".

But, most of all, the DM will probably remember a young man who's humble, thatched hovel, which stood in the most densely populated part of the old town, at the boundary of Hindu and Muslim settlements had been razed to the ground during the riots. Days later, when some sanity had returned to the town, the DM sat with him and others among the ruins of their homes and belongings. With whatever conviction he could muster, the DM said, "Do not worry, we will rebuild your house and all will be well once more".

Hearing this, the young man suddenly broke the heavy silence of the evening crying loudly like a child. He just couldn't be consoled. The DM felt the sharp sting of tears in his own eyes.

Finally the young man spoke, "Everytime there is a riot in this

town, my hut is burned down. It has happened again and again. Tell me, how many times will you rebuild my house?"

The DM pledged to himself to do all that was within his power to help rebuild the lives of the riot victims. He called the local leaders of the communal parties and told them: "I know your aim is not merely to take lives, or loot and destroy the property of people belonging to the other community during riots. You want, even more, to see their wounds fester as they continue to suffer. I am throwing you a challenge. Those whose lives you have taken away, I cannot bring back. But I promise you the district administration will ensure that those alive who have suffered because of you are much better off than when you set out to destroy them.

To the young man who had wept so inconsolably, and all the other poor residents of over-crowded old *bastis* filled with decades of hatred and prejudice, the DM offered space in a new part of town, where new mixed colonies were planned so they could live in security.

A large number agreed to move. The district administration acquired land, allotted plots and sought out grants and loans for them to build new homes. Those who had lost an earning member or their commercial establishments – often no more than a rented, ramshackle kiosk in the town's periphery – were allotted commercially valuable sites in the heart of the town, where *pucca* shops were built and allotted to them on an ownership basis.

The next change in government predictably saw the DM shifted out of the district. Some years later,

when on an assignment at the state headquarters, he visited Khargone once again. That evening he made a quiet, sentimental journey to the new tenement of the young man who had wept so desolately years earlier because his home had been burnt down once again by rioters.

The DM asked him what happened when Khargone was rocked by riots

once again after the Babri Masjid had been razed in December 1992. He replied, "For the first time in my life I felt safe during a riot".

It was not the young man, now secure in his new tenement, who wept silently that evening.

(Concluded)

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A. B. Bardhan

The demise of the erstwhile general secretary of the Communist Party of India (CPI) Ardhendu Bhushan Bardhan is a huge loss for the socialist and secular political stream of India. His role was especially important in the current era of the neoliberal-communal nexus. He was constantly trying to create unity among country's progressive factions. Before the last Parliamentary elections, he made a lot of efforts in the direction of creating the front of all big or small socialist, communist and parties advocating social justice. He had a lot of discussions about this with Bhai Vaidya and Justice Rajindar Sachar, senior leaders of the Socialist Party. Dr. Prem Singh, the general secretary, Socialist Party, had suggested in one of his articles that all parties which believed in socialism/social justice should unanimously put forward A.B. Bardhan's name as PM candidate in the last general election. Had Bardhan's efforts been successful, then the political power at the Centre would not have been under the complete control of the neoliberal and communal forces.

Bardhan ji, the erstwhile general secretary and president of the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), was a hardworking trade union leader. He started his political career as an activist of the All India Student Federation (AISF) during the independence struggle. He was a good thinker and wrote some important tracts on the problem of communalism.

Born in Bangladesh, Bardhan ji's political work, before coming to Delhi in 1990, was in Maharashtra, where he had won the Maharashtra Assembly elections in 1957 and where he had fought the Parliamentary elections in 1967 and 1980. Being from Maharashtra, senior socialist leader and Socialist Party's president Bhai Vaidya shared a long political and personal relationship with him. His demise is also a personal loss for him.

The Socialist Party pays homage to this seasoned communist leader.

Abhijit Vaidya, General Secretary, Socialist Party (India)

Akhand Bharat

Anand Mazgonkar

Ram Madhav, a leading light of the ruling BJP and RSS believes that we might soon see an Undivided India that includes Pakistan and Bangladesh. Mercifully, he's assured them that that will not be done through annexation! He says there will be 'popular will' in favour of that. He did not quite spell out how that 'popular will' will be created. May be, the conversion, re-conversion and 'ghar wapasi' programs that they directly and indirectly conduct are the ideal way to create 'popular will'.

For a start PM Modi can try getting Pakistan and Bangladesh on online sales portals such as amazon.com or snapdeal.com. They can also try to acquire Pakistan via the Land Acquisition Ordinance they promulgated and re-promulgated a number of times. Or, Prime Minister Modi can get Pakistan and Bangladesh for us through unplanned, surprise visits from Moon to Mars via Islamabad for instance. Hugs, hand-shakes and exchange of birthday and wedding gifts will of course sweeten the deal. A whisper into Nawaz Sharif's and Hasina Wajed's ears will also help. World leaders who want to protect the sovereignty of their nations may well be wary of hugging Mr. Modi when he visits them.

There is no reason we should not all be one. In fact, there are lots of good reasons to unite, to 'be one'.

Actually, of late, there's been a lot that ties us together. They kill, bloggers in Bangladesh, minority

citizens are often charged with blasphemy and killed in Pakistan. We have started following suit by threatening to deport individuals who hold unpopular opinions and killing rationalists and suspected beef eaters etc. An undivided India will make it so much easier to exchange notes and learn from each others' strategies. And there can be State patronage.

The idea of taking over Pakistan and Bangladesh is, actually, a masterstroke. We've been trying for donkey's years to get Pakistan to hand over dreaded criminals like Dawood Ibrahim and Hafeez Sayeed to India. If Pakistan does not hand over individuals it is of course an excellent idea to take over the whole landmass! If 'extraditing' individuals does not work, we might as well 'extradite' land. And, when that happens, Pakistan and Bangladesh will also have the benefit of RSS shakhas. RSS shakhas in Pakistan can open their doors to the Taliban, Al Qaeda and sundry other jihadi groups.

An undivided India will help us extend our Industrial Corridor from the Khyber Pass to Chittagong Hill Tracts. Corporates can only dream of an open door, single window policy with lots of State subsidies thrown in. Mr. Modi will bring to fruition every dream. He will then have the opportunity of tearing his hair wondering why employment is not rising, unemployment is not falling and why people are losing faith in his party election after election. Actually, losing elections is not a

serious problem. Instead of seeking votes from India's voters, he just has to consider contesting elections in US, UK, Japan, Australia, France and Germany. Globalising electoral franchise might be a good way to deepen democracy.

If Mr. Sharif and Ms. Hasina are not amenable to Mr. Modi's dream and persuasion, Modi can assign the task to our very own steel magnate Sajjan Jindal. The last time around he secured Mr. Modi a surprise trip to Pakistan by putting a word into Mr. Sharif's ear. These corporate honchos seem to do a better job, convincing politicians than politicians convincing others of their own ilk. And, the Adanis, Ambanis, Jindals can coronate Narendra Modi as Emperor of the new Empire called Hindustan, with Nawaz Sharif and Hasina Wajed as his vassals.

The only small problem Mr. Modi and his saffron *parivar* – his large family – have is where to deport people who don't agree with them. Their official, stated policy when we last heard was to send everyone they don't like to Pakistan. They'll have to find a new place to pack these people off since ruling party ideologues have started dreaming of Pakistan being their backyard running RSS shakhas, flying saffron flags and all that.

Thanks to Mr. Modi and Ram Madhav we will at least have *Akhand Bharat* – a United India – if not an *Akhand BJP!*

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Year 2015 - A trailer of our future

Sunita Narayan

The year 2015 has come to an end. It was full of events that are interconnected and foretell our future in a way that should enormously worry us. And, hopefully, get us all to rise to the challenge. In December, the Paris climate change talks ended with an agreement far from ambitious and very far from being equitable. It has left the world even more vulnerable and the poor even more deprived of basic human development.

Then there was the Chennai anomaly. Usually dry and desperately water-scarce, the city sank under water. What a way for citizens of this and every other megacity to realise what an increasingly climate-risky world we are all living in. What a way to understand that. If we keep up such mismanagement, extreme weather events are going to make us all go under.

Then my city of Delhi choked and spluttered, running out of clean air to breathe. It has learnt the really hard way that it must find leapfrog options, combining both technology and lifestyle choices of mobility patterns, if it wants to live on something as basic as breathable air.

Clearly, 2015 has brought home tough messages. One, environmental issues cannot be ignored if we want to secure life and health. Two, development has to take a different path, for we must - starting now - mitigate its visibly adverse impacts. Three, since we live in a planet where warming is now unleashed

and unbridled, what we do must be done at an extraordinary speed. Indeed, 2015 has done all of us a huge favour: it has been a tea-leaf reading of our future. Dire warnings we must heed. But are we?

Let's take the Paris Agreement as a symptom. The world today is hurtling towards two catastrophes, one caused by our need for economic growth, and the other by unparalleled and gluttonous consumption that impels emissions into the atmosphere. These greenhouse gas emissions, primarily emitted because we need energy, contain portends of a future being placed at extreme risk. We already see how weather variation - whether linked to climate change or not - has jeopardised the livelihoods of millions of farmers in India in 2015. Farmers are now driven to ultimate desperation - suicide. These failures, a combination of poor policies, are now exacerbated by untimely, weird weather, and have caused so much human pain. In this manner, the development dividend, which is so hard to secure in the first place, is being lost. And there is much more to come. Paris, with its weak and unambitious text, has failed us abjectly. The already-rich and the becoming-rich have signalled they don't want to compromise on their growth, or consumption, in the interests of the rest. Another catastrophe awaits us - living in a more inequitable, insecure, and intolerant world. Let's be clear. The Paris Agreement tells us, more than ever, that the rich world has bubble-wrapped itself, and believes

that nobody can prick it or burst through. To be secure in the bubble, conversation is restricted to only what is more convenient.

In this age of internet-enabled information, ironically, the world is actually reading and being sensitive to less, not more. The circles of information have shrunk to what is most agreeable to listen to. It is no surprise, then, that in climate change negotiations - as in trade talks or international relations - there is one dominant discourse. The most powerful nations would like to believe that there is nobody on the other side. As I wrote from Paris, there was no longer another side. So, there is no respect for another's position. It is believed the other side is either a terrorist, a communist or is just corrupt and incompetent. There is a fatal refusal to fathom, or approach, opinions or realities that are different. In all this, there is growing inequality in the world. No amount of growth and economic prosperity is enough any more, because aspiration is the new God. This means anybody who is poor is marginalised simply because they have just not made the grade. There is no longer space for such "failure" in our brave, newer, world. It is about the survival of the fittest, in a way that would have made Darwin insane.

It is no surprise that we, in India, are mirroring this grave, new world. In the last year, the very real plight of the poor, distressed, flooded, drought-stricken and famished was banished from our television screens

and newspaper articles. Our world is being cleansed. If we do not know they exist, we do not need to worry about their present or future. We can think about a way of life that benefits

us and us solely. This is the true emerging face of intolerance in an intolerably unequal world. This does not make for a secure future. No. It makes for a bloody war. But that is

what we have to change, now and forever. I haven't lost hope. Please don't as well. Happy 2016.

Business Standard

Nairobi and After The future for higher education is a matter of deep contestation

Madhu Prasad

Despite the Nairobi declaration, in which all 164 member countries agreed to end export subsidies on agricultural products over the next couple of years, the “deep divide between rich and poor countries on trade persists”, and serious doubt has been expressed that the World Trade Organisation (WTO) will ever again be able to negotiate meaningful multilateral trade liberalisation. The crux of the problem seems to be that India has been “unable to play its traditional role as wrecker” as it allowed the developed countries to introduce “new issues” in the agenda of future negotiations but failed to mobilize a consensus on the development issues of the Doha Round which are seen as favourable to the developing countries.^[1] Perhaps this can help to explain the “disappointment” of India’s Commerce Minister who was lured by a place at the high table into signing onto the former but was dumped by the developed countries and even Brazil when it came to the latter.

Nothing significant has been heard on General Agreement of Trade in Services (GATS), and there is no news from Ms. Sitharaman on whether the Indian government responded to, or was even aware of, the growing and united demand

by the academic community and democratic political parties that the offer of higher education to GATS be withdrawn. If, as the above scenario suggests, the Doha Round is indeed dead, the opportunity to withdraw this offer may have been lost. The new agenda of future negotiations will usher in an aggressive phase of liberalisation and the Indian government which has already shown itself to be pliable to demands by the developed countries, will be in a much weaker position now even if it wanted to protect the rights of its citizens.

However, the struggle in defence of higher education is already being fought on the ground. As privatisation and marketisation of education are being vigorously promoted by government policies the situation is rapidly deteriorating and attacks on the education system and on academic inquiry and freedom are becoming noticeably fiercer. In order to transform education into a commodity and a tradable service as the GATS regime demands, its character as a vibrant space for socially aware critical inquiry and expression needs to be first destroyed. This means that its constituent, freedoms of thought, opinion, expression, association and instruction can no longer be tolerated.

Since academic communities both inhabit and define this space which is so essential to any free, open and stable society they become targets, systemically and individually, of governments and forces that seek to oppress people in the interests of the exploiters and profiteers.

In India over the past couple of years what appeared to be uncharacteristic, atypical ‘incidents’, like the brutal killing of rationalist thinker Narendra Dabholkar, unmistakably acquired the quality of pre-determined and violent vigilantism against free thought with the similar mode of assassination of Govind Pansare and Professor Kulburgi, as also the threats to other thinkers and writers. The recent denial of bail to Prof. G.N. Saibaba despite his 90 per cent level of physical disability because of his ideological commitment, stands in sharp contrast to the bail given to a central minister accused of rape, and to the dropping of charges against the president of the current ruling party in extra-judicial killings where he has been named in the charge sheet. The purpose of such incidents was to silence inconvenient but powerful voices, and to suppress and frighten others who try to think and act independently.

It was this silence that had to be broken for the struggle to advance. Academic bodies at the state and central level being packed with individuals from a particular ideological stable - even though they clearly lacked both the academic and the professional credibility - had raised apprehensions and disgust among concerned sections. It required however, the courageous and sustained action of the students of the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) to bring this anger out in the open. The impact of their refusal to accept sub-standard appointments to the FTII's governing bodies led to strong support from the film and television industry, from film makers, actors, writers and the public at large. Their sustained struggle, even disregarding their own professional futures, made people aware of the importance of these academic and professional bodies and emphasised the necessity of making suitable appointments.

In order to transform education into a commodity and a tradable service as the GATS regime demands, its character as a space for socially aware critical inquiry and expression must be destroyed.... its constituent freedoms of thought, opinion, expression, association and instruction ... no longer ... tolerated.

The ghastly murder of Mohammed Akhlaq in Dadri, Uttar Pradesh, by a lynch mob of RSS/BJP leaders and supporters, who broke into his home claiming that 'beef' was being consumed and stored there, proved to be the proverbial last straw. When writers Uday Prakash and Nayantara Sehgal returned their Sahitya Akademi awards in protest against this growing intolerance and the complete failure of the state to act or even to speak out in defence of its citizens' right to

live, act and think freely, a flood of 'award *wapsi's*' pushed even the present insensitive government on the back foot. As the nation's leading historians, scientists, performing artists, painters etc., expressed their opposition to the threatened destruction of the very idea of a secular and democratic ethos in the country, the powerful force of the ethical values which the intelligentsia publicly advocated was plain for all to see.

Within this atmosphere the resistance to the government's offer of higher education to WTO-GATS as a tradable commodity began to spread. In university and college campuses and in research institutes across the country students and faculty have raised their voices against what they clearly began to see as a danger to the future of democracy and a threat to the people's right to fight against discrimination and inequality. The Occupy UGC movement in its broad sweep and range opposed the government's attempt to curtail research fellowships, slash budgets for education and reduce higher education to market requirements. The WTO claims to promote higher education as a necessary vehicle for economic and technological development, but not in a manner that would encourage dissent and wider access to "new" voices that have historically been denied education because of gender, caste, religious, regional, linguistic, and disability discriminations. By tailoring education to narrow market requirements, students are motivated to view education as tied to job markets. This manufactured 'need' can then be exploited to make room for education corporations to profiteer at their expense. Student indebtedness is spreading world-wide. The neoliberal model of

'jobless growth' is converting it into a debt-trap.

Repressive governments that stifle inquiry and expression beyond sanctioned limits are required to secure the education 'market' for the exploiters. WTO demands that, in the name of freeing trade, academic communities be closely monitored. Democratic rights of association and legitimate forms of protest need to be discredited as forms of political 'interference' but corporate controls and unrestricted fee hikes are to be protected. The present Minister for Human Resources Development has not even found time to give an appointment for meetings with the two professional All-India Associations of College and University Teachers (AIFUCTO), and the Federation of Central University Teachers (FEDCUTA), although she regularly consults with, or is instructed by, ideological hacks of the RSS. In the past few months, we have also seen that brutal police action against peacefully protesting students, including girls, has become the normal reaction from the authorities when faced with the legitimate demands and concerns of the academic community.

Post-Nairobi, the demand that GOI withdraw higher education from the stranglehold of WTO-GATS regulation would continue to be resolutely advanced but it cannot be the sole focus of resistance. Government's strategy of easing the implementation of a GATS regime by distorting the very nature and purpose of higher education and suppressing democratic movements in defence of higher education will have to be resisted and fought back through protracted struggles on a day to day basis.

A Lament for Indigenous People of Canada, Australia and India on International Human Rights Day (The Shriveling skeleton of the starving man of Sukma)

Pushkar Raj

The Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has made a historic speech at the Assembly of First Nations Special chiefs on 8 December. He underlined that the constitutionally guaranteed rights of the indigenous people are not an inconvenience but rather a sacred obligation. Beside other measures he promised to launch a national inquiry into the causes for the ongoing tragedy of more than 1,200 cases of murdered and missing indigenous women.

Its implication is that the settlers who have occupied a land whose people they pushed at the margin must respect their rights if not compensate them for violating these rights in the past. It is important that this is a political declaration that apparently has the people's will behind it, given the popular vote that the Prime Minister has recently won.

On the contrary in Australia such a declaration is a much contested issue. The ruling Liberal party due to its conservative character is not interested in any such move that improves the conditions of indigenous Australians who are no better than sub Saharan African communities or our own scheduled tribes living in parts of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. The Australian Labor party will not oppose any measure in which indigenous people are given their due rights as the native of this country, but it will not take any such an initiative. If it had so intended, it could have taken some concrete measures to improve their lot when they were in power many times in the past.

An Australian indigenous's life expectancy is 10 years lower than

non-indigenous; they are three times more likely to be unemployed; 15 times more likely to be in prison as compared to the rest of population. About 30 percent indigenous people report that they experience routine discrimination. About three percent Australians identify themselves indigenous translating into about 700,000.

For them on paper there exists a useless 'consolation toy' in the form of native title. This title (won in 1992 after ten years of court battle) is a legal title that an indigenous person or group of persons may have after placing a claim before a government tribunal that a particular piece of land belongs to them traditionally. If they succeed to convince the government with concrete evidence of records (a difficult task) then they will have no other rights on that land except for the sacred customary and traditional purposes (mainly worship) that may also, under certain conditions, be restricted.

It is just like having our fifth schedule in the constitution. All the rights of Indian scheduled caste people are supposedly safe under this schedule where the governor of the state and the President of India are entrusted the duty to see that tribal get their due share as the original inhabitants of the land. But that is on paper. A decade back an NGO, Samata, had to approach the Supreme court to get them saved from being violated. Soli Sorabjee represented the NGO, won the battle for them and after a while when he became the Attorney General advised the government to go for a review petition or amend the constitution to do away with the

protection that the court had upheld ! Lawyers' in India are powerful and rich's faithful soldiers. Those who have doubt, read Bombay High Court's today's judgment setting Salman Khan free in hit and run case.

It is pathetic that in India the indigenous people do not have a strong voice. While all the political parties are vying for appropriating Dr. Ambedkar, Indigenous people remain forgotten in dark and cold remote areas. They do not have a uniting symbol or personality. They stand divided, isolated and voiceless. They are fighting their lone battle in isolation in climate change effected devoured sea sides to deep jungles of Chhattisgarh.

It seems we are doing the same to our indigenous people that Canadians or Australians have done to their indigenous population two hundred years ago. One is surprised that it never occurred to our bureaucratic delegation accompanying the Prime Minister while he recently visited Australia that they should have arranged for him a visit to an indigenous village near Darwin (capital of Northern Territory state of Australia, that has about 28 per cent of countries population). There he himself could have seen the gulf that lies between Penthouses of Sydney and mud huts in sandy villages of Northern Territory. After such a visit he perhaps would have realised that his zeal for mad industrialization is creating the same gulf by which: While coffers of steel (steal) magnets of all colors are swelling; the skeleton of the starving man of Sukma is shriveling !

Assertion of resource sovereignty : the pathway to *Swaraj*

Krishna Swaroop Anandi

Corporates, funds and investors, i.e., multinational corporations (MNCs) across the globe are eyeing to usurp our natural resources. Truly speaking, the natural wealth or capital is the real one. So domestic or foreign corporate entities are vying with each other to acquire it through their cash piles that constitute the virtual capital in the real sense of the term.

Corporates have acquired almost controlling stakes in defence, economy, finance, market, trade, commerce, real estate, technology, healthcare, media, education, retail, agriculture, etc.. Polity is now fast moving to become somewhat a subsidiary of the global corporatocracy. Society or culture is under its grip. The only substantial thing that remains to be acquired is the people's or country's natural wealth which is in the form of living organisms, lands, forests, water-sources, mineral or metallic resources, hills and mountains. These bounties of the nature belong to the sons and the daughters of the motherland.

The first and foremost step in our new freedom movement is to denounce the corporate-led multinational colonialism and at the same time to proclaim our well-cherished goal of people-led *poorna swaraj*. Our strategy in the march towards *swaraj* is two-fold. On the one hand, we have to lay siege around the projects, plants or establishments of MNCs so that they become dysfunctional or paralysed and while on the other, people at the grass-roots or people's communities

(local neighbourhoods) should come forward to proclaim their supremacy, authority or sovereignty over the natural resources that lie under their jurisdictions. Mass boycott, nation-wide non-cooperation, civil disobedience or non-violent blocupy (blockading + occupying) are the weapons to fight MNCs or corporate-centric growth model.

Corporatisation presumes mass production whereas *swaraj* is concurrent with *swadeshi* which is based on production by the masses in close neighbourhoods. Corporatisation is violent towards nature, community and culture, whereas *swadeshi* is in harmony with nature, community and culture. The corporate-run model is playing havoc with the living environment. It is disrupting local communities. People *en masse* are being displaced from their ancestral habitats, fertile croplands, traditional job opportunities or sources; and diverse colourful lifestyles. They are facing displacement, footlooseness and joblessness. Their natural resources are being forcibly acquired by MNCs. Corporate-controlled systems are inimical to people, *swaraj*, *swadeshi* and environment. They deny bread and freedom to each and every individual. Corporate-centric model spells ever-widening inequalities.

Swaraj begins at the bottom, i.e., with communities at the grass-roots. Natural resources, ultimately, belong to local communities and not to governments, courts or corporations. *Swaraj* will start taking

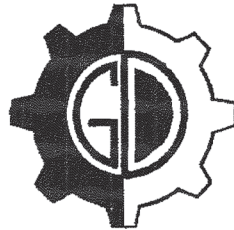
shape with the people's assertion of sovereignty over the resources lying in their communities. People will control their farms, factories, workshops, companies and utilities. Communities at the grass-roots will perform basic functions, leaving wider details to larger units. Primary communities will federate into larger units with the sole aim to meet their wider concerns. Tier-by-tier federation would thus go upwards and would ultimately culminate into the nation. The national government would have only residuary powers.

Local units would self-sufficiently manage their affairs. Participation, co-operation, sharing, equality and decision-making are the cornerstone of this people's communitarian model. *Swaraj* trusts in 'people' sector and socialism in 'public' sector whereas globalisation in private corporate sector. Public and private both sectors have failed miserably. Now the time is for 'people' sector which leads *swaraj*.

Swaraj is a pious goal. It can be realised only through peaceful, noble and relentless means and spirits. It is the highest goal a society or an individual has to aspire to. Colonised mind, community or society can never attain it. By plundering or usurping the natural resources, corporates are destroying communities that constitute the foundation for *swaraj*. Therefore we have to fight them out. Resource sovereignty is the initial point of our struggle for the liberation from corporate-led colonialism.

(PNN)

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Pathankot and after

S.Viswam

It is bad enough that the government of India has no basic, fixed, clear-cut Pakistan policy, but it is really exasperating that those in high positions project and air conflicting views on matters relating to Islamabad and Pakistan’s behavior. It is intriguing also that one person in authority who is expected to talk on Pakistan and related policy issues, external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj, is silent. Indeed, Sushmaji, who is not known to be shy or modest, hasn’t talked on any issue concerning foreign affairs, let alone on Pakistan.

The sizzling topic in the political-foreign affairs discourse in India today undoubtedly is the attack on the Pathankot air force base and station. The Punjab-based facility is one of India’s biggest, a military-cum-civilian residential complex, which has been occupying considerable media space and attention in the first few days of the new year.

India’s soft security underbelly was thoroughly exposed a few days ago (on New Years day to be exact) when a batch of six Pakistan-based terrorists not only managed to breach the airbase security and smuggle loads of ammunition including mortars, but

also engage in a gunfight with Indian troops for nearly 60 hours, which was the duration it took for the latter to neutralise them.

Not a day of glory for the Indian security establishment. Many questions remain to be answered, some of them raised by prime minister Modi himself. Indeed, the self-esteem of the Indian armed forces, which constitute in terms of military might and size one among the top ten world armies has been badly shaken. It will be some time before the Indian military establishment lives down Pathankot. At the same time, there will be a demand to be addressed that a second look needs to be given to our security mechanism and apparatus and strategy calculations.

After visiting the base and also doing an aerial survey of Punjab’s border areas, Modi repeatedly asked the IAF personnel how it was possible for the terrorists to enter the airbase. The terrorists were in occupation of a building inside which had to be ordered demolished immediately in order to get them out. There was a serious security lapse, obviously, and the prime minister was disturbed to note that the security mechanisms

were so highly porous as to allow undetected entry of terrorists whose presence became known hours after the entry. What was particularly disturbing was that airbase's assets like fighter planes were parked within walking distance of the spot where the Pakistanis entered the base and proceeded to make themselves comfortable.

Before Pathankot happened, the two neighbours were fully into the mood of debate and discussion and negotiating for peace and continued bilateral interaction. The two national security advisers had met. The atmospherics dramatically improved after prime minister Modi paid a brief but surprise visit Lahore on his way home from Kabul and had tea with Nawaz Sharif. The two foreign secretaries were due to meet on January 15 for a pow-vow.

Pathankot changed the situation dramatically and overnight, raising a huge question mark on the whole issue of where the two countries stood. Much to India's surprise the Pakistani prime minister promised swift action to bring the guilty to book and constituted a committee of high personnel to work on the leads provided by New Delhi vis a vis the Pathankot attack.

Days have passed after assurances of action were conveyed but no action has yet been reported, at the time of writing, which is Wednesday. Meanwhile, the failure of response from Islamabad persuaded serious examination by India's home minister Rajnath Singh and foreign minister Sushma Swaraj of options before India. Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar seemed a bit impatient and he showed his impatience when he advocated the theory that pain should be inflicted on the perpetrators as a retaliatory action India's part, he

did not specify what kind of "pain" he had in mind! On first hearing the news of the death of seven Indian soldiers in the attack, Rajnath Singh had called for a befitting reply. But a while later, he showed softness and said that more time should be given to Pakistan to act since there was no reason to doubt the Pakistani assurances. Of course, if the minister has the time and the inclination to examine in depth Islamabad's track

record of the manner of its dealings with he might not be so charitable!

The situation indicates a standstill, so typical of India-Pakistan negotiating tactics. As to the fate of the foreign secretaries' talks, at this point your guess is as good as mine! We best leave it at that: it may take place or it may not!

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Between the Lines

Gujrat Ambassador replaces Aamir Khan

Kuldip Nayar

I AM not a film buff. But I do watch movies by actors like Amir Khan because he acts naturally. Such actors make me feel as if I am not seeing a film but reliving my life. I must admit that I did not like Aamir Khan's remark at the Tarkunde Annual Lecture that his wife had often asked him whether they should migrate to some other country. Subsequently, he apologized and closed an ugly controversy in the country.

But the Narendra Modi government has once again revived the controversy by not reviving his tenure as brand ambassador for Incredible India to promote tourism. What message the BJP is sending is beyond my comprehension. But it is clear that the ruling party was punishing him for having made the remark.

I was present at the function because I was conferred on the lifetime achievement award at that time. Aamir Khan's remarks looked

odd but nothing offensive. His despondency that tolerance, of late, had been pushed into the background was in tune with what was happening in the country. But there was nothing which could hurt one's sensibilities.

Apparently, the Modi government did not forget and forgive his remarks and his tenure was not renewed. This did raise eyebrows and the liberals even questioned the government because they did not want to make it an issue. Yet there is no doubt that the Modi government has punished him and never explained why the tenure, a routine matter, was not extended.

This does question the credentials of the Modi government. It pacified the minorities by saying, sab kasaath, sab kavikas, but apparently it is driven by the extremist RSS. Even Prasar Bharti, otherwise an autonomous body, had to allow RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat to use its radio network to broadcast his points of view. This happened for the first time

after independence.

The Modi government does not realize that it is probably legally correct but morally wrong. The minorities which already suspect the government for being pro-Hindutva are terrified and feel that they are the second-class citizens in a country where the constitution guarantees equality before law.

The appointments which the BJP government are making smack of parochialism. Students at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, have been able to block some pro-RSS academics getting top positions. But otherwise, the message the Modi government is sending across is that even academic institutions are no more autonomous but under the fate of HRD ministry.

The Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) at Pune is not functioning for more than a year now because RSS pracharak Gajendra Chauhan was appointed as its chairman. Chauhan, who is merely a serial actor, has been preferred over more eligible people. The Modi government refuses to budge even after some leading cine stars pointing out to the government that it was in the wrong.

Another glaring example was that of Pankaj Nihalani, who was appointed as the chief of Censor Board. Nobody doubts his credentials as a good filmmaker but, at the same time, no one can ignore his RSS connections. Ever since he became the chairperson of the CBFC, there has been a lot of criticism of saffronisation. But, fortunately, the mounting pressure on the government has worked and Nihalani has been replaced by the impeccable Shyam Benegal.

However, in the case of the Pune film institute, the government has not relented.

I concede that Aamir Khan should not have made the remark when he was still the brand ambassador for the government's Incredible India campaign. He should have resigned before taking the stance. In fact, I was surprised when he accepted the position in the first instance. He knew what the Modi government stood for and how the RSS has the run of the government.

But the most grievous cut is the acceptance of the position by Amitabh Bachchan. It is known that he tends to take a pro-establishment stance, whichever government is in power. He contested from Allahabad Lok Sabha seat as a Congress candidate. Since then he has not taken any stand and gone along with any Prime Minister in power, whether from the Congress or the BJP. He only knows which side of the bread is buttered.

Incidentally, Bachchan was Gujarat's brand ambassador when Modi was the chief minister. Had he refused the position because of Aamir Khan's forced exit, Bachchan would have given the message that when it came to principles he would not compromise. But then what I am seeking in him is not there.

Take the case of his wife, Jaya Bachchan who was nominated twice to the Rajya Sabha by the Samajwadi Party's Mulayam Singh. In fact, the party wanted her to contest the Lok Sabha seat in 2014 but after her refusal to do so, Mulayam Singh still accommodated and nominated her as the Rajya Sabha member for a second term. All these point to the fact that Amitabh is clever enough

to gain from the political situation. He did not mind how Aamir Khan for his bold comment on BJP's parochialism was punished and unceremoniously thrown out.

There is a lesson in it for the nation to learn. A secular, democratic country has to give space to everyone, including critics. Unlike Pakistan, which is an Islamic state, India is pluralistic where the freedom of expression is guaranteed and the minorities have every right to express themselves. It is a pity that people like Asaduddin Owaisi are misusing the rights of free speech to widen the gulf between Hindus and Muslims.

The ball is in the BJP's court. The party has to create a climate of tolerance. Even a person like me feels the nation is being Hinduised and taken away from the path of pluralism. This is not India's ethos. Nor does the constitution permit it. The struggle for independence was not only against the British but also against the communal division created during their 150-year rule. We have to create an atmosphere where Aamir Khans do not have to make the remarks that show the pains of minorities.

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“The Root of Hatred and Intolerance”

Nargis Sattar

Across the gateway of their hearts, they wrote ‘no thoroughfare’ but hatred came by laughing and said, ‘I enter everywhere’. The whole world is nurturing hatred instead of brotherly love and peace.

Is India secular now? Our honourable Prime Minister perhaps has a different notion. I guess his silence encourages people close to him, like Shiv Sena, Bajrangers, RSS, to raise fear, insecurity and suspicion among the Muslims and Dalits. Because whatever happens, from taking beef to Shahrukh Khan’s film, they would say “go to Pakistan” as if they are not Indians first. RSS must rein in the fanatics. Muslims’ religion is supreme and not their citizenship. Not strange though. The anti-Muslim horizon of thinking is narrow and perhaps they have been raised to adulthood in an ultra-conservative environment.

Do they at all respect the Constitution of India? Lynching, murder and abuses and inhuman attitude towards Muslims say it all. One redeeming feature is a deluge of protests from some politicians, media, intellectuals and free thinkers. Actually Adolf Hitler is more alive after death. This has come from across Germany to rule. This intolerance has gripped many states too. You can’t eat what you want you can’t write and speak freely. ‘I am Mr, Mrs, ‘Intolerant’, bow down to me’. I am a Muslim by birth and by practice. But that doesn’t prevent me from speaking my mind.

What is Hon’ble Mr. Modi’s ‘Hindutva’? The spirit of Hinduism? It is known to many of us that while being ‘Vedantic in origin and expression, they are by no means confined to Hinduism’ said Karan Singh in his ‘Hinduism’. Despite the discords and conflicts of our age, Islam, so far, is the last and modern religion. ‘The Spirit of the Quran’ by Amir Ali is a must read. These fanatics, both among Hindus and Muslims should read this book to correct their misconception. So RSS says ‘go’ and Trump says ‘don’t come’. Morsi government’s argument and Trump’s hatred is different in degree, not in kind. Muslim hatred is a trodden path.

Why must some people, associate terrorism with Muslims is a billion dollar question. Why are the charges leveled against innocent Muslims? They don’t want an Islamic state, never.

Who has given the authority to Mr. Trump to ban Muslims from entering U.S.? How will the Muslims visit their sick relatives, some being on the verge of death in USA from across the world? What about the bright students who desire to go there for higher studies? Consider the harmless Muslims first. What has terrorist attack in France to do with poor Muslim farmers, workers, rural folk and businessmen? Are Muslims living across the world terrorists? Harmless Muslims are not terrorizing Mr. Donald Trump, it is the reverse. Is US his personal property? Trump’s policy has largely become a game

of megalomania and eccentricity. The key element of his campaign is poisonous hatred.

I congratulate the Nobel Prize Winner Malala Yousufzai’s steely courage for condemning Donald Trump’s hate speech. She remarked wisely, “blaming Muslims for terrorism would only radicalize more Muslims”. It strikes at the root of Muslims’ self-respect. 69 years old Donald Trump should learn a lesson from a girl of 18. What a pity! If Soni murders Moni will Tony be hanged? Trump’s freedom of campaigning has a limit. But American citizens are loving and peaceful. Remember Vietnam? How did they react?

‘Down with Islamic State’. Terrorism must stop *coute que coute*. Islam means ‘peace’. Terrorism must be wiped out. We are on a dormant volcano. Take the requisite steps, swing into action, fight continuously and unitedly. Trump’s speech is beset with evil. Barring Muslims from entry to US will not solve the predicament. This is simply a negation of democracy.

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A 2015 Free Speech Calender

Geeta Seshu

January

Jan 1: Attack on G Stephen Babu, Editor of 'Crime Today' at Vinukonda in Guntur district.

Jan 14: Tamil writer PerumalMurugan announces his 'death' as a writer on his Facebook page, after being hounded by caste-based groups and Hindutva forces in Tiruchengode, Tamil Nadu, for his novel Madhorubhagan.

Jan 16: Leela Samson resigns as Chairperson of the Central Board of Film Certification, reportedly over 'interference, coercion and corruption of panel members and officers of the organisation who are appointed by the ministry.' Nine members resign a day later in support.

Jan 19: Hindi film director PehljNihalani appointed as CBFC chairperson.

Jan 28: ShirinDalvi, editor of Mumbai-based newspaper 'Avadhnama', arrested for reproducing cover of Charlie Hebdo magazine.

February

Feb 2: A police complaint is lodged against the organizers of the comedy group All India Bakchodby the Brahman EktaSevaSansthafor alleged abusive language in a roast that was organized in Mumbai on Dec 20, 2014.

Feb 2: Members of the KonguVellalar community abductand thrasha Tamil writer

'Puliyur' Murugesan for allegedly portraying the women of their community in a bad light in his compendium of short stories.

Feb 11: Penguin India, agrees to withdraw and pulp all unsold copies of American scholar Wendy Doniger's 'The Hindus: An Alternative History' after a protracted legal battle with Hindutva organization ShikshaBachaoAndolan, ends in a settlement.

Feb 21: Senior Communist leader, rationalist and writer of the popular book 'Shivajikonhota', GovindPansareis shot by two persons on February 16 when out on a morning walk with his wife. He succumbs to his injuries five days later.

March

Mar 5: The Indian government imposes a blanket ban on the screening of a controversial documentary 'India's daughters' on the Delhi gang rape incident as it carried an interview of one of the convicted persons.

Mar 9: Nagaland government blocks Internet and mobile data services and bans the circulation of videos and photographs of the lynching of Syed Sarif alias Farid Khan by a huge mob.

Mar 18: Mere criticism is not seditious, rules the Bombay High Court upholding a petition that challenged the charge of sedition against cartoonist AseemTrivedi.

Mar 24: In a landmarkjudgement, the Supreme Court of India strikes down Sec 66 A of the amended Information Technology Act, 2000 as 'unconstitutional'.

April

Apr 8: The Supreme Court seeks the government's view on decriminalizing of defamation, while hearing a batch of petitions led by BJP MP SubramaniamSwamy challenging the constitutional validity of defamation.

Apr 13: More than one lakh people from all walks of life sent in their recommendations to save the principleof net neutrality following TRAI recommendations on OTT services and online media.

Apr 28 : The Shiv Sena moves a privilege motion against writer and columnist Shobha De for her tweets that allegedly insulted Maharashtrian culture.

May

May 14: The Supreme Court upholds the framing of obscenity charges against poet VasantDattatreyaGurjar for his poem on Gandhi.

May 29: The Meghalaya High Court has imposed a ban on media coverage of bandh calls issued by insurgency groups.

June

June 6: Bilal Bahadur, photo editor of Kashmir Life, is attacked and severely beaten by a mob in Srinagar, incensed at coverage of

their Friday protests in the Nowhatta area.

June 8: Shajahanpur-based journalist Jagendra Singh, dies of burn injuries, eight days after he alleged in a video that he was set on fire by a group of police and supporters of Uttar Pradesh minister for dairy development, Ram Murti Verma.

June 12: Kanpur-based journalist Deepak Mishra, is shot at by unidentified persons. He attributes the attack was after he wrote a series of articles on gambling dens in a small newspaper 'Dainik Mera Sach', but police say it was because of a personal dispute with a neighbor.

June 15: Haider Khan, a journalist in Uttar Pradesh's Pilibhit district is brutally assaulted, tied to a motorcycle and dragged, allegedly for his report on dubious land deals.

June 22: Sandeep Kothari, a 40-year-old journalist based in Jabalpur, is allegedly kidnapped from Balagat in Madhya Pradesh and set on fire. He dies later. He had written against the illegal mining and was being pressurized to withdraw a case he had filed on illegal mining.

June 23: BJP leader Subramaniam Swamy, who was facing multiple cases in Delhi, Mumbai, Assam, Mohali and Kerala, challenges the hate speech provisions of Sections 153, 153A, 153B, 295, 295A, 298 and 505 of the Indian Penal Code as violative of his freedom of speech.

July

July 5: Akshay Singh, a reporter with AajTak channel, who was covering the Vyapam scam in Madhya Pradesh, died in mysterious

circumstances in Meghnagar near Jhabua, minutes after interviewing the father of Namrata Damor, a student whose body was found near a railway track in Ujjain district of the state. At least 23 people had died an unnatural death, according to a special investigative team probing the scam.

August

Aug 8: Raja Chaturvedi, a journalist working in Kannauj district in Uttar Pradesh, is shot dead just outside his house by unidentified persons.

Aug 8: Sanjay Pathak, a stringer with a local Hindi newspaper, in Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly district, is killed by two persons in Faridpur, area in the district.

Aug 27: ARs. 250-crore defamation case is filed by Essar Steel against Caravan magazine, it is the latest in a list of multiple defamation cases filed through the year.

Aug 27: The Maharashtra government issued a circular to all police stations directing that sedition charges be applied if citizens criticized public officials or politicians.

Aug 30: Former Vice Chancellor of Hampi University, rationalist and well known Kannada writer MM Kalburgi is shot dead in his residence. He was attacked for his views against idolatry in a campaign of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad.

September

Sept 2: Internet blocked in Manipur indefinitely after outbreak of violence in Churachandpur.

Sept 4: Hindu groups force

literary critic MMBasheer to stop writing a regular column on the Ramayana for the Malayalam daily Mathrubhumi.

Sept 9: The Gujarat High Court upholds a ban on internet services during the Patel agitation in Gujarat.

Sept 24: Internet services were suspended in Jammu and Kashmir to 'stop miscreants from posting objectionable pictures' of beef slaughter during the Eid festival. The ban on internet services was re-imposed in November for the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Sept 30: A freelance journalist Ajay Vidrohi was shot dead in Sitamarhi, days before the Bihar state elections.

October

Oct 7: Acclaimed writer Nayantara Sahgal and poet Ashok Vajpayi return their Sahitya Akademi awards to protest the threats to free speech and growing intolerance in the wake of the killing of Prof Kalburgi and the Dadri lynching of Mohammed Akhlaq, followed by a number of eminent writers, filmmakers and poets. Eminent writer Uday Prakash had returned his award in September.

Oct 7: Two concerts of Pakistani ghazal singer Ghulam Ali in Mumbai and Pune in Maharashtra were cancelled following protests by the Shiv Sena party, which is opposed to all 'cultural ties' with Pakistan.

Oct 9: The Delhi High Court has sought the CBFC's response to a petition on the denial of a certificate for 'Endino Muzaffarnagar', a documentary on the Muzaffarnagar riots made by the late Shubradeep Chakravorty and

MeeraChaudhary. The film was to be granted an 'A' certificate.

Oct 10: Hemant Yadav, a journalist with a local news channel, was shot dead by motorcycle-borne gunmen in Chandauli district in Uttar Pradesh.

Oct 10: Sudheendra Kulkarni, who heads the Observer Research Foundation (ORF), was attacked by Shiv Sena party members and his face blackened with ink for organizing a book launch of former Pakistan foreign minister Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri.

Oct 10: Adivasi journalist Someru Nag and Hindi media reporter SantoshYadavwere arrested by Chhattisgarh police on suspicion of supporting Maoists. Despite protests both by local scribes and a signature campaign by eminent journalists, academics and activists across India appealing for their release, the duo are still in jail.

Oct 12: Indo-Pak band MekaalHasan Band was not allowed to perform in Ahmedabad's Sheth CN College of Fine Arts after a scheduled concert was disallowed by the college trustees in the wake of a protest by the Shiv Sena.

Oct 27: Mithilesh Pandey, a reporter with DainikJagran is shot dead in his house in Khastha village in Gaya district of Bihar.

Oct 31: Tamil folk singer S Kovan was slapped with a sedition case for singing songs that were critical of Tamil Nadu chief minister J Jayalalitha and her liquor policy. Kovan heads the MakkalKalaiIlakkiyaKazhagam or People's Art and Literary Association, a 30-year old cultural

organization that stages plays on social issues.

November

Nov 19: The Director of Film Festivals dropped the entire students' section from the IFFI fearing trouble from students of the FTII, protesting over the lack of transparency in appointments to heads of the Governing Council. A 139-day strike by the students over the appointment of GajendraChauhan and four others ended inconclusively.

Nov 20: The CBFC has cut four scenes from 'Spectre', the James Bond film, two for alleged profanity and two for 'excessive kissing'.

Nov 23: Newspapers in Nagaland carried blank editorials to register their misgivings at the directive of Assam Rifles not to cover banned groups

December

Dec 1: Several offices of the Marathi daily Lokmatatare attacked for publishing an allegedly blasphemous cartoon depicting the ISIS funding in an article titled 'ISIS cha Paisa' (ISIS' money).

Dec 9: Mohammed Wasim-ul-Haq, the chief editor of Akhbar-e-Mashriq, an Urdu daily from Kolkata, was taken into preventive custody by police in Delhi for an article critical of the provocative statements of a Hindu leader.

Dec 10: The Tamil Nadu government slapped sedition charges against a Tamil news weekly 'NamadhuManasatchi' for publishing an allegedly false and seditious report on public healthcare.

Dec 10: Patel community leader Hardik Patel continued to be behind bars on charges of sedition when his

bail plea was rejected by the district and sessions court. Patel faces charges in two cases of sedition, in Surat and Ahmedabad.

Dec 10: Minister files defamation case against Vikatan

Dec 14: Tamil Nadu government under Chief Minister J Jayalalitha has filed 190 defamation cases across India, the highest by any government in recent times. In flood-ravaged Chennai, the :fear of defamation notices.

Dec 16: The lawyer for Hardik Patel, KapilSibal, told the Supreme Court that the former had 'made some stupid statements' but these could not be constituted as seditious. The leader of the Patidar community did not intend to overthrow the Gujarat government through violence. The court posted the hearing to January 5.

Dec 16: Govt has blocked 844 social media pages under the IT Act says Ravi Shankar Prasad: <http://tech.firstpost.com/news-analysis/govt-has-blocked-844-social-media-pages-under-the-it-act-says-ravi-shankar-prasad-291557.html>

Dec 17: Newspapers shut down for a day against bomb threat on editor: <http://kanglaonline.com/2015/12/newspapers-shut-down-for-a-day-against-bomb-threat-on-editor/>

Dec 21: Rajasthan blocks Internet services in some districts indefinitely: <http://www.medianama.com/2015/12/223-rajasthan-internet-block/>

Dec 22: Tamil Nadu govt files defamation against Ramaswamy for his alleged remarks against CM Jayalalitha: <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-tamil-nadu-govt-files-defamation->

against-ramaswamy-for-his-alleged-remarks-against-cm-jayalalithaa-2158312.

Dec 24: CM Arvind Kejriwal gets notice in defamation case

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/CM-Arvind->

Kejriwal-gets-notice-in-defamation-case/articleshow/50291816.cms

Dec 24: Rajoana attacks journalist Sandhu in jail, senior official suspended: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/punjab/senior-journalist-kanwar-sandhu-meets-rajoana-in->

patiala-jail-asp-suspended/story-gUDr542B0w6cYwsjxDEYEI.html.

(A few of the noteworthy instances that marked free speech and intolerance in India in 2015, culled from a list compiled by the Free Speech Hub of the mediawatch site, The Hoot)

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New Turn in Kerala Politics

P. Viswambharan

Kerala Politics is taking a new turn. For the past six decades politics in Kerala has been polarized between two fronts viz., the United Democratic Front (UDF) led by the Indian National Congress and the Left Democratic Front (LDF) led by the CPI(M). All national and regional parties functioning in the state, except the BJP, have been partners in either of these fronts and the two fronts have been taking alternate chances in running the government. Though the BJP is the only political party that has grown organizationally during the past one decade in Kerala its electoral performance has been very poor. BJP has not yet opened account either in the state legislature or in the Parliament even though it had polled up to 10% votes in some general elections. Its electoral victory was confined to some seats in local bodies, and that too very nominal. But the local body elections held in October 2015 have given a boost to the BJP.

Let us have a brief analysis of the results of the last local body elections. There are 941 Gram Panchayats, 152 Block Panchayats, 14 Zilla Panchayats, 87 Municipal

Councils, and 6 City Corporations in the State. In all these institutions the LDF has emerged as the number one front and the UDF as number two. (In the 2010 elections it was the other way round i.e., UDF No 1 and LDF No.2). The BJP, which had only a nominal presence in the previous local bodies, has emerged as a party to be reckoned with in Kerala's electoral politics, with representatives in practically all local bodies in all the districts. It has doubled its seats in Gram Panchayats and in other local bodies it has more representation. In the six city corporation councils, BJP's strength has increased from 9 to 51. In the state capital city's corporation council viz., Thiruvananthapuram, BJP obtained 35 seats out of a total of 100. In the previous council it had only 6 members. In Municipal Councils throughout the state the BJP has tripled its strength i.e., from 79 to 236 and in one Municipality viz., Palakkad (district headquarters) it has emerged as the single largest party and has secured the chairmanship. In the northernmost municipal council of the state, Kasaragod, BJP's strength has increased to 14 from 3 in the previous council. In rural areas

BJP's performance is comparatively poor. Yet, it has now 14 Gram Panchayat Presidents while it had only 4 last time.

It may be noted that the BJP has contested the elections as a single party while all other parties were partners of the two fronts. But, this time the BJP had the declared support of the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam's (SNDP Yogam) leadership. SNDP Yogam, though founded as a secular, non-communal social organization by the famous Sree Narayana Guru, has now turned into a communal organization of the Ezhavas, the largest Hindu community in Kerala. Since Independence its leadership had been in the hands of Congressmen. But, presently the official leadership is handled by its General Secretary Vellappally Natesan, who changes his political views very often. Now, after the BJP has come to power at the Centre he has taken a pro-BJP stand and just before the local body elections he declared that SNDP Yogam would support BJP candidates. But, in practice this had only marginal effect in BJP's victory.

A word about SNDP Yogam. This social organization was formed in the first decade of the last century under the guidance and leadership of Sree Narayana Guru who had preached the doctrine of “One Caste, One Religion, One God for Man.” He was a much respected saint and a great social reformer who fought against the caste system, untouchability and other social evils. Ezhavas (Thiyyas, as they are called in North Kerala) being the largest community in Kerala suffering from untouchability, denial of education and entry in government services etc., naturally became his followers on a large scale. After his demise, the leadership of SNDP Yogam fell into the hands of politicians and after Independence, Congressmen came at the top of the Yogam. In nineteen sixties R. Sankar, who was the

General Secretary of SNDP Yogam, became Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee President as well as the Chief Minister of Kerala.

But, paradoxically, even though SNDP leadership was in the hands of congressmen, the rank and file of the organization and the vast majority of the Ezhava community while supporting the yogam’s social and educational activities were politically progressive minded and supported leftist parties. In fact, the Ezhava community was the backbone of the communist movement in Kerala. This political trend continues even today. In the present Kerala Legislative Assembly, the ruling Congress-led UDF has only three Ezhava members out of its total strength of 73 even though UDF had the support of the SNDP

leadership in the last Assembly election. On the other hand the 68 strong CPI (M)-led LDF has more than 20 members belonging to the Ezhava community.

Thus, it has to be recognized that BJP’s advancement in the recent elections to local bodies is due mostly to its own strength and electoral tactics and not because of support from other organizations. And the general view among the people of Kerala is that while the LDF may come to power after the next Assembly elections, which will take place in April or May this year, the BJP will open its account in the legislature.

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Save Mustard Crop from GM Technology

Bharat Dogra

Just a short time after India’s farmers and social activists fought a long but successful battle to keep away a genetically modified (GM) food crop from the country’s farming system, high level efforts are on to introduce another GM food crop in the form of Dhara Mustard Hybrid 11 (DMH 11). The Times of India (Nov.7, 2015) recently quoted its main developer scientist as stating that this variety will be considered for commercial release soon. However the same report has also quoted one of India’s most eminent scientist Prof. Pushpa M. Bhargava, founder of Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad. This leading expert, who was appointed by the Supreme Court to the Genetic Engineering

Approval Committee (GEAC) told the newspaper, “The biosafety and related tests have not been done. Secondly, the data of the tests has not been released to ascertain whether they were done properly.” The eminent scientist concluded, “I don’t believe GM mustard is ready for commercialization, nor should it be, under any circumstances.”

The tragic story of Bt Cotton in India demonstrates how even devastation can be covered up as development if enough money is available for false propaganda. Suffice it to say that within a few years of Bt Cotton, India’s cotton biodiversity has been devastated and many farmers have been ruined despite all the support extended

by the authorities to somehow try to show Bt Cotton as at least a temporary success. But all this is nothing compared to devastation that can be caused by introducing GM food crops like Bt Brinjal and Dhara Mustard Hybrid 11.

So many strong arguments and solid data against introduction of GM food crops were presented to the authorities at the time of campaign against Bt Brinjal and this information was considered very adequate by the union government for rejecting the introduction of Bt Brinjal. Many state governments are still known for their opposition to the GM crops. So why are the authorities now so keen to release this variety ignoring worldwide concerns about

the very serious risks and hazards of GM crops?

Letter to the Editor

Rss Forces My Exit From Iit-Bhu

An eminent group of scientists from various countries who constitute the Independent Science Panel have said in their conclusion after examining all aspects of GM crops, "GM crops have failed to deliver the promised benefits and are posing escalating problems on the farm. Transgenic contamination is now widely acknowledged to be unavoidable, and hence there can be no co-existence of GM and non-GM agriculture. Most important of all, GM crops have not been proven safe. On the contrary, sufficient evidence has emerged, to raise serious safety concerns that if ignored, could result in irreversible damage to health and the environment. GM crops should be firmly rejected now."

In his widely acclaimed book 'Genetic Roulette' Jeffrey M. Smith has summarized the results of a lot of research on the health hazards of GM crops/ food. "Lab animals tested with GM foods had stunted growth, impaired immune systems, bleeding stomachs, abnormal and potentially precancerous cell growth in the intestines, impaired blood cell development, misshapen cell structures in the liver, pancreas and testicles, altered gene expression and cell metabolism, liver and kidney lesions, partially atrophied livers, inflamed kidneys, less developed brains and testicles, enlarged livers, pancreases, and intestines, reduced digestive enzymes, higher blood sugar, inflamed lung tissue, increased death rates, and higher offspring mortality."

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My contract at Indian Institute of Technology, Benares Hindu University, Varanasi, as a visiting faculty, has prematurely ended after teaching there for 2.5 years due to a decision of Board of Governors. In a Board meeting held on 21 December, 2015, the Vice Chancellor of BHU, who was made the Chairman of IIT BoG by Minister of Human Resources Development, Government of India, bypassing the panel of five names recommended by a resolution of BoG, Prof. G.C. Tripathi, and Dean of Faculty Affairs, IIT, BHU, Prof. Dhananjay Pandey, and a third Professor, all three gentlemen associated with Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh, primarily forced the decision. Prof. Tripathi's academic credentials for becoming the VC of a central university are questionable. He is not believed to have taught a single class for the past many years at Allahabad University where he was employed earlier.

The charges against me are that I'm a Naxalite, screened a banned documentary on Nirbhaya case and am involved in anti-national activities. But the written order signed by Director of IIT, BHU, of 6 January, 2016, says that my 'services as visiting faculty in the department of Chemical Engineering stand terminated after the expiry of one month' without giving any reason. I've now filed an application under the RTI Act, 2005 asking for a copy of the minutes of meeting of BoG held on 21 December and the reasons for termination of my contract.

I wish to clarify that I'm not a Naxalite. The ideology that I would consider myself closest to is Gandhian. But I do identify with the causes taken up by Naxalites even though I may not agree with their methods. I also think that it requires a lot of courage and sacrifice to be a Naxalite and I certainly don't have that kind of resolve. People associated with RSS who believe in Brahminical Hinduism with its attendant caste hierarchy will never appreciate the struggle for a just and equitable society.

The banned documentary on Nirbhaya made by BBC was to be screened in my Development Studies class during the even semester of academic year 2014-15 but the decision was withdrawn after intervention of Chief Proctor of BHU and S.O. of Lanka Police Station just before the class. The Chief Proctor wanted me to cancel the class which I did not agree to as there was no ban on discussion imposed by the government. Hence, a discussion on the issue of violence against women in our society was conducted after screening a different documentary.

Sometime back a female student at Columbia University, New York, was allowed to carry a mattress all around that campus for many days and even during the convocation onto the stage with the help of her friends in support of her demand to expel the male student she charged with for rape. The University stood by the rape survivor even though the male student has sued the University

on defamation charges. In contrast, the BHU administration does not even want a discussion on the issue of violence against women on campus and usually protects its male professors when they are accused by female students and staff of sexual misconduct.

I don't believe in the idea of a nation or national boundaries, which I think are responsible for artificial divisions among human beings similar to ones on the basis of caste or religion. Hence I cannot be anti or pro-nation. I am pro-people. I'm not a nationalist but am a universalist. Moreover, I don't think I need to consider the charge of being anti-national from people who did not participate in freedom struggle of the country; who believe in an ideology which was responsible for Mahatma Gandhi's murder; who invited the problem of terrorism to India by demolishing the Babri mosque in Ayodhya and have been involved in at least five bomb blast incidents in the country – two in Malegaon, Hyderabad, Ajmer and Samjhauta Express, too seriously.

There are seeds of violence in the RSS ideology and it'll convert India into a potentially long term trouble torn nation. The RSS ideology is a threat to the social fabric of the country and will inhibit our evolution into a society which has been conceived by our freedom fighters, the basic values of which are enshrined in our Constitution ensuring life of dignity to all its citizens without any discrimination.

I've no regrets as the decision to terminate my contract has not been taken based on my academic performance but it is because of my political views and activities. I've enjoyed my stay at IIT, BHU,

and especially the interaction with students, faculty, non-teaching staff and the community living around. My most important intervention was to get a passage opened for a Musahar community in Susuwahi village, adjacent to BHU, which was going to be trapped by construction all around. Members from Musahar community in Susuwahi and Chittupur, another village in vicinity, are now likely to get government housing, water and sanitation facilities. Education of about fifty children from around the campus is being supported by donations from IIT community. A homeless woman Champa, who was living on street in Lanka outside BHU with her three children, was rehabilitated by two IIT students Neeraj Dhelariya and Rahul Khurana, both of Electronics Engineering. Later the Chief Minister's office provided a help of Rs. 50,000 to Champa. Computer Science students Shubham Jalan, Shubham Soni, Pankaj Soni and Ceramic Engineering student Bharti Agarwal helped an emaciated and ill woman Meena Devi from Chittupur village revive. A group of women MNREGA workers from Seergovardhanpur, the birth place of Sant Ravidas, also in the vicinity, were helped, by Virendra Saroj, a Chemical Engineering student, to claim their pending wages. With the help of a Ph.D. student Dhananjay Tripathi, another BHU student Dharmendra Yadav, got financial support of Rs. One lakh from CM's office for his Hepatitis C treatment. Because of efforts of Yash Shah, a Mechanical Engineering student a tailor Narayan also got help of Rs. 31,000 from CM's office for a surgery of his foot which enabled him to run his sewing machine. In preparation of the implementation of National Food Security Act a number of students of the Development

Studies class helped local population fill their forms for obtaining new ration cards which will entitle them to subsidised food grains. The vendors' association in Lanka, which supplies tea and food to patients and their relatives visiting the Sunderlal Hospital, has been fighting for their rights under the Vendors' Act. Village community in Mehdiganj is fighting Coca Cola against depletion of their water table which now is in over-exploited category. Students have helped these local communities in their respective struggles.

I'm grateful to the Director Prof. Rajeev Sangal, who allowed me to conduct one-to-one interactive non-competitive evaluation process in my courses instead of conducting the conventional examination. I got a chance to present my experience in Salzburg Global Seminar on testing methods in December, 2015 in Austria, which was sponsored by ETS, Princeton and the Inter-American Development Bank, Washington DC.

I wish the Institute and the University well.

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By

B. Vivekanandan

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International Socialists push for Equality

(A Seminar was organized by the Progressive Alliance, which is an organization of more than 100 Socialist, social democratic and labor parties and organizations, on 19th and 20th November 2015 at Rabat, Morocco which adopted a resolution on the theme 'Social Justice and Equal Opportunities for All'. It adopted resolutions detailing the rise in global inequality, the need for Social justice instead of rising inequality and the policies to achieve social justice and equal opportunities for all. The following are, to name a few, the members of the alliance: Social Democratic Party of Austria, Australian Labor Party, Socialist Party of France, Social Democratic Party of Germany, Nepali Congress, Norwegian Labour Party, Swedish Social Democratic Party. From India the Indian National Congress and the Association for Democratic Socialism are members – Babu Heddurshetti)

Progressive elements, social democrats and socialists are not the only groups who are warning about the negative consequences of deepening social inequality. Recently, Christine Lagarde, head of the International Monetary Fund, warned that “rising inequality can damage economic growth and social ties, and may also cause political instability”. The authors of the 2014 Global Risks Report published by the World Economic Forum in Davos consider the increasing gap between rich and poor to be the greatest potential threat to the global economy. Of all possible risks, the report considers increasing income disparity to be the factor that is most likely to cause “serious damage” on a global scale in the coming decade.

Growing global inequality

In the past 25 to 30 years, income and wealth distribution has radically changed on a worldwide scale due to the growing spread of neo-liberalism since the 1980's, the accompanying deregulation of the financial markets, the end of system competition following disintegration of the East Block, and accelerated globalization of the product, financial and labor markets.

Social injustice between the poor and the rich is shown by the fact that one percent of the world

population owns almost half of the world's assets. But only 1 percent of the world's assets are owned by women. These numbers clearly show the social inequality between the genders – between women and men and girls and boys.

Measured against the average per-capita GNP, income disparities between the rich and the poor countries increased greatly between 1980 and 2000. In the past few years, thanks to the high growth rate in emerging and developing countries, differences in income have decreased slightly – initially only in relative terms and, since 2007, in absolute terms as well. As opposed to this, income disparities have increased greatly within most countries and continue to do so.

A lot of countries, especially in Asia, are catching up on the 'traditional' industrial countries. But here, too, it is the elite, the top 10 percent, and to some degree also a newly-emerging middle class who are gaining from this development. People in the lower 40 percent of the income scale reap very little benefit. Global inequality, which is a combination of inequality between states and inequality within the individual countries, therefore continues to deepen. It is estimated that the richest 20 % of the world's

population earns 50 times more than the poorest 20 %.

One of the regions where the trend towards greater income inequality has been curbed is Latin America. Even though Latin America and the Caribbean, along with Africa, remains the region with the greatest income disparity, the Gini coefficient, i.e., the concentration of income distribution, of 14 of the 20 Latin American countries for which data are available, declined between 1990 and 2012.

Disparity in the distribution of wealth is much greater than the disparity in earned income. The wealth of the world can be divided into two parts: almost half of the world's wealth is owned by one percent of the world's population and the other half is shared by the remaining 99 %. On the other hand, the poorest half of the world's population owns less assets than, the 80 richest people in the world (Oxfam). In reality the actual concentration of wealth is probably even more blatant.

Women's employment, earnings and working conditions are still not in line with those of men. According to the ILO, globally, the labor force participation rate for women is 50 per cent, compared

to 77 per cent for men. Worldwide, women earn approximately 77 per cent of what men earn and continue to be primarily responsible for household chores and family responsibilities. While 51 per cent of ILO member States provide at least 14 weeks maternity leave, this still leaves millions of women, without the fundamental right to adequate maternity protection. Worldwide, a substantial part of the female workers continues to be marginalized and too many women are faced with violence and discrimination.

Policies to achieve social justice and equal opportunities for all

At the top end of the income scale, the outrageously high salaries of managers and bankers have to be curbed. This involves putting a lid on all salaries, including agreed severance payments and pensions, paying out bonuses for assumed profits with a delay of several years and being able to retrieve them at a later date if losses are incurred. These demands are often voiced during financial crises and in the context of government-backed rescue packages worth billions of dollars or euros. It is our duty to ensure that they are actually implemented.

State redistribution programs which ensure minimum incomes for the poorer parts of society, such as Brazil's 'BolsaFamilia', a highly successful social welfare system in which recipients are bound to certain conditions, are a further important element, in efforts to achieve more equality. The 'Social Protection Floor' developed by the International Labor Conference ensures access to essential healthcare and determines the general principles of basic social security guarantees that then serve as a guiding principle for progressive

politics.

The system of state redistribution is based on taxation. But not all taxation models are progressive and tax individuals according to their financial capability, i.e. demand that better earners pay higher taxes than lower earners. Not only, but above all, in developing countries, where tax revenue is often largely collected in the form of indirect taxes such as consumer taxes or import duties, the poorer sections of the population who spend the largest part of their income on everyday consumption, bear a disproportionately larger burden than the rich. For this reason, we are fighting for a taxation system that is progressive in a dual sense: a taxation system that is financed largely by direct taxes, namely income tax and corporate tax, but which, in turn, should have a progressive structure. At the same time, low incomes should be exempted from taxation by granting generous allowances. Similarly, capital income should be treated in the same way as earned income, which is usually more heavily taxed at present.

Financial transactions are one of the few economic transactions that are either fully or largely exempt from taxation in most countries. This gap should be closed and a financial transactions tax should be introduced, last but not least due to the additional effect this will have in stabilizing the financial markets.

The fight for gender equality is a fundamental part of the battle against inequality. This means we want to increase awareness of the problems that persist without scaring away from taboos. It also means taking action to increase participation of women on the labor market and

strengthening their position through equal wages. Still too few women occupy top positions in companies, on the labor market or in politics. To promote and encourage changes in this respect the support and cooperation of men is of undeniable value. The endeavor to reach maximum participation of women in top positions is a priority for us. We support the idea of gender quotas as a transitional instrument for increasing women's political and economic representation which is a step towards substantive equality with the aim to achieve gender equality based democracy. Furthermore, fighting discrimination and abuse and providing universal access to public, affordable and high-quality health, education and childcare services are indispensable conditions to realize equality between women and men.

The battle against inequality must also be fought at an international level. In particular the fight against tax evasion and profit-shifting as practiced by trans-national corporations and the fight to close down tax havens can only be won with the aid of international cooperation. The major industrial and emerging economies must finally reach appropriate agreements in the context of the OECD and G20. Also international trade is an instrument to promote decent work and fight inequality in the world. Trade agreements could and should be more used to improve labor and social conditions. Civil society organizations that serve as watchdogs to identify abuse deserve our full support. Moreover, companies that dodge the rules should be named and shamed and excluded from governmental programs.

Moreover, we also welcome the fact that the United Nations has now included, the reduction of inequality within and among countries in its catalogue of sustainable development goals (SDGs)

Social justice and equal opportunities for all

The huge disparity in income and wealth as we experience it today is an urgent problem if justice is to be achieved within and among countries. Meanwhile, this growing inequality far exceeds what the majority of people in many societies commonly consider to be fair and in relation to performance. The level that unequal distribution is allowed to achieve while remaining socially accepted varies from one country to another. One thing is certain, modern society is still miles away from the convictions of the philosopher Plato, who already argued in ancient times that the income of the richest should be not more than four times that of the poorest.

Greatly unequal distribution of income and wealth also has specific economic, social and political consequences: Inequality endangers economic prosperity and can be directly attributed to a number of negative social developments; Inequality perpetuates unequal power structures and cements the levels of social opportunity, thus hampering social and intergenerational mobility; it consolidates persisting inequality between women and men, and makes the task of combating poverty more difficult; Inequality endangers social peace and political stability and, in the long term, undermines democracy. Even in supposedly well-established democracies, increasing material inequality nurtures the domination of political decision-making by financially well-disposed

elite groups; in this way, governance of the people gradually develops into governance of money.

We advocate and support policies of social justice and equal opportunities for all.

Create a sentiment conducive for growth

Arun Kumar

The claim of better economic performance of the Government is being overshadowed by the criticism of the sectarian and divisive agenda being pursued. More than economic ranking and brand value that have been affected by the rising civil strife, what is required is a rethink at the level of policies.

The year 2015 is ending with good news for the government with the mid-term economic review predicting that the economy will achieve 7.5 per cent growth. It is less than expected earlier but makes India the world's fastest-growing economy. The news on the industrial front suggested an uptick. However, the services sector is not doing so well and the export front is dismal. The uncertainty about the impact of an increase in the interest rates in the US is over but its long-range impact will slowly play itself out in the coming months. So, the NDA has something to cheer about in the midst of many negatives.

During the Parliament debate on intolerance, the NDA was on the defensive. Everyone agrees that intolerance not only hurts India but also spoils its image abroad, thereby having a negative economic impact. Moody's Analytics warned India against following a narrow agenda due to this reason. This is not an isolated view since the US State department, Zubin Mehta and others have raised similar concerns.

The Government got a pat on the back when India's "brand value" improved by one rank over last year to seventh and India jumped 12 ranks to the 130th position among 189 countries in "Ease of Doing Business". The Finance Minister is not too pleased with this low rank and felt it should have been higher.

The NDA's claim of better economic performance is being overshadowed by the rising criticism of the sectarian and divisive agenda. Intellectuals of various hues have protested and there is bad press. Just like Volkswagen lost brand value after it was found to have fixed the software to show lower emissions in its diesel vehicles, India has also lost "brand value" due to the rising civil strife.

Brand valuation of a nation is problematic. A product or a company is simpler to value since their income stream is commercially defined. But how does one do that for a nation? In the case of a branded product, the owner of the brand gets an income as royalty from the producer and this is used to value the brand. But, to treat a nation as a "brand" and get the income earned is problematic.

Brand Finance publishes the "brand value" of nations. Its website informs us that it uses a Brand Strength Index (BSI), based on three broad factors, with

each given equal weight. They are infrastructure and efficiency, brand equity and economic performance. Each of these is itself a composite of other factors, like quality of workforce and ability to attract foreign talent. It appears that the growth of the economy plays a major role. Further, these indices are based on perceptions and Government data and this is where the problems arise.

In India, the GDP growth data has been challenged since the new series was released last January. It showed a jump in growth rate in the preceding two years. This led to an improvement in the country's image and to an improved "brand value". India's story is important given that the other big economies are sputtering or slowing — Eurozone, Britain, USA and the BRICS (minus India). This is the source of the positive sentiment about India. However, what if the GDP growth story is incorrect?

Industry has hardly grown in the last three years. The unorganised and small-scale sectors are complaining. While e-commerce has done well, it is at the expense of the brick-and-mortar traders. Agriculture is facing its second drought in a row. Exports have been declining for the last one year. Consumer demand has been sluggish and the investment rate in the economy is down to about 28-30 per cent in the last two years from its peak of 38 per cent in 2008. Both public and private sector investments have stagnated due to cuts in plan expenditures and spare capacity, respectively.

The Indian investment story stalled during the UPA II rule due to policy paralysis on the

back of corruption charges and the policy makers playing safe. Matters have hardly improved due to over-centralisation of power in the PMO under the NDA rule and files getting stuck there. Further, while policies are being announced, the roadmap is often not clear. As journalist ArunShourie has said, businesspersons are privately complaining, while in public they dare not speak.

Growing social strife on the back of the communal agenda being pushed is adding to the disenchantment of businesses. Fringe elements making rabid statements when their mentors were not in power was one thing but now this cannot be ignored when ministers and senior party people back them. All this negatively impacts investment sentiment as well as India's "brand value". The GDP data is vitiated by the growing black economy, which, while raising the rate of growth of the economy simultaneously results in poor governance and policy failures. It lowers the "brand value" and adversely impacts "ease of doing business" by bringing about non-transparency.

This factor is not taken into account in calculating India's "brand value". For instance, if roads are considered, it is not just the quantum that matters but also the quality. Indian roads are largely in poor shape so that, vehicles gets damaged. The quality of education and health is poor even though its reach has increased. Thus, with poor skill levels, there is unemployability and doing business becomes difficult. Just as the Chinese economy has slowed down given the international economic

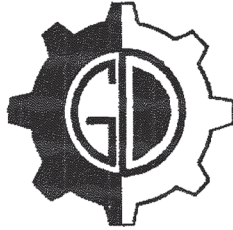
situation, so could the Indian economy. The Indian economy, at about \$2.2 trillion, is about 3.5 per cent of the world GDP and, therefore, cannot be the engine of growth for the world.

In the coming year, India would have to depend on the internal market for its growth just as China has realised this fact. For that, the Government would have to help reduce the rapidly growing inequity to boost demand. But such steps could be mistaken for being anti-business. The Government would have to also increase expenditures on education and health but the last Central budget has moved in the opposite direction.

Internal investments have to be increased because foreign investment is about 10 per cent of the total and any rise there cannot compensate for the 10 per cent decline in total investments since 2008. The private sector would not invest more as long as spare capacity persists and the social climate remains adverse. Investments depend on expectations and the social factors affect it. Investment in the infrastructure sector poses problems because private players who invested in this sector have borrowed heavily and are saddled with loans they are unable to repay, leading to NPAs for the banks. These difficulties need to be resolved if investments are to rise. "Brand valuation" etc., will not matter unless there is a basic rethink of current policies. If not, even the bit of good news for the government could turn negative. It needs to realise that what it thought was the solution is really the problem.

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that people have long since divorced from nature. Our feelings are second handed. Our love is constructed. Our beliefs colored. Our originality valid through artificial art. It has become truly difficult to love without getting hurt.

The value of a man was reduced to his immediate identity and nearest possibility. To a vote. To a number. To a thing. Never was a man treated as a mind. As a glorious thing made up of star dust. In very field, in studies, in streets, in politics, and in dying and living.

I am writing this kind of letter for the first time. My first time of a final letter. Forgive me if I fail to make sense.

May be I was wrong, all the while, in understanding world. In understanding love, pain, life, death. There was no urgency. But I always was rushing. Desperate to start a life. All the while, some people, for them, life itself is curse. My birth is my fatal accident. I can never recover from my childhood loneliness. The unappreciated child from my past.

I am not hurt at this moment. I am not sad. I am just empty. Unconcerned about myself. That’s pathetic. And that’s why I am doing this.

People may dub me as a coward.

Good morning,

I would not be around when you read this letter. Don’t get angry on me. I know some of you truly cared for me, loved me and treated me very well. I have no complaints on anyone. It was always with myself I had problems. I feel a growing gap between my soul and my body. And I have become a monster. I always wanted to be a writer. A writer of science, like Carl Sagan. At last, this is the only letter I am getting to write.

I loved Science, Stars, Nature, but then I loved people without knowing

And selfish, or stupid once I am gone. I am not bothered about what I am called. I don't believe in after-death stories, ghosts, or spirits. If there is anything at all I believe, I believe that I can travel to the stars. And know about the other worlds.

If you, who is reading this letter can do anything for me, I have to get 7 months of my fellowship, one lakh and seventy five thousand rupees. Please see to it that my family is paid that. I have to give some 40 thousand to Ramji. He never asked them back. But please pay that to him from that.

Let my funeral be silent and smooth. Behave like I just appeared and gone. Do not shed tears for me. Know that I am happy dead than being alive.

"From shadows to the stars."

Uma anna, sorry for using your room for this thing.

To ASA family, sorry for disappointing all of you. You loved me very much. I wish all the very best for the future.

For one last time, Jai Bheem

I forgot to write the formalities. No one is responsible for my this act of killing myself.

No one has instigated me, whether by their acts or by their words to this act.

This is my decision and I am the only one responsible for this.

Do not trouble my friends and enemies on this after I am gone." -

- Rohith Vemula

Playing with fire

S. Viswam

The background to the current steaming crisis in the field of education is shocking as well as highly disturbing. It burst on the political scene with amazing suddenness and it has gathered national resonance immediately since the crisis has arisen from and deals with a politically and socially sensitive subject, namely Dalits and issues concerned with them.

The crisis was obviously in the making for some time. It would seem that members belonging to two rival student bodies, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) and the Ambedkar Students Association clashed over the Yakub Menon hanging last July. Rohith and his four associates belonged to the latter grouping. The ABVP as is known is affiliated to the right-wing RSS and its allies. Rohith's role was probed but no adverse findings emerged. However, who should intervene at this stage and demand action against the Ambedkar Students Association and that too for anti-national activities but none other than Union Minister of State for Labor Bandaru who wrote to HRD Minister Smriti Irani, quite persistently, and the latter equally speedily pressurized the university to act fast. What is noteworthy is that the minister apart from pressurizing Smriti Irani also described the said student Rohith and his friends as being casteist, extremist and anti-national without any probe or proof. It would seem that the minister relied on the assessment of a ABVP supporter and resorted to name-calling instead of leaving it to the

university to sort out the problem as best as it could.

The pressures apparently worked. The five students were first suspended from the university and then expelled from the hostel. This action had unexpected reactions and was interpreted as high-handed and discriminatory. Stung to the quick that his aim of obtaining a Ph.D. degree and raising his scholastic achievements even higher through a book he intended to write, Rohith Vemula ended his own life.

The student population of Hyderabad raised a howl of protest, and the issue became so serious that the police had to intervene. The intervention took the form of cases filed against Dattatreya, the Vice-Chancellor of the Hyderabad Central University, a BJP MLC leader of ABVP. The charges included abetment to suicide and atrocities against Scheduled Castes and Tribes. It is noteworthy that a central minister deemed it fit to intervene in a small brawl between rival student bodies but also act as if carrying out a vendetta against students who do not belong to the ABVP!

Nothing illustrates more than this episode the fact that the education system has been politicized by the NDA set-up. And, nothing better can describe the state of affairs in the field of education than what an editorial in the Times of India says. Commenting on the Hyderabad incident, it says that "under the current NDA dispensation at the Centre, education is being handled

with even less finesse than before when the need of the hour is to unshackle education, if youth aspirations are to be met.” That a minister himself has had to be booked for abetment to the suicide of a student is a telling commentary on the state of affairs.

The HRD minister Smriti Irani has set up a two-member probe to go into the situation. That body’s report has already come out even as you

read this. The system obviously is riddled with weaknesses. Education is a state subject, and hence normally the Centre’s role is limited. However, it would seem that the time has come for a revamp of the entire system so that education is well served by its being placed in the state list. Even if reorganization is not warranted by the Hyderabad episode, there is no harm in having a good close look at the state of education at various levels, beginning from the primary.

The findings of such a re-look could help in a fair assessment of the state of affairs. Living in knowledge societies as the world today does, a re-look can only help eliminate weaknesses and contribute to strengths. Identifying the weaknesses is by itself an onerous task, and may result in all-round improvement.

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“The words of wisdom that haunt”

Uday Dandavate

The Times of India ran an opinion poll today asking its readers whether the politicians rushing to Hyderabad in response to Rohith Vemula’s suicide were fighting for justice or fighting for votes. I am not surprised to see the results. An overwhelming majority who responded to the poll perceives sudden flocking of leaders of all political parties to Hyderabad as “fighting for votes”. I believe it was a wrong question to ask.

Rohith Vemula’s suicide has exposed the ugly side of Indian reality. It has brought in full view an opportunist political class and a society sharply divided along caste affiliations. It is clear that though we vote for development, we seek justice for ourselves, and every once in a while, we rise in anger against corruption, at the core we remain a society unwilling and unable to treat fellow countrymen as equals.

Rohith Vemula indeed defied the persona typically portrayed by members of upper class- of Dalits as people undeserving of the responsibilities expected of them in the positions they secure only

because of affirmative action. The narrative has gone deep.

He was a Ph.D. student with good academic record. He was an artist and a writer. He used his sensitive mind and the power of articulation to express his views on injustice.

I remember the Anti-Mandal Commission protests of 1989- the intense resentment against any prospects of the so called undeserving sections of the society occupying positions of power enraged the upper layers of caste ridden society that they were even willing to set themselves on fire in protest against reservations. The simmering anger and animosity has indeed taken on a subtle and vicious form in workplace discrimination. Rohith’s suicide, a very tragic event, has brought back into public discourse the paradox of our society’s craving for embracing modern life and global culture but at the same time refusing to give up our affiliations to unjust social identities. Blaming the BJP and the ABVP would serve political interests well, but I refuse to get drawn into this discussion, more so because it

would distract us from the real need to embrace the narrative of social justice.

Rohith’s suicide should provide us all an opportunity for reflection. The real question is “How can we liberate our minds from the clutches of the caste system and eradicate the discriminatory behaviors it generates?”

I was deeply moved by his suicide note where he called his birth a fatal accident.

Some extracts from his note had the most impact on me and revealed to me his true persona.

I realize that it is impossible for me to feel the pain of the burden he carried all his life, but I admire his determination to live a life of dignity by working hard to defeat the public persona of a Dalit and salute him for ending his life’s journey after penning words of wisdom that will continue to haunt the conscience of India for a long time.

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Death of a Research Scholar

P. Shankar Narayanan

Pundits keep lecturing us that “Reservation is not the proper way to uplift the oppressed castes. Education and economic development alone can improve their lot.” The latest incident at the University of Hyderabad on 17th Jan, once again tells us a different story.

Rohith Vemula, a Dalit research scholar of the University of Hyderabad (UoH), hanged himself to death on Jan 17, days after he was expelled from his hostel along with four other researchers. The five Dalit students of ‘Ambedkar Students’ Association’ (ASA) had been on a sleep-in strike in the open on the campus ever since their expulsion.

Following his 15th night-out, Rohith had strayed away from the protestors’ camp and spent his day in one of the rooms of New Research Scholar’s hostel on Sunday. At 7.30 pm, he was found hanging in the same room. He hanged himself using the blue banner of ASA, a student outfit which has been fighting for Dalit rights on the campus.

In the five-page suicide note recovered from the room, Rohith had mentioned how he always “looked at the stars and dreamt of being a writer” and an established academic. The research scholar hailed from Guntur district. His mother is a daily wage laborer with an agricultural background. His Junior Research Fellowship fund also used to support his family.

The victim was a second year research scholar of the science, technology and society studies department and also a UGC’s JRF holder. The student is survived by

his mother and a younger brother. In his suicide note, the student had also pointed out that for the past six months he had not got his JRF funds.

Long before taking the drastic step, the Dalit research scholar had sent warning signals. In a letter dated December 18, 2015 that bordered on a suicide note, he had asked the university authorities to offer “euthanasia” for him and other research scholars.

In the note, he described some possible modes of suicide. He asked the Vice-Chancellor to supply, “a nice rope to the rooms of all Dalit students through the chief warden... or serve 10 mg of sodium azide to all the Dalit students at the time of admission.” The letter was submitted along with a petition demanding that the university administration revoke their expulsion from hostels.

As per the order issued by the university on December 16, all five Dalit students — Rohith, Prashanth, Vijaya Kumar, Seshaiyah and Sunkanna — were barred from contesting student union elections, apart from entering hostels, administrative buildings and other common places in groups. All students were members of the Ambedkar Students Association (ASA).

The ‘suspension’ order allowed them to continue their studies in the university but denied them entry to the hostels, administration building and other common places in groups. It is difficult to imagine a more blatant exhibition of social boycott than such a punitive measure, directed at a group of students from

a socially disadvantaged community. That this comes from the governing elite of a central university makes it even more appalling.

All the efforts by the RSS and BJP to appropriate the Dalit icon Dr. B.R. Ambedkar as their own were brought to dust by the suicide of Vemula Rohith. His death is due to the general intolerant mind-set prevailing among the many caste Hindus. There is no point in blaming only the ABVP or Bandaru Dattatreya or the Vice-Chancellor. That is the way upper castes in general view the oppressed sections. When other parties were in power in Delhi also, similar incidents happened. And even before Independence.

As per Dr. Ambedkar’s proposals of 1943, SCs and STs were given preferential treatment in education in schools and employment in the state services. Unable to digest this social justice action, several caste Hindu leaders approached Mahatma Gandhi and complained that tradition and culture were sullied by allowing these privileges to the lower castes. Gandhi shot back at them, “Are you doing the same work your ancestors were doing?”

The country had witnessed enough of venom-pouring, hatred, insult to OBCs and destruction of public property immediately after the Mandal Commission’s recommendations were implemented by the V.P.Singh Government giving 27% of the jobs in public services to OBCs. Even though the Constitution sanctioned the move and later the apex court upheld the validity of the act, the upper castes’ fuming and fretting continues till this day.

Mandal recommendations on 27% OBC Reservation in state and central services came into effect from 1993 after the nod from the Supreme Court. After two decades of implementation, OBCs occupy hardly 12% of the posts in A & B categories in the central services. The rest 15% is still occupied by the OCs. Yet there is a hue and cry that everything is lost.

UPA-I Government passed a bill giving 27% reservation for OBC students in institutions of higher learning like NIT, IIT, IISc, AIIMSc and IIBM. Again all hell had broken out. But the apex court upheld the validity of the Government's move. During the agitation against the act, a few girl students were asked by the media (overwhelmingly dominated by the upper castes) why they were against this act. They had the racist audacity to say in public, "How can we get married if lower caste boys are allowed in these prestigious institutions?"

In last May, IIT-Madras had derecognized the Ambedkar-Periyar Study Circle (APSC), a student association, following an anonymous complaint that it was instigating protests against the policies of the Centre and creating "hatred" against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Hindus. A prominent BJP leader from TN was in the forefront to pressurize the HRD ministry to ban the student association.

Earlier IIT-M's Director of Students told the students twice to change the name 'Ambedkar-Periyar' as it was polarizing the student community. The cited official reasons for the ban were just bogus. Names of Periyar and Ambedkar were untouchable for TN's BJP and a few in IIT-M; and hence the ban. After a furor in the political, academic and social circles of TN, IIT-M management was forced to

withdraw the unilateral ban. But the hatred against Dalit students remains intact.

Whenever an officer from the oppressed caste (civil service, university or judiciary) commits a mistake, the upper castes taunt them sarcastically: "What can you expect from a quota guy?" That is because the upper castes by and large just cannot digest Dalits, Tribals and OBCs reaching universities or entering public services. After BJP's coronation at the centre, this apartheid has picked up some more vigor.

An editorial in The Hindu of 19th Jan rightly observes: "Rohith's death brings the Indian state face to face with its utter failure in addressing the social evil of caste and casteiest discrimination. The Thorat Committee, constituted some years ago to investigate differential treatment of SC/ST students in just one institution, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi, had come out with a damning indictment of the way Dalit students were treated. Forced into ghettos in the hostel, discriminated against by teachers, denied access to sporting and cultural activities, SC/ST students in India's premier educational institutions walk into an environment that's virulently hostile to them."

Not surprisingly in the last four years 18 Dalit students chose to end their lives rather than continue to battle on in these dens of caste prejudice and social exclusion. The first step toward treating the rot of caste is to acknowledge it — after Vemula's tragic death. Not to do so would be a crime.

Indian classes are not tired of lecturing the virtues of the American system. I am citing two of that country's examples in realizing

its mistakes and taking remedial measures magnanimously. Please don't get frightened that I will be stupid enough to cite the example of Obama becoming their Raja. That is just not possible even in our imagination.

A Vietnamese Buddhist monk immolated himself publicly as a mark of protest against the American occupation. The photographs of this immolation created such revulsion in the minds of Americans that it ultimately forced the US Government to withdraw its troops from Vietnam.

After the historic triumph of civil rights movement lead by the great Martin Luther King Jr, many white Americans reportedly expressed: "We the people owe a great deal to Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. A majority of us Americans were living with a sense of guilt, a sense of being rotten the way we treated our fellow men and women. His struggle has liberated us from such pain and has brought freedom to the oppressed Black men and women, we still have ways to go, but go we will".

We must appreciate the white majority to have stood up for what was right – and join King Jr on the steps of Lincoln Memorial to let the American administration know what was morally right needs to become the law of the land.

If, Rohith Vemula's unfortunate death can create even a tiny ripple and change of heart among the upper caste men and women, his death will not go in vain.

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Ancient prejudice, modern inequality

Ananya Vajpeyi

If Ekalavya's dismembered digit has haunted the Hindu schoolyard from time immemorial, Rohith Vemula's tragic suicide lays bare the deep inequality undergirding the modern state and its institutions of higher learning

On Sunday, January 17, Rohith Vemula (25), a doctoral student at the University of Hyderabad, *reportedly committed suicide by hanging himself from the ceiling fan* in a friend's hostel room. His death has brought to a head a long-simmering conflict between progressive student groups, and the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the students' wing of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), present on campuses across the country and increasingly belligerent in the prevailing climate of Hindu right-wing dominance.

Rohith, a Dalit, had been involved in campus activism on diverse issues: Ambedkarite politics, protests against beef bans, the persistence of the death penalty in the Indian criminal justice system, and communal violence in Muzaffarnagar in August-September 2013, which left many dead and thousands displaced, mostly Muslims.

Along with four other Dalit students, Rohith had been evicted from his hostel accommodation about a month ago, his monthly research stipend suspended, allegedly for subversive activities. The university administration as well as the State and Central

governments all appear to have been strong-armed by the reactionary ABVP into expelling these five individuals on dubious charges, characterising the victimised students as "casteist", "extremist" and "anti-national". All of them belonged to the Ambedkar Students Association, a body similar to the Ambedkar-Periyar Study Circle of the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IIT-M), a group that had also faced harassment and intimidation from campus authorities in the summer of 2015.

Caste and the Hindu Right

The conflicts in both the University of Hyderabad and the IIT-M illustrate a deep fracture between the Hindu Right and Dalit-Bahujan ideologies, particularly those of the Ambedkarite strain, a fault line that cannot be papered over by electoral alliances of convenience and occasional instances of power-sharing between the two sides. The Sangh Parivar at every level, from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party down to the ABVP, stands against equality, whether between castes, religious communities, or the sexes.

Instead of egalitarianism, the Hindu Right believes in an archaic arithmetic of adhikaar and bahishkaar, entitlement and exclusion, based on caste, religion and gender. If the Indian Republic is built on a plinth of equal citizenship, the Hindu Rashtra would be founded on ritual hierarchy and patriarchy as laid out for centuries in the caste

system. Onto this unequal social order of considerable vintage would be layered a deadly neo-Fascist majoritarian politics that arises out of the Hindutva imagination of the modern nation.

This is why, when the Ambedkar Students Association supported the screening of Nakul Singh Sawhney's film *Muzaffarnagar Baaqi Hai* on the University of Hyderabad campus, the ABVP attacked the Dalit activist-students, driving them out of their classrooms and hostels, eventually to the limit where Rohith took the irreversible decision to end his life. Photographs he posted on his Facebook page in 2014 of his parents' home in the small town of Guntur — a prized red refrigerator in which all the neighbours kept their water bottles, a gas burner, a fan he wryly described as "solar powered" — suggest the great distance from poverty and hardship travelled by this young man to become a doctoral student at one of the most prestigious universities in India. His journey ended violently and abruptly.

But the ostracising of the Sudra and Dalit student from the institutions of education and employment, knowledge and power, is a very old theme in Indian thought on social structure and moral order. The figure of the outcaste student appears in some of our oldest texts that reflect on the relationship between self, society and sovereignty.

In the Mahabharata, Ekalavya, a talented archer prince of the forest tribe of the Nishadas, goes to Dronacharya, the master who teaches young men of the Pandava and Kaurava clans how to wield their weapons. Drona will not admit Ekalavya on account of the tribal status that makes him an outsider to the caste system. Ekalavya goes away, makes an image of Drona, secretly watches him give lessons to Arjuna and the other royals, and teaches himself archery, treating the mud-and-clay Drona as a stand-in for the recalcitrant guru.

When Ekalavya turns out to be a better bowman than the Kshatriya prince Arjuna, Drona asks for his right thumb as tuition fee. Ekalavya agrees, but not without understanding that he is being discriminated against yet again. Ekalavya's initial disobedience (which makes him a secret apprentice) as well as his later compliance (which costs him his thumb) shame both Drona and his favourite pupil, the supposed beneficiary of this blatant act of prejudice, Arjuna. The story of the Nishada prince shows Drona up as a caste bigot whose classroom reeks of nepotism, even if he knows how to teach his students well, at least the high-born ones he favours.

Ekalavya's dismembered digit, a bloody and visceral embodiment of caste consciousness, has haunted the Hindu schoolyard from time immemorial. It can be read as quite literally a thumb in Drona's eye, a jab at our conscience that is as painful for us to experience as it must have been for Ekalavya to lose the very source of his hard-earned skill. He is denied access at every stage: he cannot become Drona's pupil, but neither is he allowed to become a great archer through his own efforts.

The story of Satyakama Jabali from the Chandogya Upanishad is more complex. Satyakama has no father, and takes his mother Jabala's name. He goes to the hermitage of the sage Gautama, and wants to be admitted. When asked about his parentage, he acknowledges honestly that he does not know his father's name or caste. Gautama admits him nevertheless, and performs the initiation ritual to pronounce him a twice-born Brahmin, after which his education begins in earnest.

In the ancient text of the Upanishad, Gautama is willing to entertain Satyakama as a potential pupil because of his honesty: he takes the boy's love of truth (which is the literal meaning of his name, satya-kama) as proof of his essentially Brahmin nature. Once the teacher has assessed the applicant's innate worth, he then translates his positive assessment into an upanayana (bestowal of the sacred thread on the boy's body), naming Satyakama a proper Brahmin and proceeding to educate him accordingly.

Satyakama's Brahmin identity is clearly attributed to him; it cannot be proven to be intrinsic, since his mother Jabala cannot identify his father. Gautama seems to suggest that 'Brahmin is as Brahmin does', i.e., Satyakama has the lakshana (characterising feature) of a Brahmin (because he speaks the truth), even though he does not have the gotra (lineage) of a Brahmin (because his mother was unmarried).

For a modern reader, this is a confusing account. Does Gautama make an exception and admit a non-Brahmin pupil into his hermitage, or does Gautama accept Satyakama

because he thinks he recognises him, despite appearances, to be a genuine Brahmin? The exchange between Satyakama and Gautama at the threshold of the ashram, as it were, raising fundamental questions about identity (Who are you? Who am I?), about rights to entry into the portals of the academy, about rule and exception in the caste system, and about the entailments of caste in the strongholds of knowledge and seats of power, is again a moment that has not left our collective conscience for two millennia. Dr. Ambedkar himself reminds us of both these characters, Ekalavya and Satyakama, who for him are damning evidence of the stubborn longevity of caste in Indian history.

The more things change...

Ekalavya did not die and neither did Satyakama, but Rohith did. This sad fact could lead to various conclusions. It is a reflection on the unexpected cruelty and the adamant ideologies undergirding the modern state and its institutions of higher learning. Drona and Ekalavya, Gautama and Satyakama could to some extent negotiate the terms of their relationship. Rohith ostensibly had the might of the Indian Constitution behind him — his fundamental rights as a citizen, reservations policy for students of his socioeconomic background, and the empowering discourses of the Ambedkarite student group which gave him a certain political awareness and the radical energy to fight for the equality he fully expected and deserved, but never got. And yet, when he was rusticated and ousted from his hostel, when he and his companions felt pushed to stage a "sleep-in" outside the university gates; when his stipend was withheld and he had to borrow money, and when he finally felt

like he had hit a wall and had no options, Rohith was far worse off than his metaphorical brothers in the ancient literature.

His heartbreaking suicide note states the piercing truth, the skewer that caste ideology drives into every heart filled with hope: “My birth is my fatal accident.” Yes, this is the human condition: our birth, all birth, is an accident. We do not choose our father or mother, our group or community. But only in India, only in caste society, and only for Dalits does this accident of coming into an unequal life become the fatality of either living with relentless inequality and enduring its cruelties, or dying a terrible, unfair, premature and unredeemed death.

Anil Kumar Meena, a first-year Dalit student at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), India’s premier medical college, had hung himself from the fan of his hostel room in March 2012. In Rohith’s poignant Facebook photos, his family’s meagre possessions now stand witness to a life whose promise was extinguished. He had posted that before he got a Junior Research Fellowship, his mother’s humble sewing machine had supported the family.

Like December 16, 2012, the day marked by the horrendous rape and murder of a young woman Nirbhaya, let January 17, 2016 too go down in this country’s history as the dark day of the death of a student, Rohith Vemula, who was promised a chance at dignity and prosperity by our founders, and whom we abandoned, to our eternal shame.

The Hindu

The clarity of a suicide note

Manash Bhattacharjee

Rohith Vemula’s farewell letter is a searing critique of what capitalist and casteist democracies have reduced people to.

*So the future lies in darkness and the forces of right
Are weak. All this was plain to you
When you destroyed a torturable body.*

— Bertolt Brecht, ‘On the Suicide of the Refugee W.B’

These lines by Brecht, from his poem on the German Jewish philosopher and critic Walter Benjamin, tell you a person committing suicide has one terrible advantage at his disposal: his clarity. In Benjamin’s case, it was not simply clarity about his personal situation, being unable to cross through the border check posts and fearing he would be turned over to the Nazis. It was also the darkened vision of a future Benjamin carried before his eyes, for a racist regime was ruling his country and hope had receded beyond the horizon. In Vladimir Mayakovsky’s last poem, ‘Past One O’Clock’, written two nights before he shot himself, the clarity is equally chilling, caught between a Stalinist regime discrediting his poetry and a failed love affair. Paul Celan was driven to the same fate also for more reasons than one, a mediocre poet’s wife accusing him of plagiarism, and his psychiatric treatment. But the poet might also have been referring to the larger web of desolation of being Jewish in post-War Europe, when he wrote two months before he jumped into the Seine: “They have healed me to pieces.”

A 25-year-old Dalit scholar from University of Hyderabad, Rohith Vemula, who committed suicide

on Sunday evening, left a stunning note for his friends and the world alike, whose content is full of serious lessons for India’s caste-ridden society. The sequence of events leading to the suicide was plaguing Rohith’s life, when he decided to end it in his friend Uma Maheshwar’s room. In the note, Rohith says a growing gap between his soul and body made him feel he had become a monster. He immediately goes on to say where his soul lay — in becoming a writer of science, like Carl Sagan. But his body got entangled in politics, a politics that reduced him to his body, dismissing his soul. The science of politics, a science that tears the soul apart from the body, was not for him. He laments in the note, he loved people without knowing they were long divorced from nature. That is quite a Rousseauian angst, pretty late into the heart, or heartlessness, of a post-industrial era. All Rohith saw around him was second-hand feelings, constructed love, coloured beliefs and artificial art. There was no room for artifice in his soul, the note seems to suggest. But nature, like politics and art, has both soul and room for artifice, which tore apart his soul from his body. No wonder Rohith concludes, it is difficult to love without getting hurt. Love, like nature, art and

politics, is a thing of artifice, and no science can prove it otherwise. It made a huge difference to him.

Things fall apart

The note then moves into the political sphere of things: what Rohith understood as valuable in a man meant nothing to the world around him, beyond the constraints of his identity and its thin possibilities. Rohith was a Dalit, and it came in the way of his quest for the stars. Sounds incredible, but the Hindu caste system still lives in the Middle Ages. Being Dalit was Rohith's only value for caste Hindus, a value measured only through denial, insult and injury. Casteism, analogous to racism, is no less sinister and monstrous than what Celan faced under the Nazi regime. When Rohith was suspended by his university authorities, for an alleged assault on a fellow student that wasn't proven beyond doubt, he must have felt the world closing in around him. The accusation of being "casteist, extremist and anti-national" by a Union Minister in a letter must have broken his heart. How can a Dalit, who is a victim of casteism, be casteist? The game of casteism is prone to absurd charges, and Rohith's intelligence couldn't make sense of it.

It all started after he was part of a small protest against the disruption of a film screening on the Muzaffarnagar riots in Delhi University by a Hindu right-wing student organisation. Can't a film showing atrocities on religious minorities be screened in the university of a country that boasts of being the world's largest democracy? Rohith was well within his rights to protest against majoritarian vandalism. But the exercise of such rights comes with a price, for

the rhetoric of democracy doesn't match up to its practices. The value of man, Rohith sums up in his note with precision, has been reduced to a vote, a number, a thing. It is a prescient summing up of what the instrumentalist logic of capitalist and casteist democracies has made of people. Rohith refused to be counted as a number wearing an identity mark forced around his neck, in this absurd game where democracy and casteism play calculable crimes between each other.

In the middle of having contemplated his fate, having decided to end his life with his own hands, in a farewell act that will destroy his torturable body, Rohith leaves his own idea of man: A "glorious thing made up of star dust. In every field, in studies, in streets, in politics, and in dying and living". Rohith was left wondering at his immeasurability that opened up spaces between him and the stars. To be a vote counted for much less. He only saw his own immeasurability everywhere, while protesting against the disruption of a film screening, or for a suspension he and his friends didn't deserve. Even in death he believed he can "travel to the stars". But how did he feel on earth? The quoted phrase, "From shadows to the stars", gives an impression. The Dalit, whose shadow pollutes the caste Hindu, one who is ascribed a body that embodies the shadow of pollution, feels like a shadow aspiring for the stars. From measure to immeasurability. From darkness to light.

Among the bigots

And yet, Rohith reminds us, the moment of his birth is irreconcilable: For people like him, life is "a curse". He finds his birth a "fatal accident". He writes further, "I can

never recover from my childhood loneliness. The unappreciated child from my past." Despite that accident of birth, which becomes catastrophic, being saddled with a caste, foreshadowing all his troubles, overshadowing his quest for the stars, his lonely, unappreciated childhood and adolescence, he nevertheless sees himself in the true measure of immeasurability that he knows he inhabits within. In that, Rohith betrays a clarity that Brecht saw in Benjamin, and Mayakovsky and Celan saw in themselves.

Those who have most overwhelmingly suffered the barbarism of history — Dalits, people of colour, vulnerable women, workers — alone carry a genuine value of universality in them, and in their protests against injustice we see the true unfolding of that universal spirit that impresses upon our hearts. The claims to universality of those in power — white colonisers, caste Hindus — are essentially un-universal, bigoted and discriminatory. It is not in "universal gospels" that we find any real, universal capacity but in the spirit of those who suffer these gospels, the propaganda of spiritual and cultural supremacy, these lies. The lack of vindictiveness in Rohith's note is a historic lesson for nationalist and casteist hate-mongers.

So Rohith, and not his detractors, alone can claim the stars, the universe, the world, the soul of man, because he knows he belongs to such immeasurable dreams and promises. In his death, we realise the lies and mockery being played out in this country and in this world by those who don't deserve, unlike Rohith, a place among the stars after death.

Rohith the 23rd Dalit student suicide in institutes like AIIMS and IITs

Salma Rehman

In a letter addressed to the Vice Chancellor of University Hyderabad, Rohith Vemula wrote: "Please serve 10 mg of sodium azide to all Dalit students during admission. Supply a nice rope to the rooms of all Dalit students...I request your highness to make preparations for the facility "EUTHANASIA" for students like me."

Why was Vemula, known for his cheerful disposition, asking for all Dalit students to be euthanised?

Vemula's suicide, which has sparked nationwide protests, clearly brings out the darkest side of our educational system which is still in the clutches of caste and religion politics.

'Death of Merit'

Just like Vemula, eight other students belonging to 'lower' caste have ended their lives in the University of Hyderabad (UoH) in the past decade. But the UoH campus hasn't been the only discriminatory academic space resulting in the death of 'condemned'. In fact the total mounts to a disturbing 22 since 2007, with some students killing themselves in premier institutions like AIIMS, IITs and National Institute of Immunology (NII).

"Our educational institutions are sadly where this discrimination exists in one of its ugliest forms," says Gurinder Azad, a Dalit rights activist, who has been working on the data since 2009.

"You might say that I am dragging the case into history but we can hardly deny the fact that a significant number of administrative structures in our country are not able to detach themselves from their Brahminical approach where a lower caste person can never be treated at equity with an upper caste individual," explains Azad.

Balmukund Bharati, a final year MBBS Dalit student at AIIMS, hanged himself to death in his hostel room on 3 March, 2010. The AIIMS administration came out with the standard response -- 'A student who went into depression [killed himself] as he was not able to cope with the rigorous academic environment of AIIMS.'

But according to Azad, rigorous investigations revealed that Bharati was subjected to prolonged abuse and humiliation from his professors, was beaten severely by his seniors and completely alienated from the 'mainstream' campus life -- all because he belonged to the Dalit community. It was actually after 6 years of painful and slow death that he decided to take his life.

Road to submission

It was on 5 May, 2007 that the Prof Thorat Committee released a report highlighting hell-raising facts about the discrimination faced by lower caste students and faculty in the coveted medical institute AIIMS.

About 88 per cent of Dalit and Adivasi students, in their responses

to the Thorat Committee, said that the teachers did not give them the marks they deserved in written exams and that their papers were not examined properly.

84 per cent of the SC and ST student respondents reported that the examiners had asked about their caste background, either directly or indirectly, and their grades were affected by the response.

"This is just one aspect of the discrimination which expands into a larger frame. Students are not given the assigned amounts of the scholarship money and entitlement on time which is their right since they have cleared the exam and proven their contendership. Further this 'hate' extends to hostels and messes where students are forced to change their rooms to live in 'ghettos' after suffering from lots of threats, abuses, physical violence and humiliations," says Rajesh Singh of National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR).

Turning a blind eye

The irony, of course, lies in the fact that the Prof Thorat Committee report didn't compell the government to spring into action and address reasons that were forcing the students to embrace death instead of living through humiliation.

In a video interview, Bharati's mourning father said that his son wanted to study abroad and leave India for good.

Why so silent, government?

“It was only after we produced these horrific accounts of these suicides in our documentaries that the Ministry of Human Resource and Development realised the truth of these institutions in 2012. Till then, even the government relied on the excuses provided by the institutions where they tried to cover the cases arguing that ‘the students were not able to cope up with the studies’ or ‘it was due to a failed love affair’,” says Azad.

Politics in and after death

Slamming the political parties who are expressing their concern over Vemula’s suicide, especially the likes of Rahul Gandhi, Azad says, “This is all about political mileage. I would like to ask Mr Rahul Gandhi that why did not the UPA government take any action when we produced this report earlier?”

He further says that along with its dormancy towards the suicides, the consecutive governments must be blamed for slashing the budget for the Dalit and Adivasi education.

“The educational development of Dalit and Adivasi students is dependent and linked directly to the planning and allocation of the Scheduled Caste Sub Plan and Tribal Sub Plan. But the funds have shown a decline in this year budget allocation. Unfortunately the government has been diverting a large share of this money to non-beneficial items like creating capital assets of general nature, paying salaries or diverting it to other general schemes, which hardly benefit the Dalits and the Adivasis,” says Singh of NCDHR.

‘To kill a movement’

Twelve days before his death, Vemula along with four other Dalit scholars, was expelled from the university. The students were

members of Ambedkar Students Association (ASA), a student political party.

The reason behind the expulsion was allegedly a tiff between the expelled students and some members of ABVP over the screening of the controversial riot documentary Muzaffarnagar Abhi Baaqi Hai. The docu was boycotted by the right-wing student body on the grounds of being anti-Hindu, which led to its widespread screening in different parts of India as a mark of protest.

An ABVP member also alleged assault by Vemula. A probe was conducted against the ASA members and they were expelled on disciplinary grounds.

However, it is being alleged that the whole issue was politicised and

that BJP leader and Union Cabinet Minister of State for Labour and Employment Bandaru Dattatreya influenced the university probe.

“Dattatreya wrote a letter to Union Minister Smriti Irani branding students of University of Hyderabad as casteist and anti-national and demanding an action against them after which they were expelled. This in itself clarifies the intention of the government to handle the issue,” says Azad.

According to him, ASA’s reputation in the UoH is targeted by right-wing parties as their ideology clashed with the Dalit student association.

“Vemula’s death is a part of a conspiracy to uproot a social movement and kill an ideology. This is a murder not a suicide,” says Azad.

Catch News

Socialist Party on Rohit Vemula’s suicide

Abhijit Vaidya, the General Secretary of the Socialist Party has issued the following press note: “The suicide of Rohith Vemula, a talented research scholar of the Hyderabad Central University (HCU), once again unfolds the anti-human face of sections of Indian society, politics and administration. The note left by Rohith Vemula before his suicide suggests that he was a serious-minded person with a deep understanding of life. The end of such a gifted person is a grave loss to humanity.

The Socialist Party demands that there should be an immediate high level inquiry into the incident of expulsion of the five students including Rohith Vemula, which ultimately led him to commit suicide. The people responsible for leading Rohith Vemula to suicide – officials of the HCU and in particular the leaders of ABVP and BJP involved in the incident – should be arrested without delay.

The Socialist Party pleads with the Supreme Court to ensure justice in the matter by taking cognizance. The Socialist Party expresses its heart-felt condolences to the family of Rohith Vemula.”

A new Dalit identity

The RSS has taken upon itself to define who is a pure Dalit and who a nationalist

Apoorvanand

RECOVERING from the initial stage of stupor, the RSS and its government launched an ‘Ambedkarite’-nationalist offensive to justify the treatment meted out to Rohith Vemula and his colleagues. They took care to offer cold, customary condolences, but after freeing themselves from this minimum obligation, the first thing they did was to question the ‘Dalitness’ of Rohith. They claimed that he was not an authentic Dalit since one of his parents is a non-Dalit. The father comes from a backward community. Since you derive your identity from the father, Rohith could not claim to be a pure Dalit.

The cynical attempt to persuade Dalits that the death of Rohith should not concern them, by suggesting that he was an imposter, shows the real inhuman nature of the politics of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. As if, even if this were a fact, it would make the death of Rohith less tragic!

The second thing the RSS did was to question the politics of Rohith and his organisation — Ambedkar Students’ Association (ASA). The argument, barely a day after the suicide, was that the politics of the ASA had nothing to do with Dalit issues. It was raising issues which were anti-national in nature and therefore, the ASA and its members, including Rohith, do not deserve our sympathy. At least, nationalist Dalits

should not come out in support of the ASA.

The ASA was dubbed anti-national for having protested against the hanging of Yakub Memon and for participating in a procession to protest the attack on the screening of “Muzaffarnagar Baki Hai”, a documentary on the communal violence in western UP.

A strange argument was advanced to prove that Rohith and his organisation were in fact insulting Ambedkar. Since Yakub Memon was punished by the Supreme Court under the relevant laws framed under the provisions of the Constitution which was written by Baba Saheb, any act of opposition to this punishment is an affront to Baba Saheb! Rohith was guilty of this sacrilege.

One of the “pracharaks” of the RSS, who has been assigned the job of looking after its students’ wing, said on camera that Rohith and the ASA never raised the question of denial of reservation to the OBCs and SC/STs in Aligarh Muslim University and Jamia Millia Islamia; and never questioned their minority character, which again proves that they cared little for Dalits. It is again being suggested here that you will have to oppose the minority character of these institutions to prove your Dalit credentials.

This argument tries to essentialise Dalit identity and intends to tie it finally with Hindutva. Dalit politics that in any manner questions the nationalism of the Hindutva variety automatically becomes anti-national and fit for attack. The RSS is also trying to deprive Dalits of the right to choose their issues and solidarities. If they make issues which are ‘non-Dalit’ in a narrow sense, and even worse, if they make Muslim issues their own, they are damned.

The aggression with which the RSS is trying to devour Ambedkar is born out of the desperation to use the energy that the movements of social justice has unleashed in the last two decades. Recognising the urge of the backward and Dalit classes to participate in the democratic political process, the Sangh is devising ways to create its own brand of Dalit and backward politics. Since in its formative days the slogan was a unity of Dalit-Backwards and Muslims, the Sangh is trying to isolate Muslims and draw the rest in its fold.

Organisations like the ASA are impediment in this drive as they seek to realise the liberatory potential of the project of social justice by forging an alliance of all oppressed communities. The ASA, through its activities, expressed its solidarity with the persecuted Muslims of India. This could not be tolerated.

It is not surprising that even in this sombre moment, the RSS has not refrained from attacking Rohith and his friends for their incomplete and anti-national Dalithood.

The reaction from the government, defending the MHRD, is even more pathetic and unconvincing. It has now been documentarily proved that the ministry gave an extraordinary treatment to the request by Bandaru Dattatreya. All of us know that no officer would take the pain of giving four reminders in quick succession in a routine matter. It is clear that there was a concerted attempt to put pressure on the university to act in a particular manner which satisfies the complainant, in this case the minister.

The deception in the response of Smriti Irani is so palpable. She alleges that it was a clash between two groups of students and there was no caste angle to it. She hides a fact which is most important, that the students' body, for which her ministry batted, belongs to the RSS and she is also part of the Sangh Parivar. She cannot, therefore, deny partisanship in this case. Second, it is not others who are indulging in a malicious campaign by making it a caste issue. None other than her own colleague, Bandaru Dattatreya, made this allegation that casteist and anti-national groups were active on the campus!

The minister seems to be perfecting the art of half-truth, but she gets exposed each time. When she produced the letter of a Congress leader to prove that her ministry was also pursuing matters raised by opposition leaders, she concealed this fact that the urgency in the latter case was missing and the university also took it lightly, whereas in this

case, the university overturned its earlier decision of not punishing Rohith after it was relentlessly pestered by the MHRD to show compliance.

A TV anchor raised a question many of us would find innocent, but it needs to be asked. Why did the aggrieved student body run crying to the minister? Was it sure that he, being one of them, would readily help them? Second, why did the minister believe what the student body told him? Did he investigate? For, his was not a simple forwarding note which is customarily sent by a person like him when he is approached by his constituents. He very explicitly lists the crimes of the ASA and demands intervention of the MRHD to prod the university to act against the 'anti-national' casteist criminals. He cannot claim that he was merely a neutral conduit.

The role of the university is shameful, even the reaction of the Vice-Chancellor after the suicide. He is shocked and fails to understand why Rohith had to take this extreme step. But when asked why he did not think of reaching out to Rohith after his earlier anguished letter, all that he has to say is that he has to act according to rules and statutes!

It is this cold, vicious, nationalist cruelty which filled Rohith with a sense of isolation from which he could recover only by breaking free of this life. Let us face with clear eyes this duplicity, this wickedness of nationalism which criminalises my existence if I seek to express my individuality. Many more lives will be lost if we do not act in time and remove it from the position of power.

Email : apoorvanand@kafila.org

To Rohith, by a Transgender

My dear Rohith,

Rohith, we wrote to each other when you were alive. And before you died you wrote a letter that packed in so much that it will take me a lifetime to keep writing back to you.

I am writing because this entire country is on fire in a way that it never has been over the institutionalized murders of dalit students. You had fought for justice after each such death on the University of Hyderabad campus, an annual event (except for the year that Ambedkar Students' Association won the students' election). You have touched millions of people who read your letter because your letter reflects so many parts of you that were the way you wished the world to be – **beautiful, honest,**

full of amazement, full of humility, of magnanimity. I am writing because your letter gives people, who never met you, an inkling of what we have lost and this is why so many people are mourning.

I am writing because already the right wing has realized that the only way they will win is to try to tear down your charm. So I am writing to state a few things that have been inaccurately reported in many places: several witnesses, including the campus security, the police, and campus medical doctor, know that the case filed against you by the ABVP president was a false case. I want to state that we teachers at the University backed the students' struggle for justice and our views were discarded along with the truth, under political pressure.

I know only a little glimmer of how painful being alive in this world was for you, and how you still loved the world, the universe. You had just lost hope in the people. Because they, we, could not create a world without the twisted thorns of caste that maliciously wrought the pain you were forced to feel, the pain you fought against tirelessly, impatiently. You were pricked by every injustice, and this is what I want people to know. I want to send your mother and brother this letter so that they know. I will never forget how you sweated more than anyone else cutting timber for cooking food after the May 1 rally for workers' rights, with a ferocity that is precious and rare. When, as the first transgender person in the University, I was preparing with my hijra sisters and transgender family in the Telangana Hijra Transgender Samiti to organize the first Swabhimana Sabha to assert transgender self-respect – it was you who reached out to me. Who labored over the first poster on transgender dignity on the campus, issued by the Ambedkar Students' **Association?** The poster was detailed, incredibly well-informed – it is rare for an ally to frame things in the right direction – and I realized that you must have put several days of reading into this.

I want people to know that you were not only an aspiring scientist, you were a researcher already, and your rationality, your thirst for knowledge, informed your approach. At a time when so many science students and teachers see science as routine lab-work divorced from rationality, who see no contradiction in wearing their caste threads while investigating the genetic basis of diabetes in the afternoon, who are paradoxically the bulk of students shepherded into the rank and file of the ABVP by a Brahmin-dominated scientific and academic establishment which

equates science with obedient and unquestioning study – you had liberated yourself from these chains and you knew that paradigm-shifting science was always historically done by discarding authority and asking questions, and often paying for asking those questions with one's life.

On the same date that we mourned your loss, exactly a year ago, Pravallika, a trans-gender woman was murdered by a man who had already at that point brutally assaulted almost 30 transgender women with rocks and blades. We knew what you have showed – which is that the system doesn't move towards justice when an injustice is not fatal. An arrest on any one of those assaults would have prevented Pravallika's murder. But the system is bloodthirsty. Our attention spans are bloodthirsty. Society needs dead bodies before it reacts in unpredictable ways.

The unpredictability is what shakes society, has the potential to create temporary accountability. What is harder is systemic change, making universities sites of learning and questioning, not *agraharams* producing obedient robots.

We talked about my caste and class privilege. About how they are the only reason I was sitting in the university as a teacher, while millions of bright, questioning, hard-working minds were being destroyed, excluded, controlled, demeaned and rejected by the same structures. You fought for the annihilation of caste, class and gender; hating yourself for every small act of complicity in the structure; all the while my complicity dwarfed yours and today I am, we are, complicit in your death.

Karthik Bittu
*Telangana Hijra Intersex
Transgender Samiti*

They call us anti-national: What exactly is their vision of India ?

Anand Patwardhan

Their founding fathers came from the most conservative Brahmin castes, with enormous faith in the culture that empowered them.

They opposed the mainstream secular freedom struggle and started to mobilise along religious lines from the early 20th century.

They openly admired Hitler and said that it would “profit” India to copy the Nazi approach to minorities.

They stated that their top three enemies were a) Muslims, b) Christians and c) Communists.

Arguing that Hindus and Muslims were irreconcilable, they propagated the two-nation theory, exactly as did their mirror opposite, the Muslim League.

They along with the Muslim League supported the British even during the 1942 Quit India movement.

They, along with the Muslim League, instigated unparalleled bloodshed during Partition.

At the dawn of Independence in 1947, they rejected the tricolour national flag and flew only their saffron flag.

In 1948, they murdered Mahatma Gandhi and distributed sweets afterwards.

In 1950, they wrote bitterly against the Indian Constitution, preferring the Manusmriti instead.

In 1951, they opposed Law Minister Dr Ambedkar's Hindu Code Bill that granted Hindu women the same rights as Hindu men. Dr Ambedkar resigned in disgust, so the work of drafting a Uniform Civil Code, which was his next stated goal, was never fulfilled.

In 1956, they opposed all those who along with Dr Ambedkar, walked out of caste-ridden Hinduism to embrace non-casteist Buddhism.

Despite continuing heinous atrocities against Dalits, they continue to oppose any questioning of "holy" scriptures that enshrine the caste system. They continue to pretend to the world that their religion is the most tolerant one on the planet.

In Kashmir, they bitterly opposed Article 370 granting autonomy to the region, which in great measure, fuelled militancy to grow in response.

In 1987, they glorified sati in Rajasthan to make electoral gains.

They bitterly opposed the Reservation policy for Dalits and Other Backward Classes until they finally realised the electoral damage of their stand.

In 1992, they demolished the Babri Mosque and destroyed the fragile unity between Hindus and Muslims.

They targeted and murdered Christians working for the educational and medical needs of

Adivasis.

In 1998, they promoted the atom bomb and even wanted to build a temple to it. They also began weaponising the bomb and started a nuclear arms race with Pakistan that has brought the subcontinent to the brink of nuclear holocaust.

After engineering countless communal riots throughout the post-Independence era, they started a pogrom against Muslims in Gujarat in 2002. Other communal riots in Muzaffarnagar and many other places followed as when required by the exigencies of elections.

They carried out terror attacks and bomb blasts in Goa, Thane, Malegaon, Samjhauta Express, Mecca Masjid and many others places and attempted to pin the blame on Muslims, until their game was exposed by a brave police officer, Hemant Karkare.

From 2013 on, they murdered three well-known rationalists and many unknown ones, as well as threatened scores of others.

Today, they and their mushrooming affiliates are giving arms training to vigilante groups across the countryside to attack minorities in the name of a beef ban and love jihad.

Their rapidly growing youth wings are terrorising campuses across India, opposing all other student bodies be they secular, democratic, Gandhian, Left, Dalit or any combination of these. They violently oppose or defame all rival groups and individuals whose thinking challenges their hegemony, from Professor Sandeep Pande of the Benares Hindu University, to Sheetal Sathe of the Kabir Kala Manch, from the students of Film and Television Institute of India

to those of the Ambedkar-Periyar group in Chennai and the Ambedkar Students Association in Hyderabad.

Their ideology now combines a medieval cultural mindset with a free market economic model that surrenders sovereignty and natural resources to foreign multinationals, modern avatars of the East India Company.

And *they* called Rohit Vemula, their latest victim from a section of society they oppressed for thousands of years, an "anti-national".

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Letter to the Editor

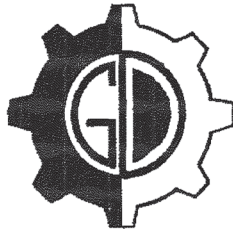
Dear Editor,

I was crying inside with anguish about what happened to Rohith Vemula right from the morning, getting mails from Teesta Setalvad and from others and was forwarding the mails of Teesta and others requesting them to forward the same to many others. But I read Harsh Mander's account in the journal Janata of Jan, 3, 2016 about the two officers and their comrades in the police force. His report gave me a soothing balm in the grim darkness that is hovering over the country with saffron brigade coming to power. I, at 84, an educational, environmental and social activist in NAPM, feel confident about the sanity amongst many. With people like Harsh Mander, B.D. Sharma, Dabholkar, Pansare, Kalburgi in India one should not lose hope. Tagore wrote "To lose faith in man is a sin".

Samar Bagchi,

Email : samar.bagchi@yahoo.com

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Janata Corpus

Janata entered its 70th year this January 26. In the 70 years since it was born, it has seen the dreams of its founders – Janata was launched by Congress Socialists in 1946 – shattered. When they launched Janata, they were heroes of the '42 movement, full of energy, hope and radical ideas. They wanted to paint India in pink, the colour that suits democratic socialists the most. Their heroic deeds, their ceaseless efforts from the underground to keep the August revolution alive, their sacrifices, had endeared them to the masses. The youth then were with them, even if their parents were with the Congress. They felt that a new dawn was on the horizon and they would usher it in. But history that they had repeatedly declared was on their side, did not side with them and the movement they launched, nursed and took towards a pinnacle, is now in a shambles. Socialism is no more popular, it, if at all, rarely gets mentioned. The people have moved on to pursue other causes, leaving socialists and theirism on the sidelines. The Janata Weekly has witnessed all this and has tried to record in some detail this history painful and tragic, as best as it could. If the socialist movement declined and almost disappeared, Janata too declined and it is on a respirator. But Janata has been kept alive, kept alive in the hope, not of a new dawn, but of revival, revival of the Indian Socialist Movement and to play a role in its revival. Who knows those days may be near. The growth that capitalism promised when it inflicted defeat after defeat on socialist forces all over the world, that inclusive growth has eluded, and the recession that set in in the latter part of this Century's first decade is showing no sign of going away. And there are movements of protest, promising a lot at their zenith, even if sporadic, give some hope even in their decline of a new world order. The downward slide of economy, the monstrous increasing inequality, and above all, the threat to the very survival of the planet, thanks to the industrial growth, despite the disturbing religious violence, is likely to herald a new future. These movements, if they succeed will call themselves, for all we know, pink socialism.

Janata will, in the coming decade of its existence, witness changes, describe them and nurse them. And Janata will grow in importance, as also in influence. But it will need resources, large enough, large for it, though very small for its opponents. The anti capitalist movements never need large amounts. The Janata trustees have decided to build a corpus. Janata appeals to its readers, socialists and friends to contribute a generous sum to swell its corpus.

–Trustees

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Republic of India after 65 years

Anand Kumar

There is growing feeling of discomfort with our parliamentary system and political parties as they are becoming non-responsive to the peoples' common concerns. They look diseased and disoriented. It is manifested by pollution of the election process where there is increasing grip of money power from Panchayat to parliament. Clean money is being overwhelmed by dirty money in the political domain. This is making the parties afraid of economic transparency and come under the citizens' supervision through the Right to Information about their incomes and expenses. The parties are becoming pale and personal properties of a close group with diminishing internal democracy in most

of the political parties at regional and national levels. Due to pressures of high frequency elections, there is new significance of imperative of survival in parliamentary process and identity politics, over and above ideological politics, has become a short cut to vote bank.

So, it is relevant to ask if ad-hocism implicit in electoral politics is being prioritized over peoples' conscientization, collective mobilization and social transformational initiatives. In other words, is parliamentary politics proving to be counter-productive for deepening of democracy through inclusivity and empowerment of the underprivileged sections of our

nation-state? Today, where is the need for program and vision based party building, with attention to ideology, manifesto, or cadre and members? But what is the relevance of this kind of politics, if it fails to stand with the forces of goodness and resist the power of evil? From the suicide of Rohith Vemula and murder of Akhlaq to cluelessness about the murderers of Prof. Kalburgi, Com. Pansare and Dr. Narendra Dabholkar, and the tearful protest by parents of Nirbhaya (Jyoti) - there are a growing number of indicators of political deficits which deserve attention of all concerned democrats. It calls for an audit of Indian politics and political class.

At the same time, it is gratifying that the rituals of democratic discourse of power are well institutionalized particularly the election process, multi-party system and media autonomy. There is also enough progress in creating separation of powers between the legislature, the executive and the judicial wings of the state system. We see less and less complaints in the context of moving towards federalization of state system between the centre and the states (except failing decentralization at the level of village Panchayats and city municipalities). Our Constitutional commitment and national mission about democratization of polity of India has so far created mixed results. As a consequence, on the one hand there is expansion of the social base of our polity with more participation by women, weaker sections and concerned citizens. On the other hand, there is growing gap between the expectations of the deprived people and delivery by the nascent democratic system. It is being further complicated with growing influence of crony capitalism, crime-politics nexus, corruption at high places and black money. Therefore, there is need to create a consensual effort for saving the baby while throwing away the bath water.

Our electoral system and the party system are twin sources of democratization of the power structure. We cannot wish them away. The Gandhians, Royists, Maoists and anarchists hope to evolve a system of peoples' power beyond electoral politics and party-system. We have no quarrel with them and their paradigms. But as long as there is centrality of elections and criticality of political parties, they need to be reformed without any further delay. There is need of national investment in both to eradicate the evil of black money. There cannot be money-less elections and parties. So state funding of elections and funds for party-building to all recognized parties is an urgent step which cannot be postponed unless we want to weaken the foundations of

our democratic system and reduce it to a formal system of representation around the discourse of dominant castes which has the tendency of getting drifted towards majoritarianism, supremo-syndrome and other anti-democratic ways.

Secondly, there is need to implement electoral reforms to bring in the significance of parties in the democratization process. As black money has overwhelmed clean money in elections, there is dominance of caste, religion and ethnicity over the party identities and interest group based solidarities. People cannot be expected to ignore the loyalties of caste, religion and ethnic links as they are sociological realities of everyday life. They are valuable as cultural and social capital. But they invalidate the relevance of common cause and peoples' interests. It is possible to subordinate them with increasing significance of parties and their programs in the electoral representation process through principle of proportionate or semi-proportionate representation. Germans moved towards it after suffering Nazism of Hitler who practiced majoritarianism and crony capitalism at the cost of democracy through electoral majority. In recent times, our neighbor Nepal has moved towards signifying parties after failure of parliamentary democracy and a bloody civil war for years. The limits of party-less election system have become quite evident after disproportionate over-representation of BJP and its allies and under-representation of Congress, the Left, the BSP, the SP and other parties after 2014 Lok Sabha elections. But the joy of BJP was short lived as they became a victim and were forced to have under represented presence in Delhi and Bihar Vidhan Sabha in 2015.

Unless we rally together beyond party interests and ideological divides, the future is bleak for deepening of democracy and progress of peoples' empowerment. If there will be weakening of the roots of democracy and decline of peoples' power, who can prevent further marginalization of our parliamentary institutions and citizens initiative? Therefore, i. electoral reform, and, ii. party system reform must be made two top challenges for all of us who cherish freedom, need social-economic and political justice and value participatory democracy. It will be the best tribute to our founding mothers and fathers who did not expect us to be so opportunist and unprincipled in such a short span of parliamentary democracy.

Sixty seventh Republic Day and Our Most Urgent Task

Sumit Chakravartty

We have just observed our sixty seventh Republic Day. On this day it is pertinent to recall what our first Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, had sought to convey in a message to the nation on the occasion of our first Republic Day on January 26, 1950:

“There is a peculiar appropriateness about this January 26, for this day links up the past with the present and this present is seen to grow out of that past. Twenty years ago we took the first pledge of independence. During these twenty years we have known struggle and conflict and failure and achievement. The man who led us through apparent failure to achievement is no more with us but the fruit of his labours is ours. What we do with this fruit depends upon many factors, the basic factors being those on which Gandhiji laid stress throughout his career—high character, integrity of mind and purpose, a spirit of tolerance and co-operation and hard work. I can only suggest to our people that we should found our republican freedom on these basic characteristics and shed fear and hatred from our minds and think always of the betterment of the millions of our people.”

By the “first pledge of independence” Nehru was referring to the resolution adopted by the 1929 Lahore Congress at the stroke of midnight on December 31 calling for Purna Swaraj or Complete Independence that became the Congress Party’s official goal thereafter. This was followed by the newly-elected Congress Working Committee, at its first meeting on January 2, 1930, passing a resolution fixing Sunday, January 26, for countrywide demonstrations supporting the creed of Purna Swaraj or Complete Independence. Despite several problems, difficulties and adversities, Independence Day was observed across the nation on that day (January 26, 1930) with widespread popular enthusiasm, As D.G. Tendulkar writes in the Third Volume (1930-1934) of his magnum opus, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*,

“Independence Day (January 26, 1930) came and it revealed as in a flash the earnest and enthusiastic mood of the country. There was something impressive about the mammoth gatherings everywhere, peacefully and solemnly taking the pledge of independence without any

speeches or exhortation. Towns and villages vied with each other in celebrating the historic day. In the cities led by Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay scores of thousands met and took the great resolve and, in the countryside, thousands of villagers assembled at numerous village meetings.” And Mahatma Gandhi himself noted: “The demonstrations of the 26th are an unmistakable proof that the Congress remains the one body to rule the hearts of the massed,” adding: “Thank God, they have unity in their starvation.”

That was 86 years ago. And precisely 66 years back we adopted the Republican Constitution of free India that gave both meaning and substance to the independence we achieved from alien rule two-and-a-half years prior to January 26, 1950, that is, on August 15, 1947.

In these 66 years the country has doubtless taken substantial strides in nation-building that owe their origin to the dynamic leadership and vision of the architect of modern India, Jawaharlal Nehru. Our progress is reflected not only in our GDP growth but also in our scientific-technological performance manifest as much in our nuclear capability as in the success registered in the field of information technology (IT). But our most outstanding achievement has been the reinforcement of our parliamentary democracy within the constitutional framework. If we look around us we are struck by the durability of both our Constitution and the democratic form of parliamentary governance, indeed a unique phenomenon in the so-called Third World comprising the independent developing nations which emerged out of the colonial system. Few developing states, in our neighbourhood and beyond, can claim such a distinction.

Yet this does not present the complete picture of our post-independence tryst with destiny. We have also to reckon with the other India, that is, Bharat. If India is flourishing today, it must be admitted in all humility that Bharat under the impact of abject poverty, destitution, hunger, oppression and exploitation has witnessed little or no progress whatsoever since the colonial days. To ignore this stark reality of economic stratification of society is to remain blind, due to ignorance or by design, to the actual state of affairs.

The continuance—and even accentuation—of backwardness, especially in our vast rural hinterland, has been accompanied by the rise of fissiparous trends as seen in the increasing sway of casteism and communalism in today's India. Caste prejudices remain intensely strong in a majority of States, in North India in particular, while recent years have witnessed a phenomenal rise in the communal consciousness based on both the majoritarian impulses and the minority feelings engendering Hindu fanaticism on the one end and Muslim fundamentalism on the other to the utter dismay of the secular and progressive sections of our polity. Eight years ago one had written: "The latest assaults on the Christian community in the tribal areas of Orissa and Chhattisgarh on the part of the Hindu obscurantists provide a fresh idea of the magnitude of the threat on this score. The thumping victory of the Narendra Modi-led BJP in the recent State Assembly polls in Gujarat is yet another ominous signal as the Modi Government's fascist face has been unmasked time and again since the 2002 anti-Muslim pogrom in the State—a phenomenon that has triggered a backlash from the radical sections of the principal minority community heightening the scale of communal tension and animosity thereby endangering the secular fabric of our nationhood and the country's democratic structure, both of which have enhanced our standing in the world at large."

Today the situation has turned far more complex, grave and ominous. For about twenty months we have a dispensation at the Centre that has unfurled the banner of majoritarian communalism thereby seeking to irreparably damage the ideal of secular democracy constituting one of the basic foundations of independent India's nationhood as exemplified in the country's Constitution. The spate of communal riots in UP, notably in Muzaffarnagar, has provided eloquent testimony to the motivation of the Sangh Parivar wielding the levers of power in governance. The subsequent lynching of a member of the nation's principal minority community at Dadri merely on suspicion of his consumption of beef brought out that motivation in bolder relief. Side by side leading rationalists (M.M. Kalburgi, Narendra Dabholkar, Govind Pansare) have been brutally killed by those steeped in obscurantist ideas and outlook. These developments have impelled leading writers, scholars, social scientists and scientists to return the awards conferred on them for their manifold achievements as a token of their outrage at such acts of intolerance.

And now to cap it all has come the report of a Dalit research scholar committing suicide in the Centrally-

administered University of Hyderabad where a systematic hounding of Dalit students has been going on for several months by the BJP's student organisation, the ABVP, as well as the university administration in conjunction with certain noted BJP leaders and at least two Union Ministers (including the one holding the HRD portfolio in the Narendra Modi Cabinet). This new element has added the proverbial fuel to fire: a genuine Dalit upsurge with all its ramifications is staring us in the face.

On the social plane the assertion of the downtrodden segments of the populace on the one side and the weaker segments like women on the other does offer new rays of hope. On this Republic Day women have affirmed their constitutional right of equality by seeking to offer prayers in the sanctum sanctorum of the Shani Shingnapur temple in Ahmednagar, something from which they were barred all these years on the pretext of "tradition". Now both men and women are rubbishing that plea by pointing to the hollowness of such a claim of "tradition" to ridicule the absurd idea of carrying on with the pernicious ritual of sati. This is most promising in the present scenario. Yet the government in Mumbai, as the one in New Delhi, from all available indications, appears to be playing a double-game on this issue thereby once again testifying to its opportunist approach to vital social problems.

On the foreign policy front the Union Government is bereft of a coherent policy-perspective. That is giving rise to occasional knee-jerk jingoist outbursts from the side of those in power in South Block. Such infantile expressions could be most damaging in the final analysis.

As the political situation worsens with extraordinary rapidity, it is becoming increasingly apparent that if the BJP/RSS' advance is to be halted and the country rescued from the depredations of the Sangh Parivar, the secular democratic forces of all hues have to unite with the purpose of defeating the regressive forces now occupying the seat of governance at the Centre. What happened in the Bihar Assembly elections needs to be replicated elsewhere too in the coming months when several States are to go to polls.

This is the most urgent task before us all today when we celebrate our sixty seventh Republic Day. To minimize the importance of this task at this critical juncture of our nation's history will be an exercise in escapism and an invitation to complete disaster the country and its people can ill afford to bear. Needless to underline, in carrying out this task the Socialists and

Communists have a special role to play. If they shirk this vital responsibility at this crucial hour on account of sectarian prejudices, they alone will have to face the full consequences in the near future. But more than that,

our polity and Republic will suffer a grievous blow in the long run. And it would be most difficult to recover from this deadly offensive in the days ahead.

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Unimportance of Awards

Kuldip Nayar

I mean no disrespect to Republic Day awardees. Except a few who have distinguished themselves in their respective fields, the rest have made the grade because they have connection, however remote, with the ruling party, this time the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The earlier regime of the Congress Party was also guilty of promoting its own people for the honor.

This is, however, contrary to the thinking of the framers of the constitution. They banned awards. That is the reason that when the Janata Party came in the wake of the popular movement, led by Gandhian Jayaprakash Narayan, stopped this practice. The person who initiated the awards was India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. He wanted the recognition of people, who had excelled themselves in the fields of literature, economics or science. No money is given because the award was too valuable to be weighed on the scales of monetary benefit.

Nehru also did not want the award to be linked with politics. He did not envisage that one day the entire exercise of selection would get politicized. The government would pick up its *chamchas* (sycophants) to reward his or her services to the ruling party.

I recall that initially the Republic Day awards, started some 50 years ago, were under the Ministry of External Affairs which Nehru headed. Subsequently, the job was entrusted with the Home Ministry which gave the responsibility to one deputy secretary. But he had too many things on his plate. He passed on the task to the Information Officer attached to the ministry. That is how I came to handle the job because I was then the Home Ministry's Information Officer.

The mode of selection was arbitrary. The Prime Minister and other ministers would suggest one or more names which I, as information officer, went on stacking in a file. Almost a month before the Republic Day I had to shortlist the names. I must admit I followed no rules while preparing the list which went to the deputy secretary in

charge, then to the Home Secretary and finally to the Home Minister. I found very few changes in the list I sent.

But the toughest job was preparing the citations. I would have the dictionary and Roget's Thesaurus before me. In some cases, I had the bio-data to guide myself. Mostly they contained a mere cryptic description of the person whether he was a scientist, an academician or economist. That helped me somewhat but preparing the citation on that basis was challenging.

The entire process was so haphazard that the Supreme Court had to intervene to ask the government to constitute a selection committee, including the opposition leader as its member. However, some order came to prevail once the committee was in position. Yet, preparing the citation was my task.

The draft gazette notification of names was issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan. I recollect that once the name of Ms. Lazaras was suggested by the President. We, in the home ministry, that the honor had been conferred on the then famous educationist Ms. Lazarous. Accordingly, the gazette notification was made public.

But when President Rajendra Prasad saw the notification, he said the name he had suggested was that of a nurse. She had attended to him while he got a bout of asthma when he was travelling to Hyderabad from Karnool in Andhra Pradesh. We were all embarrassed that the honor had been bestowed on a wrong person. But we could do nothing because the name was already in the public domain. That year two Lazarous were given the awards.

Two years ago when the Congress was in power it conferred the Padma Bushan award to the US hotelier Sant Singh Chatwal despite some criminal cases pending against him. There was a furor in the country but home ministry justified his selection on the plea that he was a known Indian who had served the cause of the country

abroad. But there are several cases of eminent people refusing to accept the award on the ground that the panel of selectors was not capable enough to judge their work.

The lesson to be learnt is whether there should be any award. The experience is that the ruling party tends to give “recognition” to the people who are either members of the party or somehow connected with it. The real purpose is lost because the recognition is extended to those who are close to the party.

Take, for instance, the case of Sachin Tendulkar. No doubt, he was the best batsman, probably next only to Don Bradman, in the world. But should he have been conferred with the Bharat Ratan when hockey wizard Dyan Chand was not even considered for the honor. The legendary Milka Singh made an issue when he was chosen for the Padma award. He refused it saying he would want nothing less than the Bharat Ratna because his son had been bestowed with the Padma award ahead of him.

Among academicians, Romila Thapar while refusing the Padma awards made another point: she wanted to be judged by her peers and not the bureaucrats sitting in the Home Ministry. The famous sitar maestro Vilayat Khan called it an insult and refused both the Padma Shri and Padma Vibhushan. His argument was that he would not accept an award which was conferred on his juniors and, in his opinion, less deserving. This only underlines that there has always been a story of wrong time, wrong person and wrong award in the country.

This only emphasizes the argument that the awards are not according to merits. This charge will remain because the selection is done by people who are nominated by the government. You can include the opposition leader in the selection panel but he or she would be in the minority. There should be a debate in the country on the importance of awards. Maybe, they have outlived their utility which was there when we got the freedom.

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A word to the wise...

S. Viswam

Pakistan has often enough in the past claimed that major international players including the US, France and China do not take Indian allegations about Islamabad's promotion of cross-border terrorism as a matter of state policy very seriously. Indeed, every time there has been an intrusion into India from across the borders and New Delhi has raised a protest, Islamabad has invariably asked for evidence and then rejected the evidence as inadequate, flawed or highly exaggerated. Something has happened now which Pakistan cannot dismiss lightly. Two of the world's major players have last week advised Islamabad to stop exporting terrorism and wind up all its terror apparatus. A word to the wise is enough, it is said. In the instant case, the word is quite strong and allows no semantic loophole for Pakistan to escape. Its adventurous terrorist launch against the Pathankot air force base has led to the exposure of its tall claims of innocence. Pathankot has opened the eyes of the world to the realities of Pakistan's perfidy. The message that both the US President Obama and the French President Francois Hollande have sent Islamabad is perhaps the strongest any country has received on the issue of terrorism. Obama not only condemned the terrorist attack in which there were casualties for both countries, but he demanded of Pakistan that it "delegitimize, disrupt and dismantle terrorist networks that operate from its territory". Pakistan can and must, he said, take more effective action against terrorist groups based there inside Pakistan. There must be, he said, zero tolerance for safe havens and terrorists must be brought to justice.

Obama's comment that the terrorism that India has endured for too long as "inexcusable" is bound to be doubly welcome in New Delhi since Pakistan has been using terrorism as a durable anti-Indian state policy for decades. He appreciated the fact that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had sought details of the Pathankot episode and had promised to bring the culprits to justice. Obama appeared impressed with the fact that Pakistan had also suffered a terrorist experience when the Taliban had organized a massacre at a Peshawar school and he said Nawaz Sharif had pledged to fight the militants then. Condemnation of the Pathankot attack came from another source also, significantly from the leader of a country which is a recent victim of global terrorism.

Francois Hollande, the French President, on a state visit to India where he was the special guest at the Republic Day parade, said that terrorism is a big challenge not to a single country or multiple countries but to the whole humanity. Welcoming him, Prime Minister Modi said he had decided to invite Hollande as Republic Day special guest on the day Paris was hit by terror. On his part, Hollande said that the first objective of his India visit was to consolidate the Indo-French strategic partnership.

A direct outcome of the Hollande visit is, in addition to the upgrading of the strategic partnership, more qualitative intelligence sharing between India and France. Terror-visited Paris and Pathankot appeared to have been the catalytic agent for cementing India-France resolve to mount an anti-terror campaign. The fight will be a joint one and its aim will be to wipe out terrorism. The Hollande visit has created an atmosphere in which the fight against terrorism on a global scale will enable the widening and deepening of action against global terrorism as a whole while at the same time strengthen bilateral relations. The current level of India- United States bilateral relations testify to the fact that tragedies like Paris and Pathankot inspire countries affected by terrorism to work together.

Pakistan has till now turned a deaf ear to international appeals to abandon its resort to terrorism against India. How long can it afford to do so without affecting its relations with other countries. In the long run, export of terrorism will prove to be counterproductive. No progress is possible that is premised on destructive philosophies. So long as Islamabad's policies are moulded by the military and the intelligence apparatus controlled by it, a peaceful India policy seems unlikely. However, in the interest of its own progress and advance into the 21st century mode of living and working, Pakistan will find it unavoidable to shed terrorism and embrace constructive endeavours. After all, the decision to have frequent meetings between the respective national security advisers and foreign secretaries is based on the theory that it is possible for India and Pakistan to work together in a tension-free environment.

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Blunders of the Communists and the Socialists

Qurban Ali

From the early twenties, various socialist groups in the national movement assumed prominence and worked towards making independent India a socialist nation based on equality and freedom. If one has to go through the journey of almost hundred years of Indian Socialist movement, one will find it a mixed bag of failure and success. Failure in terms of ideology, lack of consistency of running mass-based parties and providing a Socialist alternative to the centrist parties, left of the center parties and regional parties. In free India, they have lost their identity and have become a part and parcel of corrupt and communal parties like the Congress and the BJP and their allies like DMK, AIADMK, Shiv Sena and Akali Dal. They have also at times, lost their commitment to the cause of socialism and secularism.

However, on the other hand, Communists and Socialists can claim to have launched revolutionary programs like land reforms, decentralization of power, given power to the masses and compelled successive Congress governments to adopt a socialistic pattern of society, to fight for a just society and to compel non-Congress governments to undertake extraordinary measures like implementing the Mandal Commission report and paving way for social justice in the country. They also strove for civil liberty, human rights, equality among all sections of the society, against discrimination in the name of caste, color, creed, religion and sex and the betterment of common people. Communists and Socialists have a rich heritage. They participated in the national movement with full vigor and devotion and liberated this great country from foreign powers, not only from the British but from the Portuguese, and later on played a constructive role as a responsible opposition party in free India.

But at the same time, both the Communists and the Socialists committed monumental blunders and inadvertently caused immense damage to the dreams of the national movement, the basic idea of India and creating a homogenous pluralistic society under a democratic, socialist and secular constitution of free India and thus a great loss to the cause of Socialism. During the Second World War, the Communists supported allies in the war and didn't participate in the 'Quit India

movement of 1942' under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Later on they supported the two-nation theory of a communal Muslim League that led to the creation of Pakistan.

Secondly, both the Communists and the Socialists didn't participate in the formation of the Constitution of free India and its constitution making body i.e. Constituent assembly. They then promoted communal and obscurantist forces covertly and overtly to capture power at the Centre and now the country is facing huge repercussions of this kind of politics.

As far as the constitution making of free India is concerned, the attitude of the Communists and the Socialists was almost the same. The father of the Indian Constitution, Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, while speaking on making of the Indian Constitution said in the Constituent Assembly, on Friday, the 25th November, 1949, "*The condemnation of the Constitution largely comes from two quarters - the Communist Party and the Socialist Party. Why do they condemn the Constitution? Is it because it is really a bad Constitution? I venture to say, 'no'. The Communist Party wants a Constitution based upon the principle of Dictatorship of the Proletariat. They condemn the Constitution because it is based upon Parliamentary democracy. The Socialists want two things. The first thing they want is that if they come to power, the Constitution must give them the freedom to nationalize or socialize all private property without payment of compensation. The second thing that the Socialists want is that the Fundamental Rights mentioned in the Constitution must be absolute and without any limitations so that if their Party fails to come to power, they would have the unfettered freedom not merely to criticize, but also to overthrow the State*".

Soon after independence, the Communists recognized the need for all progressive forces to rally around Jawaharlal Nehru against the reactionary communal and pro-imperialist forces, but later in December 1947, they backtracked under unknown pressures and termed India's independence 'fake' by saying "*Ye Azadi Jhuti hai*" (This independence is a farce). They also said that 15th August is a day of national betrayal, that Congress

had crossed over to imperialism-feudalism and that Nehru had become a stooge of imperialism.

The CPI didn't participate in the process of Constitution making and called it a 'Charter of slavery'. The Party reacted to the new Indian constitution in 1949 brazenly. The manifesto of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India described it as a 'slave constitution, representing a conspiracy on the part of the Indian capitalist class and British imperialism'. The party called it "a constitution of fascist tyranny, a monstrous constitution and a fraud".

On the other hand, some of the top Socialist leaders like Acharya Narendar Deva, Jayaprakash Narayan, Rammanohar Lohia, Faridul Haq Ansari, Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya, Yusuf Meherally, Aruna Asaf Ali and Asoka Mehta did not join the Constituent Assembly. In fact, they boycotted the constituent assembly. They even went to the extent of suggesting dissolution of the Constituent Assembly and its re-election by adult suffrage. Jayaprakash Narayan, who refused to join the Constituent Assembly, felt that the Constitution would prove to be a dead letter. According to Acharya Narendra Deva, it did not reflect or represent the aspirations and the will of the people.

The second blunder made by them was that they decided to leave the Congress party when they were needed in that organization most in 1948. It is worth mentioning that Socialists weren't just a part and parcel of the Congress party under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru but they had very special relationship with both the leaders and used to be called 'blue eyed boys' of Gandhi and Nehru. They nurtured the Congress party, to the best of their abilities during the National movement and gave the organization a socialist makeover.

According to Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, who drafted the Karachi resolution of the AICC in 1931, "it was the first time that the Indian National Congress, set socialist pattern of development as the goal for India and resolution on fundamental rights and economic program was passed". He says "the origin of this resolution was the U.P. Congress Committee's resolutions of 1929" prepared by Narendra Deva and Dr. Sampooranand as Socialist agrarian program which they wanted AICC to accept. (Pt. Nehru's Autobiography P.266).

After India achieved independence, JP felt that Socialists should leave the Congress and play a role of

a constructive opposition party. Acharya Narendra Deva, Rammanohar Lohia and many other socialists were not in his favor and Mahatma Gandhi also agreed that Socialists should remain in the Congress. Even their critics like Vallabhbhai Patel and Maulana Azad asked them not to leave the party and be a part of the new government. Here, it is worth mentioning that Jayaprakash Narayan, Rammanohar Lohia, Achyut Patwardhan, Aruna Asif Ali and Yusuf Meherally were the heroes of the Quit India Movement and were respected greatly in the Congress. JP and Lohia were members of the Congress Working Committee also, but they decided to leave the Congress in 1948.

It was a setback for progressive socialist forces within the Congress party and more particularly to Pt. Nehru because all of them were his dear comrades during the national movement.

According to noted historian, Bipin Chandra, "the departure of the Socialists had weakened the radical forces in the Congress and the space vacated by them was being increasingly filled by vested interests-landlords, rich peasants, and even princes. Nehru realized that the Congress had been weakened ideologically by the absence of Socialists and that he was gradually being hemmed-in by conservative modes of thinking. Nehru, therefore, tried several times to bring the Socialists back into the Congress or at least get their cooperation in the implementation of a development oriented egalitarian agenda."

It is also interesting to note that while Communists and the Socialists boycotted the Constituent Assembly and making of the constitution of the free India, both of them participated in the first general elections under the same constitution and took oath under it. While the Communist Party of India got only 3.29% of the total votes polled and 16 seats, the Socialist Party got 10.59% of the total votes polled and got only 12 seats. This was the turning point in Jayaprakash Narayan's political life. He got disillusioned with the party's performance and tried to forge an alliance with a right wing party, called Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party or KMPP of JB Kripalani and merged his party, SP with KMPP. After the merger the party was called the Praja Socialist Party or PSP.

After some time the leaders in the PSP realized their mistake of leaving the Congress party and started parleys with Congress for a patch-up. Jayaprakash (JP) started corresponding with the prime minister Nehru and

visiting him while the party General Secretary Asoka Mehta published an article in party organ 'Janata' with the heading "Compulsions of a backward economy and areas of cooperation". This raised an alarm bell in the party. Due to severe differences among the rank and file over the issue of cooperation with Congress Party, Asoka Mehta resigned from the post of General Secretary of the PSP. To discuss all the issues, a special conference of PSP was convened at Betul (MP) on 15-16 June, 1953. JP has confessed that, he got a letter from Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru asking him to meet him in Delhi. He met Jawaharlal Nehru in Delhi for three days and discussed with him about the areas of cooperation between Congress and PSP. After this meeting, JP wrote to PM about the much-talked letter containing 14 points that can be the basis of the cooperation between the two parties.

According to JP, party president JB Kripalani had agreed to this move but Acharya Narendra Deva felt that it would be impossible to work with the Congress party. The news of these parleys between Nehru and JP spread as wild rumors and it was said from many quarters of the party, that JP was under Nehru's influence and was joining his Government as Deputy Prime Minister.

After the Betul Conference, JP gradually distanced himself from party politics and moved to the 'Sarvodaya' while the Praja Socialist Party split over the issue of police firing by the PSP Government in Travancore-Cochin (now Kerala) and Rammanohar Lohia formed his own Socialist party in 1955. It was in the same year that the Indian National Congress adopted its famous Avadi Resolution in which socialistic pattern of development was presented as the goal of the party. A year later, the Indian parliament adopted 'socialistic pattern of development' as official policy, a policy that came to include land reforms and regulations of industries. But surprisingly both the Communists and the Socialists opposed the Congress and the socialist policies of the Nehru government tooth and nail.

It is interesting to note that in the fifties, Socialists started opposing Pt. Nehru and his Congress party along with rightist forces and started parleys with right wing party's like Hindu Mahasabha and Jana Sangh (Rammanohar Lohia supported Hindu Mahasabha candidate Prabhudutt Brahmchari against Jawaharlal Nehru during 1952 general elections in Phulpur parliamentary constituency) and internationally, Socialists started supporting Israel, which was contrary

to the stand taken by Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress party during the freedom movement about the Palestinian question and Zionist Israel. The socialists were in the forefront of seeking closer ties with Israel and started touring Israel. In this context, special significance can be attached to Jayaprakash Narayan when he visited Israel in September 1958.

Other prominent Indian Socialists who visited Israel were JB Kripalani, Asoka Mehta, N G Goray, Hari Vishnu Kamath, Prem Bhasin, Nath Pai, Madhu Dandavate, Surendra Mohan, George Fernandes, Rajwant Singh, Pradip Bose, Anusuya Limaye, Kamala Sinha, etc. Praja Socialist Party leaders have also been very active in supporting the Indo-Israeli collaboration. The Mapi Party (Israel's Labour Party) had close ties with PSP. The PSP and Mapi Party were members of the Socialist International.

On the domestic front, the results of the two General elections in 1957 and 1962 marginalized the two Socialist parties, the SP and the PSP, and two right wing parties, Swatantra and Bhartiya Jansangh, emerged as the main opposition parties in the 1967 general elections. After the debacle in 1962 elections, Lohia crafted his strategy of non-Congressism. Next year in 1963 there were four Lok Sabha by-elections held at Rajkot, Amroha, Farrukhabad and Jaunpur. Minoo Masani, JB Kiraplani, Dr Lohia and Deendayal Upadhyay contested these elections from the different parties. Minoo as Swatantra party candidate from Rajkot, Lohia as Socialist Party candidate from Farrukhabad, Kripalani, as an independent from Amroha and DeenDayalUpadhyay as Jansangh candidate from Jaunpur. All these leaders contested the by-elections on the anti-Congress plank as united candidates of opposition parties and won except Deen DayalUpadhyay. This gave a new momentum to the non-congress opposition parties.

Nehru started to become weak after the Chinese aggression and at the defeat of 1962 war. At this time Dr.Lohia called for the opposition unity and to defeat the Congress, he suggested a common candidate of opposition parties so that there would be no division among the non-congress votes. In the seventh National Conference of his party at Calcutta in December 1963, he elaborated his strategy of Non-Congressism. This was the beginning of Non-Congressism. At the same time he started unity moves with the PSP. In June 1964, the PSP and the SP decided to merge and a new party was formed with the name of Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP).But this merger could not last long and there was a split in

the new party at Varanasi in January 1965 and the PSP was revived at the same time in a parallel conference at Varanasi itself. On the other hand in June 1964, there was a split in the PSP itself and a group led by Asoka Mehta, MS Gurupadaswamy, Genda Singh, Narayan Dutt Tiwari, Vasant Sathe, ChandraShekhar and others joined the Congress.

During fourth general elections in 1967, Lohia called for a joint front of opposition parties against the Congress and it was a great success in many states including Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and led to the formation of Samyukta Vidhayak Dal governments (SVD) in nine states across the country which threw the Congress party out of power. This was perhaps for the first time that a unique amalgam of many streams formed the governments jointly which included the rightist parties like Swatantra and Jansangh on the one side, and leftist and socialist parties like SSP, SP, CPI, CPM and Republican Party on the other side.

By the end of 1969 there was a split in the Congress party. Old and veteran Congressmen formed Congress (O) while the other faction of the party led by Indira Gandhi was in power. A group of erstwhile Socialists and Communists in the Congress party supported Indira Gandhi and she portrayed herself as a socialist and the champion of the poor and the downtrodden. As she was not in a comfortable majority, she dissolved the Lok Sabha and announced mid-term elections in 1970. In the mid-term General elections, Indira Gandhi returned to power with a landslide victory. Barring the Communist parties, all the major opposition parties including the Socialist Parties (SSP & PSP) were defeated miserably in these elections. The results compelled both the Socialist parties to merge and form a single party once again.

During early seventies there was a student movement in Gujarat and Bihar, which was later known as JP movement. When this movement was on its peak, JP called for a 'Delhi March' by all major opposition parties on 5th March 1975. On 12th June 1975, the Allahabad High Court set aside the election of Indira Gandhi to the Lok Sabha on the ground of corrupt practices during the election. This was a major setback to Indira Gandhi and within 14 days of this judgment of the Allahabad High Court, she imposed Emergency on 25th June 1975.

According to a French scholar Christophe Jaffrelot, "till the 1970s, there were few attempts by opposition parties to relate to the Jana Sangh. Some were initiated by Rammanohar Lohia in the framework of his strategy of *non-Congressism* and the formation of SVD governments

in the Hindi heartland in the 1960s, but they were short-lived. For most political forces, the Jana Sangh was a communal party that did not fit in the constitutional, secular order that the Indian republic had established in 1950. The crucible of the first inclusion of the Sangh Parivar in a legitimate, united opposition front was when in early seventies one-third of the 24 members of the Chattra Sangharsh Samiti (CSS) governing body of the so-called 'JP or Bihar movement' came from the ABVP, the students' wing of the RSS, whereas only four were socialist, two were from the Gandhian Tarun Shanti Sena and two were from the Congress(O)".

He further wrote "in March 1973, the CSS turned to JP, who was already in touch with RSS leaders and in June 1973, JP had presided over a mourning ceremony in memory of M.S. Golwalkar (and 20 years before, Nanaji Deshmukh, a senior RSS pracharak, had taken part in the bhoodan programme). After JP agreed to lead the student movement against the Congress, Deshmukh became his *aide de camp* and a key organizer of the protests. Hence the Jana Sangh was not "untouchable" any more. It was even less so after JP agreed to take part in its annual function, where he said: "If you are a fascist and communal, then I too am a fascist and communal."

While the integration of the Jana Sangh into the mainstream politics had started before the Emergency, it was not a turning point, because the Janata Party broke over the dual membership controversy after the socialists and the BLD leaders realized that ex-Jana Sanghis continued to pay allegiance to the RSS. Then, the ex-Jana Sanghis created the BJP but could not join hands with any party except the Shiv Sena. They could do it only in 1989, when the leaders of the Janata Dal decided to form an anti-Congress coalition in the name of their struggle against corruption. That coalition didn't last either, but the BJP had become part of India's mainstream politics for good. By the end of the 1980s, the non-secular repertoire had been legitimized from almost all quarters.

It is worth mentioning that (there can be no justification for imposing the Emergency and arrest of more than one lakh political workers across the country and imposing press censorship) during the Emergency "the word socialist was added to the Preamble of the Indian Constitution by the 42nd amendment in 1976. It implies social and economic equality. Social equality in this context means the absence of discrimination on the grounds only of caste, color, creed, sex, religion, or language. Under social equality, everyone has equal status and opportunities. Economic equality in this

context means that the government will endeavor to make the distribution of wealth more equal and provide a decent standard of living for all.

During the eighties(1980-90) almost all the left and so-called Socialist parties were hand-in-glove with Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), a political outfit of RSS or its extended family to oppose the Congress party led by Indira Gandhi. In some states they formed alliance with BJP covertly or overtly. In the second half of that decade when VP Singh was expelled from Congress party and formed 'Janmorcha' all the left-socialist parties joined his bandwagon along with the BJP. This was the second time after the 1977 Janata experiment that a non-Congress government was formed at the national level with the support of RSS-BJP.

After the fall of VP Singh's National Front government in 1990, the politics of Mandal (read Social justice) versus Kamandal (read communal politics) started and since then there is no looking back for BJP. In the eighth Lok Sabha, BJP had only two members but in the ninth Lok Sabha (1989-91) there were 89 members, in 1991 it rose to 121, in 1996 to 163, in 1998 to 183, in 1999 to 189 and in 2014 it got absolute majority with 282 members.

The need of the hour is that all those who believe in the true spirit of Socialism, its ideology, its policies and have been associated with the Socialist movement in any form, should sit together and do some soul searching. They should also identify their blunders, accept it with all humility and think about its redress.

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Driven By Calculation, Not Compassion, Modi's Tears Mean Nothing

Apoorvanand

The Prime Minister's comments on the tragic death of Rohith, the student who committed suicide at Hyderabad Central University this week, will fool no one, least of all dalits. The lacrimal glands have been activated once again but even if the tears remained trapped in the eyes of the leader, must they blur our vision?

That a full five days were allowed to elapse since the suicide of a dalit student in Hyderabad before these gland-optics tells us that what we saw in Lucknow on Friday was not at all a spontaneous expression of grief. The Telegraph has shown frame by frame the pictures of a smiling, beaming Modi on different joyous occasions – when the mother of Rohith was grieving and the nation was trying to make sense of her loss – to prove that the prime minister's act was a little too late and unconvincing. Rohith's father has seen through the bluff and has already spoken up about it. While some were keen to see in those brimming eyes a humane approach, I saw a cynical, strategic mind which kept its emotions in check so as to let it flow on an appropriate occasion, against a suitable backdrop. Modi dragged Rohith's poor mother in, to invoke the sublime image of a grieving 'Maa Bharati'. One must not forget that 'bharati' is a pet suffix for all organizations run by the RSS, Vidya Bharati, Vijnana Bharati, Sanskar Bhaarti being some of them.

It is difficult not to see the deception in 'elevating' the status of Rohith by calling him the son of MaaBharati. An erasure is being put on his identity which was the essential cause of his death. He died because of his dalitness and this needs to be said again and again even if it disturbs our universalist, nationalist human sensibility, just as Mohammed Akhlaq was killed because of his Muslimness. It is empty rhetoric to say that we should grieve for them because they were "Indians and human beings" and not confine them in narrow identity frames.

Akhlaq was not killed because of his Indianness but because his assassins saw him as a Muslim who was not a complete Indian in the 'desired' sense of the term. Rohith had to die because, being a dalit, he found it impossible to attain his individuality, and because he refused to be a nationalist dalit. Because he insisted on

forging solidarities with other persecuted identities of India, Muslim being the most prominent, his crime was to express his disquiet over the hanging of Yakub Memon and his anger over the ABVP's attack on the screening of a film on the Muzzafarnagar communal violence.

Since the politics of Rohith was sought to be criminalized by calling it anti-national, it is pointless to ask people to keep politics aside. One cannot talk about this death without talking about the politics of Rohith, which was a liberatory, dalit politics that sought to build alliances of the oppressed, a politics which recognized that a section of society cannot be liberated while others remain in chains. At the same time, we cannot ignore the politics of those who sought to outlaw this politics. It is this nationalist politics that is stifling all of us, which has assigned itself the task of giving credentials to others. We need to oppose this mindless nationalism that is gradually taking over our public spaces and threatening to colonize our mindscapes. Enough has already emerged about the squalid role of the ABVP and of senior central ministers like Bandaru Dattatreya and Smriti Irani, who batted for the student group. Even today, attempts are under way by the right-wing to question whether Rohith was a dalit and to allege that his suicide note was tampered with.

Apart from this, let us repeat what the real issue is. Even if we accept that Rohith was part of the group which had a scuffle with a student leader of ABVP – an incident that the police last October said never even happened – it does not justify the intervention of a Central minister. It was a campus issue which was being resolved there. The erstwhile vice chancellor had satisfied himself before nullifying the decision to suspend Rohith and his friends. That Bandaru Dattatreya deemed it fit to write a letter to the Ministry of Human Resources Development to express his concern over "anti-national and casteist activities" being allowed at the campus and that the ministry deemed it so big an issue that it kept pestering the university to act on the complaint shows that there was much bigger design behind it. That the ministry acts on behalf of a student organization, sends a clear message to all universities – to treat this particular organization with deference. Before everybody starts saying that Modi

has now sent a firm message to the fringe, let us ask the question: is the government itself a fringe?

Are the ministers also fringe elements, is the ABVP a fringe or is the RSS a fringe, are their spokespersons a fringe? Is there only one man here who matters while everyone else is a deviant?

Invoking Ambedkar

Modi chose the backdrop of a university named after Ambedkar to advise the nation to keep politics aside. Which politics is the dear leader referring to? Even when the news of his unspent tears was still breaking, a high-level ideologue of his mother organization asked what 'anti-nationals' were doing in campuses like Hyderabad Central University.

In the end, Modi's performance was poor theatre. The two pauses which punctuated the speech were so contrived that the audience could see through the act. Before this tear-jerker scene, the graduating students were given a lesson in the life of Babasaheb Ambedkar and were told that he endured difficulties and all the

humiliation and insults he was subjected to without complaining or ever showing his bitterness. This is a familiar theme. Earlier, while admonishing Aamir Khan for his inconvenient remarks about how those in power were failing to make ordinary citizens feel secure in the face of acts of violence and intimidation, the home minister had also invoked the life of Babasaheb to advise people to learn from the non-complaining nature of a man who faced insults but never criticized his motherland.

No dalit will be deceived by these grand, patronizing words. For no one died, more bitter than Babasaheb, who gave up Hinduism and turned towards the Buddha. Who could be more bitter than the man who was ready to criticize the Constitution of India, his own creation, as it had proved ineffective in communicating the sense of urgency which society needed to change in order to realize its potential? If there was one man who felt deceived, it was Ambedkar. The nation failed him. Just as the nation's leaders today – despite the tears that well-up in their eyes – have failed Rohith.

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Love, justice and stardust: A requiem for Rohith Vemula

Harsh Mander

Changing our world may take a long time, but we can at least ensure that children are valued for what they are – and not for the accident of their birth.

Like millions across the land, I mourn inconsolably the passing of a young man who dreamed of the stars, yet despaired of our world enough to take his young life. After writing a few words of fire, of yearning and pain, in the hostel room of a friend, he quietly hanged himself to death. A young man who loved people, who wanted "a man treated as a mind, as a glorious thing made up of star dust", yet could not in the end rescue himself from what he described as "the fatal accident" of his birth.

Rohith Vemula, doctoral scholar in the Central University of Hyderabad, observed in his farewell letter to the world, with dignity and profound sadness, that he could never overcome the loneliness of his childhood, the unappreciated childhood from his past. In these few words he spoke for and evoked the unspeakable daily humiliation that millions of Dalit children and young

people continue to endure in the new India of our times.

A harsh reminder

Some years back, I participated in a study on untouchability in rural India in 11 states, along with social scientists Ghanshyam Shah, Sukhdeo Thorat, Satish Deshpande and Amita Baviskar. We found that in most states, in anything between a third and half the schools surveyed, Dalit children were forced to sit separately from other students, usually at the back of the class. What Rohith's words should teach and remind us is what these children must *feel* when they are forced to sit away from their other classmates, and the teacher typically conducts the class as though they are just not there in the room, or that they don't deserve to be there.

Many studies confirm that Dalit children are also frequently seated separately from their fellow-students when statutory school meals are served at lunchtime. In many schools, Dalit children have especially ear-marked plates only for their use, whereas in others, upper-caste

children bring their plates from home, for fear of being “polluted” by eating from plates used by Dalit children. How would Dalit children make sense of a world in which they are treated this way by their classmates?

In a public hearing organized last summer in Delhi by the Centre for Social Equity and Inclusion, children from 13 states described the many ways that they are humiliated in classrooms. A Dalit boy was forced by his headmistress in a government school in Pratapgarh district of Uttar Pradesh in March 2015 to pick up and dispose of the stinking carcass of a dead dog that was rotting on the school grounds, as his fellow pupils watched. Two children from Bikaner were beaten up because they had the temerity to drink water from an earthen pot used by their upper-caste teacher. Children from the de-notified community, the Chharas, reported from Ahmadabad city repeated taunts from their teachers about the futility of their efforts to study and improve their lives. One teacher is reported to have declared in class, “You Chharas, should not try to study, you should only sweep the floors. You will be not able to do anything with your life.”

The otherwise-salutary campaign to build toilets in all schools fills me with dread, because in most schools, teachers are left to their own devices to find ways to regularly clean these toilets. In a large number of rural, and even some urban schools, teachers think nothing of assigning this task to girls and boys from Dalit communities although cleaning toilets is still considered one of the most socially degrading occupations. Think of how humiliating this would be for that segment of children who are forced to undertake this chore in school. I recall visiting a colony of manual scavengers in Patna in which all the children had dropped out of the only government school in their neighborhood because they were compelled by their teachers to clean toilets.

Lesser children

For Dalit children who endure the humiliation of being treated as lesser children in class – and the loneliness and lack of appreciation that Rohith wrote about so evocatively in his suicide note – and still persevere with their higher education, university often remains as demeaning and threatening a location as school was. Rohith is not alone among Dalit students who committed suicide in medical, engineering and other schools of higher learning. These suicides have persisted year after year, but few ask why these students feel compelled to take their lives. A year and a half before Rohith took

his life Madari Venkatesh in the same university killed himself when he stopped receiving his fellowship and was not allotted a supervisor even two years into his Ph.D.

Few paid heed to a damning report by Sukhdeo Thorat, former Chairperson of the University Grants Commission, of the segregation and public disgrace that medical students grapple within the premier medical school of the country, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences. In IITs, similarly, “quota students” admitted on seats reserved for SC and ST children are continuously reminded by their teachers about how they were undeservingly admitted with lower qualifying marks than the “general” candidate, and could therefore never hope to make the grade. Despite being crushed and demoralized, many still do make the grade, some drop out, and a few kill themselves.

As a teacher, I have on many occasions stood before classes of young recruits to India’s higher civil services, in the LBS National Academy of Administration in Mussoorie, or classes in the Indian Institute of Management, and debated the justice of India’s policy of reserving seats in higher and technical education centers and civil services for children from historically disadvantaged communities. In Mussoorie in particular during these debates, I have often wondered what must transpire in the hearts and minds of nearly half the young people in the classroom, recruits to the IAS and other higher civil services from SC, ST and OBC communities – who largely remain silent during these discussions – when their own batch-mates debate their lack of comparative merit in their presence.

Hostility and condescension

These discussions – and the frequently hostile and condescending attitudes of teachers and advantaged-caste students – hinge on spurious notions of merit. Entry into the IITs for instance, are aided for large numbers of successful candidates by expensive coaching centers. How would you evaluate the merit of candidates whose parents cannot afford the fees of these coaching institutes, who still pass the exams sometimes on lower grades but based on their own unaided efforts? How would you assess the merit of students whose parents have not had the benefits of higher education, and sometimes any schooling at all, or the security, comfort and exposure that wealth and privilege bring?

Rohith posted on Facebook some personal details of his family – of his father working as a security guard

in a hospital, his mother earning by tireless sewing and embroidery, and the small refrigerator in their home in which his neighbors also placed bottles of water to be cooled. But most of his posts were political. He described his political beliefs as those of an Ambedkarite Marxist. It is significant that the battle that led ultimately to his suicide after university authorities barred his access to fellowships, hostels and mess food – a “social boycott” in his university that broke the young man’s spirit – was to support the screening of a film about the slaughter and displacement of Muslims in Muzaffarnagar in 2013.

Karthik Bittu the first transgender teacher (or student) in the University of Hyderabad, describes herself as Rohith’s transgender friend. When she was preparing to organize the first Swabhimana Sabha in the University to assert transgender self-respect, she recalls that it was Rohith who reached out to her in support and solidarity, and took great pains to understand the humiliations and exclusions of their lives. It was he who worked hardest to prepare for the May Day rally in support of workers’ rights.

In an open letter she wrote to him after he died, she said:”I know only a little glimmer of how painful being alive in this world was for you, and how you still loved the world, the universe. You had just lost hope in people. Because they, we, could not create a world without the twisted thorns of caste that maliciously wrought

the pain you were forced to feel, the pain you fought against tirelessly, impatiently. You were pricked by every injustice, and this is what I want people to know.”

Rohith wrote that after his death, he hoped that he would travel to the stars. There are rare moments like this one, when I wish that I was not an agnostic but a person of faith. If I were, I could take solace in the belief that there is indeed a life after death, a life in which Rohith would certainly travel to the stars, and find a world unlike this one – a world in which for some people, birth is not a fatal accident, life is not a curse, childhoods are not lonely and unappreciated, where human beings are not reduced to their immediate identity, to a vote, to a number, where love is not constructed, beliefs are not colored, where no gaping gaps are left between body and soul.

But while I cannot believe in that other world, can we instead learn from the tragic passing of this precious young man, who dreamed so achingly of love, and justice, and stardust. Changing our world may take a long time. But in this generation, now, can we at least ensure that classrooms, schools, universities become places where children and young people are valued for what they are, for the qualities of their hearts and heads, for their efforts as much as their failures, and not for the accident – fatal or otherwise – of their birth.

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

by
Rohini Gawankar

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Suicide of Rohith

“I always wanted to be a writer. A writer of science, like Carl Sagan. At last, this is the only letter I am getting to write.

I loved Science. Stars, Nature, but then I loved people without knowing that people have long since divorced from nature. Our feelings are second handed. Our love is constructed. Our beliefs colored. . . . The value of a man was reduced to his immediate identity and nearest possibility. To a vote. To a number. To a thing. Never was a man treated as a mind.”

[Rohith Vemula’s last letter to the ‘ASA family’ before his suicide at the University of Hyderabad’s campus on 17th January 2016]

The death of Rohith Vemula, a self-conscious and political **Ambedkarite-Marxist** academic who was pursuing doctoral studies at the **University of Hyderabad (UoH)** has ripped open the façade of a democratic society and polity where all sections and opinions can claim equal space and rights. AIFRTE lowers its head in shame that the future of a young mind of such promise should have been cut short by a callously uncaring caste-divided society. We condemn the prominent and direct role of ministers of the present ruling party and of the organizations affiliated to its caste-protectionist ideology for their direct involvement in setting the stage this tragedy. **AIFRTE also recognizes that the malaise of Brahminical domination runs deeper into institutions and structures of our society and polity. Caste discrimination and oppression in various forms has been institutionalized even in the so-called premier institutions of learning. This needs to be recognized to effectively challenge and annihilate caste otherwise these institutional killings and violence will continue unabated.**

As leading activists of the Ambedkar Students Association (ASA), Rohith and his colleagues consistently fought for the democratic and human rights of students and hence had fallen foul of right-wing Hindutva forces on the campus and their student wing the ABVP. The details of the events that led to the suspension of five Dalit scholars of the UoH have become shamefully common across campuses and communities in India. Any lifestyle, activity or political expression that does not conform to positions taken by the self-proclaimed ‘nationalist’ Hindutva right-wing forces is typically

confronted through vigilante attacks and dubbed divisive, communal/casteist and anti-national. It is then politically and administratively treated as such under the present regime. This signals the descent of government institutions and functioning into a network of fascist practices and represents a serious threat to the struggle for protecting and expanding the democratic rights of the mass of the Indian people who suffer numerous forms of socio-economic oppression and discrimination.

At the UoH the ASA’s screening of the film *Muzzafarnagar Baqi Hai* was sought to be disrupted by the ABVP. When student resistance defeated their intentions, the ABVP leaders and supporters resorted to social media to post abuses and caste-based hate speech against ASA activists. Forced to give a public apology when faced with the anger of the students, the ABVP claimed that its leader had been physically assaulted by ASA activists. A university inquiry committee came to the conclusion that no conclusive evidence supported this complaint and hence the ASA activists could not be held responsible for any such attack. At this point, ABVP brought in current Union MoS for Labour and BJP’s Secunderabad MP Bandaru Dattareya to demand that Minister of HRD Smriti Irani use her ‘dynamic leadership’ to ensure that University authorities do not remain ‘mute spectators’ to the actions of ‘extremist, casteist, divisive and anti-national’ elements on campus. Irani promptly forwarded the letter to the V.C. demanding to know what action the University was taking in pursuance of Dattareya’s complaint. A formal letter was sent to the University authorities in September 2015 following which the Proctorial Board recommended strict action against five ASA student activists for manhandling the ABVP student leader, a recommendation which was rejected by the then V.C. Prof. R.C. Sharma who retired shortly after this. The new V.C. Dr. Appa Rao was clearly under pressure and took the decision to suspend the students. Following more letters and e-mails from MHRD through October and November 2015, on December 17th the University rejected the students’ appeals denying all charges. On 7th January 2016, the suspension was made ‘conditional’ by barring the students from their hostels and from all non-academic and political activities on the campus.

This clearly meant that the students were subjected to a totally unconstitutional political and social boycott,

which was aggravated by the fact of their status as Dalits. The experience of social exclusion and denial of dignity of Dalit scholars even at the highest level of academic and professional education in various institutes and universities as evidence of a deeply entrenched sense of caste hatred and revulsion in a society dominated by upper castes is by now an open secret. However, the recent actions taken by the authorities in many such institutes, for example IIT Madras, against politically conscious Ambedkarite groups – usually in conditions of direct confrontation with and in response to charges leveled by right-wing Hindutva forces – points to a heightened threat perception by the latter when they are faced with the growing confidence of radical, organized Dalit youth. Under the banner of the emancipatory ideologies associated with towering leaders like Periyar and Ambedkar these groups are steadily mounting a reasoned and open challenge to caste based Hindu ideology and refusing to be incorporated as socio-political appendages to organizations like the RSS and its Sangh Parivar affiliates that blatantly glorify caste as a celebration of ancient Hindu achievement.

Another shocking fact is that through the entire process of the University's flip-flop decision-making, Rohith had been denied his fellowship from July 2015 onwards. This violates the fundamental principle of all democratic norms of investigation of charges against persons that such punitive actions cannot be taken until the entire process of investigation is completed. It was a calculated move to financially mount severe pressure on students struggling for their political and intellectual rights and makes the university authorities and the V.C.

–Dr. Meher Engineer, Prof. Wasi Ahmed, Sri Prabhakar Arade, Prof. G. Haragopal, Prof. Madhu Prasad, Prof. Anil Sadgopal, Prof. K. Chakradhar Rao, Prof. K. M. Shrimali, Dr. Anand Teltumbde
All India Forum for Right to Education

responsible for driving the young scholar to his death.

AIFRTE therefore demands that

- Minister of HRD Smriti Irani and MOS Labour Bandaru Dattareya be immediately dropped from the Union Cabinet for their role in aiding and abetting the tragic death of Rohith Vemula;
- V.C. Prof. Appa Rao be immediately sacked from UoH;
- A completely free and transparent enquiry can only then be conducted into the whole tragic and shameful episode to identify all those who politically and administratively are to be held responsible;
- Apart from payment of the outstanding fellowship dues of Rohith his family should be paid damages arising out of his untimely death;
- All punitive action against the remaining four students to be withdrawn forthwith and any fellowship dues payable to them released immediately.

AIFRTE calls upon all its member organization and fraternal groups of students, teachers and democratic activists to hold protests and organize meetings to condemn the tragic incidents that have occurred at UoH. We appeal to them to condemn the call by government, certain political parties and sections of the media not to 'politicize' the issue. Caste oppression and the descent into fascist modes of action by right-wing groups, administrations and government are 'political' issues and they must be fought politically.

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Who will Bell the Corruption Cat

Bapu Heddurshetti

The question as to who will bell the corruption cat has become very relevant in view of the recent resignation of Karnataka Lok Ayukta, Justice Bhaskar Rao. During his tenure as the Lok Ayukta of Karnataka, the office, which had been created for cleaning up corruption, had become instead its den. The Registrar of the Lok Ayukta and Bhaskar Rao's son are still in judicial custody on charges of having extorted money from gullible IAS officers and others. In view of the resignation, the Karnataka Government has started hunting for a new person to become the Lok Ayukta.

It is a hunt because the Government is not getting a 'prey'. Justice Shivraj Patil, who had retired from the Supreme Court, had to resign from the office of Lok Ayukta as he had obtained a site from a cooperative housing society without disclosing the fact that he already had one. Justice Ravindran, another former judge of the Supreme Court and two former Chief Justices of two High Courts refused to be considered for the appointment. Perhaps they thought it better to refuse now than to resign later. Now of the two names being discussed, Justice Vikramjit Sen, who, had retired as the Chief Justice of the Karnataka High Court withdrew his name as the Chief Minister of Karnataka preferred Justice S.R.Nayak. Now the Janaadhikara Sangharsh Parishat has lodged a complaint with the additional Director General of Police (Lok Ayukta) against Justice S.R.Nayak that his family owned three sites before he got a site allotted to him from the Karnataka State Judicial Department Employees' House Building Cooperative Society and to get the same registered, he made a false statement before the Sub-Registrar that the layout had been approved by the Bengaluru Development Authority when it had not been.

The concept of Lok Ayukta and Lok Pal originated in the Scandinavian countries like Sweden and Norway. It was called 'Ombudsman' there, which means a 'public advocate'. The objective of the Ombudsman was to prevent maladministration, i.e., protecting people from administrative errors and excesses. That is why the Ombudsman forms part of Administrative Law. An Ombudsman would enquire into the grievances of the citizens and resolve the problems by mediations

or recommendations. That is the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman. The institution of Ombudsman established in Sweden in the year 1716 was so effective that today more than 40 countries have such institutions with different nomenclatures.

It is against this background that as long back as in 1966, the Administrative Reforms Commission, headed by Morarji Desai, in its interim report on the "problem of redress of citizens' grievances" had recommended the establishment of an institution on the lines of the Swedish Ombudsman and called it the "Lok Pal." However, the efforts to establish the institution, has a checkered history.

A Bill called the "Lok Pal and Lok Ayukta Bill, 1968", seeking to establish Ombudsmen for the Center as also for the States, was introduced in the fourth Lok Sabha. It lapsed on the dissolution of the Lok Sabha in 1971. Another Bill on the same lines was introduced by Indira Gandhi in 1971. However, this also lapsed on the dissolution of the Lok Sabha in 1977.

The Janata Party government had also introduced such a Bill in 1977. Unfortunately, it also lapsed due to the fall of the Morarji Desai and Charan Singh governments and the consequent dissolution of the Lok Sabha. In 1985, the Rajiv Gandhi government once again introduced the Bill. However, that was withdrawn in 1987. The Bill introduced by the V.P. Singh government in 1989 also lapsed due to the dissolution of the Lok Sabha. Now after a checkered history of a tour of the Parliament, finally the Lok pal and Lok Ayuktas Act, 2013 (1 of 2014) has come into force on the 16th January, 2014. But a Lok Pal is yet to be appointed.

But in India Lok Pal has assumed a connotation different from a body that would 'redress citizens' grievances' and has become an anti-corruption body. There are already two bodies for the same, namely Vigilance Commission and the Central Bureau of Investigation. Not being satisfied with these, a Lok Pal was sought to be created at the Center and a Lok Ayukta at the State level.

Orissa was the first State to pass a Lok Ayukta Act in 1970, though it came into force only in 1983.

Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and some other States have passed Lok Ayukta Acts and the Lok Ayuktas are functioning in these States with varying degrees of success. However, not being satisfied with the institutions, Arvind Kejriwal, the Chief Minister of Delhi is proposing to set-up a 'Jan Lok Pal'.

The office of the Lok Ayukta in Karnataka made headlines when persons like retired Supreme Court judges, N. Venkatachala and N. Santosh Hegde were in office. Not that the corruption level came down. However, it made a different kind of a head-line under Justice Bhaskar Rao. Instead of cleaning the administration of corruption the institution itself became a den of corruption. Today, the Registrar of the institution along with the son of Bhaskar Rao are in judicial custody facing charges of extorting money from gullible IAS officers and others. Justice Bhaskar Rao resigned after a motion for his removal was moved in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly. Another motion has been moved in the Assembly for the removal of the Upalokayukta Justice Subhash Adi for various lapses including meddling with cases to favor certain persons.

These controversies give rise to the question as to whether the success of an institution depends on the people who occupy it. Some say yes. They give the example of the Karnataka Lok Ayukta to prove the point. When persons like N. Venkatachala and N. Santosh Hegde were in office, the institution was said to have functioned very well. But when Bhaskar Rao became the Lok Ayukta, the institution itself became corrupt and rotten.

If the person who occupies the office is the deciding factor for the successful functioning of the institution, then should we concentrate our energies on creating 'good' human beings rather than in creating 'good institutions'? Should we concentrate on converting Sauls into Pauls like Jesus Christ did? The proponents of the view argue that if you change the 'Saul'ian mind-set you will get a Paul. The basic premise of the argument is that the human beings are, by nature, 'bad' and hence goodness has to be inculcated or imbibed in them. Since society consists of individuals, if all individuals become 'good' the entire society would automatically become 'good'. This is a Gandhian argument. This is what Jesus Christ also preached. They gave the prime of place to the individual. It may not be out of place here to mention that capitalism also accords a prime of place to the individual and so does Hinduism.

How to change the mindset of the human beings? There two points of view. Gandhi would like to persuade 'bad' human beings to become 'good' human beings, even at the cost of punishing himself. He called it *Satyagraha*. However some others take the logic, that the human beings are basically bad, to its extreme. According to them the human beings are not human beings at all but beasts. The remedy is neither trying to create good persons out of them like Gandhi by changing their mind-sets by persuasion, but to tie them up to a tree and lash them with whips. This is Anna Hazare, Arvind Kejriwal argument. While Arvind Kejriwal would like to hound the corrupt like 'Big Brother' of George Orwell's 1984, Anna Hazare would like them to be tied up to a tree and whip-lashed. He is on record for saying that the remedy brought good results in his village when he got some drunkards tied to a tree and got them whipped.

The Tribe is quite populous. Recently Kagodu Thimmappa, the Speaker of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly said that the Government should hang bad officers. The reason was that he was allotted a site by the officers in a layout that was illegally formed by no less an authority than the Bengaluru Development Authority. These people little realize that though Lord Macaulay issued his Indian Penal Code with death sentence as the punishment for murder more than 150 years ago, murders do take place even now. If the number of murders has come down, it is not because of the death punishment but because of the cultures and civilizations becoming more humane and more liberal.

The point of view opposite to the above is that the human beings are by nature 'good', but are made bad by circumstances and hence if the circumstances are changed, their goodness will manifest. This is a Socialist argument. The substance of the argument is since the society consists of individuals, if the society is changed, the individuals will also automatically get changed. Here the prime of place is given to the society and not to the individual.

This debate of 'nature' versus 'nurture' is age old. What does the fact that the LokAyukta functioned well when some persons were occupying the office and it did not when others did, prove? Does it prove the primacy of 'nature' or that the 'nurture' was inadequate? If it proves the primacy of 'nature', then where and how do we find 'good' persons who will create a corruption-free society? After Justice Shivraj Patil resigned because of 'corruption' in getting a site when he already had one,

Karnataka had found Justice Bhaskar Rao with great difficulty after a few of the candidates refused to accept the office. Justice Bhaskar Rao resigned only after a motion for his impeachment was moved in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly. After Bhaskar Rao's resignation also, Karnataka is finding it difficult to find a person who can accept the office and 'retain' it. Justice S.R.Nayak who had been tipped for the post has come under cloud even before he was appointed.

A few years ago, I hope one still remembers that, it was difficult to get reservation of a railway ticket particularly in the sleeper class. Some black marketers with the connivance of the railway staff would book several tickets and then sell them to the travelers in black market at exorbitant prices. When Madhu Dandavate, a socialist, became the railway minister, he introduced computers in the system for reservation of tickets. This, if I am not wrong, has completely eliminated corruption in ticket-booking. Today you can book your tickets even from your home. The black marketers have almost vanished. Does it mean that earlier there were 'bad' people in the railways and after Madhu Dandavate became the railway minister they became 'good' people? The answer should be an emphatic NO. Madhu Dandavate was not a magician but only an ordinary person with a socialist mind. He created circumstances where there was no scope for corruption but under which the goodness of man would manifest. I am yet to come across a case where Madhu Dandavate punished a corrupt ticket-booking clerk to achieve this. Does this not prove that if proper circumstances are created the 'goodness' in man will manifest? Then would it not be better to create proper conditions for man's 'goodness' to manifest rather than blame him for being 'bad'?

We explore the superficial reasons as to why a person becomes corrupt without going into the deeper causes and hence end up only in finding superfluous remedies. One tries to imitate the life style of another who is leading a better life than himself whether that other has acquired that life-style honestly or dishonestly. When he is unable to acquire a similar life-style honestly, he becomes dishonest, he becomes corrupt. In a society in which inequalities are galore, this becomes a natural ethos. In that case, if we remove those examples of some people having life-styles better than those of some others, can we not prevent a person from becoming a prey to this temptation of imitation?

Asoka Mehta, a socialist leader gives another interesting example. Do you remember there was

a fountain pen called 'Parker'. A few decades ago, having a Parker pen was a matter of prestige and hence everyone longed to have one. Later it disappeared from the market. Hence no body longed to have it and hence it did not remain a matter of prestige. Today, though the pen has reappeared in the market, no one bothers about it because most of the people can afford to have one. Thus its attraction has decreased. Similarly when equality is achieved, there will be no people with better styles of life for others to imitate because all will have the same standard of life so that they can also adopt the same style of life if they want to. The temptation to imitate people with better styles of life will disappear and with that the temptation to become corrupt. True, it will take time. But wiping the nose with a tissue paper is not the remedy for cold.

So who will bell the cat of corruption? Lok Ayuktas or Equality?

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Nath Pai, the Ablest Parliamentarian

B. Ramchandra CST Voltaire

When Nath Pai passed away on 17th January 1971, N.G. Goray described Comrade Nath Pai as one of India's great sons and socialism's proud disciple. Speaking about his untimely death, he said: "Death must come, as it will, to all men, but it came to Nath with vengeful haste. It took away from the Earth one of its finest human beings".

On 18th January 1971, a condolence meeting was organized in the PSP Central Office, 18, Windsor Place, Bahadurshah Zafar Marg, New Delhi. Top ranking leaders like S.M. Joshi, Karpooori Thakur, A.B. Vajpayee, Ashok Mehta, Acharya J.B. Kripalani, Sadiq Ali, Rajeswar Rao, Z.A. Ahmed, Jaswant Singh and many others attended the meeting and paid rich tributes to Nath Pai. Nath Pai was described most deservedly as: "A Peerless Comrade", "A Dauntless Fighter", "A Dedicated Socialist", "An Unrepentant Democrat", "A Staunch Nationalist", "A Devoted Friend", "The Ablest Parliamentarian", "A Towering Personality" "the like of him will not be seen again".

Nath Pai was born on 25th September 1922 in Vengurla of Ratnagiri district, Maharashtra as the youngest son of a Post Master. After completing his primary education at Vengurla, he went to Belgaum, for higher education. During the Quit India movement, he along with his friends raided a police station in Belgaum and escaped only to be caught later, beaten up and imprisoned. This disrupted his education. He completed his matriculation in 1940, did his intermediate in college in 1945 and got his degree in 1947. He then went to London at the age of 25 to become a Barrister-at-Law.

While in England, he came in contact with leading social democrats, namely, Clement Attlee, Brailsford, Fenner Brockway. Nath Pai became the President of the Indian Majlis, the Vice-President of the League Against Imperialism. In 1951, a 'British Asian Socialist Fellowship' was organized in London. Here Clement Attlee became its President and Nath Pai became the Vice-President.

In 1954, the Copenhagen Conference of the International Union of Socialist Youth, a front organization of the Socialist International, elected Nath Pai as the President and he continued to be the President for four consecutive years. While in Vienna, Austria, he met Cristle, a young socialist from Austria. They fell in love and married and

led their happy family life and they parented two sons: Ananda and Dillip.

Nath Pai did not enter into the legal profession even though he was a Bar-at-Law. He did make a name as a Parliamentarian. He was made the Deputy Leader of the PSP in the Lok Sabha. In the words of a journalist H.K.Dua, Nath Pai 'could hold the Houses pell-bound commenting on foreign policy'. Another journalist called Nath Pai as 'Nehrus Nemesis'. An editorial on the deterioration of parliamentary standards, that came out in The Hindu of 30th April 2004 remarked: "Parliament - watchers are wont to recall the dignity and style of legislative conduct in the far-away days when such greats as Jawaharlal Nehru and NathPai gently sparred on the floor of the House". Nehru used to call Nath Pai a 'gentleman politician' of the Indian Nation.

Nath Pai was really full of brilliance. "Once he had the floor to himself, he would not miss a single opportunity to put his opponents, particularly the ruling party, in a pitiable situation. He used to be at his best while presenting his views and argument on the floor of the Lok Sabha. His strength came out of the beauty of the language that he had the skill to exhibit his superb power of expression. It was said that he was at times almost poetic and at times literally clinical".

During the debate on Chinese aggression in 1962, Nath Pai said "There was a thrombosis of the will on the part of some of our leaders. There was a thickening of the emotional arteries and that was the cause of all the mischief, all the misfortune and all the tragedy that befell our nation".

Nath Pai was very active as a Parliamentarian. He gave a proof of this by introducing several Private Member's Bills of great importance. They bear witness to his phenomenal foresight. He tabled a bill for setting up a permanent commission for redressing grievances in connection with the linguistic reorganization of states. He tabled a bill to set guidelines for appointment of Governors. On 28th August 1970 he introduced a bill to include the 'right to work' in the chapter on Fundamental Rights in the Constitution. Foreseeing the abuse of power during a possible 'emergency', he tabled a bill to preserve fundamental rights even during the declaration of emergency.

Though foreign relations were Nath Pai's *forte*, he is more known for his Constitution Amendment Bill. Any student of law would be familiar with the feud between the Parliament and the Supreme Court regarding the property rights. The family of Henry and William Golak Nath held over 500 acres of farmland and under the Punjab Security and Land Tenures Act of 1953, the family was allowed to keep only 30 acres for each member and the rest was taken away by the State. The Golak Nath's challenged the law on the ground that the Punjab law took away their constitutional right to acquire and hold property and on 27th February 1967 the Supreme Court declared that the Parliament had no power to amend the Fundamental Rights and thereby protected the right to property.

Nath Pai rose to the occasion and he introduced a Constitution Amendment Bill in Parliament on 7th April 1967 to annul the Judgment and restore to Parliament its power to amend the Fundamental Rights also. Nath Pai's Bill was debated on the floor of the House and also in the Select Committee. The debate brought out Nath Pai's erudition. In his speech defending his Bill, Nath Pai extensively quoted from Justices Holmes and Philips Frankfurter of the US Supreme Court, Thomas Jefferson, the President of the United States, Sir Francis Bacon, British Jurist A.V.Dicey, Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, Thomas Paine, Prof. Laski and many others. When some critics said that the passage of the Bill would open the flood gates for a totalitarian regime, Nath Pai gave a brilliant response to the same. He said: "A totalitarian regime is not prevented from coming here because there is a Supreme Court; but because my country men are committed to democracy. We remain a democracy, not because of the charity or interpretation of a court." How true, was Nath Pai's political foresight. The later events proved that it was the Supreme Court which 'crawled' before a dictator and it is the people who threw out the dictator from the seat of power.

Nath Pai's faith in the wisdom of the people was of classic nature. This was clear from what he said in Parliament in reply to the debate. He said "I have got my right, with all my respect for the judiciary, to express my greater faith in the wisdom of my people; I respect the judiciary, but I respect my people more. They are dumb and they are illiterate, I know, but through their dumbness came the freedom of this country and not through the scholarship of a bunch of individuals and scholars".

Congress Govt. of Smt. Indira Gandhi took Nath Pai's Bill as its own and the 24th Amendment to the Constitution of India came thereafter. The Congress government did

45th Death Anniversary of Barrister Nath Pai, who was a member of the Lok Sabha from the Praja Socialist Party, was observed in Bhubaneswar, Odisha on 17th January 2016 by the Freethought Party of India, at the Copernicus Hall, 121, Dharma Vihar, Khandagiri, Bhubaneswar, Odisha. The theme of the meeting was "Contributions made to Indian Democracy by Barrister Nath Pai". Party President Dr. Bijayanand Kar presided. Kalyan Rai, IAS (Retd), Manas Jena and Prof K.P.Padhy, Dr. Bhagavan Prashad, Rajendra Narayan Das and Tushar Kanta spoke. B.Ramachandra CST Voltaire presented a paper.

not listen to Nath Pai in the initial phase. It needed the striking down by the Supreme Court of the two measures of nationalization of banks and the abolition of the privy purses and the electoral victory of the Congress Party in the 1971 elections in which the constitution became an issue for the first time, for the Congress to agree with Nath Pai's stand. While the Congress government got the Constitution 24th Amendment, which was on lines with Nath Pai's Bill, passed in the Parliament, the Supreme Court did not have the courage to strike down the amendment, but found an escape route by saying that though the Parliament has the power to amend even the fundamental rights, it cannot alter the 'basic structure' of the constitution, whatever that may mean.

Nath Pai was both a Democrat and a Socialist. He was the leader of the Postal Employees Union and the Northern Railway men's Union. He also led the strike of Central Government Employees in 1960. He played an important role in the liberation of Goa from Portuguese rule. It was Nath Pai who had dreamt of the 'Konkan Railway' as part of his plan for the overall development of the Konkan region and as a member of parliament had insisted for it. His efforts bore fruit when in March 1970, he received a letter from the then Railway Minister, Govinda Menon, that a detailed survey of 'Apta-Mangalore' line was being taken up and would be completed speedily. Later it was Nath Pai's political heir Madhu Dandavate, as the Railway Minister in the Janata Government in 1977, who realized Nath Pai's dream of Konkan Railway.

Nath Pai was indeed the Pearl of the Indian Parliament. He stood for socialism and he stood for the sovereignty of the Indian People. As a matter of democratic principle, the Parliament which represents the people of India must have the supremacy and this supremacy should not be subjugated by the Supreme Court of India.

*With Best
Compliments*

from

Well Wisher

Criticising Gandhi

A note on Historiography, Politics and Method*

Anil Nauriya

When I am contradicted it arouses my attention, not my wrath. I move towards the man who contradicts me: he is instructing me. The cause of truth ought to be common to us both

—Montaigne

The debates on Gandhi's role as a personality and as a symbol of Indian nationalism will go on; the purpose of this article is mainly to draw attention to some points of methodology which, when overlooked, lead to erroneous and even absurd results.

First, analysis confined to comparing the positions of any individuals or organizations at a single arbitrarily chosen point in time is inadequate. Gandhi as well as his critics were continually evolving. The *movement* in their positions is often of more significance than their points of view at any isolated moment.

Secondly, to determine the weight to be attached to any criticism, particularly criticism by other contemporaneous political personalities or groups, it is helpful to evaluate the activities and effectiveness of the critics themselves. Repetition of unexamined or self-justificatory criticism obfuscates more than it illumines. The MPLA and the UNITA were bitter rivals, yet both fought for the freedom of Angola. How much weight should one attach to contemporaneous criticism from, say, the pre-freedom Communist Party of India if that party for all its accumulation of intellectual energy and some flashes of heroism in the components that went into its making, did not as a party conduct a single national-level or even a provincial-level struggle against the British? As lovers of freedom some of its members were perhaps second to none; the trouble was with priorities, praxis, emphases. To say this, it must be clarified, is no criticism of the *present-day* CPI or CPM, just as to appreciate something done by the pre-independence Congress would not amount to appreciation of the Congress (I) or any other present-day political group. Nor does this

involve a denial of the anti-imperialist role of say, the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, the Jugantar group and, on the whole, of the Anushilan Samiti, some of whose members later drifted into other parties, including the pre-freedom CPI. It is the anti-imperialist record of these groups which is often sought to be appropriated on behalf of the pre-freedom CPI. The irony is that the anti-imperialist ardour of these traditions was in fact *weakened* rather than strengthened within the pre-freedom CPI. The latter largely diverted attention from struggles against the British to a virtually exclusive engagement with trade unionism and some Kisan Sabhas.¹ It was somewhat like what may have happened in China had Mao thought of reversing priorities – concentrating on mobilization for land reforms first and assisting the struggle against the Japanese only later.

Similarly, the criticisms of Gandhi made by Ambedkar in the latter's early phase when he set much store by the British are historically interesting. But historians must examine also why such things as the statutory abolition of untouchability, for example, take place with the retreat of British power from India and not earlier. The rise of Dalit representation in mainline services, increased educational opportunities and the associated enhancement in their political presence takes place only after independence. Ambedkar's greatest achievements take place when he is in alliance with those who had led the nationalist movement and not when he is at cross purposes with them. Could not Ambedkar have been mistaken then in placing exclusive reliance on the British for protection of Dalit interests particularly if the net gain registered as a sequel to this policy was not substantial? The point is that pre-Ambedkar benefits like non-discrimination in

* This paper was written twenty years ago, at the end of 1995, and published in *Mainstream*, New Delhi, Vol XXXIV, No 8, January 27, 1996, pp. 39-48. As the issues it raises are at least as topical now as when first published, the paper is reproduced here essentially without change, except for a few small corrections and the addition of footnotes 5, 6 and 12.

employment and in the system of justice, albeit expensive and slow moving but such as it was, may have provided the *rationale* for the position taken by Ambedkar. But did this position result in any further gains *after* he adopted it? It may be possible to take a contrary view if one assumes that the separate electorates envisaged by the British in 1931-2 outweighed the lack of any significant British initiative on the social, educational and employment needs of Dalits after Ambedkar came into prominence. Our essential point is that in evaluating the strength of Ambedkar's early criticisms, the educational and social fruits, if any, of the pre-freedom Ambedkar-British convergence also need to be scrutinized and cannot simply be *assumed*. The Ambedkar – British convergence may have enhanced Ambedkar's bargaining position in relation to the Congress, but did it significantly promote the Dalit cause *qua* the British? The significant grassroots support among Dalits for the Congress at this time also needs to be recognized, studied and understood.

Consider the revolutionary movement. Has there been any serious attempt to study why the violent revolutionary movement in India did not succeed? The nationalist mobilization after 1920 could not, merely because it was itself meant to be non-violent, have *prevented* those who believed in armed insurrection from making plans for it and from putting these plans into execution. The Naval ratings revolt, though undoubtedly heroic and not without an impact, takes place in Bombay in February 1946 after a Labour Government has come to power in England, a Cabinet Mission to India has been decided upon (by January 24, 1946) and the Congress is on the verge of negotiations with it. But there is no revolt by the armed forces *within the country* during 1942-45 when it would have been critically relevant and useful for Indian independence.² Nor does it take place later (that is after say June-July 1946) either when the British regime and many of its provincial governors show laxity in bringing communal violence under control or when plans are afoot to divide the country. There is an obvious need for interrogation of such 'critical' traditions themselves in the writing of modern Indian history.³ In the 1970s the major prevalent criticisms of Gandhi and the pre-1947 Congress were economic – they did not go far enough in pushing through land reforms, they were too much under the influence of big business and so on. Characteristically, for some British historians Gandhi's regional associates were, from such perspectives, 'subcontractors'.⁴ Many Indian historians, perhaps dazzled by the bright lights of the West, wrote in a similar vein.⁵ Paradoxically, the current wave of criticism of Gandhi and the Congress is

centred primarily on the Muslim League – that they were not accommodative enough to the League demand for 'safeguards'. This critique, which tends to characterize the national movement as Hindu communalist, suits *Hindutva*; it enables, to some extent, the appropriation of Indian nationalism by *Hindutva*. It suits also the Muslim communal tradition; it enables this tradition to define itself. It suits Anglo-centricism as well; the entire imperial policy in India is sought to be justified as a result.⁶ Curiously, one may find the same critics repeating the economic critique *and* the League-centred critique. This is more than a little strange. One of the reasons why the alliance between the League and the Congress did not come off in the United Provinces (U.P.) in 1937 was pressure from the Left wing which wished to push ahead with the Congress programme of reform and looked upon the League or a dominant section of it as favouring landlords at least in that Province. The decision against an alliance was influenced not only by Socialists and Communists but by Muslim groups as well.⁷ That the land reforms then conducted in U.P. were a factor that led to a strong reaction from the League is well recognized.⁸ Oddly enough, once this severe League reaction got going, the CPI sections of the Left lined up with League, that is to say, against the Congress and the nationalist Muslims.

That is why the land reform-centred critique and the League-centred critique are mutually not quite consistent. The notion of 'safeguards' is also seldom scrutinized. For example, can the demand that no party other than the League would have the right to nominate a Muslim to the Centre be described as a 'safeguard'? Or is it a 'safeguard plus'? Subhas Bose as Congress President in 1938 had found such claims to sole spokespersonship to be "impossible" conditions.⁹ Would those who put such notions forward, taking their cue perhaps from the Cambridge school of history, support similar claims on behalf of communal parties today? What was the opinion on these matters of other nationalist Muslims stoutly opposed to the League? Apart from a few prominent ones, Nationalist Muslims have not really been studied. Writings on Modern Indian history reveal scant acquaintance with, say, Abbas Tyabji, Allah Baksh, M. Tayyebulla, Abdus Samad Khan, Prof. Abdul Bari, Mufti Kifayatullah, Yakub Hasan, Ahmed Saeed, Maulana Hifzur Rahman, A Q Ansari or Habibur Rahman Ludhianvi. Or with the Momin Conference or the Majlis-e-Ahrar. References to the latter party are made, if it all, to present it as a Punjab outfit, without indicating that its activities stretched from Kashmir to Bengal. Several

other Muslim organizations which resisted the League to the end (or almost to the end when it became clear that Pakistan was in the offing) are seldom seriously studied. For example, there are no detailed studies of the Anjuman-e-Watan of Abdus Samad Khan, the Baluch Gandhi or of Allah Baksh's 'United Party' in Sind. Even the Jamiatul Ulema-e-Hind is rarely a focus of scholarly interest.

Gandhi often learned from his critics -- changing, improving and modifying his position from time to time. And some of his critics learned from him. Among these, Narendra Deva, Bose and Ambedkar reassessed their position during Gandhi's lifetime. Others, like Jinnah, did so later to some extent. Gandhi's differences with various personalities are generally set out in his writings without assuming the character of personal attacks. The same cannot be said of many of his critics. But some critics maintained a relatively high standard of public discourse.

Consider first the case of Subhas Bose. Bose's relationship with Gandhi was more complex than that of a mere critic. He did not subscribe to the Gandhian notion of non-violence. But even after differences had arisen between him and Gandhi in the late thirties, the two retained a sense of appreciation for one another.

Bose had been close to C.R. Das in Bengal. Gandhi considered his own differences with C.R. Das at the Amritsar Congress in December 1919 to have been primarily on the basis of a different understanding of a common trust, saying in June 1925: ". . . we were warriors, each holding in trust the welfare of the nation according to his ability".¹¹ One of the major differences between Gandhi and C.R. Das arose over the so-called "offer" of constitutional reform by Viceroy Reading in December 1921. We now know, with the papers of the British Cabinet also having become available, that this offer was a mirage.¹² This was not known to C.R. Das and formed the basis of his early differences with Gandhi. Bose, being close to C.R. Das, inherited some of his impressions. However, the Bose-Gandhi differences grew to a head only later -- in 1939.

Gandhi tried to link the political struggle for independence with social emancipation. This was not necessarily so even with such of his critics who are often considered more radical than him. When Gandhi started his anti-untouchability programme on a nationwide scale in 1933 this was not supported by Subhas Bose and Vithalbhai Patel.¹³

When we have adequate studies on such questions, or at least an increased awareness of them, we may arrive at a higher stage in the debate on Gandhi and the nationalist movement. These studies are perhaps unlikely to be encouraged in England which still appears to hold many Indian historians and writers in a somewhat hypnotic grip.¹⁰

II

How important is it for a national liberator simultaneously to be an internationalist? The importance of this question should not be underrated; what sometimes appears as bitter criticism of Gandhi and the pre-independence Congress is merely a different approach to events, related to whether these are viewed from a purely national or an international perspective. Bose was a patriot in the first instance: internationalist only in the next. While he thought nothing of taking the help of powers like Germany, Jawaharlal Nehru had a different point of view. M.N. Roy went to the extent of offering complete support to Britain in the Second World War, just as Gandhi, with a faith he later outgrew, had sympathized with England during the First World War. Bose sought to judge issues from a purely nationalist frame. After the rise of Hitler, Jawaharlal Nehru, according to Bose, "produced a resolution before the (Congress) Working Committee... seeking to make India an asylum for the Jews". The idea "astounded" Bose. Nehru appears to have backtracked somewhat, saying that his resolution had only been concerned with such refugees as were also technicians.¹⁴

Gandhi's humanism and Indianness were more closely connected. When some Burmese leaders in 1927 opposed the separation of Burma from India, it is Gandhi who told them that the matter should be decided by the Burmese themselves and that in his opinion "India, in cooperation with the British, is exploiting Burma".¹⁵ His position towards Sri Lanka was similar. He saw it as a 'separate entity'. Saying that "I should be content to regard Ceylon as an absolutely independent state", he was inclined to leave the matter to the Sri Lankans themselves.¹⁶

The Gandhi-Bose clash in the late thirties is often invested, as will perhaps emerge from the discussion on Narendra Deva below, with more significance than it may in fact have had.¹⁷ Contrary to the impression sometimes created of Gandhi and Bose being at cross-purposes, in the forties the two came to a greater appreciation of one another. Bose's disappearance from Calcutta in 1941 led

to Gandhi making anxious inquiries from his family; the timing of the 'Quit India' Movement a year later was partly inspired by the Japanese advance. In June 1942, Gandhi described Bose "as a patriot of patriots".¹⁸

Bose's broadcasts from South East Asia often invoked Gandhi's name and sought his blessings for the struggle. It was in the forties that Bose addressed Gandhi as the "Father of Nation" in a broadcast from Azad Hind Radio on July 6, 1944.¹⁹ Obviously delighted at the 'Quit India' Movement, Bose said in his broadcast on Gandhi's birthday in 1943 that : "The service which Mahatma Gandhi has rendered to India and to the cause of India's freedom is so unique and unparalleled that his name will be written in letters of gold in our national history for all time".²⁰ Bose's broadcast on the occasion of Kasturba's death in prison is deeply moving.²¹ The INA formations which entered to fight in Myanmar and North East India bore names such as Gandhi, Nehru and Azad. When a Japanese invasion by sea on the Orissa coast was anticipated, Gandhi gave instructions to greet the expected Japanese landing with a programme of non-cooperation with both the British and the Japanese.²² What did this imply? And on what basis did Gandhi come really to expect the Japanese to make a landing on the Orissa coast?²³ Was it simply British propaganda? Had Bose been around after the War, we might have had part of an answer.

Narendra Deva was another critical admirer. He, along with Bose, is among the relatively more authentic contemporary critics of Gandhi. This is because Bose and Narendra Deva are not idle critics from the sidelines but leaders who are themselves in the thick of the anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggle. Starting out as a 'Tilakite', Narendra Deva became a Marxist by the early twenties and remained so till his death in 1956. This was unlike his Congress Socialist Party colleagues, some of whom had rejected Marxism by 1947-48. Some of them did so as a reaction to Stalin and to the policies of the then Communist Party of India. Other, similarly motivated, socialists retreated from Marxism by 1952-53. Narendra Deva, though critical of Stalin, did not reject Marxism itself. He had, it is believed, been critical of the non-cooperation movement from a 'Tilakite' perspective.

A keen student of the writings and politics of Lenin, he gradually came close to Gandhi. At the same time, Narendra Deva retained the capacity of independent criticism. For instance, in his comment on Gandhi's plans regarding individual satyagraha in the early forties, Narendra Deva ridicules the idea of individual satyagraha and the notion that the enemy must not be harassed when he is in danger.²⁴ Gandhi nevertheless had come to rely upon Narendra Dev. ("How is it that you have kept hidden such a jewel of a man...?" he had once asked Sri Prakasa.²⁵) Narendra Deva appears to have played a role in stiffening Gandhi's position in the nineteen forties. Gandhi's draft resolution for the Congress Working Committee was forwarded by him in April 1942 to Nehru with the remark that "Acharya Narendra Deva has seen the resolution and liked it".²⁶

Gandhi twice suggested Narendra Deva's name for President of the Congress. The first time was in 1938-39. In January 1939 Subhas Bose offered to withdraw from the Presidential contest if Narendra Deva were chosen.²⁷ Had this come about, the break between Bose and Gandhi at this time could have been avoided. Gandhi himself was in favour of a socialist President and Narendra Deva was one name he had in mind. It was Nehru who did not approve of the idea. Nehru wrote in February-March 1939: "Indeed, so far as Gandhiji was concerned, he expressed his wish repeatedly in my presence that he would like a socialist as President. Apart from my own name, he mentioned Acharya Narendra Deva's name. But... I did not like the idea of a socialist President at this stage".²⁸ (In fairness to Nehru it should be marked that he indicates that for the same reason he eliminated himself). Evidently, as both Bose and Gandhi were at one on the name of Narendra Deva, the split between them at this time had more to do with the position adopted by Nehru than with Gandhi himself. The second occasion when Gandhi suggested Narendra Deva's name was in November 1947. This time Nehru was also in favour of Narendra Deva. But others were not.²⁹ Narendra Deva had presided over the Foundation Conference of the Congress Socialist Party in May 1934. His being made Congress President would have had an obvious significance.

III

This brings us to yet another dogma of research fostered in the last few decades. This is the unwarranted and near-exclusive identity that is assumed between

Marxism and the pre-1947 CPI. This has its ramifications on the assessments of Gandhi and the nationalist movement.³⁰

The Congress Socialists defined themselves as Marxists.³¹ Vallabhbhai Patel, who had begun drifting away from Gandhi in some ways after 1942-45, disliked the socialists. The Socialists' feelings towards Patel were similarly negative. It was at this juncture that Gandhi emerged as a protector of the Socialists. It is no accident that the Socialists left the Congress within days of his assassination.

Was Gandhi gradually getting disillusioned with some of the businessmen who had been close to him in the past? One of them, who proved closer to Patel than to Gandhi, had even been corresponding with leading British figures, suggesting that the League demand for partition be accepted. At any rate, Gandhi's economic ideas had been following a different course. Since 1938-39, he had been drawing closer to the CSP. He even expressed a willingness to join the CSP "*if the difference on violence could be bridged*".³²

He had said in June 1942 that in the land reform programme of free India, "peasants would take the land" and compensating landlords "would be fiscally impossible".³³ In January 1947, Gandhi supported the Tebhaga movement demand "for the reduction of the landlord's share from half to one third".³⁴

While most CSP leaders grasped the evolution of Gandhi's ideas, it appears that the CPI at this stage did not fully comprehend or even notice it. Unfortunately, the CSP has not been a focus of academic study, partly as a result of the tendency to equate Marxism prior to 1947 with CPI-Marxism.

During the Second Congress of the Communist International at Moscow in 1920 Lenin had expressed himself in favour of Communists supporting Gandhi. As M.N. Roy acknowledges, Lenin looked upon Gandhi "as the inspirer and leader of a mass movement" and "a revolutionary".³⁵ M.N. Roy, young but possessing great intellectual dexterity, attended this Congress as a delegate from Mexico. Roy had differed from Lenin, believing, rather curiously, that the national movement would not necessarily result even in a 'bourgeois democratic revolution'. The CSP, of which the CPI was only briefly a part, remained truer throughout the struggle for freedom, that is till 1947-48, to the position which Lenin had taken.

In January 1941, Roy was to describe Churchill as "a more revolutionary force than all the Congress leaders, Right or left, put together . . ." ³⁶ Less than a year earlier,

in 1940, Roy had himself stood against Maulana Azad for Congress President and lost.

M.N. Roy's position in the War was the polar opposite of Bose's. In early 1944, Roy wrote to Viceroy Wavell asking for what Wavell describes as "a subsidy", and to be taken into the Executive Council.³⁷

Inconsistencies in positions taken on behalf of sections of the Left at this time are patent; this must necessarily affect the weight to be attached to these positions. For instance, if Gandhi secures resources for the nationalist movement from India's industrialists, that makes him a representative of the national bourgeoisie; on occasion he is alleged to represent something still more frightful. But if Roy is to obtain funds from Wavell's administration, whatever the purpose, then this is presumably internationalism. When Gandhi fights imperialism, he remains a representative of the bourgeoisie or whatever other terrible label that may be applied for the moment. But if Churchill fights fascism, Churchill becomes a revolutionary!

However, M.N. Roy did attempt to come to terms with the Gandhi factor. On at least one occasion, when he joined the Congress, he appears to have written to Gandhi inviting advice on what he should do. But Roy's public comments on Gandhi indicated a trace of contempt for the people. He said in 1938 that Gandhi was great because he could 'stoop' to the 'level' of the masses.³⁸

Rajani Palme Dutt, a leader of the Communist Party of Great Britain, exercised great influence over the Indian communist movement. He was greatly critical of Gandhi in his book, *India Today*, first published in 1940. Soon after the war, however, in the British general election that followed in 1945, Dutt seems to have felt the need to gain Gandhi's support. At any rate, a request was made by Mohan Kumaramangalam to Gandhi for a message in favour of Dutt in the general elections. Gandhi responded without hesitation, saying "I do wish him success in his campaign".³⁹ Evidently, CPI leaders at the time were unsure about the adequacy of their own approach towards Gandhi and the nationalist movement. But they could not then quite understand how to readjust.

There came a phase in the politics of the pre-independence CPI when instead of strengthening the nationalist Muslims, the party grew closer to the communalist-separatist strain among Muslims. The CPI itself (and the CPM after its formation) later made

some amends for positions taken in the past. A similar realisation had come over the South African Communist Party in relation to its position towards the African national movement in the twenties.⁴⁰ In India these amends were made in deeds, if not so much in words. K.F. Rustamji recently observed with much truth that Left parties alone in the last few years had stood by the secularism of the India of the earlier years after independence.⁴¹

Mohit Sen, editor of a portion of the documents of the Communist Party of India, acknowledged that the CPI in the pre-independence years had been mistaken in propping up the Muslim League.⁴²

In fact, Humayun Kabir's comment on this had been:

“During the war years and immediately thereafter, Indian Communists were found again and again as staunch supporters of the Muslim League. The position came to climax during the general election of 1946 when they openly canvassed for Muslim League candidates. In spite of the communist distaste for religion, they appealed to the religious fanaticism of the Muslim masses in order to bolster the claim of Pakistan. It is in fact extremely doubtful if the Muslim League by itself could have brought about the partition of India unless it had received such unstinted ideological and organizational support from the Indian communists”.⁴³

In other words, the CPI stood at this time in relation to the Muslim League in *at least* the same position as the Congress (I) has seemed to stand in recent years in relation to the BJP. The CPI stand was corrected, partly by itself. Can the Congress (I) correct itself?

For various reasons, there has been in academic circles no thorough critique of the Muslim League although it was placed in power in various provinces, especially after the resignation of the Congress ministries in 1939. First, the prominent departments of Modern Indian History in

India continued to be dominated by sympathizers of the CPI tradition who (regardless of their present secularism) drew a veil over an uncomfortable past. Secondly, leading British universities, which still exercise influence over Indian departments of history, have not, dwelt greatly on this aspect. Thus the so-called ‘subaltern’ studies are carefully selected to gun for the pre-1947 Congress and the nationalist movement. The centre of gravity of such studies is revealed also by a lack of empathy towards struggles against the colonial regime as distinct from other struggles. Such writings ensured that at least half an Indian generation was systematically disoriented in their attitude towards the nationalist movement and its values.⁴⁴ The space thus created was filled by *Hindutva*. Indeed, it caused no surprise to this writer that at least one scholar associated with the so-called subaltern project soon emerged as a propagandist for *Hindutva*.

Gramsci had written of the subaltern view of history in Italy in contrast to the historiography of the movement for Italian national consolidation. But had Italy been under a foreign colonialism, as India was, a movement against colonialism would itself have had to be designated a subaltern struggle.

Even scholars who claim currently to be unraveling new facts about partition are silent on the subject. Some of them present partition as the outcome of a “triangular game” played by the Congress, the Muslim League and the British. In such critiques, the pre-1947 Congress is equated with the Muslim League in accordance with colonial policy and there is no mention of the role of the CPI. The Hindu Mahasabha is brought in as a factor which from time to time influences the Congress. That the Congress often resisted and even confronted the Mahasabha and was in fact often keen to accommodate the League and other Muslim groups is overlooked. So also is the fact that the Muslim League and other Muslim groups also influenced the Congress. The role of the Mahasabha and the League as ideological twins is not fully considered.

IV

For the same reason such Muslim groups as had been opposed to the League, Muslims of South India who were not terribly enamoured of the League and such Muslim classes as had not even been enfranchised were not seriously studied; this omission also reinforced negative representations of the nationalist movement. If other Muslim groups were studied at all it was largely

to show how after 1945 (when it seemed likely that Pakistan was in the offing) some of them were willing to compromise with the League's positions. The omission was not surprising; such studies could have shown up the shallowness of the League position. This deficiency in historiography resulted in the notion – baseless in the absence of universal franchise – that Muslims at large

were supportive of the Muslim League. This is precisely what both Anglo-centric scholarship and *Hindutva* have, by and large, been keen to project.

Some of the real warriors of secularism and Indian unity were Gandhi's Muslim counterparts, the nationalists whose contribution is so often underestimated. They were of the timbre of Allah Baksh and faced the brunt of the Muslim League wrath – Syed Nausher Ali, the Speaker of the Assembly of undivided Bengal, who was injured in a League attack on his house in Calcutta in August 1946, Saifuddin Kitchlew who was dragged in Multan streets in March 1947 because he would not succumb to the Pakistan demand, and innumerable others who stood their ground in the midst of insanity. Even a former Muslim Leaguer, Shafaat Ahmed Khan, who was named by the Congress as its nominee to the interim government in 1946, was promptly stabbed in Shimla. Whatever else it may be, secularism is a trust which every Indian must hold in obligation to the historical nationalist experience.

Bose, recognizing the Muslim contribution, in a broadcast on August 31, 1942 soon after Gandhi launched the Quit India Movement, had appealed among others to the nationalist forces of the “brave Majlis-i-Ahrar, the Nationalist Muslim Party of India that started the Civil Disobedience Campaign in 1939 against Britain's war effort before any other party did so” and the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, “the old representative organization of the Ulemas or the Muslim divines of India, led by that distinguished patriot and leader, Mufti Khifayat Ullah” (sic).⁴⁵

A critique of the League is essential also because without it, we cannot really confront *Hindutva*, which is the other side of the Muslim League coin. In fact, a few months before the League passed its ‘Pakistan’ resolution, Savarkar in his speech at the session of the Hindu Mahasabha in December 1939, had spoken of Hindus being a separate nation.⁴⁶ This *Hindutva* critic of Gandhi was explicit about the links which his ideology had with Jinnah's. Savarkar said at Nagpur 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”.⁴⁷

Writing from the Hindu communalist position, the Mahasabha leader, N.B. Khare, in his memoirs was to liken Gandhi to Aurangzeb.

The Muslim League, like the Hindu Mahasabha, was sharply critical of Gandhi. Jinnah had made virulent speeches against Gandhi for a number of years; a campaign had been built up against the nationalist Muslims and Gandhi.

At the session of the Muslim League in April 1943 Jinnah approvingly quoted Maulana Mohamed Ali's reported charge, (made in 1930) that Gandhi had never criticized the Shuddhi programme.⁴⁸ This charge was contrary to the published record of Gandhi's articles in *Young India*.⁴⁹

Gandhi had been quite critical of Swami Shradhanand and had said in 1924 that the best Shuddhi would be for each one to practice his own religion better. He had denounced Shradhanand and other Arya Samajis for having made Hinduism ‘narrow’. He had extended the criticism to Swami Dayanand as well. Many Arya Samaj and Mahasabha functionaries used to claim that it was Gandhi's criticism of the Arya Samaj, the Shuddhi programme and of Shradhanand that had led the Swami's assassin to commit the deed. Gandhi's assassin had repeated a similar accusation in his statement in the Gandhi murder case.⁵⁰

A great play was made of Gandhi's use of the expression “*Ram Rajya*”. While this was much quoted by the Muslim League and recently by the *Hindutva* combine for their own special purposes, both these forces suppressed the other part of what Gandhi had repeatedly said – that *Ram Rajya* and *Khudai Sultanat* meant the same thing to him, as indeed did *Ishwar* and *Allah*.⁵¹

The Mahasabha was equally cynical. A day before his assassination, Gandhi had sent Pyarelal to the Mahasabha leader, Shyama Prasad Mookerjee. Gandhi wanted inflammatory speeches from the Mahasabha side “containing incitement to assassination of some Congress leaders” to stop. Mookerjee's reply was “halting and unsatisfactory”.⁵²

To what extent did the Muslim League members really believe in their own political positions? There has been no attempt by Indian scholars to study differences within the League. Differences within the

Congress are minutely studied and positions taken for or against particular leaders and tendencies. The Shimla conference in July 1945 broke down over Jinnah's claim that all the Muslim members of the proposed Executive Council must be from the League and even an incumbent non-League non-Congress Muslim Premier of a Province could not be represented. Yet members of the League Working Committee were not agreed on such demands. Hossain Imam, the leader of the League in the Council of State, accosted V.P. Menon, who recounts:

“He gave me the impression that the members of the Working Committee of the Muslim League were far from unanimous in rejecting the Viceroy's offer. Hossain Imam suggested that the Viceroy was not aware that a member of his own Executive Council was advising Jinnah to stand firm.”⁵³

When Gandhi was assassinated, Jinnah's public comments on him were lukewarm. This reflected an attitude similar to that which Jinnah had taken up after the assassination of Allah Baksh in May 1943.⁵⁴ Allah Baksh, a former Premier of Sind had defied the Muslim League and had opposed the two-nation theory. After the March 1940 League resolution asking for a division of India, Allah Baksh had organized the Independent Muslims Conference which held a large meeting at Delhi and denounced the two-nation theory.

Jinnah's public comments on Gandhi's death had implied that it was a loss only for the Hindus. Although he could not bring himself to say more publicly, his private comments were somewhat different from his public position. The Vice President of Schroeders' Banking Group of New York, Norbert Bogdan, had met Jinnah in Karachi on February 4, 1948, that is, five days after Gandhi's assassination. Campbell-Johnson records the Bogdan—Jinnah conversation as reported to him by Bogdan:

“Jinnah was clearly disturbed about the implications of the Kashmir situation, and spoke of Gandhi in much more generous terms than he saw fit to use in his message, acknowledging to Bogdan how great was the loss for the Moslems”.⁵⁵

Interestingly, the Ambedkar – Gandhi differences also culminated in a comparable, though not identical, manner.

Nothing had distressed Gandhi more than criticism by Ambedkar. This criticism went to the core of the principle on which India sought freedom. Did India have any right to freedom if Dalits were to be condemned to oppression? It was this question which Gandhi himself had been posing to the conscience of society.

Ambedkar had appeared with prominence at the second Round Table Conference in London in 1931 and the country remembered his bitter criticism of Mahatma Gandhi.

Even so, Gandhi was continually to reach out to Ambedkar in subsequent years. Gandhi's campaign against untouchability in the thirties was widened to include a campaign against caste barriers which he had already condemned as an evil.⁵⁶ Towards the end the two brought out the best in each other. Ambedkar in a way drew Gandhi out to his full stature. Ambedkar's own restrictive views on tribal rights improved with time.⁵⁷ To Ambedkar's criticism may be attributed in part, the evolution of Gandhi in a major respect beyond the Gita. By 1945, Gandhi outgrew the Gita concept of the four-fold *varna* order, making a logical inroad upon it from various directions. Gandhi said now, that is in May 1945, that there “prevails only one varna today”⁵⁸ and that his earlier formulations on the subject be discarded. And next, attacking the concept from another angle, he spoke of the possibility of repudiating one's varna.⁵⁹

He made a third conceptual inroad upon *varna* distinctions on February 20, 1947 by saying that monopoly of occupations would have no place in a casteless society.⁶⁰ The culmination of this evolution was Gandhi's speech on June 14, 1947 in which he indicated that distinctions between *avarna* and *savarna* must go.⁶¹

(Incidentally, some writers seeking to make a critique of modernism, or for other contemporary political reasons, referred in recent controversies to Gandhi's earlier statements on *varna* distinctions without reference to his post-1945 positions).

Gandhi respected Ambedkar's intellect and had a role in his being actively associated with the Government of independent India at the time of the drafting of the Constitution.⁶²

Ambedkar acknowledged Gandhi's contribution. After Gandhi's death, Ambedkar, replying on April 17,

1948 to a letter congratulating him on his marriage, referred to Gandhi as Bapu; and in a speech in the Rajya Sabha some years later, Ambedkar acknowledged that Dalits had been “nearest and dearest” to Gandhi.⁶³ Ambedkar went on to acknowledge further that Gandhi wanted to protect and elevate Dalits. Contrary to current notions, he did not criticize Gandhi for his stand against separate electorates, culminating in the pact at Poona. On the contrary, Ambedkar now urged Nehru to emulate Gandhi:

“The only thing that I would like to say is this that in all this effort which is being made by the Government, by the various social workers and the social agencies, there is one thing which gives me a very sad thought and it is this that our Prime Minister has taken no interest in this matter at all. In fact, he seems to be not only apathetic but anti-untouchable. I happen to have read his biography and I find that he castigated Mr. Gandhi because Mr. Gandhi was prepared to die for the purpose of doing away with separate electorates which was given to the Scheduled Castes. He has said in his biography, ‘Why on earth Mr. Gandhi is bothering with this trifling problem?’ Sir, I was shocked and surprised to hear the Prime Minister – rather Mr. Nehru then in 1934 – uttering these words. I thought that since the responsibility of Government had fallen on his shoulder he may have changed his view and thought that he must now take the responsibility which Mr. Gandhi was prepared to take on his shoulder, but I

do not find any kind of a change in his mind”.⁶⁴

One may wonder whether Ambedkar was being fair to Nehru. But he had certainly changed his opinion of Gandhi from what it had been two decades earlier.⁶⁵

There is a phenomenon of what might be called ‘cross criticism’ that should also be mentioned because the analyst needs to be wary of it. Those who see themselves as part of one or the other of the traditions critical of Gandhi occasionally resort to ‘cross-criticism’ by *adopting* some of the criticisms made by *another* critical tradition. This is appropriation with a false ring about it; it is done even though the critical tradition concerned may in fact have been equally opposed to the tradition conveniently appropriated by it. This has the effect of creating an illusion of multiplied criticism. Thus both the *Hindutva* and the Muslim League traditions sometime seek to counterpose, for example, Bose against Gandhi. Here it is easy to forget that *Hindutva* organizations like the RSS had instructions to stay out of the national movement. They were in effect as opposed to Bose as they were to Gandhi. The followers of Hedgewar and the Mahasabha sometimes went about assaulting nationalist leaders and tearing up the national flag.⁶⁶

Similarly, Muslim Leaguers physically assaulted Bose in Tipperah district Chittagong division on June 15, 1938.⁶⁷ Ashrafuddin Chaudhury, the Secretary of the Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee and 13 others were also attacked and injured.

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Considering the continental scale of the anti-colonial movement, which is quite unparalleled, the remarkable feature is not so much the differences that arose within and outside the movement but that the major trends reflected in these differences were not as many as might have been expected or possible, and that a number of such tendencies themselves got reshaped by the hydraulic force of the movement, even as they helped shape the movement itself.

This is particularly so in a situation where, unlike in China, a full scale colonialism (holding India in its grip with its long arms extending into each village) was also potentially able to influence differences and developments. Inevitably, these differences were

defined largely in relation to Gandhi. Considering this, the inadequacy of scholarship and the scale of misinformation in relation to Gandhi and the nationalist movement is striking.⁶⁸ Even his writings have yet to be completely published although the project to publish them has formally come to a close in 1994. The translation of Mahadev Desai’s diaries is also not yet complete. Further, the letters addressed *to* Gandhi, including letters by his critics, or on their behalf, need to be compiled and published. This would help more fully to understand the symbiosis between Gandhi and his critics and to determine the weight to be attached to the criticism itself.

Science forges ahead of political theories

Bhagwat Prasad Rath

A great society for us is one which is composed of individuals who, as far as is humanly possible, are happy, free and creative. We do not think that individuals should be alike. We conceive society as like an orchestra, in which the instruments upon which to perform, and in which cooperation results from a conscious common purpose. We believe that each individual should have his proper pride. He should have his personal conscience and his personal aims, which he should be free to develop except where they can be shown to cause injury to others. We attach importance to the diminution of suffering and poverty, to the increase of knowledge and the production of beauty and art. The State for us is a convenience, not an object of worship.

—Bertrand Russell

But the personality that finally emerges is largely formed by the environment in which a man happens to find himself during his development, by the structure of the society in which he grows up, by the tradition of that society, and by its appraisal of particular types of behavior. The abstract concept “Society” means the individual human being, the sum total of his direct and indirect relations to his contemporaries and to all the people of earlier generations. The individual is able to think, feel, strive, and work by himself; but he depends so much upon society- in his physical, intellectual and emotional existence-that it is impossible to think of him, or to understand him, outside the framework of society.

—Albert Einstein.

Both man and society have deteriorated to a great extent. Science has advanced at a staggering rate, but the leading theoreticians of society have failed to keep pace with the discoveries of science. There is poverty of theory in society. Climate change is predicting disaster for society. Human character and human institutions have changed for the worse. To quote Einstein:-

‘In politics not only are leaders lacking, but the independence of spirit and the sense of justice of the citizen have to a great extent declined. The democratic, parliamentary regime, which is based on such independence, has in many places been shaken; dictatorships have sprung up and are tolerated, because man’s sense of the dignity and rights of the individual is no longer strong enough. In two weeks the sheep like masses of any country can be worked up by the

newspapers into such a state of excited fury that men are prepared to put on uniforms and kill and be killed for the sake of the sordid ends of a few interested parties. Compulsory military service seems to me the most disgraceful symptom of that deficiency in personal dignity from which civilized mankind is suffering today.’

Society and personality

We forget that man is a product of nature. What factors led to the evolution of modern man having awesome potentialities; from an obscure, insignificant ape species, is getting unraveled by modern scientists. To quote the *Hindu* Dt.16.05.2015:

Gender equality played a vital role in evolution.

A study has shown that in contemporary hunter-gatherer tribes, men and women tend to have equal influence on where their group lives and who they live with. The findings challenge the idea that sexual equality is a recent invention, suggesting that it has been the norm for humans for most of our evolutionary history.

Mark Dyble, an anthropologist who led the study at University College London, said: “there is still this wider perception that hunter-gatherers are more macho or male-dominated. We’d argue it was only with the emergence of agriculture, when people could start to accumulate resources that inequality emerged.”

Mr. Dyble says the latest findings suggest that equality between the sexes may have been a survival advantage and played an important role in shaping human society and evolution. “Sexual equality is one of an important suite of changes to social organization, including things like pair-bonding, our big, social brains and language, that distinguishes humans,” he said, “It’s an important one that hasn’t really been highlighted before.”…… people tend to live in groups of around 20, moving roughly every 10 days and subsisting on hunted game, fish and gathered fruit, vegetables and honey.

—Guardian Newspapers Limited, 2015.

The data collected by scientists mentioned in the above article are of a comparatively recent society. The research of Prof. Dunbar and his team indicate that humans lived in groups of 148 individuals. In the case of Chimpanzees the group consisted of 56 individuals. Development of intelligence depended on the factor of

the number of individuals in intimate groups. Evidently the culture of human society was matricentric as it was in the case of Bonbon. The difference between Bonbon society and human society was that in Bonbon society females did not have any sexual choice but in human society females choose caring and sharing males as their sexual partners. The female brain was predominant in forming the culture of the large intimate groups of 148 individuals among humans.

Louann Brizendine, M.D. in her book 'The Female Brain' writes, " Her mirror neurons were overreacting, but she was demonstrating an extreme form of what the female brain does naturally from childhood and even more in adulthood - *experience the pain of another person*. At the Institute of Neurology at University college, London researchers placed women in an MRI machine while they delivered brief electric shocks, some weak and some strong, to their hands. Next, the hands of the women's romantic partners were hooked up for the same treatment. The women were signaled as to whether the electric shocks to their beloveds' hands were weak or strong. The female subject couldn't see their lovers' faces or bodies, but even so, the same pain areas of their brains that had activated when they themselves were shocked lit up when they learned their partners were being strongly shocked."

The Mahabharata gives ample evidence that sexual equality prevailed in the society that existed in India before Indra-led Aryans arrived in India. The matricentric (not matriarchal) societies that developed in the ancient world were that of the Sindhu valley (Archeology and the Mahabharata), the Jew-inhabited valley in Palestine (Murray Book Chin) and the land of the Zuni tribe (Ruth Benedict and Einstein) in central Mexico. Even leading historians and philosophers of India have failed to grasp the matricentric nature of the Sindhu civilization because of their Euro-centric male-centric bias. The three philosophies which had their birth in the Sindhu valley were Yoga, Samkhya and Lokayat (Mahabharata makes it clear that Yoga and Samkhya are more ancient than the *Vedas* and *Yoga* existed prior to *Yagna*). Our historians and philosophers sheepishly accept when European scholars say that the greatest philosophers of the world lived in Greece and characterize Lokayat philosophy as a hedonist philosophy. Irfan Habib, a great historian expresses surprise when he reads in Arthashastra Kautilya's profuse praise of Lokayat philosophy. Romila Thapar, another great historian, ignores Lokayat. Dr. Ramendra, a reputed philosopher, thinks of Lokayat as a hedonist philosophy. Fortunately a few scholars are there who understand the greatness of Lokayat, Samkhya and Yoga. Amongst them, the most eloquent is Prof.

D. P. Chattopadhyaya. Amartya Sen, Dayakrishna and K. Satchidananda Murthy too have tried to do justice to Yoga, Samkhya and Lokayat. But, by not discussing these philosophies in the matricentric context, they have missed many relevant points. Sarad Patil by examining ancient India in the matriarchal context has missed the bus. Matriarchy did not exist in any society at any time. Enjoying power over others is a male-centric attitude. Female psyche does not accept this type of attitude. For them, *Empathy* is more important than having power. Modern research in psychology proves this (The Female Brain).

'Male brain thrives under competition, instinctively plays rough and is obsessed with rank and hierarchy.'

—The Male Brain by Louann Brizendine, MD

'This superior brain wiring for communication and emotional tones plays out early in a baby girl's behavior' (The Female Brain).

Lokayat is the only philosophy in the world which is free from anthropic bias, (*NON-VIOLENCE* is the value stressed by Lokayat), gender bias (*male and female sexual equality* is asserted by Lokayat), caste and race bias (The *caste system* is vehemently criticized by Lokayat). Out present culture goes against what nature wants (modern computer science simulating evolutions in the computer). We are killing animals and assert that we have a right to do so. Many religions teach such nonsense. Our philosophers (Descartes says that animals are only machines) are not less guilty. We are responsible for the extinction of a lot of living species.

Philosophers and political thinkers, not having so-called patriotic nation-based biased minds, Gandhi, Tagore, Einstein, Erich Fromm and Chomsky question the Eurocentric thinking in the fields of philosophy and political theories.

Einstein, quoting Thorstein Veblen, criticizes the predatory nature of modern human culture and societies in all parts of the world. Western society suffers from many evils, nor is the East free from other kinds of evils (India nurses the evils of the caste system and untouchability). Both the East and West societies are patricentric. The Bible, the Koran, the Gita are all male-centric books. They have done injustice to females and other human societies.

Indian scriptures are full of advice regarding how we are to revere our parents. But, to day, our aged parents are neglected and abused in the majority of homes. We unjustly blame western culture for this phenomenon. Western culture had greater influence on India in the 19th

century and the first half of 20th century. Today's India is more superstitious and more fanatically religious. PM Narendra Modi's version of Hatha Yoga using the method of soft coercion contradicts the spirit of Yoga (nonviolence). Yoga philosophy is a part of Aanwikshiki and cannot be understood properly without analyzing its context. There is reference to Yoga in three important books. They are the Bhagabad Gita, Patanjali Yoga-Sutra and Arthasastra. Of them, the Arthasastra alone is free from bias. Rationalism (Hetuvada) is the key factor in understanding Aanwikshiki (Yoga, Samkhya and Lokayat).

Discoveries in fields of physics and chemistry

'Just as Marx and Engels paid strict attention to "state of science" in their time, we should keep up with contemporary developments. Ironically, however, though most contemporary Marxists pride themselves on being "Scientific", few bother to notice that "state of the art" science has changed dramatically in the last hundred years. While avoiding simplistic mimicry and misapplication of scientific principles, we should update our methods by seriously examining contemporary science for new ideas relevant to our theoretical efforts.

Modern quantum physics, for example, teaches that reality is not a collection of separate entities but a vast and intricate "unbroken whole". Ilya Prigogine comments, "The new paradigms of science may be expected to develop into *the new science of connectedness* which means the recognition of unity in diversity." When thinking about phenomena, we inevitably conceptually abstract parts from the whole in which they reside, but they then exist as separate entities only in our perceptions. There are no isolated electrons, for example, only fields of force continually ebbing and flowing in a seamless web of activity which manifests events that we choose to call electrons because it suits our analytic purposes. For the physicist, each electron, quark, or whatever is, is a "*process and a network*". As a process it has a developmental trajectory extending through all time. As a network, it is part of an interactive pattern... stretching throughout all space. Every part embodies and is subsumed in a larger whole. (*Liberating theory* by seven intellectuals.)

Advances in life sciences.

Life sciences are in the forefront in bringing a sea change in our conceptions of the world of living beings.

'And, indeed, we are now at the beginning of such a fundamental change of worldview in science and society, a change of paradigms as radical as the Copernican Revolution. But this realization has not yet dawned

on most of our political leaders. The recognition that a profound change of perception and thinking is needed if we are to survive has not yet reached most of our corporate leaders either, nor the administrators and professors of our large universities....the paradigm that is now receding has dominated our culture for several hundred years, during which it has shaped our modern Western society and has significantly influenced the rest of the world. This paradigm consists of a number of entrenched ideas and values, among them the view of the universe as a mechanical system composed of elementary building blocks, the view of the human body as a machine, the view of life in society as a competitive struggle for existence, the belief in unlimited material progress to be achieved through economic and technological growth, and – last, not the least – the belief that a society in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male is one that follows a basic law of nature. All of these assumptions have been fatefully challenged by recent events. And, indeed, a radical revision of them is now occurring.'

–The Web of life: Deep ecology –A new paradigm.

Darwin's theory of break-neck competition in nature justified the necessity of capitalism in human societies. This idea is now out-dated.

Nobel winner Erwin Schrodinger in the book *what is life?* writes, "the classical physicist's expectation, *far from being trivial, is wrong*".

Materialism guided many scientists and social thinkers of the past. Materialism in the past was reductionist in nature. Every material was divided and sub-divided again and again till it reached a stage when division was not possible. Thus scientists reached the level of electrons, protons, neutrons and quarks. Though these ideas are still useful in many fields, present materialist thinkers have proved that in the ultimate stage of matter, interconnectivity and network remain the last stage of matter. The extract quoted in the beginning of the essay makes these ideas clear.

Rene Descarte's idea of two realities mind and matter has under gone change. Mind and matter form one complex. They cannot be separated.

Both religion and science asserted the right of man to kill all other living creatures on the earth. Today Nobel winner Maurice Maeterlinck asserts, "If the bee disappeared off the face of the earth, man would only have four years left to live".

–(The Hindu young world (July-2014).

'Deep ecology recognizes the intrinsic value of all living beings and views humans as just one particular

strand in the web of life. ...So, deep ecology asks profound questions about the very foundations of our modern, scientific, industrial, growth-oriented, materialistic worldview and way of life. It questions this entire paradigm from an ecological perspective: from the perspective of our relationships to one another, to future generations, and to the web of life of which we are part.'

—The Web of Life: Fritjof Capra.

With climate change having become the greatest problem threatening the living world, with human beings ranged against each other in the forms of nations and communities wars are devastating many communities.

The problem remains as to how we are to deepen and widen our selves. To repeat, computer scientists who have simulated natural evolution in their laboratories inform us that if nature is allowed to work independently, it will work in its own way to bring a good society in to being. Prof. Stuart Kaffman calls it 'order for free'. We do not have so much time (millions of years) at our disposal nor is society prepared to allow nature to work freely. Culture is our only weapon to change human societies within a short time. All organized religions are failures. Human psychology needs proper study. Bertrand Russell is one of the pioneers in the fields of culture and psychology. The latest thinker in this field is V. S. Ramchandran, a world level neuro-scientist. He says that nature's greatest gift to humanity is the presence of mirror neurons in the human brain. They create networks or connective empathy-harbours human beings. This type of empathy established by mirror neurons abolishes the physical barriers between different individuals. Like a wave it submerges many personalities simultaneously. Buddha, Christ and Gandhi were creators of waves of empathy. Empathy is a natural quality among our women folk. We built a predatory civilization, based on the male brain. Our females absorbed a predatory culture devised and spread by the males (Why socialism? by Einstein). So, wars and other types of violence are putting question marks on the future existence of humanity. In the personalities of the Buddha Christ and Gandhi we find a combination of the best of the male and female qualities. In the words of the Mahabharata, they are the **Mahajanans**. Our critical faculties must be fully awake and we should not blindly follow them. Broadly speaking, they are our guides.

Lack of empathy is leading us to the mass killing of animals and the suffering inflicted on our women folk. We adore and imitate the luxurious life styles of the rich and the powerful. Today our media creates our predatory **Mahajanans** who are responsible for the present climate change.

The problems that afflict humanity are of two types. There are problems that require immediate attention. There are other problems that are of a permanent nature. All our political theoreticians deal only with the first group of problems. In the field of science they are influenced by ideas of classical physicists. In the words of Erwin Schrodinger, a Nobel Prize winner, 'The classical physicist's expectation, far from being trivial, is wrong' (Chapter-II - What is Life?). The ideas of quantum physics are yet to find a fertile soil in the field of theory. Quantum physics stresses connectivity and network in the field of nature. Leading computer scientists of the world have found that nature's evolution process still remains unexplainable. That nature has perfected a process of evolution is beyond doubt.

Network and connectivity are qualities found in the female brain (The Female Brain - Louann Brizendine, M.D.) The male brain thrives under competition, instinctively plays rough, and is obsessed with rank and hierarchy. The male brain has an area for sexual pursuit that is 2.5 times larger than that of the female brain, consuming him with sexual fantasies about female body parts. The male brain is a lean, mean problem-solving machine that uses analytical brain structures, not an emotional one, to find solutions. For evolution to work properly we need a combination of both the brains, but the culture of humanity can only rely on the right emotional factors that nature provides in the proper form in the female brain.

The only society in the world which was free from wars, religions and classes (no ruling class) was the rationalist (Hethuvadi) Yogi society of the Sindhu civilization. Our knowledge of this society is scanty.

Nature's greatest gifts to humanity are two. They are the creation of human geni (the greatest flowering of human genius in a society where free individualism is nursed carefully: *discrete entities* in quantum theory: Schrödinger) and the prevalence of many types of deep empathy in the fields of relations with all living beings (**togetherness** of two particles at astronomical distance from one another in quantum theory: *mirror neurons* in psychology: V. S. Ramchandran calls them Gandhi neurons). No predatory society is capable of full-filling either of these two great nature-directed needs. The evils of present society are due to empathy-deficit in all countries. The knowledge of Yoga as preached by the Buddha comes nearest to full filling these two great needs of human society. Next to the Buddha we have Mahatma Gandhi. Both of them are children of the great Sindhu society. Gandhi was influenced by Jainism as well as the teachings of Christ.

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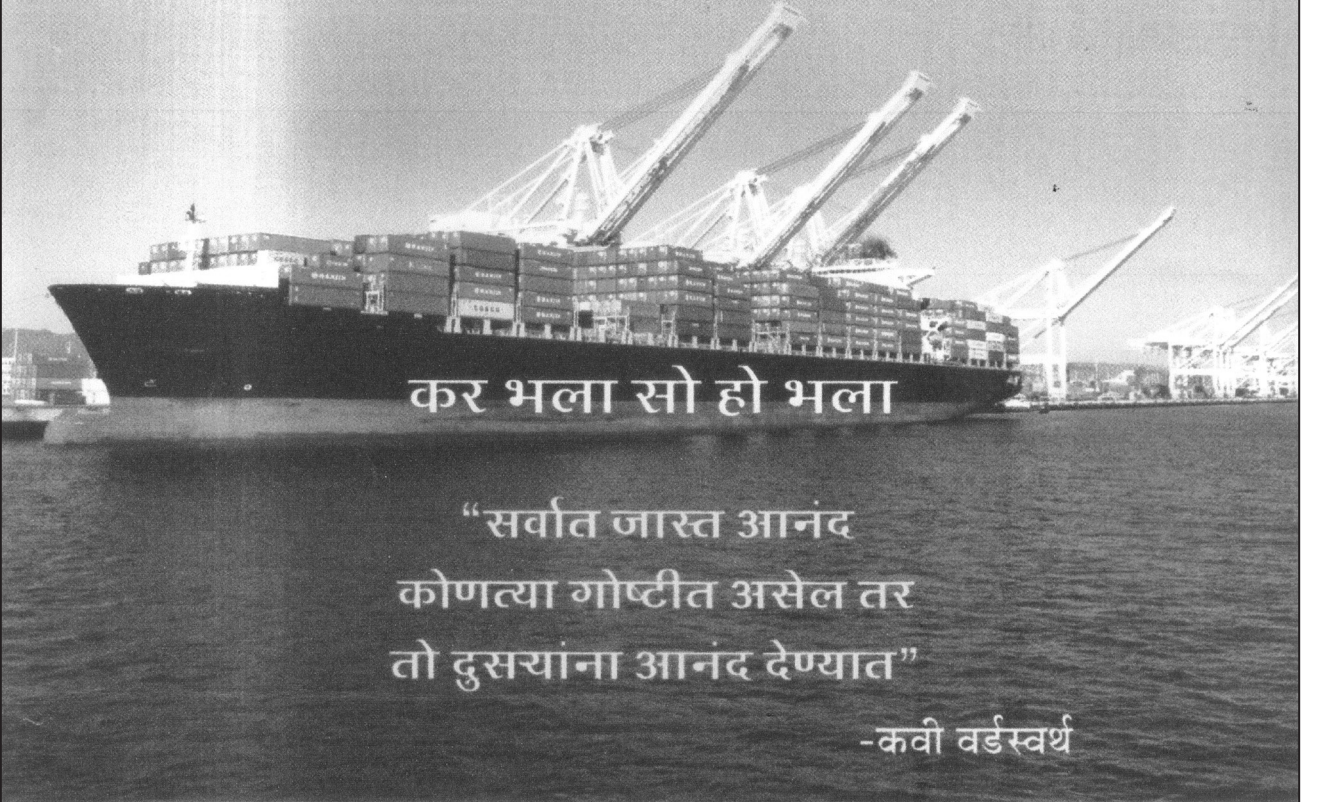
हार्दिक शुभेच्छा !

शतकाकडे वाटचाल करणारी व कामगारांचा आवाज बुलंद करणारी
मुंबई बंदरातील पहिली कामगार संघटना

मुंबई पोर्ट ट्रस्ट, डॉक अँड जनरल एम्प्लॉईज युनियन

(स्थापना: ३ मे १९२०)

(सलग्न: हिन्द मजदूर सभा)



कर भला सो हो भला

“सर्वात जास्त आनंद
कोणत्या गोष्टीत असेल तर
तो दुसऱ्यांना आनंद देण्यात”

-कवी वर्डस्वर्थ

ॲड. एस्. के. शेट्ये

अध्यक्ष

एस्. आर. अपराज

सरचिटणीस

पोर्ट ट्रस्ट कामगार सदन,

नवाब टँक रोड, माझगांव, मुंबई-४०० ०१०

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Economics: Integrated with Ecology

Bharat Dogra

While Mahatma Gandhi's role as a freedom fighter and social reformer has been widely recognised, his contribution as an ecologist who foresaw with remarkable foresight the environmental crisis of the coming decades has been generally neglected. Of course the word ecology was not much in vogue then, yet Gandhi's vision of a better world includes a very clear understanding of what needs to be done for the protection of environment.

In this context two key statements of Gandhi need to be emphasised. The first statement provides a guideline on how development choices should be made. The Mahatma told policy makers and others that whenever you are in doubt "recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him? Will it restore him to control over his own life and destiny?" In other words, the needs of the poorest people should receive the topmost priority in development planning.

The second key statement of Mahatma Gandhi tells us that while the basic needs of all people should be met, there should also be consciousness regarding placing a limit on consumption. Although the pressures on nature had not become so acute in Gandhi's lifetime and there were no scares either of ozone depletion or climate change, this wise man had the foresight to see that our planet's capacity is not infinite and some restraint will have to be placed on how much pressure we can place on its air, water, forests and minerals

Mahatma Gandhi said, "Nature has enough to satisfy the needs of everyone but nothing to satisfy the greed of even a few." Due to the unequal distribution of power, it is possible for a relatively small number of people to corner an extremely large share of the earth's resources. According to recent data, (United Nations Development Programme, 1996), the net worth of 358 richest people of the world is equal to the combined income of the poorest 45% of the world's population -2.3 billion people. The richest 20% of the world's people corner 85% of the world's income. People in industrial countries consume nearly nine times as much commercial energy per capita as people in developing countries, though they constitute only a fifth of the world's population. It is therefore clear that the pressures on environment are largely a result of the excessive consumption of the richest 20 per cent of world's people.

Mahatma Gandhi stated quite clearly that the greed of even a few people, their tendency to pursue a highly affluent and wasteful life-style, can prove very destructive to nature. This is evident today in the global warming crisis, very high levels of air and water pollution and various other alarming aspects of ecological ruin. The Gandhian solution to the environment crisis is clear - curb this greed of the few.

If we can convince the richest people of the desirability of not increasing their consumption and accumulation beyond a point, then this will reduce the pressure on nature and help us to protect environment. In addition it will become easier to meet the needs of the poor.

In view of the enormity of the environment crisis, it is important today to speak of an 'environment space' within which economic and industrial activity should be contained if it is not to become destructive. When the richest people vacate some of this space by reducing their consumption, then it becomes easier to meet the basic needs of poorest people.

The two most important challenges of our time are protecting environment and meeting the basic needs of all. The Gandhian response to both challenges is simple and similar - release resources from the grip of the very rich people so that the needs of the poor can be met.

The life-style of the richest people is attractive and so it soon becomes a model for others. Mahatma Gandhi said clearly that this is a model not worth emulating because it is destructive to nature. Instead he tried throughout his life to experiment with low-cost food, farming, education and medicare which could meet the needs of all people.

Mahatma Gandhi did not have access to the extensive data on ozone depletion, acid rain, biodiversity loss and climate change which is available to scientists and scholars today. But his quest for deeper truth of life had taken him to a higher state of understanding from where he could anticipate some of the greatest threats being faced by humanity. His understanding of the ecological crisis was much ahead of his times and is still of great relevance today in solving some of humankind's most pressing problems.

Book Review

The Last Word: by Tanika Sarkar

Book : The Phoenix Moment: Challenges Confronting the Indian Left

Author : Praful Bidwai. Publisher: Harper Collins. Pages: 600. Price: Rs 407

Massive research, penetrating analysis, strong and clear arguments and a sparkling narrative had always characterized Praful Bidwai's writings, from weekly columns to scholarly monographs. The qualities are more than evident in his last and posthumously published history of the Indian Parliamentary Left, from its inception in 1925, to the present. The first half covers colonial and immediate post-colonial times, and the second explores Kerala and West Bengal, both ruled by the Left for long stretches of time.

Each state gets two chapters, one to explain the Left's early achievements and the second to track its later debasement into patronage politics, insulated from mass movements. Bidwai is far more appreciative of the Left in Kerala, which it governed intermittently, than in West Bengal, which it ruled for 34 continuous years. Tripura, perhaps the most remarkable instance of Left governance is, unfortunately, missing.

The research is stupendous, spanning party archives — sadly, not many inner party documents, most of which are kept adamantly secret — newspapers, historical works, as well as analyses of Indian and global politics from diverse perspectives, and intellectual and political debates around socialist and Marxist theories. Bidwai's own intimate familiarity with all this adds an unusual historical and conceptual depth to the account. The mode of production debates of the 1970s, about whether to characterize the Indian economy as capitalist or as semi-feudal, for instance, are succinctly summarized in an appendix.

The book elaborates the current crisis and concludes with thoughtful and sound suggestions about how to overcome it — hoping that the Left is still capable of listening to them. The focus is on the CPI and the CPI(M) but very often they are intertwined with socialists, social movements, independent workers-organizations and left insurrectionaries-about all of which Bidwai was amazingly well-informed.

Surprisingly, few scholars have so far written a history

of the Indian Left. This 90-year-old history, ironically, co-terminous with that of the RSS, the Other of the Left however, holds an impressive record of anti-imperialist politics, massive working class and peasant mobilizations despite tremendous repression in colonial and early post-colonial times, significant cultural movements, insurrections as well as governance with a difference (for some time, at least) of three states, and the critical national role played by the Left as a major force of opposition. Bidwai provides a rich and complex account of this history.

This was a particularly difficult book to write when the Left seems to face something like a terminal crisis. For Bidwai, this is not just an electoral failure but an existential crisis of identity. Bidwai's narrative is tensely poised between affiliation and opposition, between fervent appreciation of Left achievements and bitter anger against its self-imposed limits — some of them conjectural, some mid or long-term and some structural, almost constitutive. Among the former would be what Jyoti Basu called the "historic blunder" of 1996, when the party prevented him from heading a government at the Centre. Bidwai invokes the missed chance somewhat repetitively. Factionalism, leading to the split of 1964, and to the recent inner-party violence in Kerala, would be another instance.

More serious than many other tactical blunders was the new industrial policy of 1994, an embrace of neoliberal economics and the China model, in obedience to national and multinational capitalist commands, and entailing ruthless violence against subaltern classes. The momentous change in policy orientation was adopted without any public debates on its necessity or considering alternative possibilities of development. This is also partly related to the deeper constitutive problem of Left adherence to the principle of "democratic centralism".

Another long-term problem lay with restless changes in patterns of political or electoral alliances, often dictated by Soviet calculations in earlier times, or with highly conflicting and incoherent stances on India's nuclear ambitions and nuclear energy. Bidwai shows how these flow from a seriously flawed understanding of ecological and human consequences and from privileging national ambitions over both concerns. He is particularly well informed about this issue.

Another serious problem has been the relative neglect of unorganized labor, especially agricultural labor in West Bengal. Fairly soon, land reforms degenerated into base-building among the small and prosperous peasantry alone. Panchayats were increasingly annexed to party politics. West Bengal has a poor showing for public health and education, for empowerment of women, the lower castes and Muslims. The celebrated Kerala model can boast of far more impressive social indicators of real progress but it, too, was exhausted by economic stagnation.

The most serious structural limit relates to the Left's crippling theoretical deficit. Since its birth, it has clung to Stalinist orthodoxy — the most impoverished version of Marxism — and isolated itself from far richer socialist and Marxist strands, as also from feminist and Dalit critical social theories. Consequently, it could not contribute to international communist doctrines from an Indian perspective.

At the same time, an obstinate fidelity to the Soviet line made it incapable of theorizing Indian political and social realities, adivasis, caste, gender, religion, communalism, the environment and the militarization of Kashmir and the Northeast.

In short, it developed no serious understanding of any major and relevant dimension of Indian experiences. This stands in puzzling contrast with its earlier formidable skills in mass mobilization. The Soviet collapse, consequently, deepened political incoherence. At present, there is no vision, only electoral calculations for recovery. Bidwai considers that Left governance, at its best, approximated the aspirations of Nehruvian secular nationalism: a strong developmentalist state with investments in public sector enterprises in large industries but offering little by way of social welfare or radical reform in fundamental class relations. As that vision eroded, the Left turned to economic conservatism instead of exploring new socialist or social democratic alternatives.

The Phoenix Moment, nonetheless, staunchly envisions the resurgence of a reinvented Left — without which, for Bidwai, India's future is doomed.

**Book : Excerpts from The Phoenix Moment:
Challenges Confronting the Indian Left,**

Praful Bidwai.

Published by Harper Collins, India, in October 2015.

India has long been a social-political oddity: a country with widespread poverty and wretched deprivation, but

where the underprivileged find no voice in most political parties; one of the world's fastest growing economies, where less than a tenth of the population has regular jobs and where a quarter-million farmers have recently committed suicide; a democracy with largely free and fair elections, which has failed to establish the rule of law and where human-rights violations are rampant amidst caste and religion driven hatred and vicious discrimination against women.

A pertinent question is why left-wing politics has not flourished in India as a vital source of legitimacy for parties to the extent that might be expected in a society with a million injustices and growing inequalities, recently worsened by Hindutva and neoliberal capitalism. Historically, left politics in India has shrunk in range and variety.

It was once a rainbow comprised of breathtakingly different currents, including Parliamentary and non-Parliamentary communist parties; socialists of different hues ranging from the Congress Socialist Party to the Gandhians, to the followers of the viscerally anti-Congress Ram Manohar Lohia. It also encompassed anti-caste movements with radical agendas associated with Ambedkar's Republican Party of India or later with the Dalit Panthers; and Maoists and Marxist-Leninist parties which believe in an insurrectionary seizure of power.

There also used to be independent groups such as the Peasants' and Workers' Party and Lal Nishan Party in Maharashtra or the Revolutionary Communist Party of India in West Bengal and Assam which set regionally limited agendas; there were currents like the Chhattisgarh MuktiMorchha of Shankar GuhaNiyogi which aimed to create embryos of workers' and peasants' republics; and there were many smaller progressive currents which aimed to rescue revolutionary Marxist politics from its 'distortions', active not just within the intelligentsia, but also in unions and other formations. The rainbow has contracted in size and lost some of its hues. Many political currents have shrunk in variety and waned, while a few new ones have taken root.

The socialists have long ceased to have a coherent organizational expression (barring the largely caste and communitybased, family-driven Samajwadi Party). But groupings like Samajwadi Samagam have grown. The once-strong PWP is now a feeble force. The CMM has split irrevocably. Liberal social democracy, always weak in India, which found expression in the Congress and other centrist parties, no longer exists as a force.

New differentiations have appeared within the Left spectrum, the most important of which is the division

between the party Left and non-party political Left, the latter comprised of ‘people’s movement’ structures and federations of civil society groups like the National Alliance of People’s Movements, National Fish-workers’ Forum, All India Union of Forest Working People, MazdoorKisan Shakti Sangathan, Indian Social Action Forum, New Trade Union Initiative, ShramikMukti Dal, New Socialist Initiative, Radical Socialist, and Campaign for Survival and Dignity.

The party Left is now reduced primarily to two currents: the mainstream Parliamentary Communist parties and their affiliates, and non-parliamentary Maoist or Marxist–Leninist groupings. The first is a Parliamentary alliance and campaigning bloc mainly comprised of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPI(M), the Communist Party of India (CPI), the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), and the All India Forward Bloc (FB), recently joined by the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist-Liberation) and Socialist Unity Centre of India (Communist).

The Maoist groupings – more than thirty at last count – are ideologically variegated and geographically dispersed, but the most important current is the Communist Party of India–Maoist, formed in 2004 after a merger between the People’s War group and the Maoist Communist Centre of India. It is particularly active in India’s well-forested and mineral-rich tribal heartland, which extractive capitalism wants to exploit rapaciously. Some eighty-odd districts there are declared by the Indian state as dangerously affected by ‘left-wing extremism’ where paramilitary troops and special police forces rule rather than the civilian administration. The Maoists have waxed and waned, and now seem to be in decline, with the recent arrest or effective immobilization of some of their top leaders.

The present book has an admittedly narrow focus: it deals primarily with the parliamentary communist parties. This focus arises from three factors. First, the mainstream bloc has had the longest and richest experience of trying to grapple with India’s bourgeois–liberal democratic system, which despite limitations, enjoys a fair degree of popular legitimacy, and offers opportunities for progressive change and potentially transformative politics. Parties working within the system face obvious constraints: of having to operate within the four corners of the Constitution, and to fight elections, which are increasingly becoming a Big-Money game. They also run the risk of being co-opted by the system and rendered utterly ineffective.

However, the greatest challenge for Left politics

in India lies precisely in the bourgeois-democratic arena, and the possibilities it contains both within the state and in society, the latter with its own institutions, organizations, and freedoms of association and action.

The Maoists, despite their admirable commitment and dedication, have totally retreated from this challenge. And the non-party political Left does not directly engage with it—often for well-considered reasons—through state-level participation, as distinct from popular education and mobilization, or advocacy and lobbying.

Second, the mainstream bloc is the biggest of all left currents, and has had the longest continuous organized existence, notwithstanding various splits, dissensions and mutual rivalries. It also shares many ideological and strategic premises, which are today in need of revision. If the Left summons up the will to revisit its strategic perspectives and undertake course correction, its relative cohesion and access to resources can reduce its vulnerability and offer it some protection. The opposite can happen if the bloc remains ideologically rigid. This book attempts to create a basis for understanding which way the mainstream Left might be headed.

Third, astonishing as this might seem, there is very little recent analytical literature on the mainstream Left at the national level—as distinct from state-specific studies and articles. The present book will hopefully help fill this void by combining an analysis of the state- and national-level performance of the left parties with a critical appraisal of their ideological premises, strategic perspectives, political mobilization approaches, and organizational doctrines and practices.

The real lessons, for the future lie in how well the mainstream Left acquits itself in the face of the challenge of working within the bourgeois-democratic system and uses the freedoms available within it to expand the space for radical politics, empower the exploited and oppressed, and work for a transition to a post-capitalist society. On test is the ability of its national leadership to overcome the grave crisis they confront today as the Left faces its Phoenix Moment.

This book was planned well before the downslide of India’s mainstream Communist parties became apparent in electoral terms. Indeed, it should have been written ten, if not twenty, years ago. It is a coincidence that it is being published just when the left parties find themselves in the grip of their worst-ever crisis. What is not a coincidence is the persistence of some of the long-term processes that drove my decades-long analytical interest in the Left – its ideological deficiencies, theoretical rigidity,

aridity in programme formulation, and undemocratic organizational practices.

A brief personal note is in order here. I have for more than four decades considered myself a socialist who broadly accepts Marx's analysis of capitalism. I was exposed to the working class movement in my student days in Bombay and worked with trade unions and Dalit youth in the slums of Matunga Labor Camp (a part of Dharavi). I never joined a left political party because I found none of them sufficiently undogmatic or open to new ideas—in particular receptive to my staunchly anti-Stalinist views—but I have worked closely and happily with members of a variety of left parties all my life.

In the early 1970s, I was associated with the Magowa Group and the *ShramikSanghatan* which was active among the Bhil tribals in northern Maharashtra, where I worked briefly. Later, I was also part of what mutated from the Revolutionary Bolshevik Circle to the Platform Tendency, based in Delhi, Bombay and Bangalore, which took theory extremely seriously and exposed its members to Marxism as an intellectual adventure—with

an amazingly rich repertoire of literature, views and ideas on a stunning variety of subjects.

I was fortunate enough to be able to research the history of the Indian communist and trade union movements of the 1940s, and also to combine this with union activism with outstanding labor organizers like D. Thankappan of the Kamani Workers' Union, and later, the Centre for Workers' Management. I spent a fruitful period in Europe in the late 1970s, and observed the communist parties as well as the then vibrant Far Left in France and Italy go through a fateful transition, which was, alas, aborted after the Soviet collapse. My education in science, technology, economics and philosophy, my interests in the social sciences, and my career in analytical journalism, helped me understand issues like ecology and energy and integrate some of the insights I thus gained into my understanding of socialism.

I can only hope that this book will persuade at least some readers to believe, like me, that the Left is indispensable to the health of Indian democracy. If it did not exist, we would have to invent it.

Western Railway Employees Union

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

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

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

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

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

(R.C. Sharma)
President

(J.R. Bhosale)
General Secretary

Twenty-fifth Year of Publication of JANATA

Dear Reader,

With the Republic Day in 1970 Janata will be entering the 25th year of its publication. During all these years Janata has been through many difficulties but has been able to survive and progress as an authentic voice of democratic socialism with the help of friends, authors, advertisers and above all, dear readers, with your co-operation.

Janata began its publication 24 years ago when Indian political consciousness was in its nascent emergence. Janata's desire was to bring to Indian politics a breath of fresh air and an enlightened articulation of modern thoughts so that along with nationhood the country could attain political maturity too. In all modesty Janata would like to claim that by providing a forum for the expression of new political thought, Janata has helped, week after week, in creating a climate for growth of secular and progressive forces.

In the last two decades, politics in India has undergone many a trial but it still continues to remain a loose fabric without any firm textural pattern, an inchoate exercise in parliamentary discipline. If a platform like Janata was necessary during the last two decades it is even more necessary today when we may truly be said to be at the cross-roads of our destiny, for the dispelling of intellectual apathy that has set in and for the awakening of a greater awareness of social responsibility among the people.

Indeed there is much scope for improvement in the get-up and in the content of Janata and we have been making efforts to that end. But to succeed in our efforts we need your participation. You can help us by (1) commenting on the issues, (2) sending your suggestions, (3) enrolling subscribers, (4) securing advertisements, (5) contributing articles, and (6) donating money.

May we request you to make your suggestions early? We propose to enter the silver jubilee year with a bumper special issue on January 26, 1970.

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Yours sincerely,

N. G. GORAY,

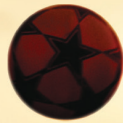
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The enemy within

S. Viswam

Like the oft-quoted saying, Pathankot is proving to be a mystery wrapped inside an enigma inside a riddle. Among those wondering about how a handful of Pakistanis managed to infiltrate a well-guarded air base and even transported a bulk of military hardware into the base and seized property inside was none else than the prime minister himself. How could this happen? wondered the rest of the country along with him.

Some answers are available after so many days. It is a bit galling to acknowledge the truth of those answers but there is no go. One of the answers is: the enemy within. Meaning that those within the air base helped the intruders to come in and did everything to facilitate their entry.

A farmer, according to a Tamil saying, installs a fence to safeguard and protect his produce in the field from intruders, but if the fence itself attacks the produce and destroys it, what can the farmer do? If Indian nationals working inside the air base turned so anti-national as to facilitate the way for a terrorist attack, what can one do?

Political leadership in Pakistan also appeared to have been taken by surprise by the Pathankot episode.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif bemoaned that the India-Pakistan bilateral normalization process was on the right track till Pathankot happened. Now, that process has been pushed back a few miles and uncertainty surrounds the prospects of foreign secretaries meeting. There is no talk of any interaction between the respective national security advisers either.

It is reported in the media that the worst fears of our national security agencies have come true. Investigations by the National Intelligence Agency have disclosed that a concertina wire atop the ten-foot high boundary wall of the airbase was cut from inside and not outside. This was found after the attack and when the position/condition in the snipped wire was examined. It has been explained that the state of the concertina wire which is damaged is different depending on whether it is cut from the outside or from inside. The massive effort put in by the NIA to get at the truth paid off. The spot where the wire was cut was dark and it was picked to launch the attack by those who had prior knowledge that the area would be dark. Pending more detailed and elaborate forensic tests on the concertina wire,

the NIA has decided that there is indication of an insider role in the attack. The NIA is currently sifting through call records to ascertain if there is an insider feeding information and arranging logistic support to the terrorists.

The findings in Pathankot lead to the suspicion that armed terrorist groups based in Pakistan, and some in Afghanistan, are able to roam around freely in the border areas of India-Pakistan and gather intelligence. Media reports suggest that organized attempts are being made to plant informers in the army by the IS (Islamic State) and ISI of Pakistan. Recently, an agent of the ISI who posed as a labourer in a field and was seen taking photographs of the Pathankot air base and surrounds was caught. Interestingly, the

government of India is co-opting members of the Muslim clergy and Muslim community heads in its efforts to counter the campaign of radicalization of the Muslim youth by the IS. The Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh met many clerics recently and requested them to use their influence to ensure that the youth are not misled by the IS propaganda preaching violent extremism.

It is no secret that Pakistan actively supports, sustains and encourages anti-Indian terrorism exported from its own soil. Top leaders say that Pakistan will not allow its soil to facilitate such an export but actions belie assurances. Islamabad also appears worried that the country is acquiring a reputation as a source and centre for

international terrorism. A Pakistani parliamentary panel has asked the government to avoid “encouraging” militant groups in Kashmir and also take action against outfits involved in terror acts in order to dispel international concern that the country was not doing enough to deter armed group from attacking Indian positions within Kashmir. The committee has drafted a new set of guidelines influencing the country’s India policy. Four key principles have been identified: reciprocity, reduction, resumption and result. The committee wants the continuation of comprehensive engagement with India on all outstanding issues, to begin with on Kashmir, water, trade and culture and communication.

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Between the Lines

The story of two Abdullahs

Kuldip Nayar

Farooq Abdullah has said in an article in a well-produced Urdu journal from Srinagar that his late father, Sheikh Abdullah, would have been happy to know that the Kashmir youth was picking the gun for demanding their rights. This was nothing but Farooq’s own fig of imagination.

Even the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Zulfikhar Ali Bhutto, had a similar approach. He did send infiltrators into Kashmir in the hope that the Kashmiris would rise against India and join him to demand accession to Pakistan.

He turned out to be wrong. The Kashmiris, sufi by nature, were

against fanaticism and the criteria of religion, that is Islam, to decide accession. The Pakistani infiltrators were detected by the Kashmiris themselves and handed over to the Indian army.

I knew Sheikh Saheb fairly well. He was the first person to come to my hotel as soon as I informed his office about my presence in Srinagar after my three-month detention during the emergency. I remember his words: *Ab tum bhi Haji ho javoge* (You have also become a Haji), meaning thereby a jail pilgrim.

The Sheikh was referring to my detention at the Tihar jail because I had written strongly against

Indira Gandhi’s authoritarian rule. This reminded the Sheikh Sahib of his detention by India’s first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru at Kodaikanal in Tamil Nadu. He was so close to Nehru that he would stay at his house whenever he came to Delhi. Even after the detention, he stayed with him because Nehru admitted his mistake and apologized.

Those who are saying all the time that Kashmir is an integral part of India are wrong in the sense that the state of Jammu and Kashmir enjoys autonomy as enunciated in Article 370 which says that except the three subjects—foreign affairs, defense and communications—the other articles of the constitution that gave

powers to the Central Government would be applied to Jammu and Kashmir only with the concurrence of the state's constituent assembly.

In other words, because of these constitutional provisions, the State of Jammu & Kashmir enjoyed the type of autonomy which other states don't. Subsequently, the Sheikh Sahib had the state constituent assembly pass a resolution that the state of Jammu and Kashmir had acceded to India irrevocably. Before doing so, he sent Sadiq Sahib, who became the state chief minister later, to Pakistan to assess what kind of policy Islamabad was going to pursue.

After hearing Sadq's view on the policy which Rawalpindi wanted to follow, the Sheikh Sahib, a product of national struggle to obtain independence from the maharaja and the British, took no time in joining India because his heart was for a pluralistic state. A democratic India, where there would be religious freedom, was the obvious choice for him because Pakistan was wallowing in Islam at that time.

With the passage of time, the Sheikh became the only liberal voice which could be heard clearly in the midst of Hindu and Muslim challenges and counter-challenges. I recall when I was released from the Tihar Jail, my co-prisoners asked me to visit Srinagar and request the Sheikh to speak against the emergency because he was respected all over the country.

When I met him at Sringar, the Sheikh saw the point and issued a statement, criticizing the emergency in an unequivocal language. Mrs. Indira Gandhi traced the statement to my equation with the Sheikh.

But what mattered was boosting the morale of those detained during the emergency. The entire nation had fallen silent and was afraid to speak out at that time. It had lost the sensibility to differentiate between the wrong and the right, moral and immoral.

Whenever he spoke the entire India listened to him because his statements transcended the state boundary. In the process, he translated the real sentiments of people. So much so that even political parties in the opposition lapped up whatever he said because he kept India above the state's interests because he had the aura of a tall leader who did not get into pettiness of politics.

Farooq Abdullah has tried to dwarf the Sheikh's stature by restricting him to Kashmir. He would have admonished New Delhi for creating such conditions in the state that the Kashmiris were forced to pick up the guns because New Delhi failed to make good the promise: the centre will have only three subjects, defense, foreign affairs and communications, and the rest will be in the domain of the state.

Farooq Abdullah's earlier statement was constructive. He said that India should recognize the line of control as the international border and allow Islamabad to integrate the Pakistan occupied Kashmir (POK) which is at present under the Pakistani army. In fact, Farooq has hit the nail on its head because both countries have clashed with each other often on the violation of the LoC.

Whatever their strategies or aspirations, the two sides should face the fact: the line of control is

the international border. Both India and Pakistan have fought two wars in trying to resolve the border issue on their own. They cannot afford to have another war, particularly when both have nuclear weapons.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has done well in allaying the fears of India on the Pathankot incident. He has asked for more details because probably he found the leads that have been provided by India are not adequate. He has done well in also detaining Masood Azhar who was also behind the Mumbai attacks.

It is healthy development that the meeting of foreign secretaries was rescheduled and not cancelled altogether as was feared after the Pathankot attack. New Delhi also seems to appreciate the pressure under which Nawaz Sharif is functioning because the last word is still with the army. The Pakistan army chief's importance can be seen from the fact that Nawaz Sharif carried him to Iran and Saudi Arabia for mediation between them.

I feel sad to see Nawaz Sharif giving an equal protocol to the army chief in every meeting that he attends. The tragedy in a third world country is that once the armed forces become a part of the government, they do not go back to the barracks.

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Myanmar's travails to democracy

Mrinal K. Biswas

Burma renamed Myanmar is a kite-shaped landmass on India's easternmost border having an on-and-off relationship with our country. Last November's elections have brought to the fore this country with Burmese population in the main having with them 100 ethnic groups. Apart from the elections, India's counter-insurgency attack last June to neutralize a militant Naga group making Myanmar a springboard of violent action against an Indian army contingent in Manipur has enlivened our neighbourly interest once more of this Buddhist country.

Isolationist Burmese population and its leadership have rarely reached out to the world beyond borders and are inflicted by ethnic strifes akin to that of caste diversities in India. It was the Socialists in Burma who broke new grounds post-colonial era.

Socialists' nostalgia about Burma is no less noted in this context as the first meet of the Asian Socialist Conference (ASC) was held in Rangoon (now Yangon) in January 1953 followed by the second ASC in Bombay's K C Collage in November in 1956. While Burma's U Ba Swe became the ASC chairman Madhu Limaye, later replaced by Madhav Gokhale, took positions in the ASC secretariat at Rangoon as joint secretaries. ASC was formed by initiatives of the Socialist parties of Burma, Indonesia and India – all emerging out in flying colours from anti-colonial struggles in their respective

countries. Incidentally Jayaprakash Narayan, Rammonohar Lohia and Asoka Mehta represented Praja Socialist Party in the ASC in the first conference in which total 177 delegates and fraternal guests from the west end of Asia like Egypt to the southeastern leg of Asia like the Phillippines. Burma's Rangoon emerged as the hub of the Asian Socialist leaderships away from the Eurocentric Socialist International (SI) and the Burmese city turned out as an important centre of the Left international movement distinct from Moscow-led Comintern and Mao brand of communism.

Vicissitudes of fortunes hit the promising Socialists soon after. Of the three initiator Socialist parties India's PSP suffered splits continually to be ultimately engulfed chiefly by caste politics leaving splinter groups in the field. In Indonesia and Burma, the military rules set at naught political party functions not in sync with the rulers in uniform. ASC went into oblivion.

Excruciating experiences of struggle for restoration of democracy in Myanmar continued for long 50 years. This was actually the continuation of the struggle for independence after the British annexation of Burma in 1886 to be immediately made it a British India province but separated from India in 1937 to be ultimately conferred independence in January 1948 soon after end of the British rule in India thereby signaling a death blow to British imperialism

as a consequence of World War II. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose led Indian National Army's (INA) landing in Burma along with Axis power Japanese land forces laid bare the utter futility of British colonial primacy in Asia.

Immediate post-war, the Socialist leaders Ba Swe and Kyaw Yein moved for cooperation with other Asian Socialists as early as 1945. This was indeed a sign of end of xenophobia in Burma, for little over a decade, though. On the other horizon, tortuous developments in the international communist movement smarting under firm control of Stalin and Moscow tried to let the side down for other forces as a consequence of which the Burmese communists remained firmly in tune with Moscow-led Comintern or Cominform. Political turmoils in Burma saw successive events like assassination of Aung San, U Nu becoming Prime Minister and Army takeovers in 1960s with a significant international exposure when U Thant was thrust in the United Nations as the world body's Secretary General during 1961-71. Then Burma turned into a closed, cursed country under the inexorable military rule. For half a century.

The military rule continued in Burma for half a century. Resistance movements against army rulers failed as they crumbled in other parts of Asia, also. The Socialists suffered most and frittered away. The present writer had a tangential look in Burma developments in the sixties when he accompanied a little

nevous Htun Aung in his Calcutta programme fighting his fear of attacks from alien sources. Burmese Socialist Htun Aung was then a secretary of International Union of Socialist Youth (IUSY) based in Vienna, a wing of the Socialist International.

Burma, by then renamed Myanmar, drew world attention once again at the return of Aung San Suu Kyi from England who came to see her ailing mother in 1988 and stayed back in response to the call of anti-dictatorship movements who rallied around her. Suu Kyi being the daughter of assassinated Aung San became the natural leader in fight against the military might but had to leave behind her own family in England. Series of her arrests, house arrests followed without any lax of her fight for democracy. This earned Suu Kyi the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991.

International pressure failed and the Burmese junta ignored the 2011 election results which gave Suu Kyi-led National League for Democracy (NLD) a clear lead over the army-sponsored United Solidarity Development Party (USDP). But the third time's peoples' verdict in November last gave too strong a message against continuance of army rule. (First was the constitutional referendum in May 2008). NLD won 225 seats out of 330 elective posts in the (lower) House of Representatives in which 25 per cent of the total 440 seats are reserved for the army men. Army's political outfit USDP will thus have 110 seats in the lower House including 30 seats they got through the hustings. In the (upper) House of Nationalities NLD secured 136 seats leaving 12 for USDP but the men in uniform will occupy 56 seats

with 20 per cent of the whole upper House remaining in the names of army personnel, because of the peculiar constitutional provisions framed by the military junta. The constitution has also provided such provisions as to prevent Suu Kyi from becoming President as the highest post is debarred for persons having foreign nationals as spouses or children. The army is ready for a change but in its own terms. The army wants a 'disciplined democracy' in Myanmar in contrast to parliamentary democracy which reminds one of Ayub Khan's 'guided democracy' in the late fifties of Pakistan.

The world is anxiously awaiting the future course of events in Myanmar. India is more anxious as her 'Look East policy' nuanced now as 'Act East move' will take important shapes in course of developments in Myanmar. Emerging world power China is not happy with NLD win as evident from that country's official mouthpiece Global Times warning against Myanmar moving closer to the USA which in effect means India as well. Indian concern stems from the fact that China made serious headways in Myanmar under military regime. Splinter ethnic groups had made forays from the Myanmar border into Indian territories in Manipur, Mizoram and other regions not without the knowledge of China and the Myanmar military rulers. Indian para-military counter attack against their recent Manipur venture surely will not miss the attention of both the neighbours.

In the midst of all these, the aggressive Buddhist clergy in Myanmar surprisingly have shed their earlier pro-democracy stand

and is now opposed to 'soft' Suu Kyi, to the comfort of the army.

The clergy is also strongly opposed to giving voting rights to the Muslim population who counts only four per cent in Myanmar. The Muslims were indeed disenfranchised in the recent November elections. The Rohingya Muslims densely concentrated in Rakhine province are adversely targeted by the clergy and about one lakh of them left Myanmar by boats to hostile atmospheres in neighbouring countries. This has a direct, though mild implication for India. At Kharagarh in West Bengal's Burdwan district the secret machinery of Muslim extremist Jamaitul Mujahidin Bangladesh built up an arsenal and its secret plan revealed that this group targeted Bangladesh and win over the Rohingya Muslims of Myanmar for a greater Muslim landmass on India's eastern border.

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Wither Economic Growth?

Pannalal Surana

Once upon a time, Davos was a highly coveted place. Annual or biennial World Economic Forum would be hitting headlines all over the world. Heads of States, or prime ministers/chief ministers would line up to greet big shots from industry, commerce and IT. Economists and journalists would, for days together, indulge in painting glamorous graphics of the plans of the bigwigs.

Now the charm has withered away. No leading politician had attended the Forum at Davos held last month. True, a couple of Robots were very graciously greeting the participants. The latter appeared engaged in congenial dialogues about how to forge collaborations to tide over waves of recession emanating from Europe and China. One participant noted that hardly

about 35 per cent participants were saying that their business would grow or expand. In one of the papers presented before the gathering, it was stated that about five million persons were likely lose their jobs during the next five years. So it would not be only jobless growth, it would be a job-swallowing growth. High-tech automation has gathered such high speed that production may increase but consumption would not. Because the purchasing power in the hands of the working class would deplete.

Back home, there is a report that more than half the lands acquired for MIDCs and SEZs are lying unutilized. Industries Minister Nirmala Sitaraman has forwarded a proposal to the Finance Minister and the P.M., to extend various tax concessions to the units that may

come in SEZs and also relax the condition that only, export oriented plants be located there. What a parody played over the greatly advertised schemes!

And yet our great Prime Minister is asserting his determination to pursue the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor. Under that scheme, it is proposed to acquire 3.5 lakh hectares of farm lands. It is estimated that, on an average, four persons are engaged over one hectare. If about a million persons would be deprived of their means of livelihood, can they be absorbed in the industrial units that may come up there?

All political parties who hold welfare of the common man close to their chest should launch a vigorous struggle over these issues.

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The Road Beyond Paris Summit For Checking Climate Change

Bharat Dogra

The Paris Agreement (reached after protracted two-week negotiations at the United Nations Climate Summit) concluded on a note of congratulatory messages by world's leaders. The French President Francois Hollande was almost ecstatic as he hailed the assembled delegates, "You've done it - reached an ambitious agreement, a binding agreement, a universal agreement. Never will I be more able to express more gratitude to a conference. You can be proud then

to stand before your children and grand-children."

President Obama called the Agreement "a tribute to American leadership" - making the USA a world leader in fighting climate change!

However several independent experts including climate scientists were more cautious in their evaluation of the Agreement. They welcomed it but at the same time

pointed out that we still lack a detailed roadmap for adequate cuts in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. If we ask a very pointed question - after the Paris Agreement do we have a foolproof guarantee of GHG emission cuts that are adequate to reduce global temperature rise to 1.5 degree Celsius, then the answer is clearly negative. The most that can be said is that if the Paris Agreement has a very satisfactory follow-up, then the chances of this will increase.

Of course the ability of 196 countries to negotiate for two weeks and issue an agreement on some basic issues is by itself an admirable effort. This also helps to focus public attention on this most critical issue. So while we should be on the whole positive about the Paris outcomes it is unjustified to exaggerate what has been achieved as this will draw attention away from the more urgent tasks that are needed.

The most basic task of ensuring that the objective of meeting the basic needs of all people is reconciled with the objective of adequate time-bound reduction of GHG emissions has still not been properly attempted, let alone achieved. This is why there are misgivings that as the 'carbon-space' is pre-empted by the richer nations and people, poorer people will not be able to meet their basic needs. The principle of 'climate justice' may get lip-service, but it has not been worked out in a detailed plan that can be implemented in the near future at the world level.

This cannot be achieved in isolation but will necessarily involve greater equality at the international

level as well as within nations. This has to be accompanied with a large heartedness and a willingness to think beyond narrow interests. But what was visible at the Paris Summit as well as at several other recent summits is the persistent self-interest driven actions of the more rich and dominant countries. The world is moving towards greater inequalities. To resolve climate change, however, we need the base of a much-more equality based world.

Narrow selfish attitudes are also evident in the efforts to make high profits even from life-saving technologies that are needed for reducing GHG emissions. A similar, more obvious trend was seen earlier while denying several essential, life-saving medicines to critically ill patients at a fair price. Now new emerging high-profit areas are being identified as the agenda of climate change depicts which advanced technologies will be most in demand in the near future.

Another factor is the increasing threat of war and strife as well as the related issue of the production of heavy and small arms. This, itself

is a very big factor in high GHG emissions. This is one aspect of high emissions that can be reduced very rapidly but for this we have to move towards a more peaceful world quickly as time is running out. What we have actually seen in recent times is the entirely avoidable and unnecessary escalation in tension and strife in many areas.

It is of course over-simplistic and unrealistic to say that the crisis of climate change can be resolved without simultaneously also resolving the other basic issues of justice and peace. It is difficult to visualize a situation in which violence and wars are increasing, the world is becoming more unequal and at the same time GHG emissions are reduced adequately. On the other hand the reduction of GHG emissions become much more possible in a peaceful and equal world, as well as a world in which simplicity and frugality are accepted as a desirable life-style.

Such wider issues need to get increasing attention so that these wider concerns can be incorporated in the agenda of tackling climate change effectively.

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

by
Rohini Gawankar

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Apology

We made a serious mistake in the article titled Criticizing Gandhi – A note on Historiography, Politics and Method in the Republic number. We failed to print the notes at the end of the article. I apologize on behalf of Janata. However, these are printed in this issue. Any reader who wants to read the article together with the notes, the Janata will be very happy to send soft or hard copy if the reader gives his email id or postal address.

----- Editor

Footnotes of Criticizing Gandhi – A note on Historiography, Politics and Method

¹ The Congress Socialist group made significant contribution in the Kisan movement and in trade unionism but without a diminished emphasis on the nationalist struggle.

¹ Major Jaipal Singh writes in *In the Battle for Liberation*, (National Book Centre, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 16-18) of an organizing committee created in February 1942 with himself as convenor to “educate the Indian officers politically...”. On August 25, 1942 “the All-India Body” of this organization met at Delhi. Jaipal Singh says (p.40): “The consensus of opinion was in favour of immediately giving a call to revolt. I opposed it from the out set. Eventually everyone present agreed with me”. Major Jaipal Singh, no doubt rendered other useful service in the course of the national struggle. But it was left to others outside the CPI, belonging, like Pannalal Dasgupta to the Anushilan and Jugantar circles, to seek, like Dasgupta, who managed to enlist in the army in 1939, to instigate a rebellious spirit within it during the War. (See *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 1, Institute of Historical Studies, Calcutta, 1972, p.369).

¹ It would be surprising if unexamined criticism, once made, were not also circulated uncritically. The first volume of

the delightful collection *Women Writing in India* Tharu Susie, and Lalitha, K., (ed), Vol.1, Oxford University Press, Delhi 1993) is refreshing because it does not suffer overly from the indiscriminate urge to run down the nationalist movement in order to justify the pre-1947 CPI or related orthodoxies. However, this cannot be said of volume 2, which in a lengthy introduction makes its peace with these orthodoxies by uncritically repeating them. The second volume (Tharu, Susie and Lalitha, K. (ed), *Women Writing in India* Vol. II, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1995) is marred by remarks like the following in a footnote (p.57):

¹ “The naval mutiny of February 1946, for example is estimated at its height to have involved twenty thousand sailors and drew support in Bombay, for instance, from crowds who thronged to cheer them and merchants who threw open their shops, inviting the mutineers to take what they needed, as well as from many trade unions who downed tools in support. But both Gandhi and Vallabhabhai Patel were uncompromisingly hostile. Gandhi chided the mutineers for having set a bad and unbecoming example for India, while Patel wrote, ‘Discipline in the Army cannot be tampered with. . . we will want an Army even in free

India’. (Sumit Sarkar, pp. 423-425). Gyanendra Pandey quotes a letter in which the Congress High Command reprimanded the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh for having inaugurated an exhibition that contained photographs of police atrocities”.

The assurances given to the mutineers by the Congress are not mentioned. But leave that aside. Even otherwise, no questions are asked and no assumptions examined. For how could Pandey and Sarkar have set up misleading signposts? How could the vanguard of history be mistaken? Although the analogy is not exact, one wonders what the African National Congress and Nelson Mandela would have done if the Umkhonto we Sizwe, the military arm of the African National Congress, had launched, on its own, a major rebellion just when talks for transfer of power were to begin with de Klerk’s administration in South Africa.

¹ See Judith Brown, *Gandhi’s Rise to Power: Indian Politics 1915-1922*, Cambridge, 1972, p.190.

¹ The reference to the “bright lights of the West” is in relation to a strategic silencing, muting or de-fanging impact that Western academic publishers and universities may often have on academic writing and publishing

in matters of vital interest to their home countries.

¹ Anglocentricism is used here to depict tendencies and writings representing British colonial or imperial interests and points of view whether contemporaneously or currently and regardless of whether these are represented by British or by other writers.

¹ An account of these events is available in a letter dated 21 July, 1937 from Jawaharlal Nehru to Rajendra Prasad [see Valmiki Chowdhury, (ed), *Dr. Rajendra Prasad: Correspondence and Select Documents*, Vol.1, 1934-38, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1984, pp.63-67]. According to Nehru, initially in the election campaign both the League and the Congress opposed the Agriculturist Party of the “big Zamindars”. But during the election campaign the League took a “reactionary turn”. The “outstanding and most powerful reactionary elements seemed to gain the upper hand”. The President of the UP League Board, the Raja of Salempur, even joined the non-Congress interim ministry that was first formed after the elections. Many Muslims including the Jamiat-ul-ulema-e- Hind disapproved of the League’s methods and of the way the League fought the Bundelkhand election in 1937. This seems to have affected negatively their subsequent attitude towards League leaders and the talks that took place between the Congress and Choudhury Khaliqzaman of the League. The Congress raised the stakes, imposing difficult conditions, and settlement possibilities receded.

Khaliqzaman, in his *Pathway to Pakistan*, [Longmans, London (Pakistan Branch), 1961 pp.166-167] refers to ‘misguided action’ of the ulema and to the role of Narendra Deva, Dr. Ashraf, Narbada Prashad Singh and Purushottam Das Tandon at this stage in queering the pitch for an alliance. Mohan Lal Saksena, a former President of the U.P. Congress Committee who was in favour of an alliance, writes in “*Is That To Be The End of Our Lives? Labour?*” (Ballot Publishing House, New Delhi, 1963 p.95) that the Socialists and the Jamiat-ul-Ullema (sic) did not let the Congress have any truck with the League...”. According to M. Hashim Kidwai, the proposal fell through because “of the stiff opposition of the Congress Socialists led by Acharya Narendra Deva, Babu Purushottam Das Tandon and Congress communists headed by Dr. Ashraf and Dr. Z.A. Ahmad. Nehru thought that the U.P. Congress having led the first mass agrarian movement in the country was now set for radical land reforms and the inclusion of the moderate-cum-conservative Muslim League elements would moderate the economic and social radicalisms of the Congress...” (See M Hashim Kidwai, *Rafi Ahmad Kidwai*, Publications Division, New Delhi, 1986, p.104).

¹ Prof. M. Mujeeb writes of the 1937-39 events in U.P:

“Further, while on the one hand the will of the majority seemed to be an argument which swept everything before it, an attempt was made by the Congress, through a programme of mass contact, to drive a wedge between

the class and the Muslim masses. The land reforms that formed an essential part of Congress policy, though intended in fact to benefit the farmer, though intended in fact to benefit the farmer, threatened to deprive the class of its only means of sustenance. It was inevitable that the class should retaliate as vigorously and as viciously as it could”. (See M. Mujeeb, “The Partition of India in Retrospect”, in Philips, C.H. and Wainwright, Mary Doreen (eds), *The Partition of India: Policies and Perspectives 1935-47*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1970, p.412).

¹ Subhas Bose to Jinnah, July 25, 1938, Netaji Research Bureau, *Crossroads*, Asia publishing House, Bombay, 1962, p.41.

¹ The need for historical scholarship to develop counter-weights to the prevailing Anglocentricism, a phenomenon understandable upto a point, but unnatural as the dominant influence, seems clear enough to this writer. As a sample of such history writings, consider the following instance, one of many but again from Judith Brown. The British regime’s violence in Punjab, including the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 1919 had inflamed all India, and led Maulana Mohamed Ali, for example, to speak of a united Hindu-Muslim national bond having been strengthened and created by the blood jointly shed. Jallianwala Bagh became a reference point for the national struggle and for Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims alike. Brown nevertheless presents the “issue of military violence in the Punjab” as one “on which Hindus were particularly sensitive”. (Brown, Judith, *Gandhi: Prisoner of*

Hope, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1990, p.143). To point out the error of this would probably be akin to “nationalist hagiography” to which attention has been drawn at p.3 in Brown’s introduction. “Imperial justification” has also been mentioned in the introduction as a bias to be avoided but it is clear that Indian historians must seek out in addition, if they must at all, non-imperial centres of study. Perhaps Dublin? Singapore? Durban? Using British libraries is one thing, submitting theses on modern Indian history to British universities is not unproblematic, nor is submitting to the subliminal messages of Anglo-centric writers, overfree with labels like ‘Hindu’ or whatever. Such statements, fit snugly with the propensity of Anglo-centric scholars to deny Indian nationalism. Besides, they suit both *Hindutva* and the Muslim communal tradition. It enables the latter to define itself and the former to seek to appropriate Indian nationalism. In the second round this affects many Indian writers who should know better. In Rajmohan Gandhi’s generally painstaking work, *The Good Boatman* (Viking, Penguin Books, New Delhi 1995 p. 280), M.K. Gandhi takes to the dress not of an “Indian peasant” or Gujarat peasant” but to that of a “Hindu peasant”. But examine the photograph of Allah Ditta of Gujranwala, Punjab “wounded in leg by bomb from aeroplane”, reproduced in 1920 in the report of the commissioners appointed by the Congress to inquire into the Punjab wrongs. Is Gandhi’s dress strikingly different?

Division, New Delhi, Vol. 27, p.268.

¹ See my article, “Viceroy Reading’s Offer: Barmecide’s Feast”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Bombay, November 25, 1995.

¹ See Baren Ray, “Gandhiji’s Campaign Against Untouchability, 1933-34”, *Mainstream*, New Delhi, October 1, 1994, p.21.

¹ See Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1958 p. 324 and pp. 324-343

¹ *CWMG*, Vol. 34, pages 185-186.

¹ *CWMG*, Vol. 33 pp. 153-154. Of Burma, Gandhi wrote on March 10, 1927 “I have no doubt in my mind that Burma cannot form part of India under Swaraj”.

¹ See, for example, Peter Ward Fay, *India’s Forgotten Army*, Rupa & Co., New Delhi, 1994 who in an otherwise meritorious work, emphasizes the difference but not the degree of subsequent convergence, even closeness, between Gandhi and Bose.

¹ *CWMG*, Vol. 76, p.438.

¹ *Selected Speeches of Subhas Chandra Bose*, Publications Division, New Delhi (First published, 1962, Revised edn., 1974 pp. 233-235).

20. *Selected Speeches of Subhas Chandra Bose*, op. cit, p.209.

¹ Statement on February, 22, 1944; *Selected Speeches of Subhas Chandra Bose*, op. cit, pp. 228-229.

¹ *CWMG*, Vol. 76, pp. 173-175.

¹ *CWMG*, Vol. 76, p.37.

¹ *Sangharsh*, Lucknow, October 28, 1940.

¹ See B.V. Keskar and V.K.N. Menon, (eds), *Acharya Narendra Deva: A Commemoration Volume*, National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1971 p.123.

¹ *CWMG*, Vol. 76, p.66.

¹ Tendulkar, D.G., *Mahatma*, Vol. 5, Publications Division, New Delhi, (First edition, 1952; reprinted, 1969) p.30.

¹ Nehru, Jawaharlal, *The Unity of India; Collected Writings 1937-40*, Lindsay Drummond, London, 1948, p.127.

¹ Tendulkar, D.G., *Mahatma*, Vol.8, Publications Division, New Delhi (Revised edn. 1963) p.191.

¹ Distortions were introduced at various levels. Some were directly contrary to fact; others took the form of too pervading an influence over scholarship relating to the nationalist movement, on account of which this scholarship definitely suffered. As an instance of a direct distortion, consider Sohan Singh Josh’s work “*My Meeting with Bhagat Singh and On other Early Revolutionaries*” (Communist Party of India, New Delhi, 1976). About the death sentence on Bhagat Singh, Sukh Dev and Raj Guru, Josh says at p. 28; “Mahatma Gandhi was expected to talk to Irwin with regard to commuting their death sentences. But he did not utter a word to save them during the Gandhi Irwin negotiations”. This is incorrect as evidenced by

¹ *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (CWMG), Publications

Gandhi's "final appeal" of March 23, 1931 to Irwin. (*CWMG*, Vol. 45, pp. 333-34). The letter shows that Gandhi had raised the issue earlier and was now doing so again. In his letter Gandhi wrote, inter alia: "Seeing that I am able to inform you that the revolutionary party has assured me that, in the event of these lives being spared, that party will stay its hands, suspension of sentence pending cessation of revolutionary murders becomes in my opinion a *peremptory duty*" (emphasis supplied).

In the preface to his book, Josh thanks "Dr. G. Adhikari and Chinmohan Sehanavis for making suggestions to correct certain discrepancies". Presumably, therefore, these persons had seen Josh's manuscript before publication. Volume 45 of Gandhi's *Collected Works* had become available in 1971, that is five years before the publication of Josh's book. I am informed by Dr. Haridev Sharma of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library that he did bring the error to the notice of Dr. Adhikari as soon as Josh's work was published. Dr Adhikari admitted that he had not seen Gandhi's letter of March 23, 1931 and told him that the error would be corrected in a subsequent edition. But the damage was done. An entire generation in Punjab and elsewhere has been brought up on this error. The process took another form at the cultural level. A later generation was in a subtle manner kept from appreciating the full inter-regional and inter-cultural impact of Gandhi and the nationalist movement. Thus if say, Gopal Haldar writes about Kazi Nazrul Islam there is only a tantalizingly

brief mention of the Bidrohi Kavi's Song of the Charkha and the verses on Gandhi. There are also occasional notes of apology no doubt unconscious, because Haldar is otherwise quite meticulous. The Charkha, the reader is assured, was to Nazrul "probably never anything but a symbol of national challenge". (Haldar, Gopal, *Kazi Nazrul Islam*, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1973, p.36). (Fair enough, but it is arguable that it was hardly different for Gandhi). And, while "In spite of his reservations, Nazrul was not unresponsive to Gandhi", the reader is assured that it is really other poems by Nazrul that were "of more touching and spontaneous nature". (Haldar, *op.cit.* pp. 50-51). This may be correct but nevertheless seems a political *ipse dixit* as no literary analysis is offered to support the statement.

It was also contemporaneously 'progressive' to write like this, so that the number of writers striking such attitudes increased, being the prism through which Gandhi and the nationalist movement began increasingly to be presented to a later generation.

¹ See my "Narendra Deva and Indian Socialism" in Prem Bhasin, Madhu Limaye, Hari Dev Sharma, and Vinod Prasad Singh (eds), *Acharya Narendra Deva: Birth Centenary Volume*, Radiant Publishers, New Delhi, 1990 pp.244-283.

¹ Bhasin, Prem, "The Heritage of Acharya Narendra Deva", *Janata*, Bombay, February 21, 1971, p.4. Bhasin, who has not mentioned a source, informs me that this was stated in Gandhi's

discussions with socialist leaders in 1946-47.

¹ *CWMG*, Vol.76, p.437.

¹ *CWMG*, Vol. 86, p.413.

¹ Roy, M.N., *Memoirs*, Ajanta Publications, Delhi (First published 1964, Reprint 1984) p.379.

¹ *Indian Annual Register*, 1941, Vol.1, p.30.

¹ Wavell, (A.P), *The Viceroy's Journal*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1973, p.55.

¹ Roy, M.N., *Men I Met*, Lalvani Publishing House, Bombay, 1968, p.27.

¹ *CWMG*, Vol. 80 p.283. This was not the first occasion that Gandhi reached out to Communists or responded warmly to them. In October 1929, for instance, he had called on the Meerut conspiracy case prisoners. The prosecution of prominent Communists and others was founded essentially on ground of belief in communism. Gandhi spent considerable time with the prisoners, who acknowledged: "We frankly did not expect you to visit us". Gandhi's response is significant: "Of course you did not. You do not know me. I may have my differences with you. You may even cause me trouble at Congress meetings but my creed teaches me to go out of my way to show regard to my opponents and thus demonstrate to them that I can mean no ill to them. Moreover, in the present case by coming here I wanted in my humble way to show in a practical manner that this prosecution is wrong and

that in any event it is atrocious that you should be put under a heavy handicap by being tried in an inconvenient place like Meerut where you cannot get the facilities obtainable in the presidency towns for conducting a proper defence". (CWMG, Vol.42, p.106). He went on to tell the Meerut prisoners: "If it were in my hands I would withdraw the charge, as in my scheme of things, holding opinions of any kind would be perfectly permissible". (CWMG, Vol.42, p.58).

¹ *Sechaba*, London, May 1988, pp.8-9.

¹ *Indian Express*, New Delhi, August 8, 1995.

¹ *Indian Express*, New Delhi, August 5, 1995.

¹ Kabir, Humayun, "Essentials of the Ideology", in Parikh, Ramlal (ed): *Souvenir, 66th Session, Indian National Congress*, Reception Committee, Bhavnagar, 1961, pp.33-34.

¹ The phenomenon is perhaps not unique to India. One may examine in this connection the work of Japanese scholars from American universities on the Japanese role in the Second World War and the extent to which this unquestioningly reflects American mythologies.

¹ *Selected Speeches of Subhas Chandra Bose*, op.cit., p.145.

¹ *Indian Annual Register*, 1939, Vol. II, p.317.

¹ *Indian Annual Register*, 1943, Vol. II, p.10.

¹ Pirzada, Syed Sharifuddin (ed), *Foundations of Pakistan*,

All India Muslim League Documents: 1906-1947, Vol. II, National Publishing House, Karachi, 1970, p.411.

¹ See, for example, CWMG, Vol. 24, p.145 and pp.148-149, Vol. 32, p.515. Gandhi opposed induced conversion, including Shuddhi and Tabligh, saying "the real shuddhi would consist in each one trying to arrive at perfection in his or her own faith". Regardless of all this, the inaccuracy is repeated by Bimal Prasad along with other errors in his contribution in Amit Kumar Gupta (ed) *Myth and Reality: The Struggle for Freedom in India 1945-47*, (NMML/Manohar, New Delhi, 1987). My letter to Bimal Prasad regarding the errors did not evoke any response.

¹ Gauba, K.L., *The Assassination of Mahatma Gandhi*, Jaico, Bombay, 1969, Appendix C, pp.390-392.

¹ CWMG, Vol. 82, p.334 and Vol. 85, p.135. The notion of Khuda-Ishwar occurs in Gandhi's writings at least as early as in 1909. (See *Hindu-Muslim Riots*, in CWMG, Vol. 9, p.134).

¹ Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase*, Vol. II, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1958, p.768.

¹ Menon, V.P. *The Transfer of Power in India*, Orient Longmans, Calcutta, 1957, p.214.

¹ See Jagat Singh Bright, "The Relevance of Allah Bux", *Janata*, Bombay, August 6, 1995. See also a rudimentary biography by the same writer published within a few weeks of Allah Baksh's assassination: *India's Nationalist*

No.1: Mr. Allah Bux, Lahore, 1943, pp. 56-57 and pp.61-63.

¹ Campbell-Johnson, Alan, *Mission with Mountbatten*, Robert Hale, London, 1951, p.283.

¹ Gandhi's remarks on caste as an 'evil' are made for example, in *Young India*, June 4, 1931 (see CWMG, Vol. 46 p.302). See also my brief survey of some of these writings in "Unfolding of Gandhi's Thought: The Undermining of Varna", *Janata*, Bombay, Oct. 8, 1995. Urmila Phadnis when making her remarks on Gandhi and the caste system at a seminar in 1968, [the proceedings of which are reproduced in Biswas, S.C. (ed) *Gandhi: Theory and Practice: Social Impact and Contemporary Relevance*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, K.P. Bagchi & Co., Calcutta 1969, reprinted 1990, p.559] perhaps did not have the advantage of the materials put together in the several volumes of the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* that have since appeared. Till the end of 1968 the *Collected Works* had reached only up to the year 1926. Scattered uncollected sources were a serious handicap for a later generation of scholars which did not quite know Gandhi but whose vocation seemed to compel them to take positions. Even this partly extenuating factor cannot be invoked on behalf of Oliver Mendelsohn and Marika Vicziany in Mendelsohn, Oliver and Baxi, Upendra (eds), *The Rights of Subordinated Peoples*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994. See, for example, Mendelsohn's and Vicziany's remark on Gandhi and caste at p.108. Incidentally, these

two writers, in their otherwise well-written paper, quote at p.75 partially from Gandhi's speech at the Round Table Conference in 1931 in a manner capable of suggesting that he was denying absolutely the political rights of "untouchables" rather than merely their *separate rights*.

¹ See Madhu Limaye, *Manu, Gandhi and Ambedkar* (Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, 1995, pp. 3-10). He compares the record of the Simon Commission's discussions with Ambedkar with the provisions of the 1950 Constitution which the latter helped frame.

¹ *CWVG*, Vol. 80, pp.223-4.

¹ *CWVG*, Vol. 84, p.247.

¹ *CWVG*, Vol. 86, p.484.

¹ *CWVG*, Vol. 88, p.156.

¹ See G.N.S. Raghavan's article, "To Each His Ambedkar", *The Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, July 5, 1994. See also Rajmohan Gandhi, who (in *The Good Boatman*, p.261 and p.480 n20) relies on M.S. Gore, *The Social Context of an Ideology*, Sage, New Delhi 1993, pp.180-1. I have not been able to examine the original Marathi biography of Ambedkar by C.B. Khairmode on which Raghavan and Gore appear to have relied.

¹ Rajya Sabha Debates, September 6, 1954.

¹ *Idem*

¹ In spite of Ambedkar's own reassessment of his position, (and in spite also of post-1947 developments and Ambedkar's

subsequent differences with the Nehru government as expressed, for instance, in the speech delivered by Ambedkar on September 6, 1954), the Director of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Ravinder Kumar, asserts that while Ambedkar's:

"political protest *against the Mahatma* found expression in the organization of the Republican party, his moral protest *against him* took the shape of entering the fold of Buddhism and recommending to his followers, largely confined to the Dalit elite, that they do likewise". [(emphasis supplied by me); see Ravinder Kumar, "Resurgence in the Ganga Valley-1", *The Hindu*, New Delhi, July 11, 1995].

There is admittedly no indication from this article that Kumar was aware of Ambedkar's speech of September 6, 1954. But Kumar must surely have known that the Republican Party was formed after both Gandhi and Ambedkar were dead though the latter had started planning for it after parting ways with the Nehru Government, Ambedkar in fact converted to Buddhism eight years after Gandhi's death.

¹ See the account by the eminent socialist N.G. Goray, "Red Sunday in Poona", *Congress Socialist*, May 14, 1938. (Reprinted, *Janata*, Bombay, May Day, 1994). Goray wrote:

"Who attacked the May Day procession? Who assaulted men like Senapati Bapat and Sjt Kanitkar? Who tore up the national flag? The Hindu Mahasabhaites and the Hedgewar boys did all this. There, are they also acting as benchmen of

the foreign imperialism? The answer to this question can only be unqualified affirmative... By the intensive use of intensely communal and completely cloistered propaganda, the leadership has succeeded in creating troops of yesmen to whom democratic and open-minded discussion seems to be a senseless waste of time. They have been taught to hate the Muslims in general as public enemy No. 1, to hate the Congress and its flag which is pro-Muslim, to hate socialists and communists who are anti-Hinduism. (Care, of course, is taken to evade any attempt at defining Hinduism)".

¹ *Indian Annual Register*, 1938, Vol. II, pp.269-270.

¹ 'Gandhian institutions' such as they are, must also share responsibility for this; they call for separate treatment. Many such institutions have a chronologically limited view of Gandhi, not going far beyond *Hind Swaraj* (1909) and his *Autobiography* which brings the story upto 1920-21. This limitation has perpetuated some misconceptions about Gandhi's economic ideas, most people being familiar only with his earlier formulations. The notions introduced and fostered by many Gandhian institutions are not much fairer to Gandhi than those sometimes introduced by his critics.

Even apart from this, many of these institutions are now quite sick. This should be obvious, for one thing, from a lack of a significant educational initiative on their part against the diverse communalist tendencies which have proliferated.

Decriminalization of Politics

It is mind-blowing that all the 3-major parties operating in Odisha : the BJD, the BJP and the Congress have the least regard for political morality. Otherwise none of the party leaders, like ex-Union Minister Bhakta Charan Das, present Union Minister Mr Dharmendra Pradhan, would have shared the dais on 10.1.2016 in the so-called Blood Donation Function organized by the Dhalasamanta Brothers on behalf of their Catak Nagr Yuvak Sangha. For clean politics there must be a Code of Conduct for all Party Functionaries, MLAs, MPs, Ministers of the State Cabinet or Union Cabinet, Chief Ministers, Prime Minister, Governors, Vice-President, President etc., not to attend any function as guests without verifying, with the help of the local police authorities and that of the State Police Administration, the credentials of the organizers of the said function. Our political leaders must get committed to ethical politics and they should never get their public image tarnished by associating themselves with the criminals of Cuttack City like the Dhalasamanta Brothers who have been accused of murder, extortions etc., since 2009. The financial status of the two arrested criminals is now very clear from the seizure, the list prepared by the police that includes more than Rs. 2.5 crore in cash, 5 luxury cars, (2 Audi + 3 Mercedes), and a huge cache of arms and ammunitions from their house in the CDA area of Cuttack city. These criminals have been doing so for the last several years since atleast December 11, 2009.

It is nothing but a lame excuse for the political leaders to say that nobody is a criminal until and unless one is convicted in a Court of Law. Political leaders are influential. That is why criminals seek their support and project them as their guests and godfathers in functions organized by them simply to hoodwink the people and to put political pressure on the police authorities as per their political clout. Unless our political leaders like Dharmendra Pradhan and Bhakta Charan Das do some degree of soul-searching and unless and until they insulate themselves against the criminals, their political credibility can hardly go up in the political sky of Odisha and that of India. Unless this aspect is given top-most importance we can not have anything good in Bhubaneswar or Cuttack or anywhere in India even if the whole country is crowded with Smart Cities and Smart Villages. Love for political morality should precede all other loves.

B. Ramchandra CST Voltaire

2000 కోట్ల రూపాయల నిర్మాణ అంచనాలతో,
ఆసియాఖండానికి అతిపెద్ద గార్డెన్ ఎస్టేట్ గా, ప్రతిష్ఠాత్మకంగా నిర్మాణమౌతున్న
అపూర్వ విశ్వర్య, వైభవ, అపూర్వ స్వచ్ఛ ప్రపంచం - 'డ్రీమ్ సిటీ-2'లో
సాటిలేని సౌభాగ్యాలనందించే యూనిట్ ను
మీ చిన్నారుల ఉజ్వల భవిష్యత్తుకు కానుకగా ఇవ్వండి!!!!

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From Archives

Search For Relevant Socialism

H. K. Paranjape

By the time India attained independence in 1947, certain political and economic trends and forces had already come to be well established in the country. The predominant political organisation was the Indian National Congress which had at one time or another included almost all strands of the political and economic struggle in the country. But even by 1947, the right and left forces had tended to separate, the former in the form of parties like the Hindu Maha Sabha, the Muslim League and the Akali Dal, and the latter through those like the Communist Party and the Congress Socialist Party. In 1948, the Congress Socialist Party completely separated itself to form an independent Socialist Party.

The attainment of freedom on the basis of negotiations with the erstwhile British rulers was itself opposed, especially by the Communist Party and the Socialist Party, who thought that another struggle would be able to prevent a partition of the Country which became inevitable under the negotiated transfer of power. But these parties were too weak to prevent this denouement. The fact that the partition was made essentially on the basis of Muslim dominated areas in the West as well as the East being separated to form Pakistan led to mass migrations which, over a period, left Pakistan (and now also Bangla-desh) with a very small Hindu population; but India continued to have quite a

significant population of Muslims, While Pakistan decided to become an Islamic Republic. India decided to keep to the original ideals in the Indian national movement and adopt the form of a secular democratic republic, This was a major difference between the two countries even though the logical consequences of this decision have not always been understood or implemented.

In keeping with the evolution of thinking about the nature of post-independence India, a republican Constitution in the form of a Union of States was adopted for India. Universal adult franchise and a charter of fundamental rights which guaranteed equality to all citizens irrespective of sex, religion or caste was adopted. At the same time, taking cognisance of the existence of specially handicapped groups like untouchables and tribal's, a system of partial reservation in the legislatures as well as in State services was adopted.

The socio-economic objectives for which public opinion had been gradually building up especially in the inter-war period were included as Directive Principles of State Policy to provide guidelines rather than to ensure their guaranteed enforcement. Even though the idea of federalism was accepted, and even the importance of decentralised government through Panchayati Raj was recognised, the fear of a possible disintegration of the country and also the requirements of capitalist development, led to provisions in

the Constitution which made for much centralisation. The Union Government was given powers which could negate the principle of federalism in many ways.

India had already built up some infrastructure by way of a railway network and some limited systems of electric power, tele-communications etc. Some growth of large scale industry had also taken place. But the economy as a whole had remained largely stagnant for almost a hundred years, with large scale unemployment and under-employment, and stark poverty, affecting large sections of the population. The necessity of undertaking economic development at a rapid rate, with the State playing an important role through economic planning for development, had been almost universally accepted. The importance of industrialisation as a part of this effort had also been recognised. From this followed the basic contours of the policy adopted after Independence.

India's was to be a mixed economy, with the State playing an important role both as a driving instrument of economic regeneration as well as a regulator to ensure that development took place according to national priorities and safeguarding public interest. This was to be done through the State providing support and assistance to development through its own efforts in extending infrastructure facilities (transport, power, irrigation. tele-communications, etc.) and also

through institutions which would provide support to private enterprise. Special financial institutions were set up to provide credit facilities to large scale industry (IFC, SIFC and later IDB I, etc.) and also through fiscal and related policies. Industrial development along appropriate lines was to be ensured through controls like industrial licensing, capital issues control and controls over foreign exchange and foreign trade. Private enterprise was to be encouraged or assisted in many areas both in large and medium scale industry, while special assistance was to be provided to small scale and village industries. Foreign capital was to be welcome on the reasoning that this would supplement India's limited capital resources and also bring with it foreign technology and knowhow; it was however expected that such enterprise would be as far as possible associated with Indian capital. The development of agriculture was to take place essentially through peasant proprietorship to encourage which a system of land reforms was advocated. State assistance to the peasantry was to be provided through special facilities for credit and State sponsored irrigation and other facilities.

Complementary to this approach regarding the production structure was the policy of providing certain essential welfare services. The most important activity envisaged was that for the provision of free and compulsory primary education for all children upto the age of 14. This was to be achieved by 1965. Other measures included the provision of drinking water and primary health facilities as well as assistance to education at higher levels. Protection of labour, state intervention to ensure fair

relationships between employers and employees, and organisation of fair price shops to meet the needs of vulnerable sections of society were other important parts of the State's welfare policy. Special facilities were to be provided to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes so as to enable them to get over their specially handicapped position. And all this was to be done through a system of overall planning guided by a national Planning Commission and a system of Five Year Plans.

Certain modifications in this formal structure took place in the subsequent period. The objective of public policy was stated in 1955 to be a socialist pattern of society and the word 'socialist' was even incorporated in the preamble to the Constitution in 1976. A more intensive role for the State was envisaged as a part of the new thrust for rapid development given in the Second Five year Plan and continued, though with much less vigour, afterwards. The result was both the setting up of new state enterprises in a number of new areas such as steel, heavy engineering, fertilisers and petroleum, and also the nationalisation of enterprises in fields like banking, insurance and aviation. The fact that, despite the efforts at planned development, the existing inequality in incomes as well as wealth and economic power was increasing, led to a political demand for curbing such developments. Legislation like the MRTP Act was put on the statute book, all the large banks were nationalised and the remnants of the feudal order like Government-paid privy purses to former princes were abolished. A 'war on poverty' was declared as a part of this new radical thrust to policy in the early '70s, to which was later added a new

element by way of special schemes for employment generation.

What actually happened

In the background of this overall policy structure which was adopted for furthering the objectives set before the country, we must note what actually took place in the course of these 43 years since Independence. In the political arena, after some initial resistance, constituent States were reorganised where necessary along linguistic lines. But the fact that the vast majority of the people in every state now speak one common language has not resulted in their effective participation in the process of governance - political or economic. Almost all important governmental and administrative work, both at the all India level and in the States, continues to be carried on through the use of English. Moreover, there has been little effort at producing adequate literature on various disciplines in Hindi or the other Indian languages. The result is that the vast majority of our people are deprived of any real opportunity of participating in guiding political or economic life, or of enjoying vertical mobility in various spheres. Almost all top positions in the country continue to be monopolised by a small proportion of the people who know English and most of whom belong to the traditionally higher castes. Secondly, many of the States continue to be very large in size. The tendency towards centralisation which was already built in the Constitution has thus been further accentuated in its actual working, further helped by the highly centralised structure of the political party which continued to dominate the country for most of the post-independence period. The bureaucratic structure which

the country inherited from before Independence was also highly centralised and this has continued largely unchanged since. The State Governments have also similarly tended to adopt a centralised form of administration, the local bodies at different levels many times becoming even less autonomous than they used to be earlier. There has been much discussion about the importance of decentralisation both in the political and administrative governance of the country. Panchayati Raj institutions have also been set up in most states. But these as well as urban local bodies have usually been deprived of real autonomy, with the state government and the administrative hierarchy effectively dominant both in administrative and financial matters. In this vast country, such our centralization has naturally resulted in not only the denial effective self- governance to the citizens but also in much inefficiency and callousness in administration. Bureaucratism rules the roast with delays inefficiency, waste and corruption being almost normal features of public administration.

On the economic side, there were undoubtedly some major achievements to the country's credit. In macro terms there has been a steady growth of national income mostly at a rate of around 3 % per annum. With population increasing at a rate of over 2%, the result has been a small increase in per capita income over the period. Agricultural production has undoubtedly increased enough to make it possible for people to be fed, though not adequately, at least in normal years. But there are large regional imbalances in agricultural productivity and the production of items like pulses, oil seeds and dairy

products has not kept pace with the increase in population and people's requirement. Much progress has been achieved in industry in that quite a significant part of the country's requirements not only of Consumer products but also of plant and machinery and important basic materials like metal and chemicals are now produced within the country. The diversity of technology which has been adopted is such that there is hardly any major area of technology where there is no significant development in the country. But the growth of industry not only continues to be regionally very unbalanced but it has also failed to come up to planned expectations. To mention a few major inadequacies, metallurgical production has hardly developed according to the perspective worked out in the plans. In many industries, dependence for technological collaboration on foreign sources continues undiminished. The protection that industry effectively continues to enjoy has resulted in its being neither efficient in terms of costs and international Competitiveness, nor able to ensure the creation of adequate employment opportunities. For employment creation, special protection has been offered to small scale and cottage industries, but the efficiency of these in terms of capital productivity as well as employment creation remains questionable. In science and technology, significant progress has been achieved in that there are pockets of excellence available in a few research establishments equal to almost the best in the world; but the vast majority of our technological institutions and scientific laboratories continue to be mediocre in terms of results, and are bureaucracy-dominated. The country has failed to fulfill the

target of making education upto the age of 14 free and compulsory by 1965; in fact we are nowhere near that goal even in 1990. At the same time, there has been a proliferation of institutions of higher education, most of them subsidised by the State, a few select ones receiving a substantial share of the public funds provided to the sector. It is these which produce highly qualified personnel for professions like medicine and engineering and also for areas like science, arts, humanities and management. Manpower planning has got so distorted that quite a large proportion of the best qualified personnel - educated at large public expense - migrate to affluent countries; but a large proportion of poorly educated 'graduates' remain unemployed and also unemployable as they imbibe the traditional high-caste disdain for productive work. At the same time over one third of our people continue to be illiterate, the proportion being far higher in certain regions, castes and also among women.

Other serious inadequacies have marred India's functioning, the most important one being that poverty and destitution continue to plague substantial sections of our people. While there is some dispute about the exact proportion of those below the poverty line, it is admitted even by spokesmen of Government that at least one quarter of our people continue to be destitute, the proportion being over one third in the opinion of many experts. The extent of unemployment and under-employment has also not significantly declined with the numbers of those affected having rapidly escalated with the growth of population. Development plans and industrialisation have not been able even to provide employment to the

additions to the labour force, leave aside taking up the back-log. At the same time, the vast inequalities in wealth and income continue almost unaffected, the only question of controversy being whether the degree of inequality has remained the same or widened. The number of those in the top decile in income terms has certainly increased; but the poorest one third continue to be destitute while the very rich 1% have even added to their luxury and affluence. A remarkable change in the last two decades has been the growth of consumerism among the top few, the 'demonstration effect' of the manner of living in the affluent countries having had much impact and the modern electronic media, especially TV, making an effective contribution to achieving this result.

A special feature of the persistent inequality of wealth is the failure of land reforms legislation, the progress of such reforms having largely halted after the abolition of the rights of the stratum of the old Zamindars, Talukdars, etc. Large inequalities in land holdings continue and land ceiling legislation has been defeated in practice. The warning provided by tenancy legislation has had the effect of termination of formal tenancy agreements so that in practice many actual cultivators continue to be tenants-at-will. In vast tracts of the country, even the record of rights has not been properly prepared and kept up to date, thus making any effective protection to actual cultivators even more difficult. Bonded labour continues in many parts of the country in spite of the constitutional and legal provisions against it.

In the industrial sector, many

large industrial units have developed as parts of private business empires, most of them controlled by particular families. This continues to be so even in companies where a substantial part of the equity capital is held by public sector financial institutions, some times this proportion being larger than that held by the controlling family. The result is that there is much concentration not only of wealth but also of economic power. Many small scale units are also controlled by certain big business empires, even though legally they may be shown as independent and therefore enjoying protection and other benefits conferred upon small scale units. A development which is of importance in its impact on standards of income and living and also the process of capital accumulation is the tendency to include a large part of what is essentially the personal expenditure of the top management personnel as business expenses. Though this is a world wide phenomenon, in a poor country like India, this tendency further accentuates the vast inequalities in income and wealth which already exist and defeat measures like progressive taxation.

The policy of state-owned enterprises playing a major role in the economy has been pursued now for over four decades. An important reason given for this policy has been the expectation that large investments in such enterprises would not only ensure growth in certain sectors which otherwise would not take place but also that this would, after a proper gestation lag, provide good returns thus helping capital accumulation. This was thought to be a potent benefit in addition to such enterprises being able to ensure fairer treatment to

the consumer as well as to labour, provide maximum vertical mobility as against family controlled private empires and establish a pattern of labour-management co-operation which would set the pace for movement towards the 'socialist' society. None of these expectations have been realised. In spite of a number of study reports pointing out the obvious defects in the manner in which these enterprises have been organised and managed, no genuine improvement has taken place, mainly because neither the politician nor the bureaucrat who dominate the Government set-up has been willing to carry out the suggested reforms. The result is that many of these enterprises have proved to be a major liability on public finances as well as the national economy.

Not that the record of private enterprises has been much better. These enterprises have certainly had some excellent examples of good management and efficient conduct. But in matters like compliance with rules and regulations including those relating to taxation, labour and consumer protection, the record of many leaves much to be desired. Moreover, the tendency of those in charge of management to defraud the shareholders, or those providing loan capital, and also the workers, is wide-spread. The number of sick units in the private sector - both large scale and small scale- has been rapidly increasing and the Government has had to step in to take charge of such units in order to prevent large scale distress arising from unemployment. The contribution of many private enterprises to research and development has been negligible and, even for their own further expansion, most of them have to depend upon fresh foreign

collaborations. Quite a number of foreign controlled enterprises have, over a long period of their existence, proved to be a net drain on the country's resources. Instead of making a net contribution to India's industrial development through developing production as well as research units in India for their international markets, taking advantage of the comparative abundance of skilled labour here, most of them appear to be intent only on exploiting the expanding Indian market and contributing to exports only to the extent that they are compelled or specifically induced to do. A tendency towards increasing collaboration between Indian and foreign capital has developed in the last 25 years so that, as last the nationalist approach of self reliance, large rate Indian enterprise now appears to be keen to it as junior partners of transnationals to exploit the Indian as well as some other developing countries' markets. The dependence on both imported technology and components continues. The earlier 'spirit of swadeshi' or national capitalism hardly exists any longer.

The few attempts at developing co-operative industrial enterprises have been mainly confined to processing industries like cane sugar. There are a few cooperatives enterprises which have been of some significant use for the cane-producing farmers to obtain a better return; but most of them have hardly made any difference to the labour working in the concerned factories, or to the overall growth of their region. The cooperative unit have also become centres of political and financial power. In a state like Maharashtra they play a significant role in governing the politics of the state. The earlier

expectation that their development would give rise to a general growth of entrepreneurship among the rural communities has not been much fulfilled.

Like cooperatives sugar units, small scale industries have also not proved to be good employers. Exploitation of labour, including that of child labour, is common among many small scale and village industries. Being regionally scattered, and with the number of employees in each unit being small, labour cannot be easily organized and cannot therefore insist even on obtaining facilities and minimum wages prescribed by law. Similar conditions prevail in most parts of the country regarding agricultural labour.

On the other hand, the position of labour in organised industry and business – including service organisations like transport, banking and insurance – is much better. Labour here is better organised, and most of it being employed in urban areas, political pressure can also be more effectively used to ensure better compliance with labour laws and wage legislation. In what may be called the semi – monopoly industrial sector, and also in many Central Government – owned enterprises, there has been the growth of what have come to be known as high wage islands. What the employees secure in these units are not wages which are exceptionally high by world standards; but they are certainly much higher than their 'opportunity cost'. Their incomes thus contain a significant 'rent' element. These workers, and most employees of Government and semi- Government agencies, are also protected against price escalation to a significant

extent. One effect of this tendency towards the maintainance of high wage levels is to encourage capital saving technology wherever possible. This is further helped by labour legislations and also court decisions which not only provide protection against extortion and exploitation, but make the enforcement of discipline and high productivity norms quite difficult, especially in Government enterprises. Indiscipline and absenteeism are common even in service units and industries paying good wages. Even in the state enterprises sector, appropriate production ethic has not developed. Most workers continue to look upon management as something alien to and different from them and therefore feel no responsibility for ensuring high productivity and efficiency. Incentives and disincentives are especially lacking in state enterprises. The result is that, once a person obtains employment on a regular basis, he assumes that a certain income is almost guaranteed to him whatever the quality and quantity of his work input. With management personnel also obtaining real incomes which are unrelated to the average income in this country, and usually far higher than their opportunity cost, no wonder that workers feel justified in this attitude. But the net result of all this is poor competitive efficiency and a generally low standard of productivity. The other result is that investment in industry leads to less employment than would be appropriate in our context and yields low returns in terms of output and profits.

Another aspect of the generally poor efficiency and low productivity in our economy is the little importance given to the development of basic

human resources. As mentioned earlier, illiteracy abounds in many parts of the country, and so also ill-health. In over 40 years, we have failed to provide basic educational and health facilities to all sections of the population. The attempts at enforcing a policy of limiting population increases have not much succeeded essentially because the importance of factors like educational and health facilities and the status of women in controlling population has not been recognised. It has been thought that only direct measures like spread of sterilisation and contraception are likely to yield results. Such attempts have failed. While the policy-makers recognised the handicaps to which the lower castes, and specially the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, were exposed as a result of the age old social system and also emerging economic factors, the patch-work methods used to alleviate the sufferings of these sections has left most of them unaffected. They continue to be among the poorest sections of our society, The exploitation of various natural resources like forests has adversely affected the traditional ways of living and earning of many tribal communities. They have also been badly affected by many irrigation projects. The rehabilitation of those who lose their lands, houses and means of living because of development projects has been a sadly neglected chapter in our development history. There has also been little attempt at learning lessons from the earlier development history of the countries in Europe and America. Pollution of waterways and even the atmosphere has been a common feature neglecting considerations of environment. This affects adversely the vast majority of the poor. An

important feature of development in recent years has been the rapid growth of urbanisation; but because of poor planning, there is wide-spread growth of slums in which large sections of the population are forced to live, in almost sub-human conditions.

A notable aspect of the working of governmental institutions at different levels has come to be the lethargy, inefficiency and corruption which appear to prevail at all levels of administration. People's representatives have increasingly shown proclivity to use their position for party and personal gains rather than for meeting the problems of the common people. Public services like water supply, power supply, health and sanitation are increasingly found to be neglected even in large urban areas. The condition of roads, including national highways, is deplorable. There is little to choose between politicians and bureaucrats in the matter of misusing power for corrupt ends. Regulations of various kinds supposedly devised to guard public interest are operated more as toll-gates to obtain moneys from the concerned parties. Black marketing had not been unknown in the country even in the period before Independence. But the development of the parallel economy has been even more rapid than the economy as a whole in the last 40 years. Especially since 1970, when contributions by public limited companies to political parties were banned, political parties and workers have increasingly relied on collection of cash contributions in large amounts. With the highest in the Government hierarchy being involved in the use of black money, the parallel economy has obtained a kind of sanctity and affects national life in all spheres.

Another tendency which is increasingly noticeable in the functioning of India's democratic system is the reliance of all political parties on factors like caste for obtaining political support. There is also an increasing association developing between criminal elements on the one side and politicians and administrative personnel, especially among the police, on the other. With large scale urbanisation and the growth of unemployment, there is a rapid growth in the numbers of the lumpen elements, and these are also being made increasing use of by political parties. The result is an increasing disenchantment about democratic politics among the common people.

The fact that, despite many difficulties, democratic institutions have continued to operate has certainly been a positive feature of our country. But with the continuing and widening gap between professions and reality, promises and performance, there is increasing dissatisfaction among the common people. The result is the growth of anarchistic tendencies in many parts, the breakdown of law and order, and a kind of internal rebellion situation in certain areas. Such situations have now existed in Punjab and the north-east for quite some time. They have also come to be in existence in Kashmir for over a year now. These tendencies pose dangers to the unity and integrity of the country as well as to the continuance of our democratic society. They also make stable economic growth difficult.

Causes for the failure

The causes of these inadequacies and failures are many. The most important of these has been that the national leadership which rested at the time of independence largely on

a small stratum of the population consisting of industrialists, traders and the educated middle classes from the urban areas, and the substantial land holders in the rural areas, has not very much widened its base in spite of the formal existence of an adult franchise democracy. The only major difference has been that the old feudal landed elements like Zamindars and talukdars have been replaced by substantial peasants. Political power at the Centre has up to recently been concentrated in the hands of those who represent the English-knowing middle classes and were aligned with industrialists, traders and substantial peasants. There has been a change in this set-up in the states; there political power has in practice come to be wielded by persons belonging to castes with a farming background even though support from industrial and trading elements continues to be an important pre-requisite. There has been a leavening of leading elements from the poorer sections - for example, from the scheduled castes and tribes - who have been co-opted among the ruling elite. The number of those enjoying the fruits of the system of democratic institutions and the proliferating bureaucracy has also been increasing. But this stratum has followed the pattern set by the pre - independence rulers of securing for themselves real incomes which are unrelated to the average income of the common people. With English continuing as the main language through which all important work political, economic industrial, commercial, or technical is done effective power continues to be concentrated. In the hands of a small high caste elite even though it has to pay formal obeisance to the elections and other disciplines of a democratic system.

The result of this is that. While professing to pursue policies which will benefit the common people, in practice only the interest of the haves is furthered. Public support is cultivated with the talk of socialism; socialism has come to be equated to increasing the power of the State. The State itself, even though based on a system of adult franchise democracy, is in reality controlled by a very small elite stratum of society. That is why there has been no real attempt at re-structuring property relations, and large inequalities in the control over productive assets continue. Land reforms have been defeated in practice. Economic power in the private sector continues to be concentrated in a few business empires and State instruments of control like licensing and anti-monopolies legislation are made ineffective. In the state sector, bureaucratism is rampant and inefficiency and delays are common. Control over enterprises by government is used for providing patronage and to obtain political gains, especially in the proliferating government sector under various State Governments.

Economic controls and proliferated regulations have also resulted in a distortion of the price mechanism. While the attempts at controlling the prices of a very large number of items - including luxury items - have been given up in recent years after their adverse effects the economy were well brought out, the attempts at what have been called informal price controls continue. While price regulation in respect of monopolistic concerns may be justified, the Government has usually shown reluctance to assign this task to an expert and independent body. The result is that much discretion remains in

the hands of the politician and the bureaucrat. This cannot but lead to distortions as well as corruption. In the case of State enterprises, price setting on their part usually requires the sanction of Government. Here again, it is the controlling department or ministry rather than an independent expert body which is authorised to decide. It is also not clear whether the distortions which are introduced in the price system as a result of such interference help the overall economic objectives. For example, there is a tendency for irrigation water rates to be kept so low as to make it difficult for even current expenses of the project being covered from the revenues. The result is a large subsidy. The waste of water due to the manner of pricing and measurement results in the total area covered by a project falling much short of that originally envisaged. Low power rates in rural areas, subsidies on fertilisers and improved seeds are the other measures which, while justified as promotional measures at an early stage, have become permanent drains on the exchequer as politicians do not want to incur the odium of charging appropriate prices. Keeping interest rates specially low for agriculture, small industry and small business similarly give wrong signals. Instead of trying to use labour, the substantial farmer begins to prefer farm machines which substitute labour. It is also well known that it is not the really small marginal farmer who is able to obtain the benefit of low interest credit from banks or cooperative societies; it is only the substantial farmer who obtains such benefit. In fact, the latter even operates as a money lender to make credit available at extortionate rates to the marginal farmer. Similarly, quite a substantial part of the benefit of

the cheap credit made available to small business is usually found in one way or another to pass either to large scale industry which purchases the product of the small scale units or to the bank officials sanctioning loans, or to political bigwigs who can influence the loan grant, in the form of bribes. It is overlooked that a specially low price, except where its administration is very closely supervised, cannot but lead to some kind of a black market. What is important for the agriculturists, or the small businessmen, is the availability of credit. In fact, by keeping the rates specially low, a certain disincentive is provided to the banks regarding the total credit that they should supply to these sectors.

An important reason why there has not been much effort at a genuinely egalitarian economic policy is that those who stand to benefit from such a policy are scattered and unorganised, largely illiterate and also socially handicapped as a result of quite many among them belonging to castes which are traditionally considered inferior. While there are seats reserved in legislatures for the scheduled castes and tribes, the system of representation ensures that it is those from among them who are favoured by the upper caste groups who alone can get elected. (The fact that Dr. Ambedkar - called the Father of the Constitution - himself could not get elected to the Lok Sabha in the first General Election under the Constitution is a telling commentary on the system of representation with reservations which we have adopted.) And there are a number of regions in the country where the poor and the lower castes - and also women - cannot exercise their franchise because the local

dadas make this difficult. Except in a few regions, political and economic organisations of such people have not yet become strong. It is true however that, wherever such organisation has developed, elections do help to ensure at least some concessions being given to them. But policies adopted in their favour like minimum wages are usually ineffective. Even in States like West Bengal, it is not unusual to find that the full prescribed minimum wage is rarely ever paid to agricultural workers or workers employed in small units.

To the extent that the large scale industry and service organisations have developed, labour employed in them has come to be better organised. Such organisations and democratic forces have both had the effect of ensuring a much fairer treatment to such employees. But this also creates a kind of distortion in that, with a large rent element in their incomes, there is a tendency for employers to adopt labour saving practices so that the investment employment ratio has been declining. Another effect is that their trade unions have usually become indifferent to the political changes required to bring about a change in the economic structure. Competitive trade unions being set up by different parties leads to an emphasis on economism and there is an increasing reluctance among trade union organisations to take up political battles for structural change. Unions of middle class employees such as those in the banks, insurance and other semi-public organisations show the same proclivity. On the other hand, all of them, wherever they are sufficiently powerful, do attempt to ensure that disciplinary action against any of their members is made difficult.

While justified in the context of exploitation which still prevails in certain spheres, this approach also has the effect of preventing a new ethic of efficiency and productivity from developing. In fact, in the kind of income structure which has come to prevail in the country, organised workers have come to belong to the top deciles of the income earners. They have therefore come to exert their influence in favour of pro-capitalist policies, a recent example being the demand made by a number of trade union organisations for raising the income tax exemption limit ! The organised workers and employees in Government and semi- Government organisations have begun to exercise an undue and unhealthy influence which has ensured that they secure a substantial part of the fruits of whatever development has taken place. It is these strata, and of course industrialists, traders and top professionals, whose share of national income has increased while the majority continue to be impoverished. In recent years, in the name of liberalisation, even the formal attempts at taxing these elements substantially have been given up on the plea that high tax rates merely lead to tax evasion and creation of black money. With the increasing reluctance of public authorities to raise more financial resources through taxation, the extent of deficit financing has been rapidly increasing and a large inflationary potential has been built in the economy. The unduly high public salaries have also created a situation where these take up such a substantial part of public expenditure that the growth even of welfare services and facilities, leave alone the creation of more productive assets, has been jeopardised.

A political fall out of this increasing conversion of what earlier was designated as the working class into a kind of middle class belonging to the top income stratum has been that in the left parties have largely lost influence even in urban areas in many parts of the country. The only exceptions to this are West Bengal and Kerala and a few pockets elsewhere. But many industrial and urban centres like Bombay, Madras, Kanpur, Delhi, Pune, Bangalore and others now show little influence of left-oriented political parties. The Congress continues to dominate the political scene and is the only party even today which has a genuine all-India influence. There has been a significant- growth of regional parties in various areas of the country which have come up mainly because of an increasing feeling of undue central dominance over what should be essentially regional affairs. But these parties are usually controlled by the substantial peasants and the urban middle classes. With the failure both of the Congress and the Left parties to create strong opinion against orthodoxy, religious parties continue to have a sway over minority groups like Muslims and Sikhs. The short-sighted wooing of orthodox leaders and conservative opinion among the minorities so as to cultivate vote-banks has resulted in strengthening anti-secular forces among the minorities. The other side the coin is the dangerous growth of conservatism and orthodoxy among the Hindus and, as a political concomitant of that, the growth of a party wedded to Hindu – dominated policy. The continued dominance of the congress party in the country's political life has led to desperate attempt to break this monopoly through the tactic of “ non – Congressism”. But while this tactic has succeeded thrice –

in 1966-67, 1977 and 1989 – in bringing a non – congress coalition to power, it has failed to bring about any genuine maintenance of this coalition in power for any length of time. As against this, where ideologically oriented political combinations the Left Front, or even the regional parties, have attained power, they have been able usually to consolidate their position. and take some progressive steps, however inadequate and rudimentary.

A major inadequacy of the governmental functioning the last forty years has been the centralisation and bureaucratization of the administration which has remained almost untouched. Even leaders who have earlier advocated decentralisation have overlooked the pursuit of this goal once they are in power either at the Centre, or in a State capital. The Left Front in west Bengal and the Janata party Hegde in Karnataka have exceptions. But in most of the country, Panchayati Raj continues to be ineffective; and the existence of oversized states has also contributed to the ineffective participation of the citizenry and their representatives in administering their affairs, especially in development.

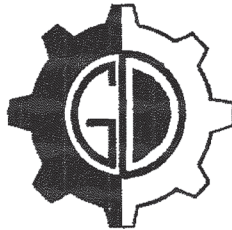
The misuse of state powers by bureaucrats and politicians in power has increasingly led to so much inefficiency and corruption that there is a revulsion in minds of the public against the very concept of ‘Socialism’; because all this has gone on under the garb of socialism. The increasing acceptance of the idea of privatization, of a policy of relying on foreign capital, technology and assistance, and of consumerism and other unhealthy developments in affluent countries as the ideals to

be pursued are mainly due to this phenomenon. It is in this country that Gandhiji preached the importance of simple living, J. P. emphasized the purity of means and Lohia the development of an appropriate technology. But all this has been forgotten by leaders who permitted their pursuit of self and power to overwhelm them and allowed an accentuation of inequalities, distress and exploitation. All that they thought necessary was to pursue certain populist measures and to raise radical slogans so as to win elections. Rational management, efficiency, self-criticism and intellectual pursuit were thought unnecessary burdens in political life.

All in all, one can say that, with all the advantages which the post-Independence leadership had to put the country on a steady path of democratic socialist development, it failed to rise up to the challenge, especially in the last twenty five years. The momentum of the freedom movement, and the continuance in power for some time of a leadership developed in the Independence movement, helped. But gradually the situation worsened, with the younger leadership proving too selfish and inadequate. The result is that, in the year 1990, we find the country on the brink of a precipice-politically, with virtual rebellions on in Kashmir, Punjab and the North-East, economically with an enormous inflationary potential making itself felt and the Country facing a debt-trap, and socially with a society increasingly divided against itself - caste against caste, religion against religion, in short each against each.

(to be concluded)

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Thrills galore!

S. Viswam

Much of the testimony through video from the United States rendered by the convicted Pakistani-American terrorist David Coleman Headley in two sessions last Monday and Tuesday was, as the saying goes, old hat. A greater part of it has been in the public domain for some years and has already become part of the terrorism folklore. Even so, as a personal narrative of an event-packed terror career, it has thrills galore and has all the ingredients that go to make powerful drama. Indeed, one should not be surprised if some enterprising film maker writes a script for a thriller and offers it as a major feature presentation of the film world!

For India, the testimony is a welcome confirmation of the bulk of allegations New Delhi has been leveling against Islamabad for the last several years. It is poor satisfaction for India that it has in its hands significant evidence to support all the allegations, for the simple reason that Pakistan will again deny any suggestion that it is a fountainhead of global terrorism and that global terror operators like Headley have been sustained, in every way including moral and material support, by the Pakistani intelligence agency Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) which in turn promotes terrors

outfits like Lashkar-E-Tayyaba (LeT).

Headley's testimony confirms that the export of global terrorism has become a matter of state policy for Pakistan. It confirms that ISI funds organisations like LeT. Islamabad can no more seek shelter under the plea that all terrorist activity in Pakistan is carried out by the so-called non-State actors. These non-state actors are figments of Islamabad's imagination. Headley has unambiguously deposed before a Mumbai court that it is the ISI that funds and sustains the LeT. He has deposed that before the 26/11 attack on Mumbai which left 166 dead and hundreds injured, he was being instructed by his LET handlers and that he had also met and been briefed by ISI officials.

India will now pass on the details of his testimony to Pakistan, but if Islamabad's track record is any guide Pakistan will deny the charge made by Headley completely and again plead that non-State actors were responsible. Indeed, although Pakistan is committed to prosecute the suspects identified by India in the 26/11 case, it has been dragging its feet and no legal steps have so far been initiated to bring the guilty to book.

In order to get Headley's testimony, India had to grant him amnesty and also an assurance that he would not be extradited. He was then made an approver. This is perhaps a rare case where a person already undergoing a 35-year sentence in an American jail has been forced to give testimony under oath in an Indian court through video conferencing. Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi who directed the 26/11 Mumbai attack is a free man in Pakistan and no action has been taken against him. Till now, Pakistan has been offering excuses for delaying legal action in the 26/11 case and is showing no reaction to Indian concerns. It is quite on the cards that Pakistan will refuse to take Headley's testimony seriously leave alone expedite action in the 26/11 case.

Were Pakistan to take allegations of terrorism export against it seriously, Headley would have been asked to testify under oath in a Pakistani court and he would have been duly prosecuted. Pakistan seems to have decided to stonewall all charges of terrorism support without batting an eye-lid and deny them regardless of whether the denial carries any credibility.

This is what makes it difficult for India to maintain good bilateral relations with Pakistan. By now, it is agreed universally that international cooperation alone can combat global terrorism. How does any country maintain relations of trust with an unrepentant exporter of terrorism? As it is, India's security system is quite vulnerable, it would seem.

Headley was able to come to and go from India without any problem. He made eight trips without arousing any suspicion.

India is awaiting the Pakistani response to the Pathankot inquiry. Although all evidence has been furnished, and even though Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has himself taken interest in the matter, Pakistan is still dragging its feet, except to discount any involvement by Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Mazood Azhar. Under the circumstances, it will take some time for India-Pakistan bilateral relations to normalize. The ball has been in Islamabad's court for long. Unless Pakistan comes to terms with its own involvement in promoting terrorism, relations can neither improve nor stabilize.

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Between the Lines

A country without focus

Kuldip Nayar

After arrival at Dhaka, it does not take you long to realize that here is one country which has lost its ethos. There is not a speck of revolution which had stirred the people in East Pakistan to wage the liberation struggle against the distant and exploitive West Pakistan. Indigenous vested interests have replaced the ones from Rawalpindi.

Still worse is the authoritative Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has become. One, her opponent Khalida Zia has gone down in the estimate of the people. Two, Hasina has made peace with the military, which had once overthrown the government of her father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the father of Bangladesh.

Hasina has increased the salaries of those in the armed forces. More than that she has made them realize that they evoke respect and authority if they remain professional and stay away from politics. Indeed, the army is now professional and considered a force to reckon with.

Only 30 years ago, did the people rise against the West Pakistan's armed forces and had their own Mukti Bahini, an ill-equipped force and prove to the world that no nation can be kept under subjugation if it is determined to cut its fetters. Sheikh Mujib was a tall leader in what was then called East Pakistan. Quid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah was his leader. But the Sheikh revolted

against him when he said during his visit to Dhaka that the Bengalis would have to read Urdu which, he declared, was the national language.

Bengalis gave the people living in Pakistan then their identity in the otherwise West-dominated Pakistan. They realized that the crude Punjabi culture would have penetrated into their sophisticated identity. And when they protested against the onslaughts on their culture, the West Pakistan's army brutally crushed them.

Even when Mujib or, for that matter, East Pakistan won a majority in the National Assembly Zulfikhar Ali Bhutto, then a real force in West

Pakistan, who was also the foreign minister, could not tolerate the Sheikh to be the Prime Minister. If at all, the responsibility of losing East Pakistan is to be put, it is on Bhutto's shoulder. He preferred to let the East Pakistan go to any extent in his pursuit for absolute power ?

Hasina's real opposition comes from the Jamiat-e-Islami which still plays a religious card. The Jamiat is not making any headway because it is seen as the sympathizer of Pakistan. Till today, the Jamiat has not condemned even indirectly the atrocities committed by Pakistan against the Bangladeshis.

I thought that the execution of even the aged Jamiat leaders, who had sided with Rawalpindi, would have created some revulsion. But, to my surprise, I found the people happy that the collaborators were being executed for the crimes they had committed. Till today, the Jamiat has not condemned Pakistan for what it had done in East Pakistan, probably because it is an Islamic country and a part of Umma.

The left which was a force at one time is no more in the picture. It has lost its appeal as well as its cadre. Careerism attracts the youth and the businessmen influence politics because they bribe every tier of the government. This pattern prevails all over Bangladesh.

Still the silver lining is that people love the democratic system and express their faith in it through protests and agitations. Not long ago, the people's unhappiness would pour on to the streets in the shape of processions, which would hamper the normal business. It dawned on the people, even though belatedly, that by closing shops in bazaars and

factories they were only harming themselves. They also realized that destroying the environment for producing garments, which is the only source of revenue and foreign exchange, is not going to help improve their economy.

What is striking is the wealth that is accumulated in a few hands. They not only dictate day-to-day business but also politics. Many industrialists finance political parties and individuals who make it to the National Assembly so that they would have their influence on the policies and programs formulated by the government.

The media in Bangladesh is free only in name as is the pattern in third world countries. Editors have freedom to the extent that their owners want them to wield and the press is very cautious in reporting matters relating to the armed forces. Somehow, it has come to be recognized that criticizing the military is tantamount to harming the country's interests. This is blatant even in the democratic India, but the armed forces have the last word in Bangladesh.

I asked many about the direction towards which Bangladesh was going ideologically, economically or socially. One academician who is closely associated with politicians told me that Bangladesh had lost its way and he did not know which direction it was heading.

Sheikh Hasina's main strength is New Delhi which has put all eggs in her basket. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) says it openly that Hasina has even damaged India's image because of her authoritarian rule. She brooks no criticism and sees that her critics

are harmed so that they realize she and India have become synonymous.

It does not look that Bangladesh would ever have free and fair elections. But if they were to be held, the foregone conclusion is that Sheikh Hasina would not be defeated. Begum Khalida Zia too has not made herself popular by aligning with Jamiat. In fact, it has been an albatross around neck which she has not been able to shake off.

However, one thing is sure that she would not this time boycott elections whenever they are held. The BNP has realized that even a few of their members in the National Assembly would have brought Hasina's acts of omission and commission before the public. The vested interests in the country have had it never as good as it is today because people are disillusioned with both Hasina and Khalida. The two Begums are the inevitable fate of Bangladesh, however unpopular they may be with the people.

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Appropriating a Dalit Icon: Modi Model

P. Sankara Narayanan

Addressing a public meeting in TN's Coimbatore last week, PM Narendra Modi accused the Congress of trying to instigate Dalits against him. He assured the nation that as long as the name of Ambedkar existed in the hearts of the people, reservations for the oppressed classes would continue. Reiterating his commitment to the Dalit cause, Modi said the Centre had paid rich tributes to Ambedkar on the occasion of his 125th birth anniversary. Even a special debate was held in Parliament to commemorate the occasion.

It is a fact that the Congress has been trying to use the occasion to ignite fire. But Modi is ill qualified to question that because the BJP was all along doing the same thing when the Congress was in power. Former UGC Chairman Prof Sukhdev Thorat had conducted an investigation during UPA-II regime, at the request of the union govt, on the alleged caste discrimination prevailing in the AIIMS-Delhi. The study found shocking evidences of discrimination against the SC & ST students inside the campus.

But neither the ruling Congress nor the main opposition BJP took any interest to deliberate the Thorat report and take remedial action as recommended by Thorat. Had such remedial measures been initiated three years ago, Rohith and many more Dalit students would not have ended their lives, so much for these two national parties' concern for the oppressed castes.

Back to Modi's other observations in Coimbatore: Centre paying rich tributes to Ambedkar on his 125th birth anniversary and a special debate in Parliament to commemorate the occasion are no substitutes for taking concrete steps to dismantle the all-pervasive racism. If that is taken as the benchmark, the Congress will defeat Modi by miles.

His compulsion to invoke the name of Ambedkar and the expressed concern for the Dalit welfare are better explained by Saba Naqvi in the Economic Times article dated Feb 06 under the caption 'Untouchable for Dalits'.

The killing of Kalburgi and other rationalists had hardly disturbed Modi, nor the return of awards by the writers and artists. Because of the national and inter-national outcry over Dadri killing, he spoke (of course, perforce) against the beef murder. In the case of the rationalist murders, he would lose hardly any vote. In Dadri issue, the affected community by and large will not vote him. And it is a well – designed plot to segregate the Muslims to reap the benefit of polarization.

In the 2014 general election, the BJP got more Dalit votes than ever before in its history. According to the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies data, in previous elections, the all-India Dalit vote for the BJP was 12-14%. It jumped to 24% in 2014. Simultaneously, Dalit support for the Congress dipped to 19%, although it traditionally stood at around 28%. In other words, the shift

of the Dalits was a crucial element in the defeat of the Congress. It is a quantum jump for a party which was once overwhelmingly led by upper castes and mercantile communities.

Next, the Narendra Modi-powered election of 2014 had considerable success in breaking the 'Dalit barrier', most significantly in UP and Bihar from where the party made a rich haul at the cost of regional parties. The election swung in favor of the BJP largely because Muslims and Dalits were divided.

The BJP's acid test will come in a year from now in the 2017 UP assembly election. It will really have to fight to hold on to the gains it made in the Dalit community in 2014. The Dalit unrest now prevailing in the country after Rohith's suicide can be ignored by Modi only at his peril. Being considered as an-anti Dalit is a potential disaster for any leader.

Some of Modi's half-baked colleagues tried to establish that Rohith was not a Dalit. That is a feeble bureaucratic attempt to fight the raging fire. They missed the wood for the trees. Rohith is now a symbol larger than any detail, hence Modi's remembrance of the Dalit icon at Coimbatore.

But attributing the entire credit to Ambedkar for bringing in the reservations for the oppressed castes is an over kill. Reservation was first started in Kolhapur by the initiative of the Maharaja of Kolhapur in 1902. Next it was

introduced by the Maharaja of Mysore in his Princely State in May 1921. The third in the line was the Madras Presidency where it was introduced in September 1921 by the Justice Party which came to power in the Province on the plank of curbing the then existing Brahmin monopoly. Next was the Bombay Presidency in 1931. Next came, Travancore where the Maharaja introduced Reservation in 1935, followed by the Maharaja of Cochin. Thus, before Independence the whole of the peninsula was covered by Reservation.

The peninsular States are ahead of the States in the rest of India in all parameters of development and welfare. This is not accidental. An important contributing causal factor is the bringing in of a larger part of the population into governance, administration and education through Reservation in response to social reform movements in the peninsular States – a process that suffered considerable delay in the rest of India. The architect was Periyar EVR.

At the national level, Reservation was introduced for the SCs through the initiative of Dr. Ambedkar in 1943. With his wisdom, he foresaw that those in whose hands power would effectively reside in the post-colonial India would be averse to providing Reservation and other measures required for the SCs. He convinced the Viceroy against the counter-advice by certain other members and secured Reservation, Post-Matric Scholarship scheme and Overseas Scholarship Scheme for SCs, which could then be automatically extended to the STs on attainment of Independence.

Reservation for OBCs had to wait for forty six years after

Independence in the rest of India. Dr Rammanohar Lohia (Periyar's counterpart in North) was the sole politician who advocated for preferential treatment to oppressed castes and women of all castes. On January 1, 1979, the Morarji Desai government chose Bindeshwari Prasad Mandal, a Lohiaite and former chief minister of Bihar, to head the Second Backward Class Commission. Mandal submitted his report two years later, on December 31, 1980. Reservation for the OBCs was implemented in the North in 1993 based on Mandal report.

The kings of the princely states, Periyar and Lohia were also responsible for this affirmative action. But it is politically not convenient for Modi to give any credit for the erstwhile Maharajas, Periyar and Lohia. His singling out Ambedkar for the entire credit is a crude attempt to appease the Dalits.

Modi just cannot afford to blame others, if Dalits are annoyed at him. Rohith's suicide in UoH and the terrorist attack on Bacha Khan University happened almost at the same time. Modi condemned the latter incident immediately on the twitter. But poor Rohith had to wait for a couple of days to get the attention of the PM. Dalits are clever enough to understand the subtle message.

While he is eulogized by his camp followers for the one lakh crore rupees bullet train scheme between Ahmedabad and Mumbai, Dalits will certainly ask him how many thousand green toilets were fitted in the railway coaches and how many stations were freed from manual scavenging .

In the 20-month Modi rule, no sincere attempt was made to

enumerate the number of Dalits engaged in manual scavenging, despite the pressure from NHRC and courts. In spite of all the big propaganda about Swachh Bharat, manual scavenging and the consequent Dalit deaths in gas chambers continue unabated. His finance minister imposed unprecedented cuts in the Special Central Assistance to Scheduled Castes Sub Plan in all his budgets.

Space does not permit me to write on the sorry state of sanitation, atrocities committed on the Dalits, social exclusion and the highhanded behavior of the bureaucracy and police towards the Dalits in the land of Gujarat under Modi rule.

Last but not the least

His latest icon Babasaheb Ambedkar once told, "The system of untouchability has been a goldmine for the Hindus. This system affords 60 millions of untouchables to do the dirty work of scavenging and sweeping to the 240 million Hindus who are debarred by their religion to do such dirty work. But the work must be done for the Hindus and who else than the untouchables?"

Can the human excreta collection or cleaning of gutters—which has condemned lakhs of people to a life of indignity since ages—be considered a 'Spiritual Experience'? Definitely not, everybody would yell. Well, Narendra Modi, the then Chief Minister of Gujarat, had a different take on this, which he mentioned in the book 'Karmayog' (publication year 2007).

Herein he discussed the age-old caste-based vocation of the Valmiki as an "experience in spirituality". He wrote: "I do not believe that they have been doing this job just

to sustain their livelihood. Had this been so, they would not have continued with this type of job generation after generation.... At some point of time, somebody must have got the enlightenment that it is their (Valmiki's) duty to work for the happiness of the entire society and the Gods; **that they have to do this job bestowed upon them by Gods; and that this job of cleaning up should continue as an internal spiritual activity for centuries.** This should have continued generation after generation. It is impossible to believe that their ancestors did not have the choice of adopting any other work or business."

Looking at the fact that a section of the Dalits themselves—especially its upwardly mobile and more articulate section—has joined the Hindutva bandwagon, it was expected that there would be no angry reaction to his utterances within the State. A section of the Ambedkarite Dalits and many human rights activists did protest but their voices got drowned in the cacophony of voices of Modi

Toadis.

It is a different matter that when Modi's remark got published in The Times of India in mid-November 2007, which was later translated in a few Tamil newspapers, it resulted in a massive reaction of Dalits in TN. Not only did they stage protests for calling their menial job a "spiritual experience", but also Modi's effigies were burnt in different parts of the State. Sensing trouble Modi immediately withdrew 5000 copies of the book.

He never apologized for this atrocious writing. Far from that, he stuck to his opinion. Two years later, addressing 9000-odd safai karmacharis, he likened the safai karmacharis' job of cleaning up others' dirt to that of a temple priest. He told them: "A priest cleans a temple every day before prayers you also clean the city like a temple. You and the temple priest work alike." Thanks to the upper caste controlled Modified mainstream media, this path breaking discovery was never

allowed to reach the Dalit masses.

The Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act, 1993 prohibits employment of manual scavengers. Engaging manual scavengers is a punishable offence under SC/ST Atrocity Act. NHRC calls it as a gross violation of human rights. Under these circumstances, a person holding a Constitutional post shamelessly glorified manual scavenging as an "experience in spirituality". And he now accuses others for instigating the Dalits against him. What an irony?

There is an old Tamil poem which reads, "Theedhum Nanmaiym Pirar Thara Vaaraa" (Bad and Good deeds are not brought by others). It is better to correct his skewed ideas on Dalits and start tackling their monumental socio-economic problems rather than blaming others. It is high time for Modi to switch over to action mode from the election mode.

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Caste and Politics – The Virus-twins

Jawaharlal Jasthi

Pathological viruses can be controlled by scientists – after some time, if not immediately. But we have done everything necessary to ensure a perpetual life for the virus of caste and made it a sharp weapon in the armoury of politicians. The Hindu religion is blamed mostly for its caste system, but there is no religion without such divisions among them, albeit under different names. Even from times immemorial, it was

conceded that the caste system is an inhuman institution and has to be discarded. Many of the social reformers tried to kill the monster, but it continued to raise its head again and again and surviving to this day. But having hated and condemned it whether intentionally or inadvertently, everything is being done to conserve the caste system. The society becomes unbalanced because of caste differences. In every such unbalanced society,

there will be some beneficiaries and they naturally try to perpetuate it.

Like any other religion or society, the Hindu society is also a patriarchal society and that is what is prevailing throughout the world – except in some minor groups which the civilized society prefers to call tribes. (We hear the matriarchal system is prevailing to some extent in the state of Kerala. Hats off to them!)The patriarchal system is

unjust to women as their importance is undermined. As Chetan Bhagat is reported to have quipped, “coke belongs to the man who puts the coin in the slot of the vending machine.” That was the law applied when Hinduism was dominant. It remains the same in all the countries irrespective of the popular religion. While there are many situations where the patriarchal system is unfair to women, there are also situations where it came to the rescue of women. The case of *Bhoobum Moyee Dabia Vs. Ram Kishore Achar Chaudhry* (1865) decided by the Privy Council can be an example. Both the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law became widows. The mother-in-law got a son adopted to prevent the rights of the daughter-in-law on the property. But the Privy Council declared that the natural son is the real inheritor and his widow is half the husband alive and inherits all his rights. The decision saved the rights of the widow and declared that “the caste rigidity breaks down and would stand no impediment to her becoming a member of the family to which the husband belongs and she gets herself transplanted.”

Unfortunately, the courts in India refuse to uphold the principle of integration of the married couple into one entity and demanded maintenance of separate identity. The question arises mainly in the case of inter-caste marriages. That has become necessary in view of certain benefits and privileges conferred on the Scheduled Castes and Tribes and extended to backward classes, in the constitution. The effect of marriage on the status of the spouses in the case of inter-caste marriages is completely changed. The main detrimental effect of the caste system is the inequality built into it. A gradation is prescribed under which

the status or level of each caste is prescribed. People belonging to some castes are given a higher status by prescribing respectable functions in the society and the others allotted menial services. It was a watertight compartment. The possibility of inter-caste marriage was not contemplated and any such relationship is extralegal, if not outright illegal. Like religion, the caste is also conferred by birth and there was no way of coming out of the frame. Naturally, those belonging to lower castes aspire to be counted as of higher castes, but there was no possibility.

It was in that situation that India became independent and adopted a constitution of its own. The constitution made some provisions to help the lower caste people come out of the rut. In addition to some incentives and privileges, they were given right of preferential treatment in regard to educational and employment opportunities. At that time the usual tradition was that the condition of the husband will, hold good after marriage. The surname is changed to that of the husband and she becomes a member of the husband’s family. Virtually the wife acquires a different identity from what she had till then. It was supposed to be something automatic and no rules were necessary to do so. If the spouses were of different castes, it was but natural, the caste of the husband holds good and the caste of the wife was of no consequence thereafter. Under that impression, certain marriages were performed. Where the husband belonged to a backward caste or a scheduled caste, the wife expected to be treated as one belonging to the backward caste and entitled to those preferential treatments and privileges. One such case was of *Valsamma*.

Valsamma Paul Vs. Cochin University (1996) is the case. Ms. Valsamma Paul was a Syrian Christian (forward) and married a Latin Christian fisherman (backward caste). They were Christians and the question of caste would not arise in their case because this caste distinction is specifically restricted to Hindus and Sikhs according to the statutory provisions. But Latin Christians were recognized as backward in the state of Kerala. Being qualified, Valsamma applied for a post of lecturer in the Cochin University claiming herself as a person of backward class by virtue of her marriage. After her appointment objections were raised and the matter went to courts. After crossing all the levels with diverse decisions of courts it reached the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court raised the doctrine of ‘constitutional purpose’. The privileges are given in the constitution “for advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens of Scheduled Castes and Tribes.” as stated in Art.15(4) of the constitution. It was introduced by the First Amendment in 1951 itself. If the privileges and rights of preferential treatment are allowed to members of higher castes the very purpose for which the provisions are made in the constitution will be defeated. Marriage cannot be accepted as an excuse to confer that right on a member of forward caste. To claim the benefit, it is necessary that the person claiming should have suffered the (undignified) life of the scheduled caste. The member of a forward caste did not suffer that life and cannot get the rights just by marrying a person of scheduled caste or backward caste. Thus, the constitutional provision is made to override the traditional concepts and religious customs. A caste which is

not included in the backward classes or scheduled castes is supposed to be forward and deemed to be advanced in education and socially as well.

The question of status of the spouse and of the offspring as a consequence of inter-caste marriages was determined in the case of *Sobha Hymavati Devi Vs. Setti Gangadharaswamy* (2005). Sobha was elected to the state Assembly from a reserved constituency. Her father was a karanam (a forward caste) and her mother was from scheduled tribe. On that basis, she claimed herself to be of scheduled tribe. Moreover, she herself married a man from scheduled tribe. Thus she was confident of her privileges. Again the same arguments were raised against her. Her father was from a higher caste and she was brought up at the level of the father and so she did not live the life of a scheduled tribe. Thus, by virtue of her birth she could not be considered as belonging to the scheduled tribe. Then she is automatically considered to belong to a forward caste. By virtue of her marriage to a man of scheduled tribe, she cannot claim the privileges as she was not of the tribe by birth. She lost on both counts. Thus she was declared not eligible to be elected from a reserved constituency.

By following that theory, it can be seen, that many of the offspring of the inter-caste marriages will be deprived of the privileges that are allowed under the constitution and the purpose of the constitution cannot be said to have been served. So the state governments tried to step in. In the case of *Anjan Kumar Vs. Union of India* (2006) the question of children was determined. Anjan Kumar was the son of a kayasth father (forward) and a scheduled

tribe mother. Based on his mother's status, he obtained an ST certificate and wrote the UPSC examinations in 1991 and failed. He wrote again in 1992 and succeeded. He was allotted to Information Service. But he did not receive the order of appointment even after waiting for a long time. His enquiries did not get any response. He approached the Central Administrative Tribunal. They conducted an investigation and decided that he was not eligible for the status of scheduled tribe as his father was from a forward caste and he had not been brought up as a person of scheduled tribe, in spite of his mother belonging to the tribe. At that juncture the Ministry of Home Affairs issued a circular to clarify the "status of children belonging to the couple one of whom belongs to Scheduled Caste or Tribe". It stated that "when an SC/ST woman marries a non-SC/ST man, the children may be treated as members of SC/ST community provided that the marriage is accepted by the community and the children are treated as members of their own community." While being ambiguous, the circular introduced another factor into the problem, that the marriage must have been accepted by the community. Which is the community that has to accept it? As the case was with reference to rights of scheduled tribe, obviously, the marriage is supposed to be acceptable to that community. How to ascertain the acceptance? Usually marriages are followed by community feasts. If the members of the community attend that feast, it might be taken as approval. But these are just conjectures and no such guidelines were given in that circular. But by suggesting approval of community, they have, may be inadvertently given credibility to the honor killings and khap panchayats.

In the case of *Anjan Kumar*, the marriage of parents was performed under the supervision of the court as the parents of the spouses were not willing. So, it can be taken as not approved by the community. Moreover, he was not brought up as a tribal person. So he was treated as belonging to a forward caste only. Among all these confusing decisions, the order of Delhi High Court in the case of *Kendriya Vidyaalaya Sangathan Vs. Shanti Acharya Sisingi* (2011) appears unambiguous. They stated that the offspring of a scheduled caste father and a forward caste mother become automatically scheduled caste members. How the children are brought up is not of any consequence. The offspring of a scheduled caste mother and a forward caste father can be treated as members of scheduled caste only if they are brought up as members of the scheduled caste. Whether it is just or not, there is clarity in that decision.

The question of bringing up the children as belonging to a particular caste has become crucial in many subsequent cases. It has to be decided not merely based on the economic level of the child, but it has to be shown whether there was observance of traditions and customs of the tribe or caste in the day-to-day life. The pity is religions are more porous in this case than the castes that are part of the religions. In the case of inter-religious marriages, one of the parties usually insists that the other party must convert to their religion before marriage. Then it ceases to be an inter-religious marriage and no complications arise. But when the parties belong to different religions, the marriage itself will not bind both the parties unless it is performed observing the rituals of both the

religions. The irony is in such cases, no party demands conversion and the marriage is performed twice, observing the rituals of both the religions, so that it binds both the parties to the marriage. In the case of castes and tribes there is no such provision for conversion. They are more watertight and that position is now given constitutional status.

When it was recognized that caste system is a menace and has to be discarded, one of the ways to dilute the caste was suggested as inter-caste marriages and many such marriages are being performed. But in the light of the judgments, such development is not possible. On the other hand, leave alone spouses, the offsprings suffer very badly. They belong to neither here, nor there. They cannot enjoy the status of the upper caste as one of the parents does not come from their caste. They can neither get the right to belong to the lesser caste as stated in the judgments. Each caste is a subset of some religion. But the children cannot opt for conversion as long as they are minors. Perhaps, those who think of inter-caste marriage have to be cautioned against it. They themselves might be happy, but the fate of children is miserable. There are many families that have suffered like that.

The case of Principal, Guntur Medical College Vs. Y.Mohan Rao is a class by itself. The parents of Mohan Rao were Hindus belonging to the scheduled caste Madiga. They converted to Christianity and after that their son Mohan Rao was born. He was a brilliant student and aspired to become a doctor. At proper time he applied for admission to the Gandhi Medical College claiming preference as belonging to the madiga caste. But admission

was rejected as he was a Christian by birth and the question of caste did not arise. He was disappointed. He was advised to reconvert into Hindu religion so that he could regain the status of the scheduled caste. That he did and underwent the rituals required for the purpose including the so-called Suddhi. (In line with Ghar Vapasi) Then he applied to the Guntur Medical College for admission on preferential grounds as a member of madiga caste. He was admitted. But after sometime the Principal informed him that his admission is cancelled as it was against the Rules in force. The Rules he referred to was in the Go.Rt. 1315 dated 4-12-1973 issued by the state government. The Rule stated that "No candidate other than a Hindu, including a Sikh, can claim to belong to a scheduled caste. No candidate can claim to belong to a scheduled caste except by birth". But Mohan Rao was a Christian by birth. And so the Principal had to cancel his admission.

When the constitution was adopted in 1950, Art. 341 gave the power to the President to "specify the castes, races or tribes or parts of its groups within the castes, races or tribes which shall for the purpose of this constitution be deemed to be Scheduled Castes..." Exercising the powers under that Article, the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 was issued.

Para (2) of the order states that "subject to provisions of this Order the castes, races or tribes or parts or groups....be deemed to be scheduled castes so far as regards members thereof resident in the localities specified in relation to them."

Para (3) stated that "Notwithstanding anything

contained in para (2) no person who professes a religion different from the Hindu or Sikh religion shall be deemed to be a member of the Scheduled Caste."

In the course of arguments before the court the advocates were wise enough to interpret the Order for the benefit of their client. It was pointed out that there was no condition in the Order that the person must be born a Hindu. It is not necessary to be a Hindu by birth. It is enough if he professes Hinduism as on the date of appointment. Mohan Rao got himself reconverted to Hinduism before that date. His admission to the medical college had to be confirmed. Meanwhile the government also stated that his admission will not be disturbed whatever the decision of the court may be. Thus it was a happy ending. But nobody questioned whether he becomes a member of scheduled caste automatically just by becoming a Hindu. It was not a case contested by anybody. It had arisen because of the interpretation of the rules and when the rules were found to be favorable, the question was closed.

In the light of the above decisions of courts, we can cast a glance on the current agitation that is going on in the Hyderabad Central University. The suicide of Vemula Rohit is a shocking tragedy. He was an extremely brilliant student who got his admission based on merit without depending on preferential treatment available to him based on his caste. Even then, he mixed freely with his kin in the college and was active in furtherance of the lot of his people. He was actively associated with all their activities. But he was too sensitive to withstand the vagaries of such activities that took a political color. The immediate and remote

causes that made him so desperate as to drive him to sacrifice his own valuable life are under investigation. Unfortunately, the controversy and agitation is spun around the fact that he is a Dalit ignoring the fact that he is an intellectual of extra-ordinary caliber which makes his loss more poignant.

It is but natural that some persons will be viewed as responsible for the tragedy and it must have been the result of some atrocious treatment meted out to him. Cases were filed against ministers supposed to be responsible for the atrocities against a Dalit member. As a logical consequence, the defendants try to escape responsibility and search for ways out of the allegations. Every kind of argument will be put forward to avoid liability under the Act which may give severe punishments. The first argument will be that the Act will not apply to this case. To say that the first step is to prove, that the victim was not a Dalit. That is what all the ministers have started to say. They think that the fact that

his father belonged to a backward community would make him a member of the backward class and so the Act will not be applicable. But the various judgments indicate that his status as Dalit will be upheld.

One of the deleterious effects of the caste system is that people at all levels get grouped based on their caste and the faculty and staff of an educational institute are no exception, in spite of being highly educated. Once such polarization materializes, discrimination is inevitable. Such a discriminatory treatment might have been meted out to him over a period of time, denying legitimate benefits pushing him to a state of penury and make it difficult for him to pursue his goals. It reminded him of his poverty and social status, out of which he was trying to come. All his efforts till that date were rendered futile and he might have resorted to the tragic decision.

All this because, of the hold of caste on the society and on human psyche. All the provisions

made in the constitution and law, to ameliorate the conditions of backward classes have become an attraction for others to claim a share of it. Six decades after independence, people of so many castes are demanding recognition as backward classes to get similar benefits. It compels rulers and well-wishers to ask whether it is the only way to help the backward communities. Courts have tried sincerely to ensure that the benefits are available to the communities as intended under the constitution. But it has led to a situation where the doors are closed on efforts to relax the hold of caste. Once it is realized that caste is a permanent feature of our society, politicians tend to play the ball to their advantage, ignoring the long term effects on the society. Thus caste and politics become interdependent with mutual help. Thus the virus-twin continues to thrive, aggravating the pathological condition of the society. That is regrettable.

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De-radicalisation, the Khan's way

Sanjay Pandey

When 40-year-old Faisal Khan, a devout Muslim, decided to revive an organization, that had been active in the pre-Independence days in the field of social reform, about five years back, he had something different in mind. It was serving the humanity through propagating the message of peace and love and bringing together the Hindus and Muslims in the country.

Of course the cause, howsoever noble it may be, could be the motto

of hundreds of social organizations active in the country. What makes Faisal stand apart is the way he strives to achieve this unity. It is his interpretation of Islam and Hinduism that silences the hardliners. Khan, who has an in-depth knowledge of the Quran as well as Hindu religious books, extensively quotes the Prophet and the Hindu scriptures to make his point.

Khan in 2011 revived "Khudai

Khidmatgar", a social organization, which was founded by Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, popularly known as Frontier Gandhi and was active before the Independence and partition.

Gaffar Khan had also been active in the struggle for freedom with Mahatma Gandhi during the British regime. What prompted Faisal Khan, who is not related to Gaffar Khan, to revive the organization was his concern over rising extremism

among the Muslim youth owing to “faulty interpretation” of, Islam. “Islam is a religion of peace and love...it never advocates killing of the innocents,” he says.

Faisal said there was an acute shortage of organizations where the entire society gets reflected. “I know about secular organizations where there is no Muslim representation and similarly there are social organizations where there is no representation of the Hindus. These organizations cannot claim to be social organizations in the true sense. They may be religious or caste-based,” he added.

“Prophet says...the best person is who benefits others...even the concept of *satyagraha* has been explained by the Prophet,” Faisal said while speaking to Deccan Herald. “There is a need to understand Islam in a proper way... we should use the teachings of the Prophet to spread this message among the Muslim youths...we should counter the radical thoughts through Prophet’s message,” he says.

Khan says that it must be told to the Muslims that Islam meant “faith, love and protection”. For Faisal there was no particular brand of Islam. For the radicals among the Hindus, Faisal has quotes from the life and teachings of Lord Rama.

Faisal appears to be sore with the Muslim activists and the organizations, which claim to be working for the community. “They have always portrayed the Muslims as victims. This will not work and

the Muslims will not be benefited by this,” he remarks.

“Unfortunately the Muslim activists, who claim to be champions of the Muslim cause, have limited themselves to the religious issues....of course there are religious issues concerning the Muslims but they too, being part of society, have to be made part of any voice against the social and other problems confronting the country,” Khan said.

Khudai Khidmatgar has both Hindu and Muslim volunteers and workers. “We have a, 60: 40 ratio of Muslims and Hindus and we take up issues concerning social, cultural, political and other fields and jointly raise our voice,” he said.

“We took up the issue of illegal constructions on the ponds and other issues concerning the common people in Kannauj district in UP. We also held meetings in UP’s communally sensitive Muzaffarnagar district after it witnessed large-scale clashes following which a large number of Muslims fled from their homes in the villages,” he added.

“The problems that confront the nation are of concern to both Hindus and Muslims and so they should come together to find a solution. This is what our organization seeks to do and this is what will make India a truly secular nation,” Khan says. Khudai Khidmatgar had also been involved in relief activities in Cuddalore in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry during the recent floods.

Faisal, a post graduate in sociology and a graduate in law from Aligarh Muslim University, realizes the radicalization of the Muslim youths was a dangerous sign and needed to be confronted forthwith but with love. “The government of India has also acknowledged that we are working toward de-radicalizing of the Muslim youths,” he said.

Faisal strongly believes that the de-radicalization could be achieved through making them aware of the true meaning of Islam. “If the Muslim youths become active in social fields then they will not have any fear...they will not feel alienated and feel that they too are very much of society...social activism must be popularized with the Muslim youths,” he added.

“In our country even social service has turned into a profession like any other...this is not the way to serve society,” he remarks.

“Hum sabke hain...Rub sabke hain..Sab hamare hain,” (we belong to all...the God belongs to all and all belong to us) says Faisal, who was also associated with some other social organizations, when asked about his religious views. Khudai Khidmatgar has also started a helpline through which it counsels the youths on different issues. “We want to propagate the ideals of the Frontier Gandhi,” he says.

Faisal understands very well that the task ahead of him is not easy. “It is difficult but not unachievable,” he says.

Courtesy : Deccan Herald

In Bundelkhand: Odd day you get to eat, even day you don't

Yogendra Yadav

Her answer still rings in my ears. “*Bhaiyya, saawankemahine me ekpaavdaallayethhe*” (Brother, we last bought 250 grams of dal during the rains). I had asked her when, was the last time she cooked dal for her family. This was village Mastapur in Tikamgarh district, Madhya Pradesh, which shares its border with Uttar Pradesh, where the pitiless terrain of the old Bundelkhand region extends. I asked this question to every woman I met during this visit. Usually there was an awkward pause followed by a smile or laughter (“don't you know the price, babuji?”), but not a single woman claimed that her family consumed dal daily or even regularly.

I was travelling with my Swaraj Abhiyan colleagues to various villages in drought-affected Bundelkhand that lies across MP and UP, trying to listen to the footsteps of famine. This was our third visit to Bundelkhand in as many months. The first was in October, when we travelled over 4,500 km through the worst drought-affected districts of the country—from Karnataka to Haryana. Till then we had only read about the plight of farmers in Marathwada. And what we saw was depressing. But nothing had prepared us for what we encountered in Bundelkhand. It was not just this drought. It was the third successive crop failure for this region. Drought in 2014 was followed by hailstorm during the winter crop of 2015 and then another drought in 2015. The last decade and half has seen nearly

ten droughts. This drought was the proverbial last straw.

We came back after a couple of weeks to conduct a thorough survey, just in case our own impressions had deceived us. The survey (in collaboration with a local NGO, Parmarth) in 108 villages on the UP side of the border confirmed our worst suspicions: in the month preceding the survey, 60 per cent rural families could not offer milk to their children; 39 per cent had had no dal; 40 per cent reported distress sale of cattle; and 27 per cent had sold or pawned their ornaments in the last eight months. The survey did not catch national media attention, except for some sensational reports on the use of *fikar*—rotis made of a traditional, wild substitute for wheat and rice—by some rural poor, mostly adivasis.

This is when we learnt the hard truth: drought is not glamorous. Unlike floods, it does not yield powerful television footage. Images of parched fields, the *cliche* of drought reporting, are exceptions rather than the rule. Unlike earthquakes, it doesn't happen in a single stroke. No breaking news, therefore. Rather a gradual, continuous unfolding. It's cruelly selective, almost Darwinian: it quietly grabs the poorest, the most vulnerable. Calamities and accidents get their stage time on the basis of how much we can empathize. Turns out not a huge amount for much of the Indian middle class.

This time we were returning after activists in that area reported further worsening of the situation. Now, drought was visible. Vast stretches of barren, unsown land greeted us. In districts like Tikamgarh and Chhattarpur in MP and Mahoba and Hamirpur in UP, most farmers have simply left their land fallow, for it's pointless to sow expensive seeds in cruel, moisture-less soil. This would be the fourth successive crop loss for the farmers. This may not be the end of their woes. Scientists tell us that climate change is resulting in higher frequency of “extreme weather events”. Climate change is compounding the agrarian crisis.

Hundreds of ravenous stray cattle, mostly cows, scouring the field for some straw or tree leaves, announce the arrival of a village. ‘Anna pratha’ (letting off cattle) is an old tradition in Bundelkhand. But villagers tell you that this year the number of cows let loose exceeds anything in the past. As you look at those exhausted, lowing cows, those loud TV debates on cow slaughter and beef consumption begin to sound fake and so removed from the real India. For the cattle, this is slaughter by other means.

One of the first sights inside every village is a hand pump with a long queue of aluminum utensils. Villagers take you to dry and drying wells. The famous ponds of Bundelkhand are drying one after another. Village elders confirm that they have never seen

reservoirs so dry. It's not because the rainfall this year was the worst ever. Bundelkhand falls in a rain-shadow area and has seen worse droughts than this. But depletion of forests, neglect of ponds and large-scale stone-mining has left this eco-region more vulnerable to drought than ever before. This is winter. You don't dare ask the villagers what the situation might be like in the months of April and May.

A walk inside the village takes you to locked houses, many more than ever before. Seasonal migration is not new to the people here. The rural poor migrate to Indore, Surat, Delhi and NCR area and all the way from Uttarakhand to Tamil Nadu in search of work. This year, the landless labor, have been, joined by small and middle farmers. At Jhansi station I met this owner of 12 acres of land, a prosperous farmer by national standards, leaving for Delhi with his wife and three children in search of daily wage labor. In village after village, you see only a few able-bodied men—mostly just old parents waiting for remittance. You wonder what happens to those families where remittances do not arrive. And you recall Amartya Sen's theory that famine is not caused by lack of food-grains but by lack of purchasing power.

And what about the state? Harsh Mander, activist and ex-IAS officer from MP and one of the Supreme Court-appointed food commissioners, reminds us that drought—besides elections and kumbhmelas—used to be a test for bureaucracy. Extraordinary times when it couldn't afford its business-as-usual approach. No sign of that in Bundelkhand, whether in MP or UP. There were some exceptions. Some activity had begun in UP when we

visited it last. But by and large the state is absent when it is needed most.

It's not as if they don't know what to do. From the days of the Raj, every state has had its Famine Code that spells out the steps to be taken during a drought. Since 2009 the government has a Manual for Drought Management that meticulously lists all that the Centre and states need to do to cope with a drought. Yet there is little sign of any preparedness, let alone action. The Drought Manual mandates a contingency plan for water and crop substitution at the district level. It did not seem to exist in most places. There is no urgency about repairing water pumps and little forward planning for the coming summer. Yes, the PDS exists and the children are getting their mid-day meals (though no education) in the schools. Madhya Pradesh is better than UP in this respect, for it has implemented the National Food Security Act. But scores of poor households in each village complain they have no ration cards. And women tell you that their quota of ration (5 kg per person per month) lasts barely a week. There is no special action yet on the ground to provide any additional ration during this period when stocks are running out. The next crop, if all goes well, is still about 10 months away.

And if you thought NREGA was meant to provide employment during such emergencies, you are mistaken. The employment guarantee scheme that originated in Maharashtra precisely to counter drought is not much in evidence—and mostly not dovetailed to this objective. There were some signs of NREGA works in UP, but none in MP. As for crop loss compensation and crop insurance, the less said the

better. UP is still to pay the meagre compensation for crop loss during last year's hailstorm. MP is faster but most of it is mired in local corruption.

We are back in the city. Running water in washbasin; a full thali looks obscene. Drought doesn't exist for the media. We are discussing the weather: it might affect the odd-even scheme. My mind is still fixated on the other odd-even scheme in Bundelkhand: odd day you get to eat, even day you don't. During a press conference, a smart journalist gets up; "Are you playing politics? Preparing for elections?" Yes, I wish to say. They are planning to give representation to animals in Parliament and I am planning to contest that election.

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How Scientific Evidence Against GM Crops Has Been Repeatedly Suppressed and Distorted

Bharat Dogra

There is increasing evidence that carefully conducted research which revealed serious health and environmental hazards of genetically modified (GM) crops has been repeatedly suppressed by powerful interests.

Several examples of tactics used for this purpose have been provided in Jeffrey Smith's widely quoted book 'Genetic Roulette - The Documented Health Risks of Genetically Engineered Food'. In the context of the USA, this book has reported, "The FDA (the Food and Drug Administration of the USA) was fully aware that GM crops were meaningfully different. That, in fact, was the overwhelming consensus among the technical experts in the agency. The scientists agreed that genetic engineering leads to "different risks" than traditional breeding and had repeatedly warned their superiors that GM foods might create unpredictable, hard-to-detect side effects." The scientists' concerns were kept secret in 1992, when FDA policy was put into place. But seven years later, internal records were made public due to a lawsuit and the deception came to light. The agency's newly released 44,000 pages revealed that the government scientists' "references to the unintended negative effects.... were progressively deleted from drafts of the policy statement (over the protests of agency scientists.)" They further revealed that "the FDA was under orders from the White House to promote GM crops and that Michael Taylor, Monsanto's former attorney and later its vice president,

was brought into the FDA to oversee policy development. With Taylor in charge, the scientists' warnings were ignored and denied."

The story of U.K. is no less shocking, adds Smith. In the mid-1990s, the UK government commissioned scientists to develop an assessment protocol for GM crop approvals that would be used in the UK and eventually by the EU. In 1998, three years into the project, the scientists discovered that potatoes engineered to produce a harmless insecticide caused extensive health damage to rats. The pro-GM government immediately cancelled the project, the lead scientist was fired and the research team dismantled.

In addition more subtle methods have been followed in designing research in such a way that risks and hazards cannot be revealed properly. Smith writes, "industry-funded studies have become notorious for using creative ways to avoid finding problems. They feed older animals instead of more sensitive young ones, keep sample sizes too low to achieve the statistical significance needed for proof in scientific studies, dilute the GM component of the feed, overcook samples, compare results with irrelevant controls, choose obsolete insensitive detection methods, limit the duration of feeding trials, and even ignore animal deaths and sickness."

According to a report prepared by the Independent Science Panel,

a group of eminent scientists from several countries, there has been a history of misrepresentation and suppression of scientific evidence, especially on horizontal gene transfer. Key experiments failed to be performed, or were performed badly and then misrepresented. Many experiments were not followed up.

At the time of the Bt brinjal debate in India, Prof. Pushpa Bhargava who was nominated by the Supreme Court in the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC), pointed out that when Monsanto's dossier containing all the bio-safety tests that they had done was put in the public domain earlier this year (2009), there were serious criticisms of it by many scientists from various parts of the world.. Prof. Bhargava's own criticism centered around, the following points -

- A large body of concerned, knowledgeable and reputed scientists have agreed that some 30 or so tests need to be done before a GM plant is cleared for environmental release. Monsanto had done only less than 10 of these tests.
- Even these tests were done largely by Monsanto, and we have no facility in the country to even determine whether the tests were actually done.
- There were many scientific errors even in the tests that were done by Monsanto.

The GEAC appointed a committee (EC-II) to prepare a report on such criticism. But Dr. Bhargava and others were essentially given just

one day to review the 102 page report. Still on the basis of his vast experience he could quickly see that there were “internal inconsistencies in the report, inconsistencies between the report and the earlier data that had been put in public domain and outright scientific absurdities.”

A group of 17 distinguished scientists from the USA, Canada, Europe and New Zealand wrote to India’s Prime Minister in 2009, “India’s regulators do not require independent bio-safety tests, but uncritically accept as evidence of safety, research conducted by the company who is applying for commercial clearance of the product. This raises serious questions regarding impartiality and conflicts of interest, which are clearly justified, based on published evidence of bias in the research conducted by industry that is contrary to accepted normal scientific conduct.

“GM food compositional analysis is superficial and the minimum required, to establish ‘substantial equivalence’, a scientifically conceptually flawed parameter that is virtually meaningless with respect to determining health risk.

“Experimental design used by the applicant is flawed, almost invariably containing irrelevant

“control” non-GM comparator crop varieties, which serve to mask rather than to isolate and reveal the effect of the GM transformation process.

“The biological testing required is not adequate to detect either acute or chronic toxic effects of GM foods. At best, only 90-day feeding studies are required by the government’s SOPs without an obligatory requirement for toxicological and histological evaluation. In order to assess medium and long-term (life-long) health impacts it is necessary to conduct lifetime and multigenerational feeding studies. Only these will reliably determine fertility and chronic health impacts, which is essential because it is the intention that people will be eating GM foods for their whole lifetime.

“Experimental data is invariably not made publicly available for independent scientific scrutiny under the pretext of commercial confidentiality. This has required court action (both in Europe and India) in order to obtain the information needed to assess the quality of the research submitted by industry to be scrutinized by authoritative bio-safety experts. Such independent re-evaluation of submitted industry data has repeatedly found that this research and its interpretation thereof to be

flawed, inadequate, biased and thus misleading.”

Dr. Sagari R. Ramdas, co-director of Anthra writes, “Since 2005, shepherds and farmers from different parts of India, particularly the states of Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Karnataka and Maharashtra, have reported their cattle falling sick after it has grazed on genetically modified cotton or have been fed Bt cotton seeds and in some instances have died. Despite several reports and representations to concerned regulatory and research institutions both at national and state levels, alerting them to the seriousness of the issue, there has been a persistent reluctance amongst the scientific establishment to respond, investigate and research the core issue. On the contrary the reaction of the establishment has been bureaucratic and dismissive of the observations.”

We may conclude with this statement of Kirk J. Azevedo, DC, a former employee of a leading MNC in the GM crops business, “When I worked at Monsanto, I warned both scientists and executives that our GM foods may cause disease, but no one was even willing to listen, let alone investigate the unpredicted side effects. For them, it was all about profit.”

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

by
Rohini Gawankar

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The elite vs the dispossessed

Aakar Patel

Ten years ago, in 2006, Lata Mangeshkar announced she would leave India if a flyover was built in front of her mansion on Mumbai's Peddar Road. She said first that it would affect her voice, and later that "if there is drilling on the road, the foundations of many buildings will be shaken". That flyover was, of course, not built.

This week I learnt something about coal mining which I thought I should share with you. It will tell you a thing or two about how fairly we are going about development. It comes from a report my colleague Aruna Chandrasekhar is working on. Let's first look at the laws regulating mining, which protect the property and rights of Indian citizens.

In 2014, came the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act. It requires that "the consent of 70 per cent of affected families is mandatory where land is sought to be acquired for public-private partnership projects, and 80 per cent for private projects".

That sounds reasonable to me. And the Act "also contains a provision requiring the prior consent of the concerned gram sabhas in Scheduled Areas before land can be acquired".

In addition, it requires a "social impact assessment", meaning a study by independent experts to map a project's impact on people's lands and livelihoods, and its economic, social and cultural consequences,

in consultation with affected communities. If you think this is fair, you should know that this law does not apply to those lands taken for coal mining.

Specifically, there is no consultation with land-owners, their consent is not required before their land is taken and there is no question of assessing the impact. It will interest readers to know, particularly after reading about Lata Mangeshkar's objection, of one small aspect of the impact that Ms Chandrasekhar has observed.

Schools in mining areas are shut between 3 pm and 4 pm because of explosions so big that the school buildings tremble. Let's come to the ST and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006. This law "recognises the customary rights of forest-dwelling ST and forest-dwellers to land and other resources.

Members of these communities can claim individual rights over forest land they depend on or have made cultivable. Communities can also file for rights over common property resources, including community or village forests, religious and cultural sites and water bodies."

The law says that village assemblies must have a key role in deciding who has the rights to forest resources. Sounds good? The ministry of tribal affairs observes that this law is mostly ignored by the government.

Another law regulating land acquisition is the Panchayats

(Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, also called PESA. It requires that panchayats be consulted before land is acquired in tribal areas for development projects, and also before the resettlement or rehabilitation of people affected by such projects. This law is also more or less ignored.

Then there is the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, which requires all projects of a certain size to get environmental clearance after public consultations with local communities likely to be affected by the project. The one law that the government properly follows and applies is the one under which it grabs land: the Coal Bearing Areas (Acquisition and Development) Act, 1957.

Under it the government issues an order published in its gazettes (when was the last time you read a government gazette?). And then, unless written objections are filed in less than 30 days, the process begins by which the land "shall vest absolutely in the Central government (free from all encumbrances)"

Observing the policies of Coal India Ltd (which controls some two-thirds of all mining in India), a parliamentary committee said that the tribal communities "hardly have any access to the official gazette wherein they could see that their lands are to be acquired for public purposes".

I would say that this is actually quite deliberate. The industrial

development of this country (it was reported on February 6, that Adani Power Ltd is building a \$2 billion coal fired power plant in Jharkhand) is happening on the back of our theft of tribal land. And we in the middle class are totally complicit.

Which one of us would give up our flats for development? Our elite can even veto the construction of a greatly needed flyover. We insist that others, who are un-willing but weak, make all the sacrifices on our behalf and then we are puzzled when

there is violence against the state. Knowing the reality of this naked land grab brings a very different meaning to words like “Maoist” and, of course, “development”.

Courtesy : Deccan Chronicle

From Archives

Search For Relevant Socialism-Part - (II)

H. K. Paranjape

Is socialism relevant to India ?

The question of socialism being relevant to India has become of great contemporary importance for two reasons. Firstly, every political party now calls itself a socialist party and persons holding all kinds of views are calling themselves socialists. Sometimes they attach adjectives to the word such as Gandhian socialists, welfare socialists or even real socialists ! But the result is that the word has become like an over-used coin and has lost its etching and edges so that it can hardly be distinguished from coins of quite a different character. The second reason for raising this question is that there has been large scale repudiation of the doctrine by many groups, parties and even whole societies which earlier used to vehemently swear by the doctrine. Country after country in eastern Europe has repudiated not only the policies which they were following in the name of socialism for the last 45 years or so; but many of them have even dropped the term from their official lexicon. Even in the very land whose October revolution provided the inspiration for the spread of socialist ideas over a large part of the globe, there

is now a dispute whether the name of the Union should be changed from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the Union of Sovereign Republics by dropping the term ‘socialist’ ! Also, many ideas such as state ownership of all means of production, central planning of the economic system and antipathy to the operation of multi-nationals and unrestricted entry of foreign capital are being increasingly repudiated by the communist parties in these countries. Not only is the importance of peaceful co-existence of countries with different socio-economic systems being accepted as a long-term proposition but even mutual co-operation and inter-dependence of the rich and the poor countries and countries with quite different politico-economic systems is being supported ! This used to be ideological anathema earlier.

India Not Socialist

In India, as mentioned in the first part above, the idea of the state pursuing the objective of building a socialist society was adopted by Parliament in 1955, and it was even put in the preamble of the Constitution in 1976. A Planning Commission was established in

1950, and the country already has had seven five year plans of development, with an 8th one now being finalised and implemented. There has also been continuous increase in the scope as well as the magnitude of public ownership of means of production. At the same time, the State has devised various instruments through which the sectors of the society not directly owned by it are controlled, regulated, directed and assisted so as to influence them to operate in the manner the State considers appropriate. But, in spite of this, no one can make the claim that India today is anywhere near being a socialist society. Enough data have been given in the first part of this paper to show that there are too many inadequacies in the Indian economy and society as they exist today to permit the word socialism to be applied to India.

Moreover, when the difficulties facing the country, especially on the economic side, are being discussed, the most persistent suggestions for reform are regarding privatisation of publicly owned business and industrial organisations, and towards reducing and eliminating

the effectiveness of many of the instruments of control and influence which the state has developed. What does this suggest except that there is much general scepticism about whether India has not been following a wrong track in pursuing 'socialism'?

What is 'Socialism' ?

One of the first points to clarify when discussing this question is : What exactly do we mean by socialism ? It being a very old term, it certainly means many things to many people. But the most common understanding of the term is related to the organisation regarding means of production. The dictionary meaning of the term has been put as follows :

“ Political and economic theory of social organisation which advocates that the community as a whole should own and control the means of production, distribution and exchange; policy or practice based on this theory “ (Oxford).

But this definition, though widely accepted, ignores the most fundamental aspect of what people believe about a socialist society. Marx had envisaged socialism to be a classless society, an association in which the free development of each is the warrant for the free development of all. The basis of such a society regarding its system of production and distribution of goods and services was to be - “ From each according to his ability, and to each according to his need.” In an earlier - transitional - stage, it was thought that this would be modified to “ From each according to his ability, to each according to his work.” While accepting the importance of some inequality as an incentive for

work, the importance of avoiding vast inequalities of income, and disparities in wealth or opportunities due to birth or inheritance, was treated as an essential part of the socialist doctrine. It was against the exploitation of man by man, of the appropriation of the value of one man's labour by another, and of vast disparities in income and wealth that the doctrine of socialism came to be espoused.

The ownership and control over the economic apparatus was thought of as a means towards attaining these objectives of socialism. Unfortunately, these means have come to be seen as the essence of a socialist society. We can have a society in which the State in the name of community may own and control all the productive instruments of the economic system; and the society may even then be far from attaining the essential objectives of socialism. Obviously, therefore, it is not proper to equate the means or the instrumentalities for attaining a socialist society, as understood by Marx or anyone else in a particular historical context, as the be-all and end-all of socialism. Of course, if we take the Marxist approach in its full complexity, then it would not be difficult to show that what was done in many countries including India in the name of socialism had little to do with a genuine movement towards such a society. But now that the leaders in the countries which have been pronounced votaries, of the Marxist doctrine have themselves come to question whether the path pursued by them has been the right one, it is obvious that one should not take it for granted that the Marxist doctrine, especially as propounded by the leaders there,

still holds true.

One can also point out that the condition for the attainment of socialism and the manner in which this would take place as indicated by Marx not having been fulfilled, - as capitalism did not, even when mature, break down, and the proletariat in the most capitalist countries did not show interest in undertaking a revolution in the manner which Marx envisaged - the Marxist • scheme will have to be looked at as only one of the possible indicators of the manner in which socialism may develop. After all, communist parties which vowed by Marxism attained power in two countries - the USSR and China - which were far from having developed into fully industrialised and mature capitalist societies. In fact, industrialisation was the main programme (“Soviets and electricity” as Lenin called it) of the regimes after taking power. Thus there can be a socialist path to the industrialisation and development of a predominantly feudal and agricultural society, a path which is an alternative to the capitalist path which earlier industrialised countries pursued. Without going into those details here, we can only say that this puts a different complexion on the nature and A Role of socialism as compared to what Marx had envisaged.

Democracy and Equality Important

We in India have thought in terms of building up our polity on the basis of equity as well as liberty for all and a structure of the State based on adult franchise, free elections and a federal system. We now also accept that the kind of society we want to build must be

one which does not deprive us of these special characteristics in our polity, but further adds and enriches them. What we have to attempt to attain further is the growth of equality among our citizens so from being merely formal and legal, it begins to percolate to social, economic and other spheres of life. We also see from the experience of the countries which have attempted to build up socialist economic structures far more persistently than us that the attainment of equality, at least for quite some time to come, should not be mistaken to imply that there would be no inequalities whatever. Incentives for encouraging the attainment of skills, trying out innovations and putting in hard work would remain important for long, and this cannot but result in some inequality. With the increasing importance in modern societies of services of various kinds, the question of appropriate valuation of work of different types and magnitudes also becomes quite complex. It is not necessary to go into a detailed discussion of that question. What needs to be stated for our present purposes is that this alone can provide the basis of a socialist society. The negative implication of this is important; and it is that, to the extent possible, no one should be able to obtain a share in the social product except as a reward, for his work, that is, except for children, the aged and the handicapped, none should be able to participate in sharing the social product except on the basis of his contribution to the production process of the society.

Equality of Opportunity

An important assumption underlying this approach has to be that the society attempts to

provide the maximum equality of opportunity for everyone to acquire the best capability in terms of intellect or skills that he or she is potentially capable of. This implies not only compulsory and free primary education of an appropriate quality for all, but also the availability of a programme of minimum nutrition, uniforms, books and other requisite materials to all students irrespective of their family backgrounds. A further implication is that for the more talented among the school children, facilities for higher education and training should be freely available in an appropriate manner; and this will involve hostel accommodation wherever necessary and other requisite study facilities. Especially in the Indian context, special provision for study facilities will have to be made for children from castes which have no tradition of learning in their families and who will therefore require special support in various ways so that their family handicap can be overcome as much as possible. Children from low income families and other specially handicapped groups will also have to be provided facilities to help them get over their difficulties. When it comes to opportunities for special education such as in universities or other higher educational or training establishments, provision for loan scholarships will have to be made so that freedom of emigration which a democratic society cannot avoid would not lead, as at present, to the loss of the large investments made in the education of students in such institutions, who decide to emigrate. The fees for such education should be such as to cover the per capita costs of such education.

Growth and Equality Compatible?

An important question regarding building a socialist society is whether it can and must be a society in which political democracy based on adult franchise, civil liberty and free functioning of political parties and other normal democratic freedoms will be treated as essential. It may be asked in this connection whether the development of the economy so as to ensure removal of poverty and building up of a decent per capita income - which in many other countries has been attained through capitalism - can be ensured through a democratic socialist society of the kind we have mentioned. The Marxist assumption has been, firstly, that socialism will be ushered in a society inevitably as a result of capitalism maturing and reaching a certain stage. Secondly, that the capitalists will resist the transformation of the society to a socialist one in such a manner that, without a violent revolution, such transformation may not take place. In the light of the experience of the last hundred years, it would not be wrong to state that neither of these assumptions needs to be considered universally valid. Many of the programmes which Marx and Engels laid down as parts of the common measures to be undertaken by the proletariat after seizing power have been carried out in countries which remain at least partly if not substantially what he would have called capitalist. These include a heavy progressive income tax, heavy death duties though not abolition of all rights of inheritance, centralisation of credit by means of a national central bank with State capital (though the central bank usually controls only the

overall credit flows and some times negatively bans particular credit channels and does not exercise detailed control), communications and transport (and other public utilities) being in the hands of the State or other public authorities, extension of state enterprises, gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country by a more equitable distribution of the population, free education for all children in public schools, and abolition of child employment in factories. The fact that communist parties wedded to the Marxist doctrine were able to come to power in countries where capitalist development had not still penetrated sufficiently deep-like Russia and China - is also a fact that cannot be ignored.

A question that is sometimes posed is: Would it have been possible for Russia rapidly to transform itself from a predominantly agricultural and industrially not very developed country to a major industrial power without the kind of coercive discipline and escalated and forced capital accumulation which took place in the 1930s? There may be differences of opinion on whether the kind of policies and massive repression which Stalin practiced were all really necessary for ensuring rapid industrialisation. But the various groups which had put forward alternative policies before Stalin's establishment of his supremacy had all suggested approaches which would lead to, in effect, a kind of capitalist role but with a communist party-led State in charge of the development. In fact it may be claimed that the attempt in the USSR was to carry out the task which was fulfilled in other countries over decades through capitalism in a shorter

time through socialist planning and, it was thought, at a much lower human cost. In the light of the information now available, success on this last point has become at the least doubtful. But we need not go into that dispute here. The relevant point for us is that in poor countries like ours which are still to a large extent dependent on agriculture, modern industrialisation and other developments have to be rapidly carried out so as to help get over the problems of poverty and inadequate availability of goods and services for decent living. The question is whether such transformation is consistent with the maintenance of multi-party and decentralised democracy such as we have been attempting to build and maintain in India. That the changes Marx thought impossible did take place in some of the affluent countries which are still largely capitalist can at least partly be attributed to the possibility of imperialist exploitation which was directly or indirectly open to them; but such a possibility does not exist for a country like India. True that, for countries with a long tradition of Parliamentary democracy like Britain, the transformation to socialism through democratic parliamentary means had not been entirely discounted even by Marx. But the problem for countries like ours is whether the movement towards basic economic development itself is consistent with democracy and socialism.

There are certain indications suggesting that this may not be impossible. The very fact that we have been able to maintain a system of parliamentary democratic functioning almost without interruption for the last 40 years is encouraging. There are important

sections of population in various parts of the country who appear be wedded to the idea of keeping this country going along the democratic path. With all their handicaps and inadequacies, elections have been held and governments have changed peacefully. It is true that the system has not been able to ensure either a consistent and adequate pace of economic development or a steady policy towards greater equalisation, regional or personal. The share of different sections and strata of the population in political power continues to be uneven even though the power balance has changed so as to cope with the demands of the disaffected to the extent they made their ands felt either through political organisations or agitations.

The experience in countries like the USSR and those in Eastern Europe or China suggests that a regime going under the banner of 'Marxism' yields a very mixed result, with economic and technological growth and certain measure of social security and minimum facilities for all, but at a social and human cost which is at least not much lower than that in the capitalist countries in their periods of growth, and then also finding that the 'democratic centralism' - cum authoritarianism makes correction of distortions quite difficult. Our own experience suggests that, however inadequate, the formal democracy which we have had has yielded some results. True that there is a tendency for the haves to imitate the consumerist tendencies in the more affluent capitalist countries; the Gandhian insistence on limiting wants is tending to be forgotten; few lessons from experience elsewhere about the environmental and ecological

disasters that result from unplanned growth are being learnt in practice even though we have attempted to plan our development but we do find that the task of organising the have-nots and bringing about a change is succeeding, however slow the progress.

Structural Changes Essential

It does appear, however, that certain structural adjustments would be essential if the dissatisfaction with the system is to be kept within limits, and outlets for such disaffection and built-in devices for correction are to be ensured. Our country not only has major differences of language, religion and culture among its people but has also a long tradition of a rigid and unjust social hierarchy represented by the caste system. Recent economic and social changes have not been effective in eradicating the caste differences. Certain castes, especially those which were deemed untouchable, continue to be both socially and economically oppressed, in spite of some ameliorative measures which have been taken since Independence. Their representation in the legislatures is not effective, and therefore their influence on decision-making remains minimal. Their share in administrative power is also small as, with their educational and economic backwardness, and also due to the caste feelings of those already well represented in the administrative services, they do not get selected for such positions in adequate numbers. This has proved to be a major handicap in a system where, with considerable centralisation of power in the Central as well as state capitals, a very significant area of decision making has remained in the hands of the administrative bureaucracy.

Political Change As An Alternative

One way of getting over this handicap is to provide for special reservation of posts in the services for such handicapped caste groups. To some extent, this could also be applied to religious minorities. But the difficulty in this approach is that it may create a kind of permanent division along caste and religious lines in the whole structure of services. This will be detrimental to their morale and handicap their efficient functioning. Especially in a country like India where administrative services of different kinds and at various levels will have to play a critical role in ensuring economic and social transformation, a system which will handicap the best possible functioning of the administrative machinery should be avoided.

A much better method of securing better attention to the interests of various groups would be to reduce the area of bureaucratic control and, at the same time, to ensure that legislative organs get to represent different sections of society in a far better manner than happens at present. The first past the post system of elections does not secure proper representation to all groups in a society like ours. What we therefore need is a system of proportional representation. This will ensure that various sections, strata and interests get more faithfully represented in the legislative bodies. The objection that this would lead to an unstable executive which a country like ours can ill afford can be met by the adoption of the presidential form of government together with proportional representation. Another essential feature of such

a structural reform has to be the reorganisation of the Union so that the units of self-governance are in a position to provide both for effective participation by citizens and efficient administration. This involves not only a reordering of Centre-state relations but also a reorganisation of the states into smaller and more manageable units to replace some of the present enormous and unwieldy ones. At the same time, care must be taken to ensure that the state units are administratively and financially viable. Units as small as individual cities or talukas (Tehsils) should not be constituted as states. (This has unfortunately been done in cases like Goa and Pondicherry, and there is a vociferous demand for doing this in the case of Delhi).

Further, the idea of the local bodies, both urban and rural, being given adequate powers through a clear provision in the Constitution itself for such division is already accepted by most political parties in the country. Such structural changes in the polity would make it possible for the real policy decisions at various levels to be taken by legislatures which are as near as possible representative of the different interest groups as well as political parties in the country. It is true that the grant of a vote, and a carefully devised system of representation, are not by themselves enough to ensure that in fact the various interest groups will be fully and properly represented in the legislative bodies. We have had experience in the past when, especially in rural areas, certain sections such as particular castes or women were not permitted to vote, their ballot being exercised by others with the connivance of those in administrative charge of

the elections. But this is a matter in which eternal vigilance is essential for continuous improvement. The neglect of vigilance on social inequity in its various forms - castism, the oppression of women, or the tendency to exploit the credulity of the ignorant in the name of religion - has been a major failure of our post-independence political movements. We have tended to assume that the Constitutional emphasis on equality irrespective of caste, creed or sex would automatically remove the age-old handicaps imposed on women, untouchables and such vulnerable sections. Progressive groups, political or others, have to remain vigilant, carry on education and propaganda and fight oppression and injustice vigilantly. Only then can the Constitutional equality have its impact in actual practice.

The main advantage of such a changed system of governance would be that the possibility of policy decisions being made in directions which would ensure increasing justice and equity to an increasingly larger number of people would be facilitated; at the same time, the implementation of various policies and programmes will be at levels where their actual execution can be supervised more effectively by the beneficiaries, and there would be maximum participation of citizens in the whole process. At the same time, it would be possible for those politically in charge at various levels to control the administrative instruments dealing with the work directly affecting them. A presidential form of government at all levels would provide for the actual management to remain stable for a certain period of time. Management would be in the hands

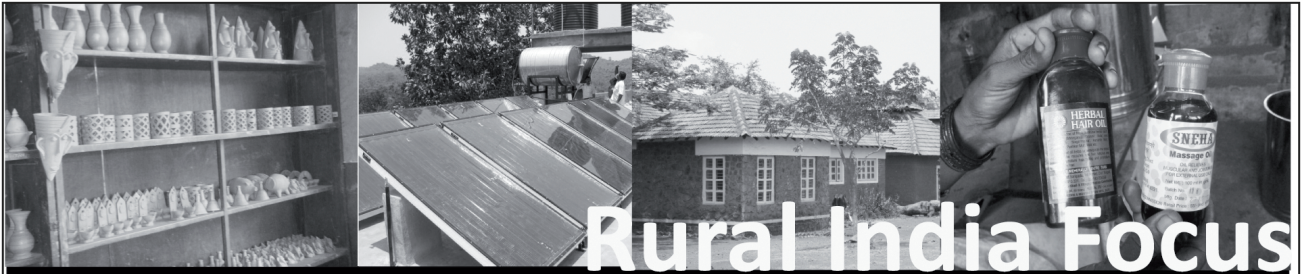
of the persons selected by the chief executive as the best available, and there would be minimum day-to-day political interference by legislative interests as happens in the present parliamentary form of government. At the same time, basic policy as well as budget decisions would remain in the hands of a representative legislature which would also be able effectively to supervise the conduct of policies and programmes. Legislative bodies would be in a better position to exercise their supervisory role, as there would be separation of powers between them and the executive. Probably, in a complex society like ours, such a system alone can ensure both proper representation of all the diverse interests and strata, at the same time minimising instability at the executive level. An executive continuously at the mercy of legislators whose allegiances go on shifting can hardly do justice to its administrative responsibilities.

I am emphasising such a structural change as a necessary part of the future socialist society for India because it appears to me that, unless we ensure a political and constitutional structure which makes it possible for the variegated elements in our complex polity to feel that they are all effectively able to make their influence felt, it is going to be difficult to maintain the unity and stability which are so essential for growth with equity. That this is not an easy task is indicated not only by our own experience but by that of the USSR and other east European countries. The feelings of separateness due to language, religion and ethnicity have made themselves violently felt there as soon as the repressive apparatus which had kept them

together was removed. The idea that a long period of repression and also living and working together for long and growing into a comparatively advanced, educated and industrial society, would automatically enable diverse elements to adjust to each other and integrate in a peaceful and tranquil manner is being belied in these countries.

We in India should not forget that all the various parts that constitute the present Union have never been for long united in a common political unit. It is as a result of British conquest that all the areas that today comprise the Indian Union came together in a political union. The strains which we have felt in these last 40 years and which are making themselves felt even more intensively in the last decade, show that it is going to be difficult to maintain this union. At the same time, it would be a great handicap to the economic development and prosperity of all our people if secessionist tendencies grow further and difficulties are in continuing the Union with the advantages of a large common market, a political structure which helps sort out inter-regional disputes peacefully and one political and legal structure, and an advantage in the international area of being a growing major power. Any breakup of the Union can only provide a setback to such a prospect. Hence the importance of building up a structure which would take care of these various diverse interests and provide for their appropriate representation in critical policy making organs, as well as in effectively organising and supervising administration.

(to be concluded)



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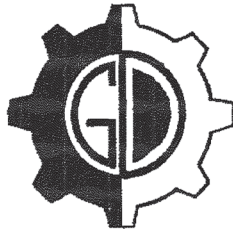
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Hindu Mahasabha ‘celebrates’ Gandhiji’s death anniversary

Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha celebrated Mahatma Gandhi’s assassination by distributing sweets on his death anniversary on January 30 at its Meerut office on Saturday. Workers of the Hindutva group danced to the tunes of drum and Bollywood songs outside its office. This comes days after its workers observed Republic Day as ‘black day’ and protested against the Indian Constitution.

“We celebrate the fact that this country’s hero Nathuram Godse eliminated Gandhi on this very day in 1948. Every year we distribute sweets, hire professional bands and invite people to dance to express our happiness at Gandhi’s killing,” said Pandit Ashok Sharma, national vice president of Hindu Mahasabha.

Pandit Sharma, a man in his late seventies told this correspondent that Hindutva activists treated January 30, the day Gandhiji was killed, as a “festival”. He proudly declared that India is a “Hindu Rashtra” and Godse should be its “hero” and not Gandhiji. At the occasion he also eulogized and paid homage to Nathuram Godse, the “martyr” who “wanted to save India from Gandhi and from his proposal of partition.”

Pandit Sharma, an old associate of Hindu Mahasabha argued that Gandhiji had no followers and the entire country was follower of Nathuram Godse.”In reality Gandhi has no followers in the country he thought he fought for. Entire India is actually inspired by the ideas of Nathuram Godse. You tell me who extends his/her next cheek after being slapped, as Gandhi asked people to do?” He proudly posed the question to this correspondent in order to substantiate his argument.

Last year, Hindu Mahasabha was ready with a statue of Godse to build a temple for him on January 30 at its offices across the country. It organized “bhumi puja” for the temple but the respective state governments sealed the offices to prevent the Hindutva body from installing the statue last year.

Like Sharma, Bharat Rajput the district president of the Hindutva body, is also an old Hindu Mahasabha hand who has been “actively taking up Hindutva causes.”Mr. Rajput had a piece of news for the Government of India. “We wanted to install a bust of Nathuram Godse in our offices so that his followers can come and pay homage to him. I want to tell the government that one day we will build the temple for Godse and nobody can stop us,” he said.

For both Pandit Sharma and Mr. Rajput the larger goal is to “officially declare” India a “Hindu Rashtra.”We do not believe in the idea of a secular Constitution. When India officially declares itself a Hindu Rashtra, Godse will be declared its hero and Gandhi’s assassination would be declared a national festival,” said Pandit.

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Poll mood sets in

S. Viswam

There are still nearly four years for the next round of Lok Sabha polls to be held in 2019, but the election mood appears to have set in rather prematurely. It is of course true that with so many states involved, some by-election or the other is always being conducted in some part of the country throughout the year. The poll mood will indeed turn into poll fever ahead of the elections whether for a state assembly or for parliament. Between now and 2019, some states are expected to go to the polls and hence your interest in the elections can be sustained throughout, in case, that is, if you are an election watcher.

The other day many eyebrows were raised when newspapers carried a story, accompanied by photographs, of a poll alliance being firmed up between the All India National Congress and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, party of Karunanidhi in Tamil Nadu. The state goes to the polls to elect a new assembly next year. Juxtaposed against the performance of the two parties in the last assembly polls, the alliance was a surprise. The DMK is no more the political force it once was, and the Congress has been for many years an "also ran" grouping in the state. Neither has made any substantial

gains in the last three or four years and continue to be political underdogs. Neither can win a majority on its own, and it is doubtful if they can achieve the feat in alliance, the chief minister Jayalalithaa and her All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam being still seen as the top dog in electoral terms.

On what calculation did these two parties opt for an alliance in preference to going it alone? Firstly, the mass support base that the DMK once commanded is eroded more or less fully and the same goes for the Congress. They should be forgiven therefore if they think that together they would carry a stronger appeal than individually. Let us not throw cold water on their hopes. Rather, let us commend them for daring to take on the mighty Jayalalithaa, hoping that the combined effort would break her stronghold (or should we say stranglehold?) on the vote bank in the state.

A word about Jayalalithaa here. Neither the Congress nor the DMK, nor for that matter any of the numerous other small groupings, including the Tamil Nadu BJP have been able to mount an effective offensive against her whereas she has eminently

succeeded in making her presence felt through a number of populist programmes that have caught public fancy and attention. You visit Tamil Nadu and everywhere you hear Amma's name (and fame), and wherever you turn you run into a poster heralding an Amma scheme. After Idlis and a few other food items, the current campaign, we understand, is focused on medicines and drugs, and bottled drinking water that sells for an affordable ten rupees compared to its local rivals that cost a few rupees more. Amma's popularity is directly linked to her populist measures, and she is using her imagination to include more and more items that can be found attractive to buy at a bargain price.

It is this formidable challenge that the Congress-DMK alliance aim to shatter at the next assembly polls next year. May the better grouping win, is all that we can say.

Poll moods are built up by what is known in the election jargon as "hawa" or "wind". Once the hawa blows, there is little poll campaigns can achieve. This is the general experience. The 2014 Lok Sabha polls were won by the BJP under the Modi hawa. That hawa, one must admit, swept much that stood in its way, and one must admit is still blowing strongly. The verdict at an odd by-election here or there is no barometer of opinions, but we have had the experience earlier this week of judging the trends

through a number of by-polls. Assembly by-polls were held in 12 assembly constituencies across eight states. The results need to be taken as a fairly reliable mood indicator since many states and constituencies were involved. And the results? The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance has emerged as the best performer while the Samajwadi Party in UP the worst. UP and Punjab go to the polls only next year and hence the results in this round of by polls have lessons for each. One lesson is that the ruling dispensations in both the states cannot take things for granted. They have to work hard to retain power. The challenge seems to be serious and formidable.

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It's Siachin glacier again

Kuldip Nayar

Some more Indian soldiers have died at the Siachin glacier in the last few days. The unnecessary deaths should have refocused the attention of both India and Pakistan on the futility of posting forces at the height of some 23,000 feet where the temperature is minus 41 degrees. Both should have sat across the table to find a solution to the unsavory happenings.

Instead, New Delhi has treated the matter as sacrifice of soldiers and ended it with their state funerals. More than a decade ago, when Pakistan lost as many as 180 soldiers in an avalanche, the two countries did discuss the matter at length and reached an agreement.

The then Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, initialed it. But he could not sign the agreement because our

armed forces raised the question of how the glacier was strategically important. It was a mere bogey. I have discussed the matter with the retired top-brass. And they have rejected the strategy angle.

Still the soldiers remain perched at that height. It was General Pervez Musharraf who spoilt the situation. He is the one who stationed soldiers and tribal on the glacier when the then Indian Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, took a bus ride to Lahore. Musharraf, then heading the army, did not want peace with India. He, like Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, thought that Pakistan could defeat India. He realized his mistake and admitted publicly that he wouldn't do so again because he had "learnt from history."

India lost heavily in the Kargil war initially but ultimately prevailed

because of superior military strength. The situation has not been normal since. Some incidents, off and on, take place to keep the two nations apart. Maybe, there are elements which do not want peace between the two countries.

The Pathankot incident is a recent example. A few days before the meeting between foreign secretaries of the two countries, the incident took place. Both New Delhi and Islamabad have become mature enough not to break off the talks, which are re-scheduled again. Yet, the fact remains that the talks between the two countries have not taken place and there is no likelihood of their early resumption.

In fact, the Siachin glacier is itself a matter of dispute. This is one of the matters which are spoiling the

relations between the two nations. Unfortunately, the problem has assumed a political colour. The ideal solution is to let the glacier become a no-man's land.

The Shimla conference which delineated the Line of Control, now an international border, could not extend the line to the glacier because it was found unpractical to do so. The matter was left at that. It is no use apportioning blame now. Both nations have to overcome bitterness that has deepened since then.

The two countries can still pick up the threads from where the Shimla conference had left it off. If the glacier has to become a no-man's land, both sides will have to implement the Shimla agreement in letter and spirit. Pakistan was not straight forward when the understanding was reached last time. It had some other ideas because it had ordered a large number of snow shoes from Germany.

When the Indian intelligence agencies informed New Delhi about the procurement of snow shoes, it stationed its troops on the glacier. Pakistan was surprised to find them when it sent its troops to occupy the glacier. The fear of being stabbed in the back has stalled peace. Yet, there is no option except to have trust in each other.

India and Pakistan are seldom on the same page. Partly, it is because they carry the baggage of partition and partly because they have no trust in each other. Above all, there is a general perception in India that since the army is a decisive factor in the affairs of Pakistan, it is not possible to foster any meaningful relationship until it becomes a democratic polity again. In fact, since the time when

General Mohammad Ayub Khan took over the reins of Pakistan in 1958, India has assumed that no normalcy between the two countries is possible.

General Ayub had even offered a "joint defence pact." India's then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru spurned it with the remark: "Joint defence against whom?" The leaders of the two other military regimes in the seventies and later—General Zia-ul Haq and General Pervez Musharraf—were never taken seriously because New Delhi believed that their say from the military point of view would never allow any exercise for peace to succeed.

However, when Pervez Kayani was the army chief, he jolted India's thinking by advocating "peaceful coexistence" between the two countries. But his suggestion that the civil and military leaderships should discuss ways to resolve the issue was a bit confusing. He should have known that the military leadership in India is not part of the decision-making process which is primarily in the hands of the elected representatives.

General Kayani's proposal did not stop at the Siachin glacier. He had hinted at a follow-up, thus belying the impression that peace between India and Pakistan was a hostage to the army's hawkish thinking. He opened a window of opportunity which the governments on both sides should have grabbed with the two hands to normalize relations.

I wish a back channel had worked on Kayani's suggestion. Though New Delhi failed to react officially then, the media had welcomed his proposal with guarded comments.

The question then was whether the Indian forces would withdraw from the Siachin glacier after Pakistan had rejected a unilateral pullout as was suggested by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif at that time.

History has once again created the circumstances because Nawaz Sharif is the Prime Minister. He should take the initiative, especially when Prime Minister Narendra Modi showed the gesture of visiting Pakistan while returning from Kabul. Both can meet either at Islamabad or at New Delhi to implement the agreement which Rajiv Gandhi had initialed.

They should realize that in the absence of normalcy between India and Pakistan, the region cannot develop. The largest number of poor is in this part of the world and the two leaders will have to bury the hatchet to extract them out of helplessness.

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Why Afzal Guru evokes a controversy every time?

Sandeep Pandey

In the context of recent event at Jawaharlal Nehru University to mark the hanging of Afzal Guru in which JNU Students' Union President Kanhaiya Kumar has been arrested on the charge of sedition, we must also consider why the controversy over Afzal Guru refuses to die? Afzal Guru was hanged for his role in the 2001 Parliament attack case. But the Supreme Court admitted that there was no evidence to show that Afzal Guru, was a member of any banned organization nor any of the 80 prosecution witnesses said that Afzal was associated with any terrorist organization. The judgment says, "The incident which resulted in heavy casualties, has shaken the entire nation and the collective conscience of the society will be satisfied if the capital punishment is awarded to the offender." We have to ask ourselves can satisfaction of the collective conscience be a reason for ending somebody's life in a civilized society? And there is not even a question raised over this judgment? It is a disservice to the Indian democracy if we choose to remain part of the silent conspiracy.

Afzal Guru did not receive a fair trial. He was not allowed to have a lawyer of his choice. Neither did the court hear his version. He was made to accept his crime under duress and threat by police. Simply put, he was made a scapegoat. The truth is if he had not been hanged a feeling would have prevailed that India was not able to take strong action against the perpetrators of the Parliament attack. Somebody needed to be hanged and it was the misfortune

of Afzal Guru that he was the most vulnerable among the four who were made the accused in the Parliament attack case.

The then Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, Omar Abdullah had slammed the execution of Afzal Guru and said that it would reinforce the sense of alienation and injustice among Kashmiri youth. He claimed that the decision was more political than legal. It is this doubt over Afzal's hanging that persists even three years after his hanging and that is the reason some people would like to call him a martyr.

The NDA government has termed the event on JNU campus as anti-national as there were objectionable slogans raised. The moot question is what will be considered more anti-national - hanging a person whose crime was not conclusively proved or merely raising pro-Kashmiri Azadi slogans? It is the injustice done in the case of Afzal Guru which is reverberating in the form of slogans which were raised in the JNU event.

It is important to question the hanging of Afzal Guru so that no more such incidents occur in future. The right to free speech is under threat in our democracy from the communal fascist forces. There are people associated with RSS who would like to eulogize Nathuram Godse. Some even want to build a temple in his name. If they would like to worship Nathuram as a hero, they should not have any objection if some people want to treat Afzal Guru as a martyr.

The authorities are also suggesting that the permission for the event was withdrawn just before it was to take place. A similar thing happened when reputed journalist Siddharth Vardarajan was to speak at Allahabad University on invitation of AU Students' Union President Richa Singh on 20 January, 2016. The Vice Chancellor there also withdrew the permission at the last moment.

It must be asked to the persons associated with the current ruling dispensation, which has become the torchbearer of nationalism and determines what is appropriate and what is not and is not behind in punishing the 'offenders,' whether they took any permission to demolish the Babri Masjid in 1992, an incident which has seriously compromised India's internal security atmosphere? Or, before they killed Mahatma Gandhi? Or, when they carried out bomb blasts twice in Malegaon, in Hyderabad, Ajmer and Samjhauta Express? Or, did the NDA government led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee at the center take even their own Defense Minister into confidence, what to talk of Parliament, before testing the nuclear weapons in 1998, an act which worsened the South Asia security environment? If the people associated with RSS think they are free to do whatever they like and would prevent others, even violently, from carrying out their activities, they may be in for a rude shock in the next elections. The people in this country have never tolerated tyrannical ways. Hitler may be a

hero for RSS but not for common masses of India.

The treatment meted out to journalists and JNU students and professors in Patiala House court on 15 February by RSS associated lawyers is shameful. If the violence resorted to by terrorists and Naxalites is condemnable how can the police and nation stand spectator to hooliganism indulged in by the Sangh Parivar members? No other

mainstream political organizations exhibit the kind of lawlessness that organizations associated with right wing ideology do. They have committed crimes like murders of Dabholkar, Pansare and Kalburgi and have created a situation in which RohithVemula was forced to commit suicide, in addition to innumerable threatening attacks on people who don't agree with their ideology. This nonsense should not be tolerated in a democracy even if a price has to

be paid for it. The RSS is hurtling this country towards a state of emergency which can only lead to civil war and anarchy. The people who brought BJP to power with thumping majority in 2014 must rethink whether it is even fit to rule for five years? Socialist leader Dr. Rammanohar Lohia once famously said that live communities don't wait for five years.

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If JNU union leader is tried for sedition, I too should be charged with the same crime

Harsh Mander

It was a stirring evening of resistance, solidarity and hope.

On Saturday, I joined several thousand students, teachers and political leaders outside the office of the Vice Chancellor of Jawaharlal University in Delhi, to protest the arrest of the JNU Students' Union President Kanhaiya Kumar, and the presence of the police on the campus. Armed security forces were visible everywhere on the campus. The university had begun to resemble a cantonment under siege.

The university management had turned off the electric power connections at the meeting site to prevent the use of the loudspeakers, in a ham-handed attempt to foil the protest. The students used makeshift battery-operated mikes instead, and the voices of the speakers still carried far because the large crowd of students was disciplined and quiet. Intermittently, students cheered each of the speakers, raised their clenched fists in slogans, and celebrated their unity and defiance. It has been a long time since I felt

surrounded by the heady optimism of youth, camaraderie and idealism as I did this evening.

The campus has many students' unions, reflecting a wide range of ideological opinion, from many shades of the Left, socialist, centrist and right-wing politics. There is usually sharp rivalry and competition between these various student groups. But after Kumar's arrest, all these student unions came together at this protest, except the student wing of the BJP – the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad. What was also unusual about the protest was that large section of the JNU teachers' union also joined and supported the students' protest.

In a corner of the massive student gathering, a small number of students of the ABVP raised slogans and black flags supporting the police action against the student leaders. Their numbers were too small to drown out the speeches from the podium. The ABVP students' counter-slogans formed only a kind of background score to the evening's

events, which in a strange way I did not find discordant (except when the students assaulted one of the speakers). The exercise by this small minority of students of their right to protest only further reinforced the larger student demand to defend the spaces for democratic dissent and debate inside the campus of *all* shades of political opinion.

Many speakers celebrated the unique place that JNU has carved out for itself in India's public and intellectual life, and indeed in nation-building. Every tongue spoke in the vast and diverse land of India could be heard somewhere in the hostels of this university. Every community from every corner of the country has contributed students to this campus. Every colour of political opinion would find its adherents in this campus. Democratic debate is central to the university's ethos. I have often been invited by JNU students from diverse unions for after-dinner debates, and each time I accept, I am struck by the numbers of students who voluntarily gather for these meetings, listen carefully,

and engage and passionately debate with me and other speakers late into the night.

The right to dream

When my turn came to speak during Saturday's protest, it was late into the evening. I began by declaring that a country is infinitely poorer if its young people are prevented from their free right to dream and dissent, because throughout history and across the planet, the journey of creating a more just and humane world has begun always with the dreams and also the challenges and disagreements of its young people. If Kanhaiya Kumar, the JNU Students' Union President, is anti-national, and before him, if Rohith Vemula of the Hyderabad Central University was anti-national, then I declared that I too am anti-national.

By all credible accounts, the meeting of February 9 that set off this storm had been organised not to uphold separatist politics but to protest against the principle of the death penalty awarded to Afzal Guru, convicted for his role in the Parliament attack of 2001. I recall my own writings at the time he was marched to the gallows. At that time, I wrote in the *Hindu*: "The hanging of Afzal Guru on 9 February, 2013 raises a thicket of debates – ethical, legal and political – about justice, law, democracy, capital punishment, and a strong state. What is the quality of true justice? Is it enough for it to be lawful, fair and dispassionate, or must it also be tempered with mercy?"

I went on to say that the High Court's reference in its 2003 judgment to "the collective conscience of the society" being satisfied by awarding the death penalty to Guru caused me great unease, because the only legitimate reason for a court to award any punishment should be the fair application of the law to the evidence placed before it, not the

appeasement of alleged majoritarian public opinion. I also expressed my anguish at the distressing failure of official compassion and public decency in denying Afzal Guru's wife and teenaged son the chance to meet him for the last time before his execution. The haste and secrecy of the execution also unconscionably denied him his last available legal resource, affirmed by the Supreme Court in the Kartar Singh case, to seek judicial review of the rejection of his mercy petition.

I had concluded: "Many believe that the belated execution signalled a strong and decisive state, especially to the 'neighbouring country'. One glance at the daily reality of this neighbouring country will reflect the brutalising wages of years of "decisive" politics of militarism and public vengeance. It is not a weak, but a stable, mature and confident democracy which can display compassion even to those we may believe have most wronged the country."

Unsurprisingly, I was attacked savagely on social media by trolls of a particular political persuasion, casting me to be "anti-national" for months. But at least I was not booked for sedition. It worries me deeply that today this same debate – that raises most fundamental questions of public ethics and law – initiated by students in a university, instead of being welcomed, is treated as criminal sedition, for which the principal organiser is at the time of writing in police remand.

A mischievous claim

There is little doubt that Kanhaiya Kumar could not have either raised or supported slogans against the Indian nation, because these were never part of his politics, or those of AISF (the All India Students' Federation) of which he was a member in JNU or the Communist Party of India, of which AISF is the

student wing. The charges against him are transparently a mischievous attempt to use untruths to stoke popular majoritarian and hyper-nationalist sentiment against both him and the university that had elected him to lead its Students' Union.

However, it is important to add that even if there were some Kashmiri students who did raise slogans expressing disaffection against India and in support of independence for Kashmir, the fitting response to this would only have been open public debate in which students and teachers heard their views and challenged these, not to charge these students with the grave colonial crime of sedition that could result in their imprisonment for up to 10 years. Universities are places where young people must feel free to challenge the received wisdom of the times they live in. Their minds and hearts must be freed of the fetters of fear and the obligation to conform to powerful or dominant opinion. It is in universities that students the world over have fought colonialism, unjust wars, tyranny, hate and unequal social orders. Governments and indeed majority opinion may be pitted powerfully against their views, but a democracy requires the stout defence of their right to profess and debate these ideas, even by those who are opposed to these ideas. Universities in a democracy cannot be allowed to become places where the institution's leadership allows police to walk in and arrest students at will, and where dissent by students or indeed teachers is demonised and criminalised.

It is for these reasons that I declared that if Kanhaiya Kumar is charged with sedition, I demand that I be tried for the same crime. And I know that I am not alone in this demand.

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Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I am shocked to read the 24th January issue of Janata. I do not expect his kind of mechanical and biased views from your magazine. Let me make it clear to you that I do not belong to either right or left wing ideologies. You can put me in the centre if you like. Yet, I am quite vary of the left wing ideology and agenda, as much as I disdain the cock eyed view of history and Hindu thought by the right wing ideologues.

I think India faces a great challenge today in the form division of the two opposing camps, the right and the left. It is very distressing to note that most activists with very well meaning programs of larger public interest also have left leaning with the result they invite opposition from the rightists even for the issues of public interest. The same holds true for the leftists who are ready to sacrifice any National or Social interest if the rightists talk about it.

People like me are sandwiched between these two conflicting groups because we do not subscribe to any of these ideologies and try to have as objective an approach as possible.

The various interpretations put forward in this issue of Janata vis-a-vis

Rohit Vemula's letter are full of naivety, ignorance and extreme bias. I can go to each and every article to prove my point but that itself is a very frustrating exercise so as an alternative I am giving hereunder my reaction to the Frontline magazine issue of last week featuring a cover story on Rohit Vemula case:

“..... throughout more than thirty pages of false, contrived and malicious writing of Frontline - February 19, 2016 issue, there is nothing to substantiate the claims of victimisation of Rohith Vemula . No grounds to impute motives on authorities, the central minister is dragged into it without any cause. All in all it is a shameful attempt by a highly biased and motivated media group to create and nourish an unseemly controversy. It is a blatant attempt to damage the reputation of the union government and ruling party. It's a very risky attempt for it only tarnishes the image and goodwill of the most reputed media group- The Hindu. I am an avid reader and subscriber of the newspaper in spite of its highly biased left tilt. One could tolerate it for the sake of other very valuable news, views and info the magazine and the newspaper offered. But this

time they have crossed all limits of unethical and far from the truth reporting.”

I am sorry to reiterate that this issue of Janata has competed with the frontline magazine in publishing absolutely irrational and illogical views of various writers. A suicide by a clinically depressive person is just an unfortunate result of depression. It does not make any difference whether it is committed by a Dalit or a non Dalit. It will be height of absurdity If every sickness or death is interpreted according to the caste of the dead.

I know many of them as having a committed left ideology and one can not expect an objective analysis from them. My only request is that you should not let Janata platform be used for such purposes.

–Naveen Tewari

Crores of debt written-off

Between the financial years 2013-2015, Debt of Rs. 1.14 lakh crore payable by the business houses has been written-off by twenty-nine government banks. The Socialist Party registers its protest against this decision of the government. This decision of the government is not a new one. Governments have been doing this since neoliberal policies were introduced. The only difference this time is that the amount is nine-fold in comparison to the earlier debt-waives. This fact indicates that the present government is truly

pro-capitalist.

The Socialist Party would like to point out to the hard-working masses the fact that there has been no vocal opposition from any of the mainstream political parties against this decision of the government. This explains that there is no serious opposition to neo-liberalism in the country's politics.

Abhijit Vaidya,
General Secretary, Socialist
Party (India)

From Archives

Search For Relevant Socialism-Part - (III)

H. K. Paranjape

The Economic Structure

While it is not necessary for the present purpose to go into details about the future economic structure, a few major aspects may be mentioned. An important and basic question is: to what extent should a society like ours attempting to ensure growth as well as equality permit private property in means of production? Experience everywhere indicates that agriculture and related spheres of economic activity are best conducted when the ownership of land and other similar assets is vested in those who use those assets for production. Except for special purposes such as seed farms and research and service organisations, there should be private ownership of land as well as other productive assets. At the same time, there must be a ceiling on the size of land that an individual farmer should be able to hold. The size of the holding should be limited to what the person himself, with his family members, can cultivate through their own labour, with only occasional assistance by outside labour.

As in agriculture, so also in other productive sectors, there would be many areas where small scale units would be able to operate efficiently. Such units are best owned privately. Even for medium units, whether in trade or industry, private ownership, partnership, as well as private joint stock companies may provide a suitable basis of

organisation. A private unit of production should not be such that it needs to employ large numbers of non-owner workers. Any unit which has to employ more than, say, twelve persons should be organised either as a cooperative or as a joint stock company with labour participation. There can be other forms such as public corporations and organizations which are essentially run by managements elected by and responsible to the workers or consumers or both. What is of importance is that there should be no rigidity about the forms of organisation. There should be scope for experimentation and the insistence should only be that no individual, family or group of persons should have ownership of large business organisations in which their own labour constitutes only a small part. The ownership of all large organisations should vest in some public authority, be it a cooperative, or workers' organisation, a public body such as a Panchayat, a Municipality, a regional government or the Central Government, or a combination of any of these. Specialised organisations such as financial institutions and banks may not only be owned by various such authorities, but they may also have a role to play in nominating or supervising the managements or enterprises of different kinds. The purpose should be to prevent the undue concentration of economic-cum-political power in any

one authority, at the same time providing enough scope for flexibility, experimentation and initiative. The importance of incentives - positive and negative - must be recognised, the only limitation being provided by a wages-cum-income policy which would prevent large inequalities exceeding, say 1:20, from arising. Private property in means of production, either by way of full ownership or by way of share capital, should be permitted so as to enable experimentation with different forms of production, organisation and management, subject only to the importance of preventing unduly large properties being built up, and especially avoiding the perpetuation of inequalities in wealth through inheritance. Suitable methods of taxation and other instruments will have to be devised for this purpose.

Role of Foreign Capital

The role of foreign capital needs to be decided in the context of the twin advantages it can bring - addition of capital resources and bringing in of difficult technology while not overlooking the costs that have to be directly and indirectly paid. Aid, whether multilateral or bilateral, becomes available in sufficient magnitudes only if domestic economic policies can be adjusted to please the aid-givers who are usually not out to provide charity. They usually insist on policy changes which would help them in their trade, or make it easier for their large

corporations to penetrate the domestic markets of aided countries. There are no 'free meals' in the world. Foreign equity may appear advantageous in that foreign remittances of dividends take place only when the concern makes profits; also in that the foreign equity holder may be interested in continuous technology upgradation and successful management. But it should be remembered that profits can be made by the controlling company through the purchase of plant, components and raw materials, and generally through what is called 'transfer pricing'. What should not be overlooked is that multinational corporations can manipulate operations in different countries in such a manner that their own managements and basic equity-holders- who usually, at least predominantly, belong to one or the other affluent country - can receive the maximum benefit. Their capacity to influence national politics should also not be ignored, in view of their size as well as the support of their home-country governments. Their capacity to act in conjunction with the secret services of their home countries for influencing the politics of countries where they operate should not be ignored. An authoritarian country like China may perhaps be able to take the risks of welcoming foreign capital. But an open society like India's will have to be far more careful. All these considerations suggest that a very limited role should be envisaged for foreign aid and foreign capital in a socialist India. In any case, the quantum that becomes available can only form a small proportion of the capital required for the

country's development. But the temptations it can create for influential persons in politics, bureaucracy and management can lead to a situation where the tail wags the dog.

The 'demonstration effect' which the top executives of foreign-controlled companies can have on their domestic counterparts has a deleterious effect on their reward expectations, and on the whole elite through a kind of percolation effect. 'Consumerism' of an unaffordable if not necessarily of an undesirable kind tends to develop in the wake of large scale entry of foreign aid, and especially of foreign equity capital.

The argument that foreign capital would bring in state-of-the-art technology ignores the possibility that the factor endowments in our country-with abundance, actual or potential, of skilled, semi-skilled and general labour and acute scarcity of capital - may require the use of 'appropriate' technologies which may not be the replicas of those found most suitable in the capital-rich, labour-scarce, affluent countries. Most affluent countries are keen on preventing the free immigration of labour to them from countries like India. The best use of our labour resources - and considerations of preventing unemployment - also suggest the use of labour-intensive techniques wherever feasible; and these would require either adaptations of those developed elsewhere or complete innovations. Our experience up to now should also suggest that MNCs are none too keen on developing R & D for such purposes.

Finally, in a world of nation-states, and a sharp division between a few richer and powerful countries and a large number of poorer developing ones, the mutual dependence of basic self-reliance and national independence should not be forgotten. Imperialism is not dead; it may merely take on new facades. Building up our internal strength so as to make any possible attack on our independence very costly is of great importance for a country like India, especially in a world where there is no longer a balance of power between an affluent First World and a not-so-affluent Second One. What used to be called the Third World at present faces an increasingly threatening unipolar world situation; and guarding our economic independence must thus remain an important objective of our economic policy, especially if we really want to pursue a socialist path.

Planning and Regulation

The main instruments for preventing economic crises will be an overall indicative plan, which will provide guidelines for the institutions which will be in-charge of using monetary and fiscal instruments to prevent such crises, avoid major ups and downs, and permit competitive forces to operate. With an appropriate wages and incomes structure being devised, competition and the market will provide in many sectors very useful instruments for guiding production and investment decisions, and also for ensuring efficiency. Overall regulations to ensure the avoidance of certain undesirable developments will perforce be necessary. These will include environmental

controls, and control over monopolies; the latter would be unavoidable in sectors like public utilities or even those where the economies of scale inevitably dictate the existence of an oligopoly if not a monopoly situation. But such regulations will have to be in consultation with the planners who would provide the overall indicators for the operational economic plan, the detailed regulations being worked out by autonomous expert bodies such as an Environment Board, a Monopolies Commission, public Utility Control Boards, Labour Courts, etc.

Public Ownership and Control

The system which has come to develop in the public sector as it has grown in India has unfortunately come to be one which has led to bureaucratism, inefficiency and dissatisfaction both among employees and the consumers. Enough material is available about the record of most public enterprises to require this proposition having to be specially illustrated or supported by data. Many of the enterprises such as those in the steel or petroleum sector initially did an excellent job in making a breakthrough in a situation of semi-stagnation; but then onwards their manner of organisation and functioning has not been one which could yield the best results. In fact a major difficulty with the public sector as it has developed in India has been that partly on political considerations, patronage and favouritism, bureaucratism and red tape, excessive centralization, indifference to the employees as well as the consumers and such other deficiencies have persisted in most of them. All studies and reports about these

organisations have pointed out such faults. But those in charge at the political and administrative levels have failed to apply the remedies suggested so that the same faults persist decade after decade with disastrous results for the economy and the society.

To take one example, power has been a sector largely reserved for government ownership and management. While the capacity has vastly expanded in the last 40 years, the operation and maintenance have been so poor that inadequate utilisation of capacity, largescale waste and thefts, and break-downs and shortages which affect all other sectors have by now become almost a persistent feature of the country's power system. The only answer that the present political leadership appears to think of is that of privatisation. But they will not organise the electricity control boards on a professional basis, permit them sufficient authority and autonomy, and allow a schedule of power rates which would ensure economic viability of the enterprise. If democratically elected governments cannot but misuse their powers, public enterprises are bound to fail. That does not in any sense indicate that public ownership is **ipso facto** deficient. But, unless the political system can develop conventions about some norms of conduct in public management, respecting the autonomy of professional functional organisations, and a minimum discipline and honesty among political, administrative and managerial cadres, it is better to give up the insistence on public ownership. Till such time as a genuine socialist party or group of parties can attain power, it is better that a frankly

capitalist system should be permitted to operate, with socialists merely using their political and organisational power to prevent misuse of such power and the proper use of independent expert investigating and regulating authorities. The mistaken support by the left groups in the past to basically capitalist and bureaucracy-oriented governments extending state ownership and control has merely led to inefficiency, corruption and the growth in the power of anti-socialist forces.

Socialism Not a Soft State

One mistaken notion that many persons - especially in India - have is that a socialist-oriented state or even welfare-state must be what Gunnar Myrdal calls a 'soft' state. Enforcement of discipline, insistence on hard work, incentives directly related to productivity and, parallel to this, punishments as a deterrent to indiscipline or shirking work, insistence on sacrifices which are necessary in public interest, even penal action for violations of law are all thought of as acts to be avoided. While a socialist state must take all precautions to avoid injustice, and keep inequality to the minimum necessary, and its leaders should practice what they preach, the tendency to permit laxity, indiscipline, low productivity and even law-violations to continue unhindered under the mistaken notions of taking a 'liberal' or 'humane' approach, or under the political pressures of legislative lobbies, must be resisted. Otherwise, such a society will soon find itself in a situation of both semi-anarchy, and economic bankruptcy. We find this happening in our

public sector enterprises as well as public administration. Even in the private sector, law-courts appear to be almost insisting on connivance at large-scale indiscipline under the same mistaken notions of liberalism. It is overlooked in such cases that this softness towards transgressors does great harm as well as injustice to the law-abiding and hard-working majority and also encourages a tendency to continue misbehavior. Especially in a country where large numbers are shifting within a generation from unorganised, rural, agricultural work and life to organised, industrial or urban life and work, strict enforcement of modern norms of discipline and productivity is essential.

Avoiding Overconcentration

What has to be avoided at all costs if we want to develop a genuinely socialist polity and economy is to avoid concentration of power in any one authority or even in a few centres of power. The attempt at ensuring stability has resulted in a Constitution which gives vast powers to the Union Government, and the rest of the authority to State Governments. For many areas and people, these centres are too remote to permit effective participation as well as control by and response to the affected citizens. Effective decentralisation of political, administrative and economic authority is therefore a sine qua non of any attempt at building up a socialist society. It is also important to prevent any particular authority from dominating all aspects of life. Partly as a result of the tradition inherited from the British rulers, and partly as a result of the awe and respect in which the early post-

independence rulers of the country with their freedom struggle background were held by the people, politics and administration have been permitted to assume command over almost all aspects of life. The result is that, instead of different aspects being guided and controlled by those professionally knowledgeable, competent and interested in those aspects, everything has become subject to the play of political force-be they educational institutions, research organisations, health authorities, town and country planning, academies of art and literature, or cooperative agencies. We shall have to evolve organisational devices to avoid this over-politicisation of life. Though we have had no party dictatorship in India as in the communist countries, we have built up a tradition in which the political and administrative hierarchy is able to control and influence almost every single aspect of life. This has to be resisted and changed. Various professional and expert organisations have to be given their lead, they have to be permitted to operate autonomously, and the only task of State bodies will be to lay down certain overall guidelines by law and also through financial support.

Restructuring Public Expenditure

It will also be necessary to take a fresh look at the structure of public expenditure. Defence expenditure has come to constitute - directly or indirectly - a very substantial proportion of the Government budget and also of national resources. It is true that, in a world of nation-states, the possibility of irrational attitudes and hostile actions by other countries which may make it necessary for us to defend ourselves cannot be overlooked. But the thrust of our

policy must be to help create a climate of live and let live. We have witnessed tendencies in our political leadership and military hierarchies towards attempting to build up India as a regionally dominant power. Such attempts may bring some sense of glory at least for a short time; but it is not an effort which a country as poor as ours can afford. It also does not behove a people who claim to be the heirs of Gautama and Gandhi to think of military glory as an important objective. Gorbachev's initiative can provide us an excellent example which must inspire all those who want to pursue socialist policies in countries like ours.

The importance of keeping income inequalities at the minimum possible levels has already been emphasised. The tendency to provide various special benefits which make substantial additions to the incomes of political, administrative and business bureaucracies exist everywhere, and India is no exception. An important reason why political immorality has increasingly come to infect public life in India is the tendency to create pockets of special benefits for all those who can wield political or administrative power. Salaries and wages in the organised sectors as well as in public services are only one side of the story; the other is the grant of various privileges, whether it is plots of residential lands at specially low prices, availability of scarce goods and services in preference or at subsidised prices, or the use of public or company money for what are essentially private expenses on travel or entertainment. If the disparity in living standards between a legislator (and certainly a Minister) and the ordinary citizen was not as wide as it has gradually come to be,

there would be far less temptation for political workers somehow to keep to their ministerial or legislative posts, whether they can do it consistently with being true to their ideologies or not. These tendencies need to be specifically exposed and curbed. Only then will it be possible for socialist policies to be pursued through a restructuring of the polity and economy on the lines indicated here.

Who Will Bell the Cat ?

We have mentioned upto now what kind of policies need to be accepted as a part of building up and operating a socialist structure of polity and economy in India. The question is : is this not Utopia-building, a kind of romanticising ? Is it feasible to move towards such a society in India in the foreseeable future ? May be that it would be very desirable if we could build up such a society in the country. But who will do it ? And how as the story books had put it : It is true that the cat should be belled; but who will bell it ? And how ?

Marxist theory as well as the experience in many countries of the world suggested that it is the organized industrial working class which would provide the main support for a movement towards a non-capitalist if not a socialist transformation. Especially in the advanced capitalist countries in Western Europe, the advance towards a welfare state which was made in the period after the Second World War received its main thrust because of the strength of their trade union movements, which also obtained some support from the educated middle classes who otherwise traditionally tend to be conservative. On the

other hand, the revolutions in Russia and China were not the handiwork mainly of the industrial workers. In Russia, the workers did play a major role, but so did the dissatisfied soldiers in the army and the peasantry. Similarly, in China, the support which the Communist Party obtained was only to some extent derived from organised industrial workers the peasants and the middle classes also playing an important role.

The situation in India is somewhat similar. It is noteworthy by that the trade unions of industrial workers which were mainly led by left-oriented leaderships belonging to the communist and socialist parties in the inter-war period have gradually come to be divided among competing unions of various parties. These include not only the communist and the socialist unions but also unions belonging to non-left parties like the congress or even the BJP and the Shiv Sena. There is also increasing tendency for trade unions to be led by leaders who essentially believe in nothing but economism. The organised workers in industry as well in service organisations have shown enough strength to be able to obtain significant concessions from the government as well as the employers so that many among them - mainly employed in government ; organisations or large monopolistic business and industrial units - are able to obtain wages and benefits which put at them in the top one or two deciles of the population. The best organised having secured such advantages are no longer interested in a basic transformation of the existing

politico-economic system. They are not unhappy with what exists. There is no question of their having nothing to lose except their chains. They have a vested interest in the existing economic structure, a good indicator of this being that some of the trade unions have been pushing forward the demand for further raising of the income tax exemption limit ! Another demand which is pushed by many strong trade unions is for preference if not reservation in employment in their units for their sons and dependents. While this demand can be appreciated in a country where the spectre of unemployment looms large, it also shows the lack of a class approach. It is only the really oppressed and exploited in the society, who really have nothing to lose but their chains, who can provide the thrust for the transformation of the unequal and unjust society which exists in the country at present. Unless they can be organised so that transformation in a direction which will serve their interests becomes possible, there will be no thrust towards a socialist society.

We do already have some political and trade union type organisations of specially oppressed sections of society. They take different forms. There are unions of agricultural workers, headload workers (Mathadis, Hamals, etc.), shop assistants, transport workers, and workers in small industries. With the considerable overlap in India between the caste and the class hierarchy, and caste continuing to play a major role in political, economic and social life, the organisations

of the oppressed many times also take the form of unions based on caste, community or ethnicity. With the Central and State Governments mainly representing the exploiting political groups like big land holders, large capitalists, traders and bureaucrats at different levels, and most of these also belonging to the higher castes, the struggles against oppression many times take the form of movements against upper castes, or against the power concentrated either in Delhi or in the state capitals, or in favour of autonomy for a particular linguistic or tribal group. These movements are mainly of the oppressed against their oppressors and therefore can provide support for an overall movement towards transformation in a socialist direction. But what is necessary is to weld all these into an alliance with socialist-minded groups. Such attempts have been made in the past, the last one being the formation of the National Front which brought together regional parties, other breakaway groups like the Jan Morcha and the Congress-S, and the Janata Dal. This last was formed by merging together the Janata Party which itself was formed in 1977 by merging together the Congress (O), the Socialist party and various other groups, and the LokDals. This combination was mainly based on the approach of non-Congressism, and was supported from the outside by the left Front on the one side and the BJP on the other. But the inherent contradictions in this combination soon made its functioning difficult and the joint effort could not be sustained. A similar denouncement may

await the efforts now being made to bring together behind the Janata Dal groups which are predominantly poor and backward such as untouchables, tribals and other backward castes (OBCs). These last (OBCs) include caste groups which are largely landless and have no other inherited productive assets on the one side, and also others a significant proportion among whom are well established peasant proprietors, many of them socially and politically well entrenched and economically exploitative of other peoples' labour. A method which would bring all the oppressed together in an overall alliance will require to have a clearly socialist thrust. It should be based upon identifying the oppressed and exploited persons according to their economic as well as social and political status, and not merely their caste affiliations.

The Mandal Approach

The emphasis on the Mandal Commission's Report is likely to lead to a wrong policy twist because reservations in jobs-especially in government services - are the main thrust of the recommendations. What is important to emphasise is a much deeper change - land reforms, equalisation of educational opportunities, rapid reduction in inequality in income and wealth, decentralised governance and economy, and other changes implied in socialist transformation. While eradication of castism and caste hierarchies - including untouchability- is important, it cannot be achieved merely or even mainly by a small number of the traditionally lower caste persons securing

posts in Government services. Our experience in the last few decades should help us understand this. On the other hand, the chances are that those who do secure such opportunities will join the oppressor groups, while the system based on exploitation will continue. Co-option of the leading elements among the oppressed is always tactically useful to the oppressors. To quote Marx : "The more a ruling class is able to assimilate the foremost minds of a ruled class, the more stable and dangerous becomes its role."

The idea of eradicating castism by organising people on a caste-or a caste combination - basis would prove to be no better than the idea of giving battle to what the BJP calls pseudo-secularism by organising the Hindus on a Hindutva platform. It would merely conceal the nature of the real battle which is socio-economic and of the real antagonists who are the exploiting classes. It is true that many times minority conservatism, fundamentalism or obscurantism has been connived at if not encouraged on the mistaken notion that the majority should bend backwards in order to remove the feeling of insecurity among minorities. The wish to create minority vote banks in one's favour has also governed such attempts even by left-oriented parties. Such policies have boomeranged and given rise to the discouragement of progressive elements among minorities and a kind of vengeful support to obscurantism and communalism among the majority group. But to put a

stop to such wrong wooing of minority obscurantism is one thing, and directly encouraging majority obscurantism and communalism quite another. The BJP is doing the latter. This needs to be resisted.

Similar is the nature of the attempt by elements like the Shetkari Sanghatana, the Kisan organisation of Shri Tikait and leaders like Shri Devi Lal to emphasise the rural-urban or farmer-non-farmer divide. While there has been a comparative neglect of rural and agricultural interests in the post-independence period especially in the earlier years, and a correction was necessary, the demand for indiscriminately raising support prices for agricultural products, or the one for giving preferences in benefits of various kinds to 'rural' persons, tends to emphasise and serve mainly the interests of the well-entrenched among farmers and other rural people. Such attempts tend to divert attention from the real conflict. By putting the poor, the exploited and the oppressed of one caste, religion or locality against those of another, cannon-fodder is provided for use by the real oppressors in their sectional battles against one another. By putting their weight behind a castist approach, left forces would repeat the kind of mistake which they committed earlier by supporting the Muslim League demand for partition on the assumption that it was one basically for regional autonomy and relief from bourgeois-landlord oppression.

A Socialist Alliance

What is ironical in the present situation is that the basic approach to socialist

transformation which had been emphasised by Indian socialists under the guidance of Acharya Narendra Dev, Jayaprakash Narayan and Rammanohar Lohia is coming to be seen as the right one in the light of the experience of 'countries like the USSR, China and others in Eastern Europe, and also our own experience since Independence. But there is no socialist party in existence which would take up the task of bringing the socialist approach up to date in the light of recent historical experience and theoretical discussion. Elements of the erstwhile Socialist Party exist mainly in the Janata Dal (both wings), and also in other parties including the Congress. While the time is probably not quite opportune for the revival of the Socialist Party, what is immediately essential is to create platforms for discussion of socialist transformation and propagation of socialist ideas. There are large numbers of young workers, students and activists who are dissatisfied with present dispensation. Some of them are keen on a basic transformation and are active in fighting oppression in some manner or the other. What is essential is to help provide a connecting, coordinating, ideological link which will help all these to form an alliance for socialist change.

The next step for moving in this direction would be those who believe in a socialist transformation in India to come together, not in one party but in an alliance. Keeping the experience in the USSR, China, Eastern Europe and elsewhere in the world including India in view,

the earlier all of us, belonging to different left parties and groups, give up sectarianism stop questioning each other's bonafides, the easier would it be for us to join together in a common endeavour in a socialist direction. A dialogue at the logical level on a continuing basis, political actions which would ensure struggles against the continued dominance of parties upholding the interests of the haves whatever the ideological garb they take, joining social endeavours against obscurantism, communalism, castism, and oppression of traditionally exploited social groups such as untouchables, tribals and women, and joint economic actions to safeguard the interests of those employed in small units in industry and business generally in agriculture and related sectors, would make it possible for the differences which have traditionally existed among the different left parties to gradually sorted out. The 'Holier Than Thou' attitude that many left groups have taken towards each has to give way to an attitude of understanding and mutual cooperation. All left parties have to accept that none of them have a monopoly of wisdom. Recent events have exposed the inadequacies in the theory as well as practice which most of us have vociferously supported in the past. We all have to learn much.

Avoiding Wrong Turns

It is also necessary that we avoid the tendency not uncommon especially among parties largely dominated by leaders belonging to the educated middle classes, to look for short cuts and therefore to

hitch one's group or party to the band wagon of a leader who appears to be popular at the moment. The approach that, by supporting a party which itself is an alliance of disparate elements with quite different economic interests, a few well intentioned and socialist minded leaders can help the furtherance of the socialist movement has proved in the past to be an illusion. Attempts to bring about a socialist transformation through using the goodwill of popular leaders like Pandit Nehru and Indira Gandhi have been made in the past. They have failed, not necessarily or only because of these leaders not having real faith in socialist transformation but also or mainly because the organisations and socio-economic forces which sustained their power were not keen on transforming the existing society. Many actions were therefore taken which appeared to provide a thrust towards progress and socialism. But, in practice, nothing much changed and poverty, unemployment and injustice continued as before. Such steps also led to a weakening of the Left parties, disillusionment among party workers and supporters and a disillusionment also among the common people about the effects of what they thought were socialist policies.'

The history of the erstwhile Socialist Party should warn us against the tendency to look for quick results, and giving up long-held organisational and theoretical positions for the sake of expediency. Beginning with the merger with the KMPP of Acharya Kripalani, socialist leaders have drifted till now and are left with no organisation of their own. Many of them joined

the Congress, at different periods of time, The advocacy of non-Congressism as a tactic might have had its advantages; but the merger of the Socialist Party in the Janata Party, with little attempt to ensure that the basic organisations remained intact, has resulted in a situation where erstwhile socialist workers are divided among various parties, and some have given up political work in frustration and disillusionment. Without a party and related organisations, there is not even a proper focus left to facilitate an early regrouping of socialist forces.

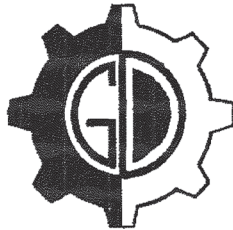
The Communist Parties have kept their organisations distinct and have not permitted temporary alliances and tactical manoeuvres to shift them from their own chosen path. But due to various inadequacies in their thought and practice they have gradually lost support in many of the areas where they were formerly well entrenched - Bombay being the best example - and have come largely to be confined to a few states, the most important being Bengal and Kerala. But the importance given by the Left front leadership to somehow remaining in power in these States has apparently led to compromises which may harm their parties. After the initial thrust in land reforms and Panchayati Raj, there is not much to differentiate the policies pursued by the State Governments under the Left Fronts and those pursued by the better administered among the others such as those in Maharashtra or Tamil Nadu. It is also increasingly felt that corruption which affects a party which is in power for long, has begun to affect the parties

of the left Front too. There are allegations of undesirable criminal and anti-social elements getting associated with the parties in power as in Congress-ruled States - even though no one up to now alleges that any senior party leaders are involved.

A tactical question which remains open is how far it is worthwhile for socialist parties to join governments when they are not in a position to carry out policies which they think essential. The limitation may arise due to socialists constituting only a small group in a broader alliance; or because they come to power in an authority whose powers are strictly limited as in a state government or a local authority. Some good work can certainly be done for the benefit of the common people, and public confidence in the capability of the leadership can be built up. But there is also the danger of cadres getting corrupted because of the overall corrupt environment of the system and further achievement in the direction of solving basic problems being found to be difficult because of the limited powers at that level and disillusionment thus setting in. Carrying on the struggle for change while remaining in power may be difficult in practice though not theoretically impossible. One cannot say that there are any final answers to this question. But it needs to be posed all the time; once any power position is attained, temptations arise to cling to it, irrespective of what purposes it can serve. The objective of a basic socialist transformation may be lost sight of in the pursuit of limited power.

(Concluded)

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Spare the students
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Chandra Bhal Tripathi

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Inamul Hasan

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Stalemate in J & K

S. Viswam

It is not only the prolongation of President's rule in Jammu and Kashmir and the failure of the People's Democratic Party and the Bharatiya Janata Party to stitch up a coalition again that is worrisome. Various stake holders in the state seem to have taken an indefinite spell of president's rule for granted and there is no pressure from any side on the political class to end it as fast as possible. So much so, Mehbooba Mufti of the PDP and senior office bearers of the J & K unit of the BJP behave as if the present crisis caused by the political stalemate does not concern them.

The two-party coalition of Mufti Mohammad Sayeed was settling down nicely in office and had already earned considerable popular goodwill when an unexpected setback caused it to cease. Mufti died and the hope that a successor coalition would take over has been belied till now. Mehbooba Mufti who is the heir and successor of Mufti in the PDP was the natural choice for the top post. But she has been talking of certain policies and ideas of her father being implemented as a condition precedent to her forming a government. Frankly, it is difficult to make out what precisely is the situation and what forces are at play. The unfortunate part of the story is

that no meaningful initiative is in sight from any quarters to break the stalemate and give an onward push to the process of government formation. Instead, there is a political vacuum which is allowed to persist. Perhaps no one expected that a room for such a deep political vacuum was there already built into the situation which is perhaps why there has been no sustained political engagement and interaction among the major players in the state.

As the events unfolded in the last six to eight months, it became clear that the advent of the PDP-BJP government was the best thing to have happened to the state. It opened some doors which were closed for long and created a setting for the peace process to take off. But before the opportunity could be fully availed off, Mufti died and everything changed in Kashmir. There are ominous portents on the horizon now. The state is under central rule which means Governor N. N. Vohra runs the state machinery with the help of some advisors. Vohra is a senior bureaucrat and carries a wealth of experience on his shoulders and he will do a great job for Kashmir. But that is no substitute for popular rule. The sooner the state is run by elected representatives the better for

all concerned.

Between the Lines

Spare the students

Kuldip Nayar

An interruption in popular rule is not a good thing especially in a state like Kashmir which has had a long history of militancy. This point is worth emphasis since in the absence of popular rule there is no other effective mechanism to check discontent, tension and disaffection, the three factors that fuel militancy.

We are living in fast changing situations in various parts of the world. There is a competitive rivalry to get popular support among Islamic forces and non-Islamic forces and in many parts of the world where Islam has thrived in the past a trend towards radicalization is evident. Militants are gaining popular support more readily than before and the number of militant-police confrontation is rising. The growing support for militants among the general public is a worrisome development and so also the fact that at last week's episode at Pampore, off Srinagar in J & K, the militants could last out for three long days against the state's security forces and managed to claim the lives of six security personnel. It is a disturbing thought that of late, and some time before the death of Mufti Sayeed incidents of violence involving militants and security forces rose phenomenally. One reason for this is that the support for the militants from the general public has grown in recent month, a fact testified by the presence of large number of mourners at the funerals of killed militants. Even otherwise, official information points to many encounters between militants and security personnel. Dangerous times are ahead, it would seem, as the atmosphere of violence and conflict grips the border state.

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Should students take part in politics was the question even before independence. This same debate raged when I was studying law at Lahore. We would skip classrooms on the call of Mahatma Gandhi or some other national leaders to show solidarity with the independence struggle. The agitation was against the British rulers and it never struck us that we were missing studies.

Even when Pakistan's founder, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, raised the slogan for a separate homeland for the Muslim community, we, the students, resisted the pulls of religion. True, the Hindus and Muslims had come to have separate kitchens, but we ate together and were getting food from both kitchens. The polarized atmosphere had little effect on us.

Today, the Akhil Bhartiya Vidhyarti Parishad (ABVP) is advocating soft version of Hindutva in universities across the country. The ABVP is the Muslim League of today. The Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) may be an island in the midst of a Hindutva sea. Yet, all credits to the university and its students that it has, more or less, preserved the idea of India—democracy, pluralism and egalitarianism. Unfortunately, the struggle to sustain secularism still continues.

A few days ago, some Muslim fundamentalist students, not more than five or six, spoilt the liberal image of the JNU and raised slogans, seeking India's destruction. The

JNU's vice-chancellor, Dr. Jagdish Kumar, told me that their number was not more than a handful. But they had tarnished the image of the university.

The electronic media, in their attempts to improve TRP all the time, spread the impression as if the JNU was the epicenter of activities by fundamentalists and separatists. It was suspected that even the video clip which was run throughout the day by a television channel was doctored.

Take, for instance, Vishwa Deepak's claims of grave lapses in the channel's coverage of the JNU sedition case. The journalist, who resigned from the channel, wrote: "We journalists often question others but ourselves. We fix others' responsibilities but not ours. We are called as the fourth pillar of democracy but are we, our organizations, our thoughts and our actions really democratic? This is not just my question but everybody else's too."

To a large extent, I agree with Deepak. We, journalists, often tend to preach more than practise. In his protest letter to his employers Deepak, while apologizing for the use of such words to describe the situation, asks: "Along with Kanhaiya Kumar, we made many students appear to be traitors and anti-nationals in the eyes of the people. If anyone is murdered tomorrow, who will take its responsibility? We have not merely created a situation for someone's murder or to destroy

some families but we have created the conditions ripe for spreading riots and brought the country to the brink of a civil war. What sort of patriotism is this? After all, what sort of journalism is this?..."

Yet, I do not rule out the audacity of separatists to pay homage to Afzal Guru, who had plotted the attack on the Indian parliament. It is deplorable. But the question is should they be allowed to set an agenda for the nation when India's population has overwhelmingly come to cherish democracy and pluralism? The incident at the JNU should not be allowed to dilute the arduous work done to sustain pluralism when the country was divided on the basis of religion.

In fact, the JNU is like the Oxford at London or the Harvard in America. There is a liberal atmosphere and even the odd voices against general thinking are taken in their strides. None questions the motive because the basics are never doubted.

When then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi established the JNU, the purpose was to inspire students by her father's thoughts. A product of independence struggle, Nehru was the nation's icon, not of the Congress party which, no doubt,

led the movement to wrest country from the exploitative British rulers. The purpose of Indira Gandhi, his daughter, was undoubtedly to perpetuate his name. But he was the real architect of Modern India and deserved to be remembered and followed.

Bangladesh does not have a similar institution. But Pakistan has Lamus at Lahore, similar to the JNU and same reputation. My personal experience testifies this. An engineering girl student asked me at a lecture in the campus why partition took place when people on both the sides were similar, ate the same good and wore the same dress.

The student was unbiased and indicated that the atmosphere remained unpolluted. And that was some 40 years ago. Today, the religious parties have hijacked the society to reap political gains. The most unfortunate part is that religion has made deep inroads into the universities.

The RSS, which seems to guide the Narendra Modi government from its headquarters at Nagpur, is appointing to key posts such persons who are avowed followers of Hindutva philosophy. Distinguished scholars, known for their secular

ideas, have been crowded out because the RSS does not want the students to be inspired by their example of not mixing state with politics. If a democratic polity has to have any meaning, it must stay away from religious identities which are now being refurbished.

Unfortunately, the other fields are getting affected. Take, for example, the incident at Patiala House Courts. A few lawyers, affiliated to the BJP, created rumpus and beat up the student leader and journalists when Kanhaiya Kumar was to be produced in the court. Kanhaiya's statement that he had nothing to do with the students who raised anti-India slogans did not relent the attackers, some of whom were said to be outsiders, wearing lawyers' robes.

It's time that all political parties put their heads together to consider steps which would leave the students only pursuing their studies instead of wasting their time in parochial politics. The nation will suffer if the students, who are idealist at that age, are not allowed to throw up such thoughts which in the long run will help the country to cherish its ethos.

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

by
Rohini Gawankar

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A danger to democracy

Rajinder Sachar

There is a figurative way of attributing intense stupidity to an individual or a political party in the idiom, 'He is own worst enemy'. This occurred to me by the idiotic way BJP Central Government has handled the recent student protest at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). According to the Students' Union there, a meeting was held in the campus by some outsiders wherein slogan favoring Afzal Guru were raised by them. Students maintain that they condemned these slogans and they can not be blamed. In the normal course protest would have passed off without any problem and forgotten.

But then a curious turn of events which one suspects was a planned conspiracy by the BJP and its student wing ABVSU. Mahesh Giri, M.P. (Delhi) and the student wing filed a complaint before the police, which registered a case of sedition against unknown persons. It is impossible to accept that the police will act so unprofessionally, as they did following the complaint, except under political pressure.

A further mystery was added by the Home Minister Raj Nath Singh's statement that Hafeez Mohd Saeed, the head of internationally known terrorist group situated in Pakistan who was said to be responsible for various terrorists attacks in India including the recent one at Pathankot was so short of work that he has had to stoop to provoke J.N.U. students in order to boost the morale of his followers - how nitwit can be our National Investigation Agency.

Sine then, it is quite clear that this incident at JNU is being exploited by BJP's dirty campaign cell to malign the opponents of BJP and cause permanent danger to the internationally respected JNU. The latest rowdyism and violence by BJP-affiliated lawyers in even threatening lady Journalists and even beating students and in not allowing the court proceedings at Patiala House is shameful .

To add further shame, Senior Advocates sent by Supreme Court are abused and not allowed to carry out its mandate. Hard to believe this conduct of junior lawyers could have been done excepting at the mandate of BJP high ups to defile our judicial system. Would the Government consider such acts as treason and take action (not according to my view of law) but on the same view taken by the government in JNU case.

It is needless to repeat that all earlier allegation at what happened at JNU on 13th February, 2016 pale into insignificance at what BJP-controlled elements are doing to spread fear under the cover of fighting sedition although no private persons can take the law in its own hand, - it is only the State which can so act -, no bunch of self-appointed false patriots can defy the law. As it is even Police action is vindictive and illegal. It is well settled by Supreme Court decisions that mere speech howsoever strong against the government is not sedition, unless accompanied by some violent act, of which there is not even a whisper

against the JNU students. Let me quote what Gandhiji said when he was prosecuted for sedition in 1922 "Section 124A i.e. under which I am happily charged is perhaps the prince among the political section of IPC designed to suppress the liberty of the citizen; **affection can not be manufacture or regulated by the law. If one has no affection for a person, one should be free to give the fullest expression to his disaffection, so long as he does not contemplate, promote or incite to violence**". (emphasis supplied)

Let the BJP not trout its patriotism because this noble sentiment is so cynically exploited by politicians that it made the English writer Samuel Johnson giving a warning "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel".

Human Rights can never be violated under any circumstances. Let me quote the warning given by USA media within a couple of days of September 11, 2001 massive tragedy; *Washington Post* wrote "the country cannot allow terrorists to alter the fundamental openness of US society or the Government's respect for civil liberties."

Philadelphia Inquirer wrote "We feel rage. We feel fear. We are bewildered. We can't avoid acting on those feelings. Yet we must calibrate our response against the ideals of liberty and tolerance that have made this nation work so well for so long."

Laura W. Murphy, Director of the ACLU's Washington office

criticized the U.S. Patriot Act thus; “this law is based on the faulty assumption that safety must come at the expense of civil liberties”.

Mr. Muggeridge, former Editor of Punch (UK) once warned – “the choice for us is between security and freedom. And if we ever ceased to prefer the later, we should soon find that we had nothing of any worth left to secure anyway.” BJP’s antipathy to freedom of speech has now attracted international condemnation but also has led to anti-BJP rallies throughout India.

In this matter of JNU the top of BJP leadership has acted so stupidly that it has allowed Congress and Rahul Gandhi to be seen as champions of dignity of Afzal Guru and Kashmir, when in reality the conduct and action in the case of Afzal Guru by the Congress in

the past had incurred it massive condemnation in J&K when it ignored the appeal of large section of abolitionists of death penalty not to hang Guru. But the most shameful part was when Congress hanged him in utter secrecy, against the well accepted law that convicts’ family must be allowed a last opportunity to meet him before execution. Massive protests then demanded an innocuous and justified request to be allowed to take Guru’s body to be cremated according to tradition at the family graveyard in Kashmir. But Congress/UPA government rejected it cynically because of pending General Elections in India. J&K people never forgave Congress as results of latest state J&K elections have shown. Likewise BJP’s false pretence of patriotism when it is having a coalition with Mufti of P.D.P. in J&K, which has always condemned the action taken

against Afzal Guru. In that context BJP Government’s dishonesty in proceedings against JNU students in the name of patriotism is the limit of hypocrisy in politics.

The happenings in Patiala House Courts would have pleased Marx who envisaged the ultimate victory of proletariat when “State will wither away”. This having not even happened in USSR and Mao’s China, has occurred in India – this is the only excuse which Modi Government can put forward at its shameful spectacle of having to carry Kanhaiya Kumar from the court to prison in a disguise and in a closed police van protected by hundred of policemen for the fear of the police being overwhelmed by a coterie of BJP lawyers and other goons from the custody of the mighty Indian State.

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Be Warned, the Assault on JNU is Part of a Pattern

Romila Thapar

Recent events at JNU raise many questions pertinent to us as citizens of India. The questions have become imperative because it is apparent that many who govern us have little sensitivity to understanding the fundamental issues crucial to governance. For example, what are the necessary aspects of a democratic system, or how essential are equality and human rights as components of democracy to be taught and nurtured in educational institutions. Every articulation of thought and action is judged these days by its immediate political implications and seldom by the wider context of ethics, society and citizenship.

A recent example was the discussion on capital punishment where a handful of students had gathered on the JNU campus. Obviously the names of those recently given this punishment cropped up in the discussion, and very soon this became the dominant political aspect and the sole consideration, setting aside all other questions. Slogans took over in a confused fashion as happens in such situations and the serious issue of capital punishment was lost. Capital punishment is not just an issue of concern to nationalism alone. It involves aspects of ethics, morality, religion as well as the context of the punishment, and it

is not in the least bit surprising that opinions differ on all these issues. The logical follow-up could have been a more extended discussion of the subject, from other perspectives, rather than the insistence by some of those present that this was an anti-national issue, and then proceeding to have the government intervene and clamp down on it.

Sedition and secession

As has been said by almost everyone who has written on this event, the terms that the government uses in its charges against the JNU students are problematic and cannot be bandied about in a casual way. Charges of sedition, extremely

serious as they are, nevertheless are slapped on anyone for virtually any critical opinion about the country. Even the dictionary meaning of sedition is enticement to violence and the overthrow of the state/government. As others have pointed out, there is a considerable difference between advocacy of violent methods and actual incitement to violence. But such distinctions seem to be beyond the comprehension of most politicians.

To maintain that a statement made about the possibility of a segment of the Indian nation breaking away is sedition, shows neither an understanding of the word nor knowledge of the historical occasions in the last half century when such statements were made with reference to other parts of India. This is not the first time that Kashmir has been mentioned as part of such a suggestion. There have been earlier threats of secession from other parts of the nation, such as Nagaland and Tamil Nadu, and the intention of establishing the Sikh state of Khalistan to mention just a few. Some others are not completely silent even in present times. Threats of secession are in part the way in which nationalisms play out in nations that extend over large territories and multiple cultures. It has to be understood as a process of change and debated rather than being silenced by calling it sedition.

The debate on sedition goes back to the early years of independence when the attempt to silence free speech was successfully resisted by the Supreme Court, (*Brijbhushan vs. State of Delhi* and *RomeshThapar vs. Union of India*). Nehru was in favor of expunging sedition as unconstitutional. Those were the days when democracy was

valued and was nurtured. We should familiarize ourselves with the many occasions when sedition has been objected to and on valid grounds, and therefore consider its removal from the body of laws. Laws that can be easily misused should be reconsidered. Governance does imply taking an intelligent interest in the debates on the laws by which we are meant to be governed.

The first foray

Then there are those who, because they are critical of some aspects of the nation, are immediately condemned as anti-national. Taken literally this adjective would apply to a large number of Indians who are critical of various aspects of events in India. Governments turn by turn have described people as anti-national but the frequency of this accusation has increased in the last couple of years. It has been applied so often by the BJP that the word has become virtually meaningless, but not harmless, because it can be used to politically persecute a person. The ancestor to the BJP – the Jan Sangh party, when it was part of the government of Morarji Desai, subsequent to the Emergency – criticized the history textbooks written by some of us and published by the NCERT. We were accused of being anti-Indian and anti-national for the views we held on ancient Indian history. The government demanded that our books be proscribed. But in the election that followed the government fell, so the books survived.

Almost 25 years later, in the first NDA government the matter was taken up again. The then education minister, Murli Manohar Joshi and his BJP cohorts referred to the authors of the textbooks – and I was included in this – as not only

anti-Hindu but also anti-national, anti-Indian, and academic terrorists of the worst kind. Enthusiastic politicians demanded that we should be arrested and punished for writing these books. Fortunately, the first NDA government did not take itself too seriously and did not go around arresting many teachers and students for being anti-national, largely because their definition of what was anti-national became a matter for ridicule. Anti-national for them was in effect a limited term, namely anti-Hindu.

Pathetic attempt

In the latest move of the BJP-RSS government pertaining to universities, the student union president who was arrested at JNU has been accused of being anti-national and indulging in sedition. He has been accused of raising slogans on independence for Kashmir and praise of Pakistan. The irony is that the student union president who was doing just the opposite of what would be regarded as anti-national and seditious and was trying to close the discussion, was the one who was arrested.

It is now being held, very much as an afterthought, that the group that held the meeting was instigated by the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba. This is at best a rather pathetic attempt to institute a charge of terrorism with no other evidence but a dubious tweet. Does government evidence rely on tweets? And are dubious tweets enough to accuse a person of sedition? This is not just a case of the government and the police being adamant, but it appears to be a well-planned strategy to destabilize JNU. There was just too much unusual alacrity in the way events moved. One can't help but feel that somewhere along the line the

present government has lost its initial confidence in itself and is now resorting to unpleasant tactics. An example of this was the way in which JNU faculty and students and some media people were beaten up at the Patiala House Court by a bunch of lawyers, said to be of the BJP, when there was to be a hearing of the case against the student union president. Are the courts of law now going to have to resort to fisticuffs?

Education as catechism

The ideology central to the BJP-RSS has no space or use for liberal thought. Education for such organizations means only what can be called a kind of catechism. This is a memorization of a narrow set of questions rooted in faith and belief and an equally narrow set of answers that prohibit any doubt or deviation. The same technique applies to all subjects. Therefore educational centers that allow questioning and discussion are anathema and have to be dismantled.

Since what is referred to as Hinduism does not confine itself to a single sacred book, nor is there exclusive worship of a single monotheistic God, the notion of blasphemy so crucial to the Christian and Islamic religions has little application to the Hindu religion. However, in the Hindutva version of Hinduism, aimed at establishing a Hindu Rashtra – a state where Hindus are the primary citizens and the purpose of governance is to uphold Hindu principles – the notion of a kind of blasphemy is applied to those that are critical of Hindutva that is equated with the Hindu Rashtra. This is then equated with the nation. Criticism of it is described as anti-nationalism so such criticism can be silenced. To call criticism as “hurt sentiment” is now much too mild. It

has to be treated as blasphemy/anti-nationalism, and treated as a serious crime. This helps to convert a secular state into a religious state, which ultimately is the aim of the RSS.

The BJP-RSS government currently in power is unable to have a dialogue with an institution such as the JNU and other similar universities such as the Hyderabad Central University. The emphasis from the start in such universities has been on questioning existing knowledge, exploring new knowledge and relating knowledge to the existing reality. This is the very opposite of merely handing down selected information without questioning it. This is a problem that the BJP-RSS government has to face with a number of pace-setting prestigious centers of learning that do not substitute catechism for learning, and instead demand the right to debate a subject that may be thought to be blasphemous to the nation as defined by Hindutva. So the alternative is to try and dismantle such centers of learning by creating disturbances. This will eventually prevent them from functioning as they are intended to do.

Method in the madness

There seems to be something of a pattern in the organization of such disturbances, since there is a repetition of the same procedure in each case. The similarities are curious. The first step is to ensure that the person appointed in a position of authority in the institution is relatively unknown, as have been many of the directors, chairmen, and vice-chancellors appointed in the last 18 months in various institutions. They are relied upon to follow the orders of the government. The next step is to locate a group preferably debating contemporary

issues, and instruct the local AVBP cadres to create a confrontation with such a group in the course of the meeting, and the confrontation could even result in some violence. This allows the ABVP to claim that they were attacked first and for a complaint to be made to the local BJP politician, readily to hand, who then takes it up with the minister, and who then orders the authority concerned to rusticate the students, to bring the police into the premises and arrest the non-AVBP students, irrespective of whether or not they were involved in the confrontation.

The normal university reaction in the past has been not to allow police on the campus or to make arrests. The exception was during the Emergency. Generally, a committee of enquiry is appointed by the university. It is treated as an internal matter of the institution. Police action can only be permitted if there is a serious breach of law. A group of students shouting slogans is not a serious breach of law. What was done in the JNU reminds me of the saying “to bring a sledge-hammer to crack an egg.” The intention was obviously not just to crack the egg but to smash it completely. But it looks as if the egg is now on the face of the government.

One might well ask why the BJP-RSS is so bent on dismantling institutions of learning and converting them into teaching shops. Is it the premium on conformity and out-of-date knowledge that the BJP-RSS would like to define as education? Is it the kind of education that is given in the *shishu-mandirs* and *madrassas* that is seen as ideal in form? Interestingly the institutions that come under attack are those that are associated with freedom of thought, the asking

of questions, the advancing of knowledge. Those that conform to education as learning by rote and providing supervised answers are not interfered with all that much, since this pattern of learning fits into a catechism style.

There is by now little, doubt that we are currently being governed by those that seem to have an anti-intellectual mind-set. This spells trouble for universities that are concerned with high standards of teaching and research, and it would seem beyond the comprehension of those governing. One can only ask why the government is so apprehensive of intellectuals? Is the government being ham-handed with universities because from the minister down they fear the potential power of those universities that encourage their students to think independently? Or is this a deliberate way of creating a general ambience of fear in the institutions? The existence of such a fear would make it easier to impose syllabi, courses and methods of teaching emanating from the think tanks of the RSS. Not to mention that it makes those employed in universities more pliant.

A culture worth fighting for

For those of us who were among

the founding members of JNU, the events of the last few days at the university is a moment of a far bigger intellectual and emotional crisis than has ever happened before in its history. JNU was founded on the principles of democratic functioning, both administratively and in the content of the education it imparted. It meant a generally positive relationship between teacher and student, and a frequency of free discussion both on matters academic and on the world we live in. It meant more rigorous training in the subjects taught and this experience improved the work both of teachers and students, and all of which was underlined by an insistence on critical enquiry. We were conscious of stretching our minds to beyond what was readily known and in encouraging students to look beyond the obvious. It was these factors that made it into a prestigious university, a trend-setter in many subjects that were taught in other Indian universities. It was again these factors that gave it international recognition, on par in many subjects with the best universities outside India.

This of course is the opposite of the rather pathetic BJP-RSS version of what is meant by education at any level, judging by the views of

the HRD ministry. To see the BJP-RSS government trying to annul what we have achieved in JNU and reduce the university to a pedestrian teaching shop, is like having to see the work on one's lifetime being systematically destroyed. Many of us chose to work in JNU rather than take up lucrative positions in universities abroad, because we had a vision that we could make it among the best academic centers located in India. And that excellence it has experienced. As one academic who lived a substantial part of my life working in the JNU, and contributing to this vision, the hostility of the current government to the JNU leaves me with a sense of despair and sadness for the future of universities in India. However, I must add that experiencing the protest of the JNU community against the attack that has been mounted on it, does make me feel that perhaps the values that we had tried to inculcate in its early years have taken root. When JNU recovers from the trauma of this attack it is likely to be even more committed to the values for which it was created – excellence not only in intellectual enterprise but also in endorsing a humane and open society upholding the rights of every Indian citizen.

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Sliding Popularity of Right Wing Politics

Sandeep Pandey

Hardly two months back nobody would have thought that PM Narendra Modi's authority would be questioned by ordinary university students on campuses. The campaign which brought Modi to power in Delhi was so high profile that in the initial period of his prime ministership an atmosphere was created in which, what to talk of common people, even his own party members, elected representatives and ministers couldn't question him. He was like a headmaster who believed only in one way communication. Media rarely questioned him or his decisions. But the beginning of 2016, less than his being in PM chair for two years, the aura built around Modi has been punctured, and on several occasions.

The Rashtriya Swamsewak Sangh has a strategy since long to mould people's minds through the education process. By propagating a certain ideology it has built a base of its supporters. Since this ideology is based on aggressive nationalism, the people trained in the RSS schools have a domineering personality which believes in direct action. They don't believe in Indian Constitution nor respect the law and order. For example, on 6 December 1992 the then BJP CM of UP, Kalyan Singh, during the day gave an affidavit to the Supreme Court to the effect that he will not allow any damage to Babri Masjid and then allowed it to be demolished by the Hindutva activists. It is surprising that there are no questions raised on his holding the Constitutional post of Governorship today.

Government's interference in academic institutions and its simultaneous opposition, which did not go down well with the academic community, started in Film and Television Institute of India when Gajendra Singh was appointed Chairman in June 2015. The students after a prolonged 139 day protest continue to oppose his appointment and refuse the offer of dialogue with him on this issue.

Things flared up after the suicide of Rohith Vemula on Hyderabad University campus on 17 January, 2016 and started taking an ugly turn. Shameless interference by central ministers, use of violence to subjugate voices of dissent by ABVP or BJP members and manipulation of facts by those sitting in responsible positions like VC, became a pattern. No other political organization uses violence so easily against others as the right wing. The police and government usually stand by and let them go on rampage as was recently witnessed in Patiala House Court.

But the response to highhanded treatment by the government and university administrations has been equally strong. On January 22 three dalit students Ram Karan, Amrendra Kumar Arya and Surendra Kumar Nigam raised slogans against Narendra Modi and dented his overawing image for the first time in the convocation of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University at Lucknow.

Following this the BHU authorities were very circumspect

and took extreme care that no untoward incident happened during Modi's presence on campus during its convocation. A dalit minister came in advance and held a meeting with dalit students and professors to assuage any anti-government feelings they might have. In spite of this, about 200-250 members of Bhartiya Vidyarthi Morcha, two of whom had earlier courted arrest in open defiance when they went to seek permission from the Varanasi DM to show black flags to Modi during his Varanasi visit, protested at the gate of BHU and shouted 'Narendra Modi go back' slogans. Then when Narendra Modi was proceeding towards the gate inside BHU leading to Ravidas temple members of Bahujan Mukti Party raised 'Rohith Vemula Zindabad' slogans and demanded punishment for culprits responsible for his death. Here again 'Narendra Modi go back' slogans were raised. During the convocation in BHU one student Ashutosh Singh raised slogans demanding revival of students' union which has been suspended since 1997. He was slapped and overpowered by police. These three incidents took place when BHU was converted into fortress on 22 February, 2016 and every person and corner was under security gaze. Imagine if this security cover was not there. It is quite possible that dalit organizations alone would have blocked Narendra Modi's entry into campus.

Compared to the two terms of Manomohan Singh in which, what now appears to be major

achievements, important Acts like Right to Information, Protection of Women from Domestic Violence, (Mahatma Gandhi) National Rural Employment Guarantee, Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights), Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement, National Food Security, Right to Education, Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending), Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation were enacted, the Narendra Modi government hasn't really accomplished anything worthwhile to show. The Make in India or Startup India programs have failed to take off due to lack of interest of investors. Hence RSS has found it convenient to fall back on its tested strategy of polarizing the society on emotive

issues like patriotism and anti-national activities.

Usually university level politics is left to the student groups. Every political party its worth has student groups on campuses. If Congress has NSUI, BJP has ABVP. Left parties, which otherwise are not very strong in state level politics, have a strong presence on campuses in the form of AISA, SFI and AISF associated with CPI(ML), CPI and CPI(M), respectively, and are able to win student union elections quite easily. There are even ultra-left groups like DSU which don't believe in contesting elections. In other words universities have seen plethora of groups believing in diverse ideologies that co-exist. Usually they don't engage in violent clashes with each other even though their ideologies may be contradictory. Sometimes they resort to violence but it is usually against

the administration or government.

No other political party has been so obsessed about taking control of academic campuses as the BJP. And they have made a mess of it. In addition to encouraging clashes between student groups, which sometimes become violent, by direct or indirect intervention through RSS affiliated VCs or police, they have spoiled the academic atmosphere of institutions, so much so that it has now started pinching its own people. Three ABVP office bearers Pradeep Narwal, Rahul Yadav and Ankit Hans have resigned citing differences with RSS and BJP on Manusmriti and Rohith Vemula incident. A Ph.D. student at JNU, Neetu Singh, feels the BJP has let her down as people outside the campus now call her anti-national.

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The Centrality of the Right to Dissent

Amartya Sen

I begin on a self-indulgent note. "How is Amartya?" asked my uncle Shidhu (Jyotirmoy Sengupta) — cousin of my father — in a letter written from Burdwan Jail, on August 22 of 1934, before I was one. He complained about the name "Amartya", given to me by Rabindranath Tagore, and argued that the great Tagore had "completely lost his mind in his old age" to choose such a "tooth-breaking name" for a tiny child. Jyotirmoy was in jail for his efforts to end the British Raj. He was moved from prison to prison — Dhaka Jail, Alipur Central Jail, Burdwan Jail, Midnapur Central

Jail. There were other uncles and cousins of mine who were going through similar experiences in other British Indian prisons.

Jyotirmoy himself came to a sad end, dying of tuberculosis, related to undernourishment in the prisons. As a young boy I was lucky to have a few conversations with him, and felt very inspired by what he said and wrote. He was committed to help remove "the unfreedoms heaped on us by our rulers."

How happy would Jyotirmoy have been to be in today's India, with the Raj dead and gone, and

with no unfreedoms imposed on us by the colonial masters? But — and here is the rub — have these unfreedoms really ended? The penal codes legislated by the imperial rulers still govern important parts of our life. Of these, Section 377 of the code, which criminalizes gay sex, is perhaps the most talked about, but happily a Constitution bench of the Supreme Court is re-examining it. It is, however, often overlooked that the putting on a pedestal of the sentiments of any religious group — often very loosely defined — is another remnant of British law, primarily Section 295(A) of the

penal code introduced in 1927. A person can be threatened with jail sentence for hurting the religious sentiments of another, however personal — and however bizarrely delicate — that portrayed sentiment might be.

The Indian Constitution, despite claims to the contrary, does not have any such imposition. In a judgment on March 3, 2014, the Supreme Court in fact gave priority to the fundamental right, of the people to express themselves as enshrined in the Constitution. The Constitution's insistence on "public order, decency or morality" is a far cry from what the organized political activists try to impose by hard-hitting kick-boxing, allegedly guided by delicate sentiments. The Constitution does not have anything against anyone eating beef, or storing it in a refrigerator, even if some cow-venerators are offended by other people's food habits.

The realm of delicate sentiments seems to extend amazingly far. Murders have occurred on grounds of hurt sentiments from other people's private eating. Children have been denied the nourishment of eggs in school meals in parts of India for the priority of vegetarian sentiments of powerful groups. And seriously researched works of leading international scholars have been forced to be pulped by scared publishers, threatened to be imprisoned for the offence of allegedly hurting religious sentiments. Journalists often receive threats — or worse — for violating the imposed norms of vigilante groups. The Indian media has a good record of standing up against intimidation, but freedom of speech and reporting need more

social support.

To see in all this the evidence of an "intolerant India" is just as serious a mistake as taking the harassment of people for particular social behavior to be a constitutional mandate. Most Indians, including most people who are classified as Hindu (including this writer), have no difficulty in accepting variations in food habits among different groups (and even among Hindus). And they are ready to give their children the nourishment of eggs if they so choose (and if they can afford them).

And Hindus have been familiar with, and tolerant of, arguments about religious beliefs for more than 3,000 years ("Who knows then, whence it first came into being? ... Whose eye controls this world in highest heaven, he verily knows it, or perhaps he knows not," Rigveda, Mandala X, Verse 129). It is a serious insult to Indians — and to Hindus in general — to attribute to them the strange claims of a small but well organized political group, who are ready to jump on others for violations of norms of behavior that the group wants to propagate, armed with beliefs and sentiments that have to be protected from sunlight.

The silencing of dissent and the generating of fear in the minds of people violate the demands of personal liberty, but also make it very much harder to have a dialogue-based democratic society. The problem is not that Indians have turned intolerant. In fact, it is quite the contrary. We have been too tolerant even of intolerance. When some people — often members of a minority (in religion or community or scholarship) — are attacked by

organized detractors, they need our support. This is not happening adequately right now. And it did not happen adequately earlier as well. In fact, this phenomenon of intolerance of dissent and of heterodox behavior did not start with the present government, though it has added substantially to the restrictions already there. M.F. Husain, one of the leading painters of India, was hounded out of his country by relentless persecution led by a small organized group, and he did not get the kind of thundering support that he could have justly expected. In that ghastly event at least the Indian government was not directly involved (though it certainly could — and should — have done much more to protect him). The government's complicity was, however, much more direct when India became the first country to ban Salman Rushdie's Satanic Verses.

So what should we do, as citizens of India who support freedom and liberty? First, we should move away from blaming the Indian Constitution for what it does not say. Second, we should not allow colonial penal codes that impose unfreedoms to remain unchallenged. Third, we should not tolerate the intolerance that undermines our democracy, that impoverishes the lives of many Indians, and that facilitates a culture of impunity of tormentors. Fourth, the courts, particularly the Supreme Court, have good reason to examine comprehensively whether India is not being led seriously astray by the continuation of the rules of the Raj, which we fought so hard to end. In particular, there is need for judicial scrutiny of the use that organized tormentors make of an imagined entitlement of "not to be offended"

(an alleged entitlement that does not seem to exist in this particular form in any other country). Fifth, if some states, under the influence of sectarian groups want to extend these unfreedoms through local legislation (for example, banning particular food), the courts surely

have to examine the compatibility of these legislation with the fundamental rights of people, including the right to speech and to personal liberties.

As Indians, we have reason to be proud of our tradition of tolerance

and plurality, but we have to work hard to preserve it. The courts have to do their duty (as they are doing — but more is needed), and we have to do ours (indeed much more is surely needed). Vigilance has been long recognized to be the price of freedom.

(Text of the lecture by Prof. Amartya Sen organised by Editors Guild of India.)

A Workshop on Socio-Political Dialogue

Khudai Khidmatgar organized a two days' workshop on 20/21st February 2016 at Puzhazhyoram Resort, Calicut, Kerala. The youth joined in large numbers to discuss the rising socio-political issues in the country and ways to promote peace and harmony. The workshop began with the release of 'Khudai Khidmatgar' a book written in Tamil by Dr. Jeevanandam. Kerala State Khudai Khidmatgar Co Ordinator Musthafa Mohammed delivered the inaugural speech about the aim of the workshop. Khudai Khidmatgar Convenor Faisal Khan spoke about the necessity of the unity of like-minded organizations and religious groups to protect the sanctity and spirituality of our nation and the human society. Dr. Jeevanandam had a long discussion with the participants about the role of various ideologies like Marxism, feminism, Gandhian thought, Islam, Hinduism, Christianity and ways to promote positive scenarios from these ideas to better our activities.

Well known social activist on women's rights and bonded labor, Ajitha interacted with the participants about women's

empowerment and social justice. She spoke about the challenges to women in our society such as dowry, domestic violence, torture of women due to liquor consumption by male members of the family, which had to be wiped out for creating an equal society which was the need of the time.

On the second day, Advocate Sivakumar from Tamil Nadu spoke on the Role of Youth in World Peace. He briefly explained how the super powers were promoting war and how the war and conflict between nations and regions were being generated and in this context how youth can play a major role in promoting peace.

Faiz Akram Pasha, Khudai Khidmatgar Karnataka unit Coordinator spoke as to how prisoners' rights were being violated and the need for protecting those rights as a large number of minorities and Dalits were in prison and about the conduct of police during and after the arrest of a person. Inamul Hasan, Secretary of Khudai Khidmatgar spoke about the necessity of youth for social movement and for initiating non-violent struggles to promote

people's demands.

Iyachery Kunhikrishnan, an anti-liquor activist from Kerala inspired the participants with the sayings from Holy Quran and Bhagwat Gita about the social responsibility of every human being apart from their religious practices and need to make the society full of knowledge and love. Vijaya Raghavan the activist from Plachimada presented his views as to how the corporates afflicted the society and a situation like slavery was increased by means of technological and economic development.

Finally the participants had a long discussion on how to promote our activities in the society and work in future. It was decided to organize workshops all over south India

The Coordination team consisted of Musthafa Mohammed, Akhil, Mohammed Fajar, Athul, Jamsheer, Fasil, Jennith, Akhil Kumar who worked for the success of the workshop.

**Inamul Hasan
Khudai Khidmatgar**

On the day Mahatma Gandhi's ashes were immersed

Chandra Bhal Tripathi

On February 12, 1948 the *asthi-visarjan* or ash-immersion rite of Mahatma Gandhi's ashes took place at the Sangam in Allahabad. We walked barefoot from Allahabad junction station to the Sangam (confluence of the Ganga, the Yamuna and the invisible Saraswati, aka Triveni). I think the distance is at least five miles. I was 17 years 3 months then. Like millions of Indians we felt that we had lost our father (Bapu) and according to the Hindu tradition I observed the 13-day mourning period by not wearing any footwear, no haircut or shaving, sleeping on the floor, taking very simple food, etc. I was studying in the second year of Intermediate Science class at GIC, Allahabad, and was among the few students who observed these rules. My mother, Smt. Durgawati Tripathi, who was a pious lady, hard core nationalist and had highest respect for Bapu and Nehru, stopped eating in the night every Friday for 22 years until her death.

Bapu's ashes were sent to all important places and *teerthas* for immersion on that day. I remember that Braj Krishna Chandiwala of Chandni Chowk, whose family was closely known to Bapu and with whom he had stayed in Delhi, was detailed to immerse his ashes in Kailash Manasarovara in Tibet.

Reverting to the event of 12-2-48 at Allahabad, the ashes of Bapu were mounted on a military gun carriage and the person sitting in front was none other than Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Another prominent person

was the son of Bapu, Ramdas Gandhi, whose widow I called on at Sewagram in 1988. Great leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajendra Prasad and Abul Kalam Azad were standing on the gun carriage. At the Sangam the crowd that paid the last respects to Bapu included the lakhs of pilgrims who were camping on the sands to celebrate the Kumbha. All India Radio announced that the crowd numbered about 35,00,000 the highest congregation in the world ever. Later I met in Delhi the radio newsreader Shiva Kumar Tripathi who became famous for his commentary on the occasion. Earlier the continuous seven-hour commentary by the legendary Melville de Mellow on the cremation of Gandhiji in Delhi attracted worldwide attention.

I may add that since our maternal uncle, Sri KC Shukla, was the ADM and Kumbha Mela in-charge, we had the privilege of standing near the base of the high tower specially erected for this ceremony. The only two persons who stood on the top of the tower were Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and the Governor-General, Lord Mountbatten. I distinctly remember Panditji's speech but don't remember if and what Lord Mountbatten spoke. The other national leaders including Maulana Azad, etc., were standing at the base of the tower.

It was a historic occasion and I was fortunate to be a witness to the same and to have got an opportunity to pay my *shraddhanjali* to the Father of the Nation whom I had the privilege

of meeting as a young student at Allahabad station in 1946 when he was travelling in a third class railway compartment. He was accompanied by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, INA hero Shah Nawaz and a worker with a *jhola* containing donations for the Harijan Kosha. Those days one had to contribute Rs.5 to the Harijan Kosha in order to get Gandhiji's autograph. It was not affordable for me. My cousin sister had given me her autograph book and Rs.5. Gandhiji asked me: "*Paisha de diyahai?*" I answered: "*Jee, Bapu. Paisa de diyahai.*"

Bapu was on the way to Noakhali (now a part of Bangladesh) where he created history by walking on foot with very few friends and from village to village to restore peace in the communal riot affected areas. He refused to come to Delhi to celebrate the Independence Day.

You would recall that Bapu was assassinated by the Hindu fanatic and Hindutvavadi Nathuram Godse around 5:30 PM on January 30, 1948. What a pity that some Hindutvavadis in a village in Uttar Pradesh have decided to build a temple to worship Godse. PM Narendra Modi does not have the guts to oppose it, not to talk of condemning it. He uses Gandhiji's name for political gain and hoodwinks the whole world.

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Letter to the Editor

Mixing religion and politics

Dear Sir,

Mixing religion and politics is a lethal combination. Particularly politics of stoking religious identities and nationalistic hysteria is a sure sign of a sinister design to manipulate mass imagination.

I appeal to the average Indian not to give up their innate sense of justice under the force of media manipulation. Video images can be doctored. The truth must prevail over false propaganda. The freedom India earned from hundreds of years of slavery was meant to be used to establish a psychological environment conducive to creative and compassionate thinking- for building a society based on justice,

where nobody felt deprived of opportunities for progress. Rabindranath's "where the Mind is without fear" best captures the dream of Swaraj our freedom fighters fought for.

The Azadi ka Jung our forefathers fought has not ended. We need azadi from injustice, we need azadi from discrimination, we need azadi from servitude, we need azadi from hatred towards our own, we need azadi from criminalization of the society, we need azadi from corruption, we need azadi from everything that divides our society. Asking for azadi is not an unpatriotic act. If it is done with the intention of making our country a just society, it is a patriotic act. Asking for Barbadi is definitely

an act of misplaced protest and needs to be dealt with appropriately.

The nationalistic hysteria currently being unleashed will benumb our minds and will lead to compromising of the process of justice. It will give legitimacy to the use of brute force to crush genuine dissent. It will compromise diversity of thought and turn us into a herd of sheep.

We are being led into surrendering our individual freedoms by encounter specialists. Please watch out for being manipulated. Your love for your country should not be used to fuel anger and hatred against your own people.

We deserve better.

Uday Dandvate
uday@sonicrim.com

The Editor,

Janata, Mumbai.

Sir,

With reference to 'A country without focus' Janata (Feb.14, 2016) I want to point out that the learned author should also have talked about Freedom of speech and expression in Bangladesh. He has chosen to ignore it in his wisdom which is quite characteristic of him. Perhaps he doesn't want to harm his own relationship with them. Being pro-fundamentalist is being secular for him. Secularism has gone astray in India and also in Bangladesh. He is always soft on Muslim fundamentalists and hard on Hindu nationalists whom he dubs as communal elements.

A. L. Rawal
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Assault on our educational institutions by the BJP–RSS

Socialist Party (India) and Lokayat demand the immediate release of JNU Students Union President Kanhaiya Kumar who was arrested on false charges of raising anti-India slogans, and charged with sedition. We demand that this false charge be immediately withdrawn.

We also strongly condemn the attacks on him by the RSS/BJP goons at the Patiala House courts. Several other students, faculty members, journalists and advocates were also injured in the assault repeated for the second time within the court premises, despite specific Supreme Court orders to ensure security for Kanhaiya Kumar and restricting entry of outsiders inside the court premises. These hooligans even tried to manhandle a panel of senior lawyers sent by the Supreme Court to investigate the matter. The Delhi police remained a silent spectator to this complete breakdown of law and order, going to the extent of ignoring Supreme Court orders. Instead of performing its Constitutional duties, the Delhi police was obviously following orders of the BJP Home Minister. All this indicates the extent to which the country's law and order machinery has become a complete pawn in the hands of the fascist forces! The scant respect the BJP–RSS have for democratic norms and judiciary is obvious from the fact that following the violence in the Patiala House court, the lawyer goons who indulged in this violence are being openly felicitated, instead of being arrested and their licenses cancelled.

The arrest of Kanhaiya Kumar, and the permission given by the newly appointed Vice Chancellor of JNU to the police to conduct raids on the JNU campus without informing the Deans, are only the latest incidents in a series of attacks

being made by the BJP–RSS on our campuses to impose their regressive ideology and stifle the voices of those who disagree with their politics. Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh has openly defended the police action in JNU, and asserted that he has evidence against Kanhaiya Kumar for raising anti-national slogans, even though it is now increasingly becoming obvious that the evidence they have is all fabricated. Some time ago, the Union Minister of State for Labour and Employment, Mr. Bandaru Dattatreya, had raised the same bogey of 'anti national' activities against an Ambedkarite group of Dalit students at the behest of the ABVP and sought action from HRD Minister Smriti Irani against them. His intervention led to the suspension of Dalit students and was followed by the suicide of one of them: Rohith Vemula. Earlier, the MHRD had pressurised IIT Chennai to impose a ban on an independent student group on its campus, Ambedkar Periyar Study Circle (APSC), alleging that it was trying to "create hatred among students"; this, when the IIT Chennai has several right-wing groups active on the campus, in contrast to which APSC had been organising intellectual programs to promote rationalist and scientific thinking on the campus. However, a countrywide furore forced the authorities to back down and withdraw the ban. The BJP has also been foisting persons with Hindutva leanings as heads of India's leading academic institutions, even if they are ill-qualified for the post. Thus, it has appointed Gajendra Chauhan, a B-grade actor with no work to show any kind of inclination for art and aesthetics, as head of the prestigious Film and Television Institute of India, and G.C. Tripathi, a RSS functionary, as Vice Chancellor of Banaras Hindu University. G.C.

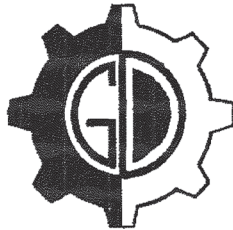
Tripathi recently terminated the contract of Dr. Sandeep Pandey as a visiting professor, alleging that he was indulging in 'anti-national' activities. An amazing charge, considering that Dr. Pandey is not only a highly qualified academic with a PhD from University of Berkeley, he is also a well-known Gandhian Socialist activist who has been associated with several grassroots movements which earned him the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay award in 2002! But then for the RSS, he was a thorn in their attempts to saffronise BHU, and so he was unceremoniously dismissed.

The RSS does not believe in democracy, secularism and socialism—all pillars of the Indian Constitution. The founders of the RSS were admirers of Mussolini and Hitler. The RSS critiqued the Constitution when it was drafted, lamenting that India's Constitution makers had ignored the Manusmriti. It has always wanted to transform India into a Hindu nation, and its fraternal wings have been openly eulogising Nathuram Godse. Now, with the BJP in power at the Centre, it has launched a vicious offensive to suppress progressive and rationalist thinking and forcibly impose its regressive ideology on the country and especially our educational institutions.

These attacks by the Modi-led BJP government are meant to silence dissent or any views opposed to its own in educational institutions. We on behalf of Socialist Party (India) and Lokayat assert that the people of India will not allow fundamentalist, anti-democratic and fascist forces to succeed in their designs. We call upon all progressive forces to join hands to protect our universities from assault by Hindutva forces and foil their designs to impose their regressive ideology on them.

–Alka Joshi Convenor, Lokayat Abhijit Vaidya National General Secretary, SP (I)

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janata

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The budget & after

S. Viswam

The unreal Rajya Sabha
Kuldip Nayar

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Rajindar Sachar

**Most Indians Would be Considered
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Sudha S.

Women in a Socialist society
Bapu Heddurshetti

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Men may come and men may go, the brook famously said, but I go on ever. The annual budget is now universally acknowledged as a finance institution indispensable to all economies. Parodying the brook the budget may well proclaim that finance ministers may come and go, but it goes on forever. Indeed, in India, the budget is not only well-established tradition but it is also a deeply-entrenched one in the national psyche, impacting the public sector as it is meant to, but the private as well since we happen to be a mixed economy even if proceeding slowly towards a free enterprise one. We have just had a visit from the finance minister who duly carried his budget along.

Budgets are hardy annuals and make a lot of noise when they arrive every year, but compared to the noise they make and the excitement they generate, they depart relatively silently. The lay public identifies the budgets as good or bad as they are the instruments through which economic development is effected (or not effected) but even more so if they are likely to affect their daily life in any meaningful way---make it cheaper or more expensive. And this is generally decided upon by juxtaposing the taxes one has to pay against income earned in a financial

which is still April 1 to March 31, a phenomenon we have retained from the British, for reasons we will never understand nor appreciate. Most heavy or long-term financial transactions are done through the financial year, but side by side there is a desi one which is observed from dewali to dewali. Between the official calendar year and the financial year and the desi Samvatsar, one wonders how business is conducted! However, since all systems have been going on for years and years let us leave them aside and carry on with our main work, which today happens to be to comment on the budget.

The choice of the topic of this week has been decided for us by the budget. Budget analysis tells us that a particular taxation move has established a new record for drawing the most vociferous protest. It is father protest and mother protest rolled into one! And we are taking note of it because it has been a rarity.

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley's proposal to tax sixty percent of the interest earned on the EPF (Employees Provident Fund) on withdrawal has drawn across-the-board protest and criticism. It has been variously described as ill-advised, retrogressive, anti-poor, anti-labour, and the protests have been accompanied with calls for

Union Budget 2016-17

Pretending to be pro-poor, little change over UPA

Arun Kumar

While giving concessions worth Rs1,000 crore in the direct taxes paid by the rich, the government plans to net an extra Rs 19,000 crore in indirect taxes, which are contributed by all. This reveals a regressive intent.

full roll-back. For perhaps the first time a taxation proposal has met with this kind of mass and massive protest and calls for roll back. It is also perhaps for the first time that the public reaction has been so strong that the government began talking of a partial roll back! As an example of litmus test of public opinion, the levy has been a classic, the effect instant and telling!

The result of the government reconsideration of the issue in the context of the public demand. The finance minister they will bring forward an amendment that will make only the interest accrued on 60 per cent of the contributions made after April 1, 2016. The existing corpus will remain untaxed as till now and no EPF rules are to be changed. The EPF is regarded in India as a holy cow, an untouchable. As one newspaper (Deccan Herald of Bangalore) argued forcefully, the outburst of over six crore EPF subscribers was justified. It represented their life-time savings which they look up to for post retirement obligations like marriage of their children and meeting their essential day to day needs such as the ever increasing cost of health services with the state almost abdicating its responsibility in favour of brazen commercial interest of star category hospitals.

The finance minister was reported to have assured his party MPs that he would seek to assuage political parties and especially the trade unions affiliated to them and explain the official position. However, thanks to the public uproar the EPF is likely to suffer no serious damage due to the unsuccessful attempts made at using some of its resources for official purposes. We have taken note of the development because it has been an unusual experience and perhaps will be a rare one.

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Like all Union budgets, this one also is long on promises but hides the real dynamics, namely, how the resources are to be raised for the promised very substantial expenditures. The budget is targeting more than Rs 19 lakh crore of expenditures. This is enough to give small amounts to almost every section of Indian society. Based on this increase the Finance Minister has claimed a budget that is pro-farmer and pro other marginalised sections of society. But, what is also clear is that these schemes often do not require budgetary allocations and can be financed through bank loans. Also some are mere policy announcements with little budgetary implications.

In this respect, the budget indicates that the government is more or less continuing with the policies of the UPA regime. That is what it had done last year as well. The one important lesson that the NDA government learnt last year was that its political losses were due to its image of being anti-poor and pro-business – Rahul Gandhi's 'suit boot ki sarkar'. The budget attempts to correct that image. The UPA had also tried the same in its last few budgets. No wonder, the government has made many pro-poor announcements. Arun Jaitley likes the number 9, since he has

listed nine points of 'transformative agenda' and as many of 'tax reform'.

The government has given direct tax concessions and will forego almost Rs 1,000 crore in direct taxes while hoping to collect Rs 19,000 crore additional from indirect taxes. This reveals the real intent of the government. Direct taxes are paid by the well-off (only 4 per cent of Indians pay direct taxes, and these are the well-off) while indirect taxes are paid by everyone and tend to cascade into increased prices via consumption for the poor. Thus, a decline in the share of direct taxes is an indication of a regressive scheme of things.

The Economic Survey had indicated that India has one of the lowest tax/GDP and direct tax/GDP ratios. The Survey hinted that taxes on the rich may be raised and their subsidies cut. However, apart from some tinkering, the overall reduction in direct taxes indicates that the rich are not likely to bear any major increase in taxation. This author has been proposing since the late 1980s an increase in wealth taxation and estate duty to reduce inequities but this is nowhere in sight. Mr. Picketty has also argued for these measures and the Economic Survey raised expectations that these policies may be finally introduced.

The black money schemes if effectively implemented could have increased direct taxes' collection substantially. However, the NDA government has not been successful in tackling the black economy in spite of the various schemes it has introduced since it came to power. For instance, little has been declared out of the hoards of black wealth held abroad. The gold monetisation scheme has also not been successful. The new schemes in this budget which give concessions from penalties and prosecution amount to an amnesty to those who have not declared their incomes in the past. However, the government cannot call it that since it gave an undertaking to the Supreme Court in 1997 that in the future it will not introduce any voluntary disclosure schemes. These schemes cannot succeed unless the government is willing to be tough but that would send an anti-business signal and the NDA regime does not wish to do that.

The Finance Minister announced proudly that in 2015-16 the Plan expenditures have not been cut to attain the fiscal deficit target and he is correct in this. In the preceding five

years there have been massive cuts in this. This year's good performance has been possible because the tax collections have been on target. This is due to the decline in the petroleum goods prices and the non-passing of that decrease to the public by raising excise duties. Excise duty collection has gone up by approximately Rs 50,000 crore over the budget estimates. This has compensated for the decrease in direct taxes by around Rs 50,000 crore. Non-tax revenue has gone up by Rs 37,000 crore over the budget estimates with the net result that the total revenue collection has gone up. States' share has gone down by about Rs 17,000 crore, thus leading to an increase in the Centre's share of revenue.

The implication is that the revenue buoyancy of direct taxes has been less than that assumed last year. What it also suggests is that the economy is not growing at around 7 per cent, as assumed in the budget. This is also apparent from the repeated attempts of the Ministry of Finance to improve demand in the economy. Businesses are also repeatedly asking for interest rate cuts to boost demand.

Assuming a 7 per cent rate of growth for the coming year may also lead to miscalculations. This year's budget has been drafted in an uncertain environment emanating from both the internal and external situations. The Finance Minister has flagged this. The implication is that there is need to be cautious rather than ambitious. The external sector can short-circuit the growth of the Indian economy and make the budgetary calculations go wrong. Unless the correct figures are used for growth and the rate of inflation, errors can get multiplied in case of any exogenous shock.

Finally, the Union Budget is first an instrument of macro-economic policy and then of micro-economic policies. If the calculus of the former is incorrect then the latter are likely to fail. Given the international situation of declining commodity prices and likely shortfall in growth, the package for farmers and for the marginalised sections — the highlight of the budget — is likely to also yield partial results.

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Courtesy : The Tribune

Between the lines

The unreal Rajya Sabha

Kuldip Nayar

Some 80 members of state assemblies have entered this month the portals of Rajya Sabha, the upper house. They represent the states since Parliament has two houses, the other being the Lok Sabha which is elected directly. The Rajya Sabha is the Council of States.

I feel that some elected members do not qualify to sit in the house. A Rajya Sabha member has to be 'ordinarily resident' of the state which returns him or her to the house. Keeping this in view, the Supreme Court should have thrown out the act nearly 10 years ago when it was first challenged. Instead, the

court persisted with the mistake.

Subsequently, a confused bench sought to spell out the qualification for election. In its wisdom it did away with the domicile qualification for the candidates contesting for the Rajya Sabha. The qualification says that a member has to be

ordinarily living in the state from where he seeks election. The nub of the problem is that political parties wanted to do away with the domicile clause so that they could send their favourite to the Rajya Sabha even though he or she did not belong to the State or lived there. Unfortunately, Parliament substituted the word, India, in place of State. This made little sense because no person other than Indian could be elected. The Supreme Court should have restored the domicile clause but it went along with the interpretation that did away with the domicile requirement.

The proceedings of the Constituent Assembly show clearly that the two houses are different in purpose and intent. On the query of R.Venkataraman, a member of the Constituent Assembly, who subsequently became the country's President Dr. B.R.Ambedkar, piloting the constitution or bill, clarified that a candidate to the Council of States should be the resident of the state concerned and a candidate to the House of People need to reside only in any parliamentary constituency.

The Supreme Court saw no merit in the plea that the elected member should be from the state "because the electorate that is electing him is required by law to do so." It was a strange logic to justify the election of an outsider. The point at issue was not who could be elected but who could represent the state. Obviously, a person who normally lived in the state was the one because he was familiar with the state's culture, language and its problems.

Take the case of two warring states, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

They have a running dispute over the division of water from River Krishna. Would a person, who is a resident of Karnataka, represent the state's interest better or the one who belongs to Tamil Nadu but has been returned by the Karnataka assembly to the Rajya Sabha? This is the reason why the National Commission, appointed by the government to review the working of the constitution, recommended "that in order to maintain basic federal character of the Rajya Sabha, the domiciliary requirement for eligibility to contest elections to the Rajya Sabha from the states concerned is essential." It is another matter that the government never implemented any of its recommendations.

The Supreme Court's argument that a federation was not a territory is most untenable. A federation is a formation of separate states which retain control over their own affairs but authorize to the federation that transcend them. The entire justification of a state goes if it does not have in view its own people, sons of the soil. Agreed that "the residence is neither a constitutional factor nor a constitutional requirement," but who forms the state, definitely not those who are not even ordinarily residents?

The Supreme Court was satisfied as long as the representatives to the Rajya Sabha were "citizens of the country." If there was no residential qualification, all the 250 Rajya Sabha members, excluding the 12 nominated ones, could not be only from one state or even one city. Surely, the Supreme Court would not want that. There is no option to the domicile requirement if a state's interests are to be looked after.

Unfortunately, the judgment gave a new title to the Rajya Sabha, that of "revising house", not realizing that it would bring down its status and stature. The Rajya Sabha is an independent house, with its own duties and obligations. The role is not secondary. All bills, except those relating to money, can be introduced in the Rajya Sabha. Does it mean that the Lok Sabha becomes the revising house if and when the bill is introduced in the Rajya Sabha. In fact, the matters concerning the states, originate in the Rajya Sabha. All questions relating to the central services and the like are initiated in the Rajya Sabha.

I express my inability to make out what the Supreme Court means when it says that right to elect "is neither a fundamental right nor a common law right, but pure and simple, a statutory right and not a constitutional right." The two arguments are contradictory. How does a country stay democratic if the right to elect is not something basic or fundamental? In real, this very right differentiates democracy from dictatorship.

It is sad that the Supreme Court judgment has wide opened the doors of the Rajya Sabha to the money bags, the mafia or the like. The house has become a hunting ground for those who have a clout or deep pockets. Political bosses bring to the house their favourites living in any nook and corner of India. The constitution lays down that only 12 members will be nominated to the Rajya Sabha. Now the whole house is nominated by political masters.

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Opposition Parties Duties and Modi's Raj Dharm

Rajindar Sachar

The events in the JNU Campus starting from the now almost established facts of the conspiracy of a section of the ABVP, encouraged by local BJP legislator has, not only vitiated the political atmosphere but it has also had the effect of raising imminent questions on the twisted politics taking shape in India.

Apparently for the record every one is against the continuance of "Sedition law", describing it as an anachronism. In the original draft of the Constitution of India "Sedition" was provided as one of the exceptions to limiting the fundamental freedom of speech and expression, but after a long debate in the Constituent Assembly it was dropped.

K. M. Munshi advocated its deletion from Article 19 because "The party system which necessarily involves an advocacy of the replacement of one government by another is its only bulwark; the advocacy of a different system of government should be welcome because that gives vitality to a democracy." T.T. Krishnamachari, supported Munshi pointing out that such a law became non-functional in 1802 in the US.

Nehru said, "Take again Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code. Now so far as I am concerned, that particular Section is highly objectionable and obnoxious and it should have no place both for practical and historical reasons – the sooner we get rid of it, the better." But alas these encouraging

words remained merely on paper and Sec. 124A continues to be used as a weapon of oppression by all governments.

It is further ironic that sedition law, which owes its ancestry to English Imperial domination, continues on our statute book, notwithstanding the fact that England has abolished the crime of sedition and, in doing so, emphasised the following:

- a) Sedition is defined in vague and uncertain terms. This offends the fundamental principles of criminal law.
- b) In any case, it refers to a particular historical context (sovereignty residing in the person of the King) which no longer holds. The law is archaic and must be done away with.
- c) While certain political views may be unreasonable or unpopular, they cannot be criminalised. This offends democratic values.
- d) The definition of sedition offends fundamental freedoms of speech and expression which are universally recognised.
- e) In practice, the law is used to silence political opposition or criticism of the government. This has a "chilling effect" on free speech.

The present situation arising from the JNU incident is a very apt time for all these parties to publically demand that the sedition law be repealed – in fact to show their

bonafide, all the Parties, should heed the demand of public morality in politics emphasized by Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, to the effect that; "political morality requires that there should be conformity between word and deeds". And this can only be done if the other parties match their speeches against sedition by formally not only writing publically to the central government but formally passing a resolution in the Rajya Sabha (where it has a majority) to repeal Sedition law. BJP opposition will condemn it to being undemocratic and anti people.

A recent resolution by various Human Rights and Civil Liberties Unions held in Delhi, have publically demanded of opposition parties to so act. Can we expect them to match their words with deeds. If they do so BJP will stand exposed with no clothes on in the matter of civil liberties of the people.

In fact a similar petition demanding repeal of sedition law was sent to UPA Government in 2012. Unfortunately not even an acknowledgement was received. Can the opposition now redeem its lapse and at the same time score a political point against the Modi government.

This declaration by opposition parties is of immediate urgency. This is because of the silence by the opposition has devilishly encouraged the dastardly attack made on human Right activist Soni Sori by the goons of police working in Bastar Tribal areas and also on

the lawyers Legal aid Group. Such is the brazen effrontery of Bastar – I.G.S.R.P. Kaluri (Chhattisgarh) that he has the temerity, to suggest the astounding lie that the attack on “Soni, was a part of conspiracy by JNU student Umar Khalid of JNU”. Can anything be a greater untruth? It is already a part of legal history how Soni was tortured by Bastar police in the past and it was only through the intervention of PUCL in the Supreme Court that she got some relief and was allowed to get medical aid at A.I.M.I. Delhi.

I find that the rabid elements of R.S.S. are now openly spreading their venom, assured as they are of no action being taken against them by Modi government; otherwise how is it that such provocative instigation to criminal conduct is being overlooked by the police viz;

a) “Akhil Bhartiya Hindu Mahasabha observes Republic

Day as Black Day”,

b) And November 15 as Balidaan Diwas, hanging of Nathuram Godse and took oath to make India a “Hindu Rashtra”.

But now the matter has reached beyond all limits when Mr. Katheria Minister in Modi government attending a condolence meeting of a V.H.P. worker at Agra killed in a private quarrel allegedly by a Muslim had the temerity to publically encourage the slogans by his co-workers who urged Hindus “to corner Muslims and to destroy the demons”. Katheria publically boasted that simply because he is a minister, his hands are not tied and asserted that such meetings will continue where such venom against Muslim was uttered.

I was expecting that at least the silent Modi, if he will not speak, will act quietly and dismiss the

minister from his cabinet. Nothing has happened – he has not even spoken, much less condemned Katheria. Such silence on the part of Prime Minister can only divide the nation. I feel Katheria’s case is one where the President Pranab Mukherjee’s oath requires him to ask Modi to remove Katheria from his ministry and Modi failing to do so, the president should himself dismiss the minister.

I am also surprised why U.P. Government is quiet and has not registered a criminal case against the Katheria. This is the demand not only of impartial governance but of Secularism enshrined in our constitution. Not to so act accordingly can attract the consequences of dismissal of government which as pointed out and acted open in Keshwanand’s Case of Supreme Court in 1969.

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Most Indians Would be Considered Anti – National

Sandeep Pandey

Lately, a number of people has been described as anti-national by the Hindutva lobby. The most shocking is their definition of anybody who worships ‘demons’ from Hindu mythology is also an anti-national. The mythological figures belong to a distant past when the concept of nation state was not there. Nation is a modern concept and it is defined by our Constitution, which, in the wildest of imaginations, has no place for mythology. Only an insane person would confuse the two things. It is a pity that even the government institutions like police are falling in this trap of

Hindutva campaign. It appears that the Hindutva lobby is assuming that India has become a Hindu Rashtra merely because the BJP has come to power at the centre. Now deceased Vishwa Hindu Parishad President Ashok Singhal had described Narendra Modi’s government as the first Hindu government after the Mughal and British rules. But this is the illusory world of Hindutva brigade. It is only by considering India a Hindu Rashtra that one can go to the ludicrous extent of calling people worshipping demons as anti-national. This is similar to application of blasphemy law

on people who denigrate Prophet Mohammed or Quran in an Islamic state. Does this mean that we’re headed towards being a theocratic state? This should be a cause of concern for people who value democracy, secularism and freedom of speech. The Hindutva lobby represents a very narrow world view which is not shared by a large segment of Indian population including dalits, tribals, minorities, section of other backward castes, atheists and secularists. Together these groups would easily constitute more than half of the population. The BJP has come to power with

less than half the number of votes. Hence they may have a majority in Lok Sabha but they certainly do not enjoy the majority support.

If there are people who worship Durga in this country there are people who worship Mahishasur. If there are people in this country who worship Ram, there are people who worship Ravan. If there are places associated with Gods, there are places associated with demons. When Smriti Irani says that she is hurt by the pamphlet brought out by dalit, tribal, OBC students of Jawaharlal Nehru University on the occasion of 'Mahishasur Martyrdom day' which is offending towards Goddess Durga, does she even conceive that there might be people in this country who're offended by acts of Goddess Durga? In any case, how does she think that by virtue of being a Durga devotee she is a more righteous citizen than her less privileged fellow citizen whose only fault is that he chose to worship somebody who is opposed to her deity. This country is known for its diversity. The Sangh Parivar is bent upon destroying this diversity and wants the dominance of upper caste point of view to prevail. Ordinarily, people believing in different thoughts have learned to co-exist in this country. When two religious communities have events on the same days, the local District

Magistrate makes influential people from two communities sit down and works out a mutually agreeable plan so that both communities may observe their events peacefully. The BJP government is conveying that only what is agreeable to upper caste point of view will be allowed in this country. The rest would be categorised as anti-national and their only place will be in jails. Hence the Hindutva mindset poses a threat to the diverse thoughts of this country as well as its democracy.

But there is an interesting twist to the whole debate. The upper caste notion of a demon is someone possessing muscle power and also who indulges in worldly pleasures. Demon represents evil. In our democracy when people have a choice between a simple, honest, straightforward candidate who is a paragon of virtues and a criminal, mafia, domineering candidate who uses ill gotten wealth to win the election, people have shown their preference for the latter because the common people believe that their representative should be materially and muscularly strong. These candidates are akin to demons as they have various criminal cases pending against them and have acquired wealth illegally. Does this not mean that we are a demon worshipping people? If this is true, then by the definition of Hindutva

brigade most people of this country should fall in the category of being anti-national. Except for some bright spots like the Anna Hazare led anti-corruption movement most of the educated people in this country most of the times end up supporting corruption. People also don't have problems with criminals, especially, if they belong to their own caste or religion. Shouldn't all these people be considered anti-national? If Hindutva lobby had its way there would be more people inside the jails than outside of it.

When Narendra Modi ran for the post of PM he did not inform people that the Hindutva brigade will have a free run in the BJP rule. He won the election on a secular agenda, promise of achche din, which everybody thought would be good governance. The people did not bargain for imposition of Hindutva agenda on the country. Hence Narendra Modi must seek a fresh mandate if he wants to unleash the Hindutva forces in society. The BJP government has allowed to build an atmosphere of fear in society for anybody who doesn't agree with the Hindutva ideology. The people of India have been cheated in democracy by a group which simply doesn't believe in democracy.

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

by

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The Myth Of Mahishasur

Chandra Bhal Tripathi

Some supposedly leftist students of JNU have recently started showing another red rag to the fascist bull by celebrating 'Mahishasur Martyrdom Day' and parading the mythical Mahishasur as the hero of the anti-Aryan (anti-Brahman) 'indigenous people of India'. On February 26, 2016 an article captioned 'Was Mahishasur Anti-national? Is This A Nation of Brahmins?' appeared in the Caravan magazine.

There are several myths and legends about Mahishasur. Wikipedia mentions, *inter alia*, that the name Mysuru (erstwhile Mysore) is derived from Mahishasur and there is a statue of Mahishasur at the famous Chamunda hills. However, the article referred to above excels in fancy by claiming that "The Asurs often claim Mahishasur as an ancestor, as do Adivasi groups such as the Santhal and Bhil, and the Yadav, Kushwaha and Kumhar castes, among countless others.Mahishasur is the hero of all indigenous inhabitants of India."

It is a fantastic assertion. The term 'indigenous' is a loaded one. I would be happy to be enlightened about the authenticity of this assertion with regard to the large tribes like Santhals and the minuscule Asurs recorded by any eminent anthropologist like Sarat Chandra Roy or other acknowledged ethnographers. A statement by an unknown social activist (read political activist) of Bihar is obviously motivated by vested political interests when he brackets Hindu backward castes like Yadav, Kushwaha and Kumhar with the tribal communities. Ask Lalu

Prasad Yadav, the most important Yadav face in Bihar, if he considers Krishna or Mahishasur as his ancestor. I can only visualise the sharp reaction of the Yadav leader to this statement by the so-called social activist.

It is a matter of investigation by anthropologists, historians and other scholars as to who the *asuras* mentioned in the ancient scriptures were. They must have been very powerful and spread over a large territory so as to cause tremendous worry to all *devas* and even the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh who created Durga to annihilate Mahishasur. It is absurd to identify the mighty *asuras* of the ancient scriptures with the tiny Asur tribe of Jharkhand.

Asur is a very small specially vulnerable tribal group (earlier the pejorative term primitive tribe was being used by the administration) of Jharkhand, their locality known as the Neterhat group of plateaus within Chhotanagpur Plateau of Jharkhand State. Their total population in Jharkhand was 10,712 in 1991 Census. The office of the RGI ought to be able to give the population figure of the tribe in 2001 Census. Similarly, they are an insignificant group in West Bengal, but Asurs were amongst the Proto-Australoid groups inhabiting the western regions of West Bengal in pre-historic times. The Asur religion is the combination of animism, animalism, naturalism and ancestral worships. They believe in black magic and witchcraft. Asur's chief deity is

Singbonga; other deities are Dharati Mata, Duari, Patdaraha and Turi Husid. I have not come across any evidence of Asurs treating Mahishasur as an ancestor.

I wish to relate my interaction with Asurs in December 1957 when I visited a small hamlet of Asurs known as Jobhipat at the foothills of Netarhat, famous for a high standard public school then run by the Govt. of Bihar). Earlier Asurs were engaged in domestic ironsmelting. The occasion was the field work among Asurs by final postgraduate students of the Dept. of Anthropology, Lucknow University, including Hari Mohan Mathur, RK Jain, PG Ganguly and PK Mishra who all became eminent in their future careers. At that time I was working at Ranchi as Research Supervisor in the Munda-Oraon Culture Change Evaluation Project sponsored by the RPC, Planning Commission, and directed by Prof. Sachchidananda, HOD, Anthropology, Ranchi College (at that time affiliated to Bihar University with headquarters at Muzaffarpur). After their field work was over I anchored a discussion on Asurs over All India Radio, Ranchi, with some leading students of the group. The teachers guiding the students in the field work included Gopala Sarana, Ripu Daman Singh and VN Mishra--all became famous anthropologists known internationally. I never heard of Mahishasur being considered an ancestor or hero by the Asurs.

I may add that irrespective of the mythology or historicity (as

claimed by some vested interests) about Mahishasur, it is well known that the so-called Aryans were precursors of the Nazis of the 20th century who believed in a theory of racial superiority of Aryans (they took pride in saying that Germans belong to the superior Aryan race). First, let me hasten to clarify that Aryan is not a racial but a linguistic term indicating that Aryans spoke a language belonging to the Indo-Aryan family of languages. Similarly, Dravidian is a linguistic term denoting that Dravidians spoke a language belonging to the Dravidian family of languages. The other important families of languages spoken in India are Mundari or Austric family and Tibeto- Burman family. There is no essential identity between race and language. People belonging to one race may be speaking languages belonging to different families of languages, and *vice versa*. The concept of race itself has undergone changes as no 'pure' race is left. However, in common parlance mostly the tribal communities in Central India, South India and the North-East belong to either Proto-Australoid race or Mongoloid race (the uninformed sometimes call it the Mongolian race) and speak languages belonging to the Mundari (Austric), Dravidian or Tibeto-Burman families of languages.

It was not uncommon for Aryans to ridicule non-Aryans on the bases of colour or other physical features. All kinds of terms like Asura, Rakshasa, Danava (like Maya the superb engineer who built the palace for Pandavas at Hastinapur) were used for non-Aryans. While they called long-faced Kinnars as '*turagamukhaah*' (horse-faced), another people were called '*anaasaah*' (noseless because

they did not possess aquiline noses). No wonder Mahishasur was depicted as half-human and half-buffalo. These are matters of intelligent

interpretation in terms of modern social sciences and not based on one's political proclivities.

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Towards A Broad Based Peace Movement

Bharat Dogra

When incidents of communal, caste or other sectarian violence take place in India, often well-intentioned groups come forward to work for peace and harmony. These efforts have made a valuable contribution, but these efforts have some limitations. They are generally too scattered, sporadic and short-term. These efforts often arise in response to specific events and related needs. As the event recedes, so do the efforts.

However there is clear evidence that fire fighting and short-term measures have only limited usefulness. A fertile ground for communal violence has been created by long existing prejudices and myths, which, are then exploited and ignited by vested interests for narrow and selfish objectives, political as well as economic.

It is therefore necessary to work with much greater continuity and on a much wider scale to remove negative myths and prejudices. On the positive side, there is equally a need in continuity of efforts to encourage inter-faith mixing and organizing events of communal harmony and cultural pluralism. People, and in particular youth, need more opportunities to feel and realize how cultural plurality and inter-faith friendships can enrich our daily life in terms of food, language, literature, music and spirituality.

It is not that all this is not happening. Such efforts are made from time to time by some organizations, but these efforts do not have a wide presence and continuity.

Somewhat similar is the situation of efforts to promote peaceful relationships with neighboring countries and their people. These efforts are particularly important in the context of Pakistan but are also needed in the context of other neighboring countries like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and China. These efforts also need to be wider and have greater continuity.

Generally the peace movement has been identified in India in terms of communal harmony and peaceful relationships with neighboring countries. Extremely important as these concerns are, it has not been possible to consolidate these efforts in such a way as to provide them a much broader base and continuity.

Hence there is clearly a need for a much broader conceptualization of a peace movement which by including several other highly relevant concerns can help in the emergence of a broad-based peace movement having much greater continuity as well.

One of the biggest causes of human distress is violence in daily life. The available statistics on

domestic violence and violence against children and women are horrible. Clearly, on a daily basis, the distress caused by this is even more than the distress caused by war and terrorism. Apart from domestic violence, many children and youth carry for long years the scars of bullying and violence in schools and colleges. A lot of violence takes place at the workplace. Suicides and all forms of self-violence require deep concern and care. Violent crime (including homicides and sexual crimes) are the cause of extreme distress and trauma to more and more people (and not just the direct victims).

There is growing evidence that violence and crime in daily life cannot be just checked by police and jails alone. Well thought out and sensitively handled community initiatives can be of great help in

reducing violence and crime at various levels.

While on the one hand it is important to reduce violence in people's daily life, it is no less important to bring the bigger issues of WMDs and war closer to the concerns of the people. There is increasing evidence that, world leadership left to itself will go on postponing urgent action on WMD till it is too late. However if peoples peace movements in various countries continuously raise their voice against WMD and disarmament, then this may be the most effective way of influencing world leadership to take urgent steps.

While effectively reducing violence in daily life will bring more and more membership to the peace movement, these numbers in turn will increase the strength of the

peace movement to bring changes on the big issues at the national and international levels.

Thus a broad-based peace movement should be visualized as a movement which tries to mobilize peace and to reduce all kinds of violence (including domestic and workplace violence, self-violence, crime, civil strife, war and accumulation of deadly weapons).

This peace movement should be routed in the principles of justice and equality as without justice and equality there can be no lasting peace.

Non-negotiable values and principles of such a peace movement should be worked out carefully. Efforts should be made to spread the movement all over the country to work with continuity.

An Open Letter to JNU Students and Teachers

As a former student of JNU, and staying next door to it, I write this to share my agony and pain on the unfortunate episode of JNU. One thought, this would pass, since it concerns young students, who are at an excitable age and are entitled to hold radical opinions. Moreover, JNU students were known for their 'left' and 'progressive' views, especially as CPI & CPM sympathisers among the teachers and students dominated the public discourse in the campus. That is how many controversial events have taken place in JNU, in the past and for the sake of freedom of speech, right to dissent, debate and open discussion in a democracy; such incidents were *passé* in JNU. But what happened recently in JNU and its aftermath is deeply painful, and plainly out of order. One could

blame ABVP and/or the BJP MP for lodging an FIR against it, and thereby highlighting it, but one could not ignore the incident and its repercussion. Let us remember that, in any incident, there are three things – the fact, the interpretation, and the judgment.

In history, things that happened years or centuries ago, one could be subjective in recalling the facts, what is called 'subjective' recollection and perception of facts (E. H. Carr's, *What is History*). But one could be perfectly objective in looking at the facts in current history. What are the facts in the JNU imbroglio? A group of students wanted to organize a literary event (officially) which turned out to be an anti-India event, evident in the sloganeering that was

recorded. It was to be a pro-Afzal Guru, and "anti-India", event; the students knew it that is why they sought permission in the name of a literary event. When the 'cat was out of the bag', the authorities cancelled the permission, 15 minutes before the event was to start. The students had already gathered for the event, so they moved to another nearby area and conducted the meeting. The speeches or any other proceedings of the meeting are not known, but from the video record of the slogans, the event was anti-India. The point to be noted is that the slogans were not raised on the spur of the moment, the feelings and attitude must have been brewing for a while. That is all on facts.

There have been several reactions

to these slogans. Again, in a democracy, people are entitled to their opinions. Are the slogans unlawful, seditious, and anti-national? Prima facie, they are, but it is for the law enforcing agencies and the judiciary to decide and act upon. It is one thing and acceptable in democracy to criticise the ruling party or Government, but it is quite another to criticise and attack (even verbally) the state. The latter is not acceptable and is not covered by freedom of speech. So the students, the abettors and the offenders, have to be booked and tried. It is another matter, if they do not have any legally questionable antecedents; if they have no links with anti-India forces, they may be let off with a reprimand etc. But it is up to the courts, and we ought to have faith in judiciary.

The second issue is whether the video is doctored or technically manipulated, as alleged by some people including Sitaram Yechuri of the CPM. Surely, we have adequate expertise in the country to ascertain the authenticity of the video. The third assumption is that the ABVP students shouted or engineered the slogans in order to sully the reputation of the communists. An independent enquiry can find out who actually the instigators and offenders are. The enquiry panel set up by the JNU has identified 5 students and recommended action against them to the JNU authorities. The Delhi Government also has ordered a judicial enquiry. So whoever, ABVP or students of any ideological persuasion, guilty of shouting should be booked.

The final issue is that of politicisation. In a democracy, party politicising an issue is unavoidable. The media-newspapers, and

channels will also have their own 'spin' to raise their own TRP, the Civil Society will have their own perception whatever news they get. Yet, the judiciary and police need to follow the law, and by and large they do. Despite, several interpretations, one could discern and ascertain the facts and act accordingly.

A word about reactions of political parties – the first one to enter JNU and defend the action was Rahul Gandhi, in the name of right to dissent, and freedom of speech and blamed the BJP for imposing its ideology on the students. Then we have CPM & CPI questioning the police action and professing the innocence of Kannaiah, the JNUSU President, and the ultra-lefts defending the slogans. Such reactions are predictable, except Rahul Gandhi's, who, without grasping the facts, ended up supporting the sloganeering which he must not have intended to do. He is not known for making such *faux pas*.

I appeal to all the students and Teachers to delink this anti-India sloganeering from the progressive tradition of JNU. Let us reaffirm that progressivism and patriotism (not even nationalism) must go together. A progressive has to be a patriot. If we realise this, reflect deeply on it, this incident will pass, and the JNU image will be restored. If we continue to mix the two - progressivism and anti-patriotism, JNU will not be seen with respect and admiration, as it used to be.

With all my good will and support to those who stand for progressivism and patriotism.

Dr. D.K.Giri

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Letter to the Editor

Sir,

Thanks to Janata dated January 24, 2016. I could read the letter Rohit Vemula wrote before killing himself. I would like to desist myself from dealing with the precedence of caste politics which unnecessarily ended in the sacrifice of the life of a promising youngster.

What moved me was his ambition to emulate a doyen like Carl Sagans and mold himself as a science writer.

What I would like to emphasize is the pathological space in which most of our educated youngsters are entrapped – their longing for a ready-made answers to everything. They are impatient either for a review or recapitulations. It is all the more pathetic to see that they are so impulsive that they could not desist from consuming their own life in the process.

I personally feel the kind of grief Rohit's death has struck on his parents. My own son had, opted for such a predicament two years before.

Though it is late, will you convey my heart-felt condolence to them.

Yours faithfully,

Asokan Pudupurram
21.2.2016

Irom Sharmila's Anguished Appeal to Women of India

Irom Sharmila on a hunger fast for the past 15 years, and released from detention by a court in Imphal, Manipur on Monday, February 29, has appealed to the women of India for support to her cause.

Irom Sharmila had started her hunger strike on November 4, 2000 demanding a repeal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), 1958. In an open appeal issued on March 1, she has addressed Indian women activists on two issues. One, she wants active support for repeal of AFSPA and second, she wants an open discussion on whether her fast should continue. The existence of AFSPA on the statute books has ensured impunity for India's armed forces for repeated human rights violations against Manipuri people, especially women.

A court in Imphal on February 29, 2016 released Irom Sharmila, who has been on a 15-year-long hunger strike to press for the repeal of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, from custody. On her release Sharmila Irom is quoted by the media to have said, "I shall

continue the fast at the footsteps of the Shahid Minar in Imphal town. I will not eat anything till my goal is achieved," she said while coming out of the court room. She also expressed regret over the declining support to her cause, particularly from women activists.

"I am sorry that women activists and civil society organisations have distanced themselves from me and my cause. If they had extended support to my campaign, perhaps by now the AFSPA, which gives *carte blanche* to the security forces, might have been repealed," she said. She further said, "I am not discouraged by the lack of support since I know that victory will be there at last."

"Sharmila was charged with attempting to commit suicide under Section 309 of IPC. However the court found no evidence to establish that she is trying to commit suicide and accordingly ordered her release," C. Momon, Sharmila's advocate, told reporters in Imphal. Local media has reported that given Sharmila's condition and her resolve to continue her fast unto death, she

may be re-arrested soon, a police officer is quoted to have said.

She has been arrested, tried and released several times on the charge of trying to take her own life. Sharmila is also undergoing trial in the Patiala House court in Delhi on the same charge.

Until her release in Imphal on February 29, Sharmila was lodged in a security ward of Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences in Imphal. She is guarded round-the-clock by jail, police and hospital staff. The government is spending about Rs.70,000 a month on her medication and feeding her through the nose.

Appeal for:

- A collective statement by women and other activists to the President, Prime Minister and other authorities.
- Launching a 'Save Sharmila' campaign among students.
- All ex-army men writing a joint representation to the authorities.
- A day-long fast in solidarity and a message to Sharmila Irom.

Courtesy : Sabrang India

A Feminine Approach towards Responsible and Sustainable Societies

Sudha S.

This is a reflection on my experience of working with marginalized communities in their struggles.

We all agree that, in all cultures and societies, women have, in different ways, been marginalized and silenced. Central to the inner world of every community, as an individual the woman is being made to bear the brunt of increasing impoverishment of her people. Recent years have witnessed

countless discussions, seminars and consultations on the issue of gender and poverty with specific focus on "feminization of poverty".

The concept of this "feminization" is linked to a perceived increase in female-headed households and increasing female work participation in the informal sector. Women have found themselves burdened with economic responsibilities but lack of access to productive resources to enhance or supplement these efforts.

Most so-called poverty alleviation measures are not responsive to women's socio political needs.

In the light of this, in my experience, it is heartening to see the manner in which marginalized women have bravely stood up to all forms of oppression and have guided the course of development; their choices being not only for their own sake but also for the betterment of their communities. Women are lead to naturally realize

that although they are from different ethnic backgrounds, a common thread that binds them all is the hope; the hope to challenge the culture of violence- the violence that uprooted them from their origins and the violence on body, mind and materials. And it is not despair that binds them. This common thread does not arise “with a vengeance”, but grows from the awareness that the challenge rests on a deep attitude and practice of nonviolence.

At the ground level, mutually supportive groups created by individual women, have become a common platform for personal and social change. It has shown me that the focus was not only to improve their individual living conditions through economic activities, but also to affirm their self-esteem and confidence, and to become proactive in assuming the challenges collectively.

There are several examples of large collective movements of women who challenged the established order through nonviolent solidarity action, such as the Chipko movement, the Narmada Bachao Andolan, etc. Manipur women for example have always been known to have an independent, decisive say in social affairs. So, when the state was declared a disturbed area in the 80's and atrocities including rapes by the Armed Forces became a serious issue, the ‘Meira Paibes’, members of an informal collective of mothers, took to the streets, fighting for civil rights and peace. The protest against the Armed Forces Special Powers Act took shape in the women’s markets of Manipur where their networks were first formed. It shows that, individual women traders are able to transform into a collective non-violent force to challenge such powerful violent authority.

Even through the worst forms of gender discrimination and violation of their rights, women

have boldly taken up their responsibilities, asserted themselves and successfully demanded their economic, psychological and moral rights to not only equality but also equity. Whenever their deeper consciousness is stimulated, women are awakened to an extraordinary transformative vibration, the natural expression to their latent positive strength. In spite of the complexity and harshness of the struggle, their hearts are still filled with love and compassion though their bodies are being worn out.

Viewed globally, from the start, the feminine approach never limits itself to the individual merely. Its concern is always all encompassing, always motivated by hope and the transformation of the community or society towards better and more equitable horizons. The feminine approach to individual/collective relationships has a transformative capacity in contrast to the dominant patriarchal paradigm, the behavioural patterns of which are the upholding of hierarchical structures, power and coercive authority, refusal of dialogue and subsequent direct or indirect violence.

A major characteristic of feminine notion of responsibility goes towards

the harmonious interaction of the individual and the collective, and to society at large. It is a wonder that, in spite of having been historically oppressed and humiliated by the patriarchal cultures of “mankind”, women continue to demonstrate incredible and inexhaustible psychological and spiritual resources of compassion and solidarity that are both an asset and a hope for the peaceful and harmonious becoming of one and all.

Along these lines, it is important to acknowledge that laws and regulations for the protection and promotion of women’s rights are only a preliminary progress, but they are far from being enough. Women are spontaneously responsible, and it is this feminine natural responsibility that connects them organically and empathetically both to the individual –the person-and to the whole. This intrinsic encompassing interconnectedness embedded in the feminine approach to life should become the basis for the formulation of policy frameworks and for societal interactions; thus an honest step towards equitable and sustainable societies in which we live.

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Women in a Socialist society

Bapu Heddurshetti

As the world celebrates International Women's Day, women in India are waking up and fighting for their right to equality with men. Recently women waged a struggle to gain entry in Shani Shingnapur temple in Maharashtra. Taking a cue, Muslim women also demanded entry in the Haji Ali Darga in Mumbai. A Judge of the Supreme Court asked as to when God does not discriminate between men and women, why do the authorities of the Ayyappan Temple at Shabarimala in Kerala do? The traditionalists have naturally opposed these moves on the grounds of 'our culture', 'our tradition' etc. It is unfortunate that even after the beginning of the 21st Century women have to struggle to get their rights, to get a decent place in society and to get equality with men.

A Socialist does not view the status of women only from the point of view of their rights. He tries to survey their status through the historical phases like feudalism, capitalism etc., and then visualizes what and how their status would be in a society permeated by the values of liberty, equality and fraternity.

What was the status of women in ancient India? The traditionalists promptly quote '*Yatra pujiyante naari, tratra ramante devata*' – 'Gods reside where women are worshipped'. The radicals immediately retort and quote from Manu Smriti: '*Pita rakshati koumarye, Bharta rakshati youvane, Vardhake rakshati putrou, Na stree stwatantyam arhatiti*' – 'Father protects during childhood, Husband protects during youth, Son

protects during old age, No woman is deserving of freedom'. However, there is no contradiction between the two statements. It is not necessary that a woman who is worshipped should have freedom also. But the moot point is whether a woman would prefer to be worshipped at the cost of her freedom?

The ancient Indian society depicted in Ramayana and Mahabharata was a feudal society. Socialist leader Asoka Mehta says "A feudal lord was essentially a parasite. He had hardly any function to perform, except to indulge in warfare, or in poetical and musical contest, or in gallantry." A woman, a Droupadi, a Sita, becomes a 'prize' to be won in a contest called '*Swayamvara*'. A Kunti tells her five sons to share the 'prize' among them-selves. Her sons dutifully oblige. Who cares for what the woman's desires are?

Though it was called a '*svayamvara*', i.e., choosing one's own groom, in fact the woman did not have any freedom to choose. She had to marry the one who won the contest, whether she liked him or not. If at all she had liked someone, he had to abduct her. Krishna did it, Arjuna did it, Prithviraj did it. In all such instances we have to presume that the woman had liked her abductor because that is what those who have written about such abductions have written, and all such writers were men.

But the truth has its own way of coming out. The point worth noting is that none of the narrators of these

incidents ever say that the woman eloped with the man, she had liked, it was the man, who abducted her. But when Paris abducted Helen, why did her husband Menelaus wage a war against Troy and kill Paris and take Helen back? When Ravana abducted Sita, why did Rama wage a war against Ravana and kill him. Not because they held their wives in high esteem but because they could not stomach the humiliation of their wives having been abducted by another man. It was an insult to their manhood. Asoka Mehta says "Abduction of a Helen of Troy or of a Sita provided themes for epics, because the leaders of society had unlimited time and ample wealth at their disposal with no specific social function".

I haven't read the original of Homer, but at least Valmiki in his Ramayana says so. When Vibhishana brought Sita to Ram's presence in Lanka, Ram tells Sita "I did not wage this war for you. I waged this war to remove the blot of humiliation on my famous dynasty. To reestablish the lost honor of my dynasty I have won you. Now that I have reestablished the lost honor of my dynasty you can go wherever you want to go". But those who wrote Ramayana after Valmiki, like Tulasidas etc., deified Rama and extolled his virtues and hid his vices.

Thus in a feudal society, whether in a '*swayamvara*', or in abduction or even where an abducted woman was reclaimed through a war, she had no freedom of choice, her feelings had no value.

True, the coming of capitalism changed the feudal mindset of men but so far as women are concerned it was a case of jumping into the deep sea to avoid the devil. Writing about women in a capitalist culture the Fabian Socialist George Bernard Shaw says “Capitalism made a slave of the man, and then, by paying the woman through him, made her, his slave, she became the slave of a slave which is the worst sort of slavery.” Capitalism develops a culture where women sell their bodies and men their souls for money.

Asoka Mehta’s explanation as to what happens when in feudal and capitalist societies a wife is stolen or seduced by another man makes very interesting reading. In a feudal society the man whose wife is stolen or seduced challenges the thief or the seducer to a duel. Whoever wins the duel takes the woman. So a woman in a feudal society is equal to a chattel. In a capitalist society “if your wife commits adultery, you do not seek out and kill the seducer, but you go to the court and claim a big sum as damages. The virtue of a woman, the self-respect of a man, everything has a price” says Asoka Mehta.

Asoka Mehta says that in ‘a capitalist society all intimacies revolve round the *cash nexus*.’ Under capitalism *cash nexus* determines the marital relations also. Earlier this *cash nexus* existed in the form of dowry in a marriage. Now it has established its presence in divorce also. Anyone watching the proceeding of any family court in India would know that the husband fears seeking divorce because he will be saddled with a fat amount of alimony and the wife will only be calculating as to how much money she may get by consenting for the divorce.

But then what happens when a man seduces the wife of another man in a Socialist society? A woman in a Socialist society is neither a chattel as in a feudal society nor has her character a price as in a capitalist society. She has freedom equal to that of a man and has also equality with man. She has the liberty to live with a man of her choice and hence to leave any man at any time if she so desires. The man in a Socialist society respects woman’s liberty and equality. Since she has equality with man, the man whose wife is seduced neither challenges the seducer to a duel as in a feudal society nor sues the seducer for damages as in a capitalist society. Since the woman leaves him and goes to another man of her own choice, the very word seduction loses its meaning.

One social institution which affects women most in our society is marriage. Very few women in our society have the liberty of choosing their partners in life. Even if they exercise their liberty and choose their partner in life, there is no guarantee that such partner will accord equal status to them. Even then, including most of the women thinkers, very few thinkers have bestowed any serious thought about the position of women in this institution of marriage and the ways and means of entitling her with liberty and equality, let alone seriously trying to get them for her.

Why do women endure unhappy marriages thrust upon them? Why do they not quit and walk out on their husbands? “Because” says George Bernard Shaw, “the starvation awaits them, at the other side of the door”. He says, if women can walk out on their husbands “without losing a single

meal, a single night’s protection and shelter, or the least loss of social standing in consequence” an immense number of women would so walk out. That is why with more and more women getting education and jobs and the consequent economic independence and resultant liberty, the number of divorces are increasing. One need not lament the collapse of such marriages because in any case they are not desirable marriages as they are not built on mutual respect and equality between husband and wife. But George Bernard Shaw says that under socialism divorces will be less. He says, “Husbands and wives, if they knew that their marriage could only last on condition of its being made reasonably happy for both of them, would have to behave far better to one another than they ever seem to dream of doing now. There would be such a prodigious improvement in domestic manners all round that a fairly plausible case can be made out for expecting that far fewer marriages will be broken up under Socialism than at present”.

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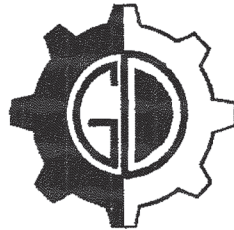
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**The 2016-17 Budget:
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Prof. Vibhuti Patel

Certainly Not A Socialist Budget
Bharat Dogra

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An incomplete version

Kuldip Nayar

I BELIEVE that a head of state should not publish his memoirs while in office. Political parties are reluctant to criticise him because he is the constitutional head, as much theirs as that of those who elected him. Pranab Mukherjee has violated the demand of office by publishing his memoirs when he is still the President of India.

Before reading his autobiography, I imagined that Mukherjee would explain how he was wrong in becoming Sanjay Gandhi's Man Friday. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's son, Sanjay, literally ran the government. Shockingly, Mukherjee has praised him. "Sanjay was clear in his thinking and forthright in expression," wrote Mukherjee.

The President should know that Sanjay destroyed the institutions and imposed his personal rule in a democratic polity. Although he had not won even a municipal election, Sanjay administered the country, a job entrusted to Indira Gandhi when the nation returned her to power.

Mukherjee was the Commerce Minister in her cabinet. Still he was at the beck and call of Sanjay Gandhi. Mukherjee should have explained in his memoirs why he was at the end

of Sanjay's telephonic call. Was it the lure of office or did he fear detention without trial?

I, for one, went straight to the index to locate the chapter on the emergency. To my horror, I found that the word 'E' was missing. I thought that the emergency must have been discussed under some other head. But I was disappointed to find that Mukherjee preferred to skip the traumatic experience the nation had for almost 22 months.

The Turbulent Years, as he captioned his biography, has mentioned even small events but not the emergency. Today, the people are quiet or reluctant to say. But posterity will not be burdened by his office. He can still explain and bring out the third volume to do so. By keeping quiet, he is only hurting himself.

Even on the demolition of the Babri masjid, Mukherjee spares the then Prime Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao, by saying that he was at fault. Narasimha Rao connived at the demolition. He sat at the *puja* (prayer) at home when the demolition started and opened his eyes only when the masjid was demolished to the last brick. Madhu Limaye, a socialist

leader, told me that Narasimha Rao knew about the “conspiracy” beforehand and did nothing to stop its execution.

Mukherjee may have known what Narasimha Rao told us, senior journalists, that the small temple which had come up overnight at the Babri masjid site “would not be there for long.” The mandir is still there. Had Mukherjee felt so strong about the issue, he would have probably said so. It would have retrieved the image of India. The tolerant country would not have got the tag of intolerance which has not rubbed off even after some 24 years.

Mukherjee was taken aback when he learnt from the daughter-in-law of Kamalapati Tripathi, a Congress leader, that he had been expelled for anti-party activities for six years. Mukherjee even started a party of his own when he was dropped from the government by Rajiv Gandhi.

Subsequently, when he regretted his mistake he was made the president of the West Bengal Congress Committee. Strangely, Rajiv Gandhi blessed Ashok Sen’s tirades against Mukherjee. Sen was also from West Bengal. Mukherjee did not emulate the example of R.K. Dhawan, Indira Gandhi’s trusted private secretary of 22 years and had also been summarily dismissed. Dhawan preferred to withdraw from public life. However, Mukherjee stayed in politics.

Since the Congress was still riding the wave of *garibi hatao* (oust poverty), Union Carbide was nationalized. Mukherjee was at odd with the party because he criticised the economic policy. He wrote: “Union Carbide is a big multinational. Nationalizing

it would be compared with the nationalization of Coca Cola and seen as a mistake. Nationalisation will discourage future investments into India. As Finance Minister, I have tried to woo investors, NRIs, etc. This will be a huge setback...”

His narratives remind me of President Giani Zail Singh who, too, fell from the grace of Indira Gandhi. But she was helpless because George Fernandes, a socialist leader, had appealed to the President to try Indira Gandhi for having imposed the emergency. Zail Singh told me that he would have done it but being a Sikh, he would have been singled out for taking revenge for the Operation Blue Star when she sent the Indian forces into the Golden Temple.

Despite the deliberate slight to Giani Zail Singh, he remained loyal to the Congress Party and made the broadcast to defend the government on Operation Blue Star. He told me then that he would have become another Maharaja Ranjit Singh if he had defied the government. The Sikh community, he thought, would have hailed him. But, as he told me, he did not do so because it would have adversely affected his country.

Things had come to such a pass between Rajiv Gandhi and Zail Singh that the former did not allow the President to undertake officials tour to South Africa. Mukherjee was then so close to Rajiv Gandhi that the Prime Minister took his advice and felt justified when Mukherjee endorsed Rajiv Gandhi’s decision.

One strongly feels about the omission of such developments in Mukherjee’s book. He knew too much but he has told very little. To that extent Mukherjee

has neither helped himself nor the Congress party. Posterity may feel that Mukherjee has concealed more than what he has revealed in his memoirs. After all, he was privy to all government decisions, many of which were controversial and required to be told in perspective.

One of them is the imposition of the emergency. Whatever has been published so far does not justify such a step. Was Indira Gandhi’s unseating by the Allahabad High Court the real reason or the countrywide demonstrations by opposition parties? Mukherjee has failed to make the nation wiser.

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The 2016-17 Budget: Business as usual

P. Sankara Narayana

Even before Arun Jaitley completed his budget speech, Modi's megaphones went to town declaring the budget as a historic pro-rural and pro-farmer Budget. But the facts are different. It is the same old Manmohanomics wine served in a new Modinomics bottle. It is nothing but an image makeover by projecting the budget as a pro-farmer one, very generous with words and precariously stingy with funds.

Modi Sarkar has once again established itself firmly as a Suit Boot Ki Sarkar. Funda is straight away borrowed from the UPA. Tap the poor to pat the rich. Let us go back to the Economic Survey presented before the budget to grasp the fundamentals of Modinomics.

India's rich were fed off subsidies worth over Rs. one lakh crore in 2015-16 that were meant for the poor. This figure only considered the subsidies on six commodities, two public utilities — the Railways and electricity — and one small savings scheme, the Public Provident Fund. From the subsidised kerosene, the non-poor were benefited nearly by 50%. In respect of subsidies given for Electricity, LPG, Railway fare, Petrol & Diesel and Gold, the non-poor ineligibles were immensely benefited respectively by 84%, 91%, 92%, 96% and 98%.

The tax structure has resulted in aviation fuel being cheaper per litre than petrol and diesel. Aviation fuel is taxed at about 20%, while diesel and petrol are taxed at about 55%

and 61%. The real consumers of aviation fuel are those who travel by air, who essentially are the well-off. The rich consume 98 per cent of the gold in the country, and yet gold is taxed at only 1-1.6%. Commodities that are primarily consumed by the rich have a lower tax rate. This is the guiding principle adopted in the 2016-17 budget.

Tapping the wretched

Special Component Plan (SCP) for the Scheduled Caste and Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) for the Scheduled Tribe are components of union budget, which are in effect since 1979-80 with provision for population-proportionate allocation for their welfare and development with specific focus on individual, family and hamlet. As per norms, 16.6% for SCP and 8.6% for TSP (over the Plan Budget amount) are to be allocated in the budget.

But the finance minister's allocations for SCP & TSP are 7.06% (16.6% due) and 4.36% (8.6% due) respectively of the Plan Budget of Rs. 5,50,010 crore. Against the total amount of Rs. 1,38,603 to be allocated for SCP & TSP, the actual amount allocated is Rs 62,838 crore. The deficit works out to Rs 75,765 crore. In comparison with the Revised Budget Estimate for 2015-16, the deficit in the 2016-17 budget is increased by Rs 11,149 crore. Virtually this amount of Rs. 75,765 crore is a shameless thieving from the poorest people of the land, a sure sign of a Suit Boot Ki Sarkar and a carbon copy of the notorious neo-liberal Manmohanomics.

Sadly, the government does not seem to have learned that investing in the social sectors is not about the "welfarism" that it seems to detest, but about creating a pathway for inclusive and sustainable growth. So, its attitude remains miserly, dishing out little portions of money in dribbles that are nowhere near enough to provide even the minimum in terms of decent and good quality delivery of nutrition, health and education services.

Healthcare

The very essential aspect of health which sucks a large amount of money is also left dependent on health insurance schemes. The budget for this year for the National Health Mission is Rs. 19,037 crores, which is almost the same as last year. Along with inadequate investments in health care, it is also disturbing that the entire strategy of this government for improving access to health care seems to be based on provision of insurance for a few rather than provision of universal and free health services. Such an approach will only benefit the private sector (insurance companies as well as health care providers) and there are serious doubts as to how effective it can be in reducing the burden of health expenditure on people. Similar schemes had already failed miserably in several states.

The NSS data shows that more than 70% of spells of ailment were treated in the private sector. This high dependence on the private sector has been mainly because of poor access to public health services

and neo-liberal policies that allowed the unregulated growth of private provision of health care since the 1980s. India is amongst the countries that spend the least on health care with a public spending of 0.24% of GDP on healthcare compared to 3% in China and 8% in the UK. Successive governments and expert panels have recommended that at least 2.5% to 3% of GDP must be devoted to public expenditure on health.

Education

Probably for the first time in the history of the budget, elementary education simply has been glossed over. The budget speech by finance minister made a reference to primary education that was not just only factually incorrect - India has *not* achieved universalisation in primary education, as claimed by him - but it did not even include the budgetary allocation the government plans to make to this sector. Instead, Jaitley moved swiftly to higher education, for which we are told Rs. 1000 crore has been put aside for its financing.

Budget documents, however, reveal that the allocation for school education is **up by a meagre Rs. 1367.5 crores** from the RE of 2015-16. The demand for grants in 2016-17 for school education by the ministry of HRD was Rs. 63,826.7 crores, but only Rs. 43,554 crores has been allocated by the finance ministry – a whopping shortfall of 20,273 crores! However, for higher education the demand for grants has been met by the increase in allocation this year, indicating a clear shift in priority towards higher education.

It is not surprising that for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, which is the government's vehicle for fulfilling

its constitutional obligation under the Right to Education Act, the allocation has gone up by a negligible Rs. 500 crores (even less if compared to the RE). The allocation to the higher education sector thus registers an increase of 13.5% from last year's RE, while school education shows a negligible increase of 3.24%, which if adjusted does not even cover the inflation rate.

Women and children

The worst fate is reserved for women and children, despite the florid concerns expressed in the budget speech. The entire ministry will experience a real cut as the increased allocation does not keep pace with the projected inflation. But worst of all, the allocation for the Integrated Child Development Services programme (which is still not universalized) has actually been cut in nominal terms, from Rs. 15,394 crore to Rs. 14,000 crore. As states are struggling to find ways of even paying the anganwadi workers and helpers who are the backbone of the programme, it is terrible to think what will happen if such a stringent cut is actually implemented.

On food, there is an estimated reduction in budget by nearly Rs 5000 cr. The budget estimate puts the bill at Rs 134835 cr against Rs 139419 cr in the RE of current year. Despite the pompous claims of a gigantic push in infrastructure, capital expenditure in 2015-16 was lower than the budgeted and is proposed to be kept at almost same level in 2016-17 – implying a reduction in real terms and as a share of GDP from 1.8 to 1.6%. While budget envisages 11% hike in total expenditure, the capital expenditure that creates assets is enhanced only by 4%.

Space does not permit me to delve deeply on the pathetic budgetary allocation for achieving the PM's promise to free rural India from open defecation. It was promised on Oct 2 2014 that the whole of rural households will have toilets by 2019. Petty allocations made in 2014-15 and 2015-16 budgets were mockery of the PM's pet scheme. If you look at the present allocation of Rs 9500 crore against the total requirement of Rs. one lakh crore for Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, the goal cannot be achieved even after a couple of decades. Less we say about the provision of safe drinking water the better.

Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme

Jaitley proudly declared that he has increased the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme allocation to the highest ever level of Rs. 38,500 crore. But that is false, as the spending under this head reached Rs. 38,552 crore in 2013-14. At only 0.25% of GDP, this would also be much lower than the 0.59% that was achieved in 2009-10. And this also conceals the arrears that must be paid by the centre for this programme. As many as 21 states are still waiting for the money they have already spent that the central government has yet to pay them for the current year, so the final allocation will be around Rs. 6,500 crore less if that is accounted for.

Patting the Suited-Booted

FM Jaitley said the global economy was in serious turmoil and did not appear to be set to emerge from it anytime soon. With scope for exports being limited, the budget was a direction to the economy to generate domestic demand, which would generate employment and growth. However,

the FM enhanced indirect taxes and reduced the purchasing power of common people, dampening demand. Meanwhile, direct tax proposals will lead to a revenue loss of Rs1060 crore, a petty gain to the rich in comparison with the mega bumper lottery called 'Revenue Foregone'.

While the Government tried to raise resources by taxing the poor and the middle classes more, it failed to take measures to control the Revenues Foregone. In 2015-16, the centre lost the potential tax revenue of Rs 6.11 lakh crore owing to exemptions, concessions and rebate given to a section of tax payers, particularly rich corporates. This whopping concession for creating a jobless wonder growth amounts to more than a third of the budget estimate.

This was an increase of Rs 56779 crore over the previous fiscal. Earlier called "Revenue foregone" and now renamed "Revenue Impact of Tax Incentives" by the Modi Government, it is indirect subsidy to the preferred taxpayers. This figure does not include export promotion-related concession which amounts to Rs.50938 crore.

The corporate world has on an average received Rs 70 crore every hour (or Rs 1674 crore every day) in write-offs on direct corporate income tax, excise and customs, and that for eleven years running. It's tucked away at the very rear of the budget document - a seemingly innocuous annexure -it's title, though, is disarmingly honest: 'Statement of Revenue Foregone.'

But budgets, only started carrying that annexure a few years ago, and we only have the data from

2005-06. In these eleven years, the corporate *karzamaafi* amounted to Rs 48.3 lakh-crore. Nine were UPA years averaging an annual dole of Rs 4.05 lakh crore. It is an average annual dole of Rs 5.9 lakh crore for the years 2014-15 and 2015-16. Easily Modinomics defeated Manmohanomics in the LalaSeva. These are the same Lalas who owe 75% of NPAs of public sector banks amounting to 7 lakh crore. Govindacharyaji, how accurately you called the fight between Congress and BJP a shadow boxing!

Under these circumstances, to boost revenue the budget has announced an aggressive disinvestment of the public sector to the tune of Rs56,500 crore for 2016-17. It amounts to selling family silver to meet current expenditure. Strangely the finance minister does not want to sell the shares of union Government held in Axis Bank, ITC and L&T amounting to nearly Rs 60,000 crore. Why and for whose convenience, corruption-free Modi Sarkar?

Agriculture, farmers' welfare and rural sector

How much is the actual increase in the total allocation to agriculture in the 2016-17 budget? This year's budget markets itself as a pro-poor and pro-farmer budget? Ashok Gulati, chair professor for agriculture at ICRIER, tells us why this budget is insignificant for reducing farmers' distress, in spite of all the tall talks:

"The RE of last year for the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare was about Rs. 16,000 crore. This year they have budgeted about Rs. 36,000 crore. So if you look at that, it appears as though there is a 127% increase, and therefore everybody jumps to the conclusion

that it is wonderful. But then you look into the details, the Rs 15,000 crore interest subsidy on short-term credit is actually a transfer (which was Rs 13,000 crore earlier) from the Department of Financial Services. It is not really an addition at all. So the increase is actually very limited. Also, last year the budgeted amount was higher than the actual spending, so we don't know how much will be spent.

"The actual allocation to the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers' Welfare has gone from about Rs. 16,000 crore to about Rs. 20,000 crore. That's a Rs 4,000 crore increase compared to last year's RE. This is peanuts, it really doesn't mean anything. It is a very marginal percentage point change; not a game changer. The agrarian crisis is much deeper than that, farmers' distress is very acute. But people in Delhi don't care as long as food is available and prices don't shoot up. They feel that everything in the country is fine".

Yet the finance minister claims the above three (Agriculture, farmers' welfare and rural sector) are among the nine pillars of his historic budget. Rural folk are managing to keep their body and soul moving, in spite of the govt's of all hues and urban vultures, for all these seven decades in free India. But we can't live without them even for a day. Out of the 880 million rural population, about 660 million (50% of Bharat Mata's uncared for children) live with an average per capita monthly income of Rs. 1260.

Another govt data tells us that the average income a farmer earns from farming activities, including what he keeps for his family's consumption, is Rs 20,000 a year in 17 states across the country. This means the

monthly income of a farmer in these states is a paltry 1,666 rupees. These being the bare facts, broadcasting tall claims (factually bogus) are nothing but exhibition of urban arrogance. Now, put yourself in this situation. If you were a farmer and made only 1,666 rupees a month, what would you like to do?

But Jaitley said, “We need to think beyond food security and give back to farmers a sense of income security.” But all he promised was to double farmers’ income by 2022 — five years away. He wants the farmers to wait five years for their income to rise to 3,332 rupees a month, if the promise is realised. But the reality is, by 2022, adjusting for inflation, the doubled income would be equivalent to what a farmer makes now. This is the income security promised by an unelected tyranny!

Doubled from what level? Last year’s level which is already the second drought and farmers’ incomes have crashed, or the last year of the UPA? And is he talking in terms of nominal or real income? In nominal terms everything goes up in five years, everybody’s income doubles in about 7 years anyway, it’s the impact of inflation. What do they have to do in this? Everything adjusts on its own in that amount of time.

Ashok Gulati observes, “But if they mean it in real terms, and are able pull it off in 5-7 years, I will be impressed. For that they need to get a strategy in place, what is their strategy? The way they have phrased it now is only lip services, only wishes. For many crops at the moment, the cost of production is higher than the MSP. Is that what the MSP is supposed to be doing?”

Rs 5,000-10,000 crores allocation for irrigation is not going to solve any problems. You need to put in Rs 40,000-50,000 crores every year for five years. Only then can you tap the potential of this country’s agriculture. Once irrigation is in place, it is also easier for farmers to adopt better seeds and fertilisers. It is not possible to control productivity without water, and wherever irrigation goes, productivity goes up by 70 to 80%.

But the current crisis is not an outcome of low agricultural productivity. Farmers are aware of how to increase crop productivity, but if this is not backed by remunerative prices, they will continue to suffer. Take for instance Punjab. Punjab’s farmers produce 4,500 kg/hectare of wheat and 6,000 kg/hectare of paddy — a very high crop productivity indeed — in an area that has 99% assured irrigation. All development indices projected by the government in this year’s budget, including expanding irrigation, already exist in Punjab.

Yet, according to calculations by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices, the net income from a hectare of cultivating wheat and paddy (the usual cropping pattern followed in a year) is about 36,000 rupees, which is a monthly income of only Rs 3,000. Compare this to the basic monthly salary of Rs 18,000 a peon will get after the Seventh Pay Commission is implemented.

In 1970, the minimum support price (MSP) for wheat given to farmers was Rs 76 per quintal. By 2015, the MSP for wheat had increased a mere 19 times, to Rs 1,450 per quintal. In the same period, the basic salary (plus

dearness allowance) of government employees has increased by as much as 150 times, for college teachers and university professors by as much as 170 times, for school teachers by up to 320 times and for top corporate executives by a whopping 1,000 times.

While the salaries of employees rose phenomenally over the past 45 years, farmers were starved of their legitimate dues. If only the wheat price had been raised by the same yardstick, perhaps by 100 times, the MSP for wheat would have been at least 7,600 rupees per quintal.

A common argument is that if wheat prices go up, food inflation will skyrocket. Thus farmers have been penalised merely to keep food inflation in check. Protecting the poor from high prices shouldn’t be the farmers’ responsibility; that is up to the government. In the effort to protect the poor, you are impoverishing the farmer. These are the steps that are needed if the government is serious about increasing farmers’ incomes. This is the reason why the government has backtracked on its promise to provide farmers a 50% profit over the cost of production.

Elsewhere in the media, pundits have been pouring oil into the raging farm fire by their utterances that ‘this budget has allocated a lion’s share to the farm sector’. A few thousand crores in any sense of proportion is not a lion’s share. 0.013% of total budget has been allocated for farmers, which is only Rs.700 for each farmer if we look at the population of farmers. What a lion’s share!

Truly the lion’s share of Rs six plus lakh crore (30 % of the total

budget amount of Rs 19,78,060 lakh crore and 110% over the plan budget amount of Rs 5,50,010 lakh crore), as usual, is allocated under the new jumlaified head “Revenue Impact of Tax Incentives”. Beneficiaries are the close friends of the Suit-Boot Ki Sarkar viz., Ambadanis. Another lion’s share of one lakh crore (5% of the total budget) will go to meet out the increased salaries of a select class, called the civil servants.

Another confident assertion from the pundits: “Farm loans have been waived several times in earlier budgets, but that never solved the issue”. I would like to know how many times were farm loans waived in earlier budgets? To my memory, Rs 70,000 crore out of the total farm loan burden of five lakh crore was waived during UPA-I regime. It could never solve the issue because the devil lied elsewhere; that is MSP. Similarly the loan waivers, bail out packages and the mega annual

loot called ‘Revenue Foregone’ in favour of the dollar billionaires had not solved any of the issues of the majority Indians. Why not we advise the govt to stop this day light robbery?

Yet another funny suggestion from the pundits is that MSP is irrelevant in the drought situation. Drought or no drought, MSP for all produce is a *sine qua non* for the survival of the farmers and the sovereignty of Bharat Mata. The country as a whole is not affected by the drought. Why starve all the farmers by denying MSP? MSP is graciously recommended by the pundits only when there is a distress sale. May I know when was the last time private traders offered a better price for the produce in comparison with the miserly state-administered MSP? And how many crops are included in the MSP bracket? Even if by accident the market price shoots up (very very rare), the

govt immediately intervenes with lightning alacrity to allow massive imports to protect its favoured citizens.

Today on an average 52 farmers are ending their life each day. The pundits suggest the govt’s efforts will definitely benefit the farm sector in the long term. How long will it take to reach the LONG term? In the meanwhile, can we close our eyes to the dance of death in the farm fields? In contrast, corporate sector and civil servants are scores of times better placed than the farmers.

Why not we, the conscious citizens, demand the govt to stop the mega freebies showered on these privileged children of Bharat Mata and divert that whopping sum towards the farm sector for its and our own survival?

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Gender concerns in The Union budget 2016-17

Prof. Vibhuti Patel

The Railway Budget and the Union Budget for the financial year 2016-17 were presented on 25-2-2016 and 29-2-2016 respectively. The Union Budget 2016-17 has allocated Rs. 90625 crores for gender concerns in different ministries. But it does not show any increase in the “Gender budget” i.e., the financial allocation that directly benefits women and girls with budget allocation of 4.58% of the total. The revised estimate in the Union Budget for 2015-16 is 4.55 per cent of the total allocations and the financial allocations to the Ministry of Women and Child Development

(MWCD) were slashed from Rs. 21194 crores to Rs. 10382 crores. Due to pressure from the MWCD, the revised budget was increased to Rs. 17352 crores. The current budget has made financial allocation of Rs. 17408 crores to MWCD.

Cooking Gas:

The Union Budget allocates Rs. 2000 crores to provide the BPL families with a cooking gas connection at a subsidized rate so that poor women will not have to use Chulha for cooking resulting in inhalation of carbon monoxide, major cause of their respiratory tract

infections. Gender economists have demanded that the LPG connection must be in the name of women members of poor households. The budget also promises to continue the Scheme for at least two more years to cover a total of 5 crore BPL households. This scheme may be boon to ‘neo-middle class’ but majority of the toiling poor women cannot afford to buy ‘subsidized’ cooking gas @ Rs. 600/- per cylinder.

Predicament of women Farmers

Women farmers and cultivators are the backbone of agricultural production in India. Majority of

agricultural laborers are women. In agricultural sector also the allocation at Rs 20400 crores is lower as compared to 2014-15 in which the allocation was Rs. 22309 crores. The current budget makes a non-plan allocation of Rs.15000 crores to the Ministry of Agriculture to transfer funds to compensate commercial banks for providing subsidized credit to agriculture.

The budget permits 100 per cent FDI in rural markets. Entry of corporate sector into agrarian marketing has already made condition of farmers precarious as a result of their monopolistic control where large number of poor sellers face handful of buyers. Desperate farmers will have to distress sell their products to the multinational corporations.

Several states in our country are facing severe drought resulting in agrarian unemployment. In this context, increase of MGNAREGA allocation by 7.7% is highly inadequate.

Start Up India Scheme

The Union Budget has provided an outlay of Rs. 500 crores to promote entrepreneurship among SC/ST and women. Each nationalized bank will have to facilitate at least two projects per bank branch, one for SC/ST and one for women entrepreneurs. This scheme claims to benefit at least 2.5 lakh SC/ST/ women entrepreneurs. Quarterly social audit is a must for this scheme or else like 'Nirbhaya fund', this allocation will also remain unspent.

Railway Budget:

Railway Budget has promised a 33% sub-quota for women under all reserved categories. Looking at increasing attacks on women commuters, the railways need to allocate more funds for security

and safety of women on the railway platforms and in the trains.

National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW):

The Gender Budget Statement has increased MNEW's allocation to Rs. 50 crores which is double as compared to the previous year. The budget has not taken into serious consideration the violence against women that has escalated many fold. While schemes to combat trafficking and empowering adolescent girls have received increased funds, the schemes meant for implementation of PCPNDT act, the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act have not received much allocation. Corpus of Rs. 3000 crores under Nirbhaya Fund has largely remained unutilized. On March 8, 2016, the Union Budget 2015-16 had allocated Rs. 653 for the Scheme for the Safety of Women in Public Road Transport with an objective to ensure safety of women and girl-child in public transport by monitoring location of public road transport vehicles to provide immediate assistance in minimum response time to the victims in distress. The proposed scheme under the "Nirbhaya Fund" envisages setting up of a National Emergency Response System with a control room under the overall control of Ministry of Home Affairs, which will receive alerts from distressed women and take action on them. Under the scheme for giving grants to states for setting up driving schools, preference is given to proposals for driving schools for women. Similarly, 'Beti Padhao, Beti Bachao' scheme was announced with the goal of improving efficiency in delivery services for women. Proposal submitted by different ministries, local self-government bodies and state governments under these schemes are gathering dust and funds have remained largely unutilized.

Social Sector:

Subsidized education and health are most beneficial to women and girls. The Union Budget, 2016-17 provides Rs. 40000 crores for school education which is slightly higher than last year's allocation of Rs. 39039 crores and higher education has received Rs 16500 crores this year as compared to Rs. 15855 crores. Both are grossly inadequate. This will result in intensification of privatization and commercialization of schools and higher education.

The same is happening with respect to health sector-withdrawal of the state from public health to promote private health sector. Except for 3000 stores for distribution of subsidized medicine, the budget subsidizes private insurance companies and pharmaceutical industries in the name of public-private partnership.

Flagship program such as Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), like last year, has faced cuts in allocations. In 2015-16 the budgetary allocation was merely Rs. 8000 crores but the actual disbursement of funds was Rs. 15394 crores. Nutrition for pregnant women and children in the 0-6 age group will suffer as the Union Budget 2016-17, allocates only Rs.14000 crores. Even the Mid-Day Meal Program will also face financial crunch as the allocation is merely Rs. 9700 crores, while inflationary prices of food items have increased drastically. In spite of increase in the workload, the foot soldiers of ICDS and National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) don't even get minimum wages; leave aside pension, social security benefits and health insurance.

Public distribution system:

Instead of direct distribution of food grains and essential items,

the budget paves way for cash transfer in PDS through provision of automation facilities for 3 lakh Fair Price Shops, ATMs and mini-ATMs in rural areas linked to Adhar. The budget does not promise price control for essential commodities to ease poor women's woes.

Trend analysis of allocation to social sector in the pre-1991 and post-1991 Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) phases has revealed that poor women have suffered the most due to drastic budgetary cuts in the Public Distribution System and public health, safe public transport & child care facilities, food security, drinking water and sanitation. There is no gender mainstreaming with respect to safety of women in the budgets of Local Self Government Bodies.

Digital India Scheme

The Union Budget promises a lot thro' digital India scheme but there is no financial allocation for specific programs and schemes for digital empowerment of girls and women.

Smart Cities:

The Union Budget, 2016-17 has given priority to formation of 100 smart cities in terms of high allocation for physical infrastructure, IT based and cyber technology based governance. Smart cities have to be Safe cities. Town planners, policy makers and budget experts need to do gender budgeting to ensure women-friendly civic infrastructure, water, sanitation, health care, safe transport, public toilets, help lines, skill development for crisis management and, safety at work place. While making budgets for social defense services, consideration must be given to safety of girls and women in schools and colleges in terms of prevention of child sexual abuse through public education and counseling facilities,

separate toilets for girls and boys in schools, legal literacy on POCSO Act, 2012 and Prevention of Sexual Harassment At Workplace Act, 2013. Provision must be made to have special cells in the police department to take action against display of pornographic images, SMS messages, cybercrimes that victimize young girls at public places or in public transport- buses, local trains, rickshaws and taxis.

There is need to integrate safety of women as a major concern in flagship centrally sponsored schemes such as Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), PMSSY, NUHM which are supposed to have 30% of funds as Women's Component.

Revenue Generation

Several state governments have sent GR regarding allocation of 5% of total revenues for women and children. This should be increased to 10%. Kerala has done this. Moreover, urban local self-government (LSGs) bodies can raise revenues by heavy taxes on Tobacco, alcohol, private vehicles and entertainment industry. Some amount of fine collected for causing damage to environment (introduction of Green Tax), high speed driving, wrong parking and breaking rules can also be used for welfare of women and children. Surcharge, earmarked charge for specific purposes such as Education Cess-2 % of salary, income tax for disaster management have raised revenues for urban LSGs. In Maharashtra, transport cess was imposed at the time of Bangladesh war in 1971 and later on was diverted to EGS kitty.

The Centrally Sponsored Schemes are meant to have national focus on poverty alleviation or welfare. Fund sharing pattern between centre and state has changed from 75:25 from

60:40 and many poor states are not able to contribute their share, as a result most of the anti-poverty programs and flagship schemes are not fully implemented or are totally not implemented. By putting the onus on state governments to provide for social sector, the Centre is washing off its hands with respect to the needs of SC, ST, women and minorities.

Gender sensitive budget demands re-prioritization of financial allocations by urban and rural Local self-government bodies in favor of

- Working women's hostels, crèches, cheap eating facilities, public toilets
- Women friendly and SAFE public transport- local trains, Metro, buses
- Housing- Subsidized housing for single/ deserted/ divorced/ widowed women
- Nutrition- Strengthening PDS and nutritional mid-day meals
- Health- Abolition of user fees for BPL population, one stop crisis centre in public hospital
- for women/girls survivors of violence linked with shelter homes
- Skill training centers for women and tailor made courses
- Safe, efficient and cheap public Transport-bus, train, metro
- Water- Safe drinking water in the community centers
- Waste Management - Technological upgradation- Occupational health & safety of recycling
- workers/rag pickers
- Proper electrification in the communities
- Multipurpose Community centers, half-way homes for elderly and mentally disturbed
- women.

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Certainly Not A Socialist Budget

Bharat Dogra

Although the Finance Minister repeatedly emphasized the commitment of his government to the poor and vulnerable people of India and more particularly to farmers while presenting the Union Budget for 2016-17, this is a case of rhetoric not matching the reality, or more specifically the stated commitments not being backed by actual allocations.

This budget has been praised as a pro-farmer budget mainly on the basis of a big increase in the budget for the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers' Welfare. However this increase is mainly on the basis of a change in accounts keeping only, as the subsidy on interest to farmers which was earlier shown under the Ministry of Finance has now been shifted and attributed to the Ministry of Agriculture. If this amount is deducted then actually there is only a modest increase in the budget of the Department of

Agriculture.

There is only a very marginal increase in the budget for MNREGA and no announcement for separate drought relief works either. Both are needed keeping in view the fact that about 300 districts in the country are affected by drought. In this situation while there is clearly a need for increasing the budget for nutrition programs, the budget for ICDS has been further cut compared to the revised estimate for the previous year.

While it was important to raise overall social sector allocations significantly to make up for previous cuts this has not happened and there are at best only relatively modest increases here and there while in some areas even more cuts.

No significant effort has been made to increase direct taxes with the result that the share of indirect

taxes in total taxes has, been rising which is more burdensome for the poorer sections. Also due to this, adequate resources could not become available for pro-poor and pro-farmer schemes and programs in line with the declared intentions and aims of the Budget. Hence despite the recognition of the urgency of the needs of severely drought affected areas in the budget speech no announcement was made of special drought relief works which can be more effective in making prompt wage payments.

The National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights has pointed out in a review of allocations under the Scheduled Caste Sub Plan that instead of earmarking 16.6 percent of the funds, only 7 per cent have been earmarked. Similarly in the case of the Tribal Sub Plan only 4.36 per cent have been earmarked in place of the requirement of 8.6 per cent.

Budget: Modi's new found love for farmers is as misleading as his nationalism

Just as Modi's RSS inspired nationalism is misleading, his love for villages and farmers is also misleading. The government, which since the past two years has been hell-bent on killing farming, is claiming to be their saviour in the year 2016-17 budget. This is Modi's filmy formula to win the faith of the farmers – 'first send in the goons to attack and then pretend to be the hero and

save the day'. This government which is trying to sow the crop of social tension, fertilize it with the make-believe love for farmers, is inspired by the intention of increasing its political harvest. The farmers need to understand this truth and the intellectuals who call this budget farmer-friendly also need to rethink their contentions. The government which primarily supports big

corporate houses cannot work towards strengthening the farmers-labourers-artisans-small traders-small scale industrialists.

The draught since the last three years has broken the back of farming and its growth rate dropped to 1.1 percent. This is why there was a hue and cry everywhere. Its heat was felt by the Modi government in three

places especially. First the violent reservation movement of the Patidars in Gujarat, after that the defeat in Bihar assembly elections and then the recent movement by Jats in Haryana demanding reservation which engulfed the whole state in its flames and lead to caste-based riots. This meant that the farming castes were getting disillusioned with the Modi government and that is why he did three huge rallies in Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Bareilly and after this made an urbane and corporate supporting former finance minister Cidambaram to sing the paeans of the villages.

In the budget, the government has shown a dream of doubling the income of the farmers by the year 2022. Why has the corporate supporting Modi government said this and how are they going to achieve this target? The growth rate of the agricultural sector between 2014-15 and 2015-16 has been from -0.2% to 1.1%. In this scenario, if the income of the farmers is to be doubled, then the growth rate of the agricultural sector has to be taken to 12 %. To achieve this, on the one hand, the productivity of farming will need to be increased and on the other hand, minimum support price will have to be increased. There seems to be no big initiatives on these two fronts in the budget.

It's not clear how much and how long the gain from the Prime Minister's irrigation scheme and the Prime Minister's crop insurance scheme will be. Especially there is no guarantee whether there will be water in the canals for irrigation. On the other hand, there is no guarantee that a majority of the portion of the 5500 crore rupees allotted to the crop insurance

scheme will not go into the pockets of the insurance companies.

The trumpeting of the government that they have doubled the allocation for farming and the farmer's welfare is actually a clever game. First of all, the government has removed the short-term loan interest subsidy from the department of financial services to the agricultural and cooperative department. After this, the agricultural welfare budget, which was reduced from 19,255 crore rupees in 2014-15 to 15,809 crore rupees in 2015-16, has been increased again to its earlier state, i.e. 20,984 rupees. In this way the expenditure of agricultural welfare increased from 15,809 crore rupees to 35,984 crore rupees. By giving 100 percent FDI exemption in agriculture based industries, to increase the investment in farming, the government has directed the neo-liberal economic reforms towards the villages. It remains to be seen how much it helps the rural industry and how much it destroys it? How much money reaches the villagers and how much of it reaches the middlemen?

MGNREGA is in the most ironic situation. The government reached out for help to the same scheme which the Prime Minister himself called an epitome of failure of the UPA government. But the budget of the MGNREGA being 38,500 crore rupees is not a miracle. This is because the budget of MGNREGA in 2011 reached 39,377 crore rupees which the NDA government reduced to 29,436 crore rupees in the financial year 2015. If the government is not returning to the *status quo*, it is nothing new in fact it is only trying to rectify its mistakes.

This budget does not seem to be taking any action against the capitalists who take loans from Public Sector Banks and devour them. It is ironic that the finance minister says a lot of big things but the bill presented last year about the bankruptcy of banks (Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code Bill) is still pending and even this year, there is merely an assurance that it will be passed. There is no concrete initiative in that direction. Export has been adversely affected because of the global slowdown. It is so much that even the depreciating rupee cannot make up for it.

On the urban front, there is one decision which is certainly laudable and that is the levying of a surcharge of 10 percent on those earning more than 10 lakh rupees dividend. This noiselessly done arrangement will ensure good earnings for the government and will facilitate in reducing the revenue deficit. But on the other hand, the government which claimed to put in 15 lakh rupees in every citizen's account by bringing in black money from overseas has given a tight slap to fiscal prudence by giving the inland black marketers the option of converting their black money into white by depositing 45 percent. Along with this, the working class is troubled by the taxation of the EPF interest. This is the reason why some have commented that this is a case of relaxation for the criminals and a slap to the hard workers. Due to the widespread criticism on this front, the government is getting ready to retract.

Abhijit Vaid
General Secretary,
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Beyond Kanhaiya Kumar

Is this the student awakening that has been a long time coming?

Kalpana Sharma

(Something really unusual and encouraging has been happening in the last days. Apart from JNU, which has been in ferment, young people in many other parts of India seem to be waking up and speaking out as never before. I have just returned after a full day surrounded by enthusiastic, intense youngsters who hung on to every word spoken by a range of speakers about secularism, communalism, democracy, the media, and history. The meeting was organized by a small group who call themselves the Mumbai Collective. I can't remember such an electric atmosphere in this city in a long time. Keeping my fingers firmly crossed that this is not a passing phase but part of a deeper churning.)

Kanhaiya Kumar's words, as he delivered his passionate speech in Jawaharlal Nehru University hours after being released on bail following 23 days in custody, will continue to reverberate in our ears for some time to come. "We want freedom in India, not from India," he said as he went on to define what he meant by that freedom, that "azadi".

Kumar left those who listened to him at the venue, and on television, speechless. He probably left his detractors, who have called him "anti-national", sleepless. For what Kumar said on the night of March 3, and what he represents, cannot be ignored anymore.

But is this the story of only one exceptional person, a young man not just with admirable oratorical skills but also commitment, perspective, passion, courage and insight? Or does this represent an awakening among India's students and youth, a stirring that has been a long time coming?

Rise and spread

What began in September 2014 in Jadavpur University in

Kolkata in the form of a demand to investigate an incident of sexual harassment, spread to the Film and Television Institute of India in Pune in June 2015, when the students went on strike against the appointment of Gajendra Chauhan to head, the institution.

Like the "infection" the Delhi High Court judge who granted Kumar bail fears, it then spread to the Hyderabad Central University in August 2015, culminating in the tragic death of Rohith Vemula in January this year. And then on February 9, JNU became "infected" as students demanded their right to protest and were instead charged with sedition and being "anti-national".

Since the arrest of Kanhaiya Kumar on February 12 on charges of sedition and the subsequent arrest of two other JNU students, Umar Khalid and Anirban Bhattacharya, students from many more universities across India have come out in their support. This kind of solidarity among students across universities has not been seen in recent times.

These protests could, of course, subside. The majority of students might decide to get back to classes, and to worrying about their careers. But the chances that this "infection" will spread are greater because the JNU students and the Dalit students from Hyderabad Central University have widened the ambit of their protests. It is not just freedom of expression that they are demanding; they are equally passionate about freedom from caste. It is this combination that must worry the current dispensation at the Centre, or at least should worry them.

Past passion

You would have to delve quite far into your memory to remember a time when Indian universities were in ferment. But there was such a time. If you were in any university or college in the 1960s or 1970s, student politics was alive. There were passionate debates about the country's future, about injustice and about freedom. There were Gandhians, Socialists, Communists, Maoists. I can't remember too many Sanghis in those days.

Whether you were politically inclined or not, expressing your views on everything and anything was the norm. And no one was afraid. There was no one telling you what was allowed or not allowed. And there was certainly no one accusing anyone of being “anti-national”, not even if you believed that “power came out of the barrel of a gun”.

The late 1960s and early 1970s saw the Naxalbari movement at one end, and Jayprakash Narayan’s call for Total Revolution at the other. Both attracted educated young people, including students who left their studies to go and work in the villages. There were study circles and intense debates. Many young people who followed JP dropped their surnames so as not to identify with any caste. Despite opposition from parents, young people were giving up jobs, education, comfortable homes to follow their convictions. They did not want to wait, to be safe. They wanted to take risks.

For the young people who were politicized in the early 1970s, the declaration of Emergency by Indira Gandhi in 1975 was an inflexion point; it confirmed their worst fears about the Indian state. When the Congress Party president DK Barooah declared that “India was Indira and Indira was India”, the frame within which rights, such as freedom of expression, could operate had been set. If you were critical of Indira or her policies, you were against India, hence anti-national. In today’s context, this sounds creepily similar.

Lessons not learnt

Although there have been other galvanizing events that have

drawn out young people since the end of the Emergency in 1977 and today, I would argue that there has been nothing that has been this widespread. The issue of communalism did bring young people out on the streets after the Babri Masjid demolition in 1992 and the Gujarat violence in 2002. But their participation was not on the scale we have seen today.

Since the 2014 election and the formation of the Narendra Modi government at the Centre, the demand for “azadi”, in the way Kumar describes it, has been spurred because the state now defines what we can say and cannot, what we can do and cannot, what we can eat and cannot, what we can read and cannot. You don’t have to be a student of JNU to understand that this is unacceptable. Young people have always demanded the right to question, to rebel, to choose their own paths. As Kanhaiya Kumar presciently pointed out, the more you push them down, the stronger they will emerge.

This is precisely what has been happening. Instead of recognizing the legitimacy of the demands being made by students on these different campuses, the government has chosen the hammer of “sedition” and the “anti-national” label to knock them down. In turn, it is now facing the ballooning rebellion of students, political and apolitical, who instinctively react against arbitrariness and oppression.

Pertinent reminders

What is particularly pertinent about the struggles of the students in JNU is that they are going beyond demanding freedom of expression. By placing on the same plate caste oppression, these

youth have launched a campaign that has relevance and should have resonance. Relevance because it is unacceptable that in 2016 caste should still be a factor that determines a person’s future in this country, and resonance because in 2014, as Kumar reminded us, 69% of the voters did not vote for Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party. There is a large constituency of people out there who do not subscribe to identity politics and the divisiveness that is being deliberately fueled by this government.

Kumar has also reminded us that there is an India that lies beyond university campuses and television studios. It includes places like his village, where his mother is an anganwadi worker. He is in JNU only because there is a system that accommodates people like him. In those places beyond the reach of the media, what is “India”, what is “the nation”, who is a patriot and who an “anti-national”? Does it really matter?

Listening to Kumar’s passionate speech at JNU, I recalled an incident from 40 years ago. I was meeting students at a village school in Panchgani, western Maharashtra. They were curious about Bombay. Some had heard of it, many had not. They had no idea who was the prime minister of India, or the president.

And then I asked, “Which do you think is the biggest city in India?” In an instant, a little girl dressed in the regulation uniform common in most village schools, with her hair neatly braided into two plaits, raised her hand. “Satara”, she said, with utmost confidence.

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Marathwada Ekal Mahila Parishad

“We should refuse to be cowed down by the wretched customs of looking down upon the single (widows/deserted) women and preventing them from participating in the family functions like marriage, christening the new-born, etc. These women are considered to be inauspicious and cause of pollution. All this is wrong. We are human beings like other married women. We should assert our right to equality that is enshrined in the Constitution” advised Ulka Mahajan, organizer of The Sarvahara Sangathana of Raigad district and a fire-brand activist, while addressing Marathwada Ekal Mahila Parishad at Tuljapur (Dist. Osmanabad, Maharashtra State) on 21st February 2016.

A number of single women like Mira Naikwade, Bhagyashri Ranadive, Ashalata Pande, Drupada Gawali, Archana Waidande, gave vent to their pent up feelings. Every woman wishes that her husband should live long . If, unfortunately, he dies early, why should she be blamed? It is observed that some males are suffering from some incurable diseases much before marriage, but it is kept secret. Or,

these days, many youths are getting addicted to drinking and die either due to the liver failure or in accident caused due to driving while drunk. But the in-laws put blame on the widow. In case of desertion, it is solely the irresponsible behavior of the husband. As one lady put it, he simply deserts or utters “talaq” thrice as if he, after chewing pan, spits out the remains. But the community, instead of punishing him , metes out insulting behavior towards the unfortunate woman. A single woman, having children, has to play the role of both mother and father. But when she goes out to market or office, people throw suspicious glances and indulge in vilification. The society, and men in particular, should give up this kind of attitude and start dealing with single women as normal human beings and treat them as equals.

It has been common experience of widows/deserted women that their parents as well as in-laws don't allow them to give their residential address while applying for a ration card/voter card/Adhar card due to anxiety that she may claim right to property. Ekal (single) women are

facing many hardships like these.

The conference adopted resolutions containing following demands :

Village Panchayat/Nagarpalika/ Municipal Corporations should maintain a separate register of such single women and issue them certificates that should be honoured by all government offices, banks, etc. The latter should not ask as to when the husband died, etc.

Annual income limit for schemes like Sanjay Niradhar, widow pension, etc. be raised from today's Rs. 21,000 to one lakh rupees.

Necessary amendments be effected in relevant laws so that legal matters of single women are disposed off within a period of, say, two years. And Only one appeal be permitted.

Government should take suitable steps so that such women and their children get education and employment.

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Letter to the Editor

This refers to Sri Sandeep Pandey's Article published in 21st February issue of JANATA.

It is not surprising that Mr. Pandey talks about one issue, then hops to another and brings in a third to prove the veracity of his settled position.

He arrives at conclusions simply on the basis of heresy and propaganda , without any effort or reasonable study of facts. Mr.pandey joins the chorus of a vested interest group in challenging the legality and rationale of a Supreme Court order.

He puts up a post facto defence for the hanged terrorist Afzal Guru. He alleges that the trial court, the high court and finally the Supreme Court erred on both facts and Law while convicting Afzal Guru. The same Supreme Court which by the same order, acquitted Gilani (who is now proving to be still active in anti India campaign), has wrongly upheld the conviction of Afzal Guru, argues Pandey .

I am sure a literate person can say such a thing only when he has not read the judgement in question.

I will try to prove my point by giving a pointed answers to issues raised by SandeepPandey.

The Supreme Court admitted that there was no evidence to show that Afzal Guru was a member of any banned organization nor any of the 80 prosecution witnesses said that Afzal was associated with any terrorist organization.

Note: Following text from the judgment on the appeal filed by Afzal confirms that Afzal Guru was a surrendered militant:

“ The only reason, according to learned counsel for the appellants, is that they were really not prepared to make the confession in a Court and, therefore, the investigating authorities found the ingenuity of adding POTA offences at that stage so as to get the confession recorded by a Police officer according to the wishes of the investigators. **It is also submitted that it is highly incredible that Afzal, who is a surrendered militant, and who is alleged to**”

Afzal Guru did not receive a fair trial. He was not allowed to have lawyer of his choice. Neither did the court hear his version.

Note: It is a baseless allegation because nobody can deny the right of the accused to hire his own lawyer. The fact that Afzal and others were represented by two of the senior most and eminent Lawyers of the Supreme Court- Mr. Shanti Bhushan and Mr. Ram Jethmalani , belies the charge Mr. Sandeep Pandey has made.

For in the 107 odd pages of the judgment , the Supreme Court has dealt with every important factor and taken into account the arguments of the counsel for the defendants .The honorable Supreme Court appraised all evidence produced by the prosecution and heard both the parties on questions of Law and also referred to case Laws related to the same.

While holding Afzal Guru guilty as pronounced by all the courts below, the Apex court made the following observations :

“ the circumstances detailed above clearly establish that the appellant Afzal was associated with the deceased terrorists in almost every act done by them in order to achieve the objective of attacking the Parliament House. He established close contacts with

the deceased terrorists , more especially, Mohammed. Short of participating in the actual attack , he did everything to set in motion the diabolic mission. As is the case with most conspiracies , there is and could be no direct evidence of the agreement amounting to criminal conspiracy. However, the circumstances cumulatively considered and weighed , would unerringly point to the collaboration of the accused Afzal with the slain Fidayeen terrorists. The circumstances , if considered together , as it ought to be, establish beyond reasonable doubt that Afzal was a party to the conspiracy and had played an active part in various acts done in furtherance of the conspiracy. **These circumstances can not be viewed in isolation and by no standards of common sense , be regarded as innocuous acts. His conduct and actions antecedent, contemporaneous and subsequent all point to his guilt and are only consistent with his involvement in the conspiracy . Viewed from another angle the court can draw a presumption under section 114 of evidence act having regard to the natural course of events and human conduct that the appellant Afzal had nexus with the conspirators who were killed and all of them together hatched the conspiracy to attack the Parliament House and in that process to use explosives and other dangerous means . We are, therefore, of the view that there is sufficient and satisfactory circumstantial evidence that Afzal was a partner in this conspired crime of enormous gravity.”**

Mr. Sandeep Pandey goes further on sermonizing about freedom of speech, democracy and compares Afzal Guru's hanging with the arrest of JNU students on charges of being anti National. He suggests that the Supreme court while passing the

judgment upholding the sentence of Afzal Guru has committed a greater offence by being anti National than the JNU students! This is preposterous, to say the least.

Mr. Sandeep Pandey trains his guns on the ruling party and its associates and reminds them of the offences committed by them, from killing Gandhi to demolition of Babri Masjid, Samjhauta express blasts and also puts in dock the former Prime Minister Atal Behari Bajpai for Pokharan Nuclear test.

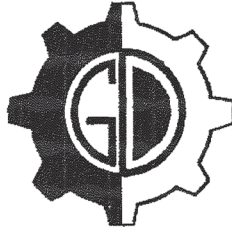
The problem with people like Mr. Pandey is that they do not understand nor respect the legal sanctity of a Supreme Court order. One may choose to disagree with the evidence or legal position or the conclusion of the Supreme Court, but once the order has achieved finality, you can only have an academic debate over the rationale of the judgment and not challenge its validity or legality. Law does not provide any further scope to challenge the highest legal authority of the country . For if it did, every convicted or sentenced person will have equal rights to challenge its authority and not just those chosen by the so called activists.

Every murderer or rapist will sit on dharna against the judgment of the Apex court.

Law may or may not be based on common sense but it can not always be interpreted in a simplistic manner. Evidence, hard logic and objectivity are the pillars erected on the foundation of natural Justice over which the high edifice of jurisprudence rests. Of course, like all man made systems and structures , this may also be imperfect and prone to failure at times.

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No bets on outcome

S. Viswam

Supreme Court Owes An Apology
Kuldip Nayar

Congress-Left A Challenge To Mamata Regime In Bengal
Mrinal K Biswas

Health Sector Needs More Resources
Bharat Dogra

Ambedkar On Bhagat Singh
Anand Teltumbde

To Prevent Suicides By Farmers
Bapu Heddurshetti

Truth Behind Farmers Suicides
Vivekanand Mathane

National Assembly On Common School System And The Judgment Of Allahabad High Court (AIFRTE)

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If there is one phenomenon that always throws up surprises, undoubtedly it is elections. It is only the rash and the adventurous that take bets on the outcome of polls. Even at the risk of being dubbed so, one is tempted to hazard a guess over the result of the polls that have been called to be held in April-May in four states for their respective assemblies, West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Assam and the Union Territory of Puducherry (Pondicherry). The guess is that the status quo will remain barring the possibility of the Congress losing to the BJP in Assam. One needs to say also that the guesswork is apt to go wrong or right in equal measure if ground realities are taken into account.

At first glance one is sorely tempted to say that the chief ministers of West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, Mamata Banerjee and Jayalalithaa seem so well entrenched in their respective states that it seems far-fetched even to offer the possibility, remote possibility of their being trounced. Didi seems settled for life, and so is Amma, one can sound very impractical and unrealistic to talk of their defeat. Can voters be so fickle-minded as to throw out the leaders whose praises they sing day in and

day out? Yes, is the answer one is told. Elections throw out surprises, did we not say? While conceding that it is wise to be prepared for surprises, we need to concede that the outcome in these states is not likely to usher in dramatic changes in the current political map of India. That map underwent dramatic changes in May 2014 when the Modi Wave swept through India. That was a one Big Surprise and that too at the Lok Sabha level. Such surprises seldom recur, but, again, one never knows.

Parliamentary and assembly elections are two different things, as the elections to the assembly in Bihar have proved. Bihar was the first failure for the BJP after the 2014 Modi hawa. Bihar has kindled the hope in the hearts of all the non-BJP groupings that Bihar can happen anywhere. It is because of this that a BJP win is not taken for granted anywhere, including in the four states and a Union Territory that will vote two months hence. Didi seems well placed to retain power but is also true that the Left Front which has not forgotten its defeat at the hands of Didi is determined to pose the toughest challenge possible to her. In their perspective, an alliance with the Congress is likely to do the trick.

The Left in West Bengal has been traditionally anti-Congress but perspectives change with situations and today the Left has no one else to fall back on to take on the highly popular Didi.

It is intriguing why the Election Commission has decided to have a six-phase poll in the state with the voting dates spread over between April 4 and May 5. Surely, it would have been possible to reduce the number. The excuse for a multi-phased poll is security, but is the

internal security situation so bad as to warrant a six-phase voting which taxes the people's patience and is highly inconvenient. The Commission seeks time to move troops from voting centre to the ones in the interior, but surely the troops movement can be more effectively and efficiently organized. As it is voters in West Bengal will have to wait for a month to know the outcome. Such agonies do not enhance confidence in the electoral system!

The BJP would naturally like to spread its wings and expand its area of influence. Except in Assam the chances of its succeeding are limited. Regional forces are strong in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, and a pan-India party has little chance of breaking the regional stranglehold. Regional parties count in Assam too but there has been a presence of national parties for some decades that counter the regional forces.

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Between the Lines

Supreme Court owes an apology

Kuldip Nayar

The judiciary in India has a long way to go to retrieve its reputation. One judgment by the Allahabad High Court which said that dissent should be "protected" cannot rub off the stigma it acquired during the emergency. This is still beyond my comprehension, even after some 35 years since the judgment was pronounced.

The judiciary caved in and upheld that Parliament could suspend the fundamental rights enshrined in the constitution. Even the imposition of the emergency was justified. Only one judge, Justice H.R. Khanna, gave the dissenting judgment but he was superseded. It is another matter that the country punished the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, when she was ousted from power, lock, stock and barrel, after elections were held. Similar was the fate of her son, Sanjay Gandhi, an extra-constitutional authority.

What disappoints me is that the Supreme Court has never passed a resolution or done anything to register its criticism against the judgment which gave the judiciary a bad name. Even now it is not too late. The Supreme Court has liberal judges on the bench. They can still dilute the situation by passing a resolution that its predecessor bench was wrong in endorsing the emergency.

At least the Narendra Modi cabinet, with a liberal Law Minister in Arun Jaitley, should say sorry for the excesses committed by the earlier government during the emergency. At that time, Indira Gandhi had detained one hundred thousand people without trial. The then Attorney General, Niren De, had argued in the court that even the right to live was forfeited during the dark days of the emergency.

There was so much fear that practically all lawyers in Delhi dared

not to speak. A lawyer like Soli Sorabjee from Mumbai and V.M. Tharkunde from Delhi argued the habeas corpus petitions. My petition was argued by both and they had me released after three months in jail.

The two judges, Justice S. Rangarajan and Justice R.N. Aggarwal were punished for having given the verdict. The first was transferred to Guwahati where people still remember him for his impartiality. The second was demoted and sent back to the Sessions Court. But this did not deter them and they carried on their work independently.

Probably, the pressure on the judges has lessened in recent years because of a vigilant media. But the worse is happening. Appointments to the benches are being made according to the wishes of rulers. It began with the Congress government at the centre and has continued even

during the Bhartiya Janata Party government.

The process was really started by Indira Gandhi. She superseded three judges - Justices J.M. Shelat, K.S. Hegde and A.N. Grover - to appoint Justice A.N. Ray as the Chief Justice. She was unseated from parliament and disqualified for poll malpractices for six years. Instead of accepting the verdict, she imposed the emergency and amended the law itself.

The excesses she and Sanjay Gandhi committed during the emergency may be a part of history and it is still remembered by not only those who suffered but also those who support democracy. It was the Janata Party which came to power after defeating Mrs Gandhi that changed the constitution to make the imposition of the emergency impossible. And Justice Khanna's dissenting judgment that the basic structure of the constitution cannot be changed was accepted as the norm. This has ensured the parliamentary system of governance and has deterred every ruler since then not to tinker with the judiciary.

Ultimately, the independence of the judiciary depends upon the quality of judges and this is where I have begun to develop doubts. In the US, the biggest democracy, the Supreme Court is divided between the Republican judges and Democrats. But since the tenure of the judges is for lifetime, the appointees of one party have risen above their old loyalties and become independent and impartial.

In India, we had the best of judges when the government appointed them. But now the party politics is creeping in and at least in High Courts it is seen that the party in

power has not appointed the best of lawyers but those who had owed allegiance to it. Even in the Supreme Court, some appointments come under the shadow of doubts.

Take the case of former Solicitor General Gopal Subramaniam whose appointment to the Supreme Court was stalled by the Narendra Modi government. Blaming the government for blocking his appointment, Subramaniam said his "independence as a lawyer is causing apprehensions that I will not toe the line of the government. This factor has been decisive in refusing to appoint me." He subsequently withdrew from the race.

In fact, it was at his instance that the Gujarat police were forced to book a murder case in the Sohrabuddin fake encounter matter. Then when the prime witness, Tulsiram Prajapati, was liquidated under suspicious circumstances, Subramaniam had recommended the transfer of the case to the CBI. Significantly, Subramaniam also admitted that it was on his suggestion that the Supreme Court, while granting bail to accused Amit Shah, now the BJP president, had barred him from entering Gujarat.

When the story of Ishrat Jahan's encounter case comes to light fully it would be apparent that politics had got mixed with criminality. I do not want to apportion blame on one political party or the other but there is an increasing tendency to politicize certain issues where a party member is arraigned before the court.

The remark by the Allahabad High Court Chief Justice is telling. Justice C.J. Chandrachud, during the High Court's anniversary

function, said: "Law tends to follow precedents. But it must be kept in mind that administration of justice also necessarily involves interpretation of laws that may have been laid down ages ago, in accordance with contemporary needs and challenges."

Ironically, things start from the Allahabad High Court. It changed the legal history when Indira Gandhi was unseated by it and it has now given a new lead to the judiciary. Probably, this is the time when Prime Minister Modi's statement that outdated laws should be done away with is given legal shape.

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Congress-Left a challenge to Mamata regime in Bengal

Mrinal K Biswas - 1

Of the 2016 five State polls, West Bengal and Kerala have assumed special significance as ideological barriers are surmounted to have an electoral understanding between the grand old party of Congress and the Left behemoth Communist Party of India (Marxist) in the former State while the two parties remaining chief adversaries in Kerala. In Assam, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry both the parties have their chosen allies by this time.

The CPI(M) central committee agreeing to an understanding with West Bengal State Congress through excruciating intra-party debates, uneasily kept in abeyance equidistance policy from the Congress and the BJP which was adopted in the CPI(M) party congress at Vishakapatnam. The Congress high command dithered too long to close its option for the ruling Trinamul Congress (TMC) and yielded to the tremendous West Bengal Congress pressures for a Left-Congress alliance ignoring Mamata Banerjee's request to Rahul Gandhi against such collaboration throwing a lethal challenge to TMC's *ma-mati-manus* regime.

While in Kerala, as alternation of power is almost a given fact, the coming election is likely to return CPI(M) to the state government defeating the Congress, Left-Congress understanding in West Bengal notwithstanding.

Both these States have shown ideological moorings because of which a schism was perceptible

in the Left camp where bourgeois Congress is anathema to the Marxists but not entirely untouchable in a broader democratic set-up. Long experiments with parliamentary democracy giving the Marxists the first taste of power in Kerala in 1957-59 under the Chief Minister E M S Namboodiripad made it a full grown commitment when Jyoti Basu led decades-long CPI(M) rule in West Bengal commencing 1977. The Marxists in Kerala, going through caste and fragmented and religious divides, have associated themselves with their designated democratic parties to form the Left Democratic Front (LDF) making it possible for a comeback to power at regular intervals. On the other side, Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) has its origin in the PSP-Congress front rule of 1960-64 under Chief Minister Pattom Thanu Pillai of Praja Socialist Party. Incidentally, that was the first poll alliance that the Congress had embraced post-independence after dismissal of the CPI government following anti-government agitations resulting in an adverse poll outcome for the first Communist government in the world elected through democracy.

Politically, West Bengal is a *sui generis* case. The Left bastion is shattered by a Congress-offshoot TMC. CPI (M) is forced to join hands with Congress bugged by survival instinct. In West Bengal, unlike in Kerala, the CPM-led Left Front (LF) is an exclusive club of Marxist parties like CPI, RSP, Forward Bloc and some splinter groups but not open to democratic

parties. This time under political compulsion the Congress is made a LF electoral ally overcoming stiff opposition from Prakash Karat and his puritan Marxist adherents in the Politburo and central committee. The nod from Congress high command, meaning Sonia-Rahul Gandhi mother-son duo, for poll understanding with LF is indeed an expression of survival instinct bugged by both sides. Congress-Left poll-vault is nevertheless a strange political project to remove TMC from power in West Bengal.

Trinamul Congress is a motley crowd under full control of Mamata Banerjee which rules the State with the help of pliable administration, police and enough entrants of lumpen-proletariat in the TMC. It is widely held that constitutional principles, not being sacrosanct, pliable administration with politically-directed police force, law and order often getting bent to suit the powers-that-be, institutions losing their proper roles, political opponents becoming frequently subjected to poaching and physical assaults because of alleged despotic rule by TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee. The opposition is suffocated and absence of fair deal for the people because of terror tactics is becoming evident quite widely.

People are reminded in the same context that over-the-three-decade-old LF rule was actually the precursor of the present style and content of the TMC rule. There is a difference, though. CPI(M) with

the LF tried to model a system showing up democracy in form while perpetuating partocracy in content (military communism with enough dose of terror practices). Rainbow coalition fructified with Mamata Banerjee becoming its mascot bringing down LF rule only when Election Commission strictly exercised its basic task in 2011 State poll in West Bengal.

Assuming Poll panel repeats its fair poll performance this time also CPM hopes to come back to power on the piggyback of Congress. Mamata Banerjee however is

extremely confident of keeping them at bay and continuing to hold the seat of power next five years also. As things stand now Trinamul Congress (TMC) is clearly ahead of others in vote counts:

- 2011 TMC Assembly poll –38.4 per cent, seats-184: 2014 parliamentary poll-39.7 per cent. Seats-34
- 2011 LF(CPM-led) Assembly poll - 39.3 per cent, Seats – 60: 2014 parliamentary poll - 29.9 per cent, Seats - 2
- 2011 Congress (As TMC ally)

Assembly poll - 9.5 per cent, Seats – 42: 2014 parliamentary poll (no alliance) 9.7 per cent, Seats 4

- 2011 BJP Assembly poll - 4.1 per cent, Seats – 0: 2014 parliamentary poll 6.9 per cent, Seats 2.

Poll arithmetic says that the Congress-Left combine will level with the TMC. But Vote chemistry works differently, particularly in a polarized condition when voters have limited choice. This happened in Bihar election of November last.

Congress incumbency in Assam

Mrinal K Biswas - 2

Assam is the sole among the country's five election-going States where the BJP keeps up hope to wrest power dethroning Tarun Gogoi's decade-long Congress government. But Assam politics is a bit complicated owing to latent but strong sentiments prevalent among the sons of the soil, presence of large hills and plains tribal people and the Muslims commanding one-third of the total population.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the Congress still keeps up advantage - the grand old party suffered a hard knock at the hands of the saffron party in the wake of Modi wave in the 2014 Lok Sabha poll, though. This is despite the fact that a section of dissident Congressmen led by ambitious Himanta Biswa Sarma, MLA, deserted to the BJP camp reducing the ruling party's number of legislators down from 79 in a house of 126. However welcome Sarma was in the Saffron

camp, the BJP dashed his hope by declaring Sarbananda Sonowal the chief ministerial candidate for the party. Sonowal is currently central sports and youth affairs minister under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Sulking Sarma does neither bring any gain for the BJP nor does it prove a loss for the Congress because in the latter, Sarma was seen as one leader too many in the ruling party.

Obviously BJP calculated that its present strength of five (5) MLAs can be exponentially upgraded post-poll to a majority in the Assembly if its efforts for striking a winning combination with Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) now having nine members, Bodo People's Front (BPF) with its present strength of 12 MLAs and dissident Congressmen could turn into a critical mass against incumbency. No less a factor will be the centripetal support from the central BJP which is in power

at Delhi which in its turn can also help its regional allies in Assam to pull up. Just pre-poll, AGP suffered a split.

However, the BJP is skillfully working on the sons of the soil's fear of continuous influx from Bangladesh which they feel will turn the Assamese into a minority in their own land, if not checked now. Narendra Modi made a big hole in the Congress armor during the Lok Sabha poll campaign by promising deportation of these alleged immigrants if he wins the central power. It is time Modi kept his promise, Assamese at large feel.

Congress being relatively on the back-foot on the issue is determined to turn its weakness into strength by luring the Muslims into its fold. Assam's one-third population being Muslims, originating from Bangladesh, secularist Congress is against any deportation *per se*.

It is sure to get support from All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) in the event of a high political confrontation. AIUDF is a strong political entity itself solidly supported by the Bengali

Muslims in Assam conveniently called Bangladeshis. It has 18 MLAs at present and is most likely to retain its strength as before. A subtle Congress-AIUDF understanding cannot be ruled out if BJP onslaught

threatens Bangladeshis in Assam which nomenclature includes Hindus also, who had to come over from former East Pakistan, now Bangladesh.

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Health Sector Needs More Resources But It Also Needs More Honesty

Bharat Dogra

On the one hand tensions relating to affordable treatment of diseases and injuries is increasing not only among the poor but even among the middle class and on the other hand there is increasing criticism even at the international level of the low spending by the government on public health. This in turn is making health-care dependent on the private sector to a dangerous extent and within the private sector unethical and ruthless pursuit of profit is at a new high, starting right at the stage of medical education.

A recent analysis of health sector public spending made in the context of the Union budget for 2016-17 made by the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA) says that India's public expenditure on health including central and state expenditure all combined is far from meeting the 12th Plan target of 2.5 percent of GDP. The allocations in the budget for 2016-17 at Rs. 19037 crore are lower than the Revised Estimate for 2015-16 which amounted to Rs. 19122 crore. The Revised Estimate for 2015-16 was in turn lower than the actual expenditure in 2014-15 which was Rs. 19751 crore. Thus it is clear that the allocation for National Health Mission has been declining

and this decline would be higher if the impact of inflation is also taken into account. The Comptroller and Auditor General's Report has mentioned that in 2014-15 there were nearly 70 per cent savings or unutilized funds under the head 'Establishment of AIIMS type super-specialty hospitals-cum-teaching institutions and upgrading of state government hospitals'. The CBGA Review adds that there appears to be an increasing dependence on private sector provisioning of health care.

This analysis has in this context also drawn attention to the NSS 71st Round Report on health which noted that nearly 70 per cent of the ailments were treated in the private sector and the average amount spent for treatment per hospitalized case in private hospitals was four times that of public hospitals. Hence clearly there is a very compelling case for increasing the budget for the health sector. However it is no less important to ensure that the purse not just grows bigger but the money contained in it is also spent honestly.

To ensure this on the one hand it is important to curb corruption but on the other hand it is also important to resist the numerous pressure

groups including those bolstered by very resourceful and powerful multinational companies which are trying to trap our medical system in unnecessarily highly expensive medicines, equipment, vaccines and procedures. If we are caught in this trap then even with increasing allocations ordinary people will not get relief.

There are also other powerful vested interests (for example those who have a mafia like grip on medical education and use this to extract huge profits while ignoring the quality of education and the real needs of the country. All such powerful and selfish interests need to be overcome so that the available funds are used most appropriately and frugally to meet the real health needs of the country.

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Ambedkar On Bhagat Singh

Anand Teltumbde

The vested interests while lauding Babasaheb Ambedkar have systematically reduced him to be his near ideological antithesis. The ruling classes and their state of course have played a vanguard role but even his so called followers have not been any behind. This year the ruling establishment is going gaga over the celebration of his 125th birth anniversary when as though revealingly the year has dawned with the monumental injustice to the five Dalit Ph.D. scholars of the Hyderabad Central University that led to one of them, Rohith Vemula, committing suicide. When Ambedkar stressed on higher education unlike most reformers of his times, he had the likes of Rohith in mind, laced with critical faculties to steer the movement of oppressed people to their liberation. Harassment of Dalit students pushing them to commit suicide in higher educational institutes is not new but the manner in which this suicide took place should wake up Dalits to the deceit practiced by the current regime.

It saw the continued abuse of the Constitution and trampling of all ideas Ambedkar stood for in recent imbroglio in JNU. The very establishments that decimated his ideal of democratic republic and killed the spirit of liberty, equality, fraternity are posing as his biggest devotees. Under such mounting propaganda, right from the late 1960s, which shows that it is not parties but the class they belong to has been acting in concert, the radical aspects of Babasaheb Ambedkar have been systematically overshadowed.

For instance, just after getting disillusioned with the aftermath of Mahad struggle he had tried class politics over the entire decade until he was forced by the circumstances to revert back to the caste politics. This politics symbolized by the Independent Labor Party, which was described by him as workers' party, and its reflection in Janata, his newspaper appears to have been completely forgotten. The 1930s was an eventful decade and it is interesting to see how he saw or related with many of these events. The non-Marathi readers are totally lost to these writings because their translation are yet not available in English and therefore in other languages. It creates the impression that Babasaheb Ambedkar just hampered upon the betterment of Dalits and supplemented the 'divide and rule' policy of the British imperialists. At least that is what is reflected by the current genre of the Dalit leaders through their apathy towards issues other than Dalit.

One of the most shattering events of this decade is the trial and eventual hanging of Bhagat Singh along with his two comrades Rajguru and Sukhdev. It exposed the British imperialists in their true color along with their love for the rule of law as well as the phony concern of our nationalist leadership for the freedom of people. Bhagat Singh and Dr. Ambedkar, as they would seem perfect opposite of each other, are the two heroes who had truly understood what ailed this country.

When I said this while speaking in the launch of centenary celebration of Bhagat Singh in Maharashtra in

2007, people were perplexed by such a weird statement. But it is quite true. The relevance of these two people is growing as they get distanced from us. How did they see each other? There is no evidence of either of them saying anything about the other. However, we do know that Bhagat Singh had grappled with the Dalit question. He had written an article titled Achoot Samasya (Problem of Untouchability) at the age of 16, but it still has freshness and reflects amazing maturity of thought to be relevant for the emancipatory struggle of Dalits. Ambedkar did not write on the revolutionary movement of Bhagat Singh but has written an editorial note titled "Three Victims" when they were hanged. Though it does not speak about their struggle, much less politics, it explains how their execution was influenced by political expediency back home.

I provide herewith its translation as it may be of interest to many a student of Ambedkar besides its historical value.

Three Victims (Janata dated 13 April 1931)

"Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru have been eventually hanged. They were charged for the murders of an English police officer named Sanders and a Sikh police sepoy named Chaman Singh. Also there were three or four additional charges such as an attempt of murdering one police inspector at Banaras, throwing a bomb in the Assembly, conducting robbery at a house in Maulimiya village and looting its valuables. Bhagat Singh had already admitted to the charges of throwing bomb in the Assembly.

For this crime, he and Batukeshwar Dutt were already sentenced with life imprisonment. One of the comrades of Bhagat Singh by name Jaigopal had confessed that the murder of Sanders was executed by them revolutionaries including Bhagat Singh and others. The government had filed a case against Bhagat Singh and his comrades based on this confession. None of the three accused participated in this case, however. A special tribunal comprising three high court judges was appointed which heard the case and unanimously awarded them death penalty.

“Bhagat Singh’s father had made a mercy petition to the Emperor and the Viceroy, requesting them not to execute the punishment and convert it if required into life imprisonment at Andamans. Many people including prominent leaders also tried to plead with the government in the matter. The issue of Bhagat Singh’s death penalty might have arisen in negotiations that took place between Gandhi and Lord Irwin. Although Lord Irwin had not given any definitive assurance about saving Bhagat Singh’s life, Gandhi’s speech during the intervening period created a hope that Irwin would try his best within his powers to save lives of these three youth. But all these hopes, predictions and appeals proved futile. They were killed by hanging in the Central Prison, Lahore on 23 March 1931 at 7 pm. None of them had made any appeal for saving them. But as it is already published, Bhagat Singh had expressed a desire for being killed with bullet shots instead of hanging by the neck. But even this last will of his was not granted and they implemented the judgment of the tribunal *verbatim*. The judgement was to hang by the neck till dead. If they were killed with bullet shots, the execution would not conform to

the judgement *verbatim*. The order of the justice goddess was obeyed in *toto* and the three were killed with the method she prescribed.

“For whom the Sacrifice?”

“If the government thinks that people would be impressed by its display of devotion and strict obedience to the justice goddess and therefore they would approve of this killing, it would be its utter *naïveté*. None believes that this sacrifice was made with the only intention of maintaining clean and sans-blemish reputation of the British justice system. Even the government will not be able to convince itself with such an understanding. Then how will it convince others with this veil of the justice goddess? The entire world, as well as the government knows that it is not for the devotion to justice goddess but for the fear of the conservative party and the public opinion back home in England that this sacrifice was executed. They thought the unconditional release of political prisoners like Gandhi and signing pacts with Gandhi’s party has damaged the prestige of the Empire. Some orthodox leaders of the conservative party have launched a campaign that the prevailing cabinet of the Labor Party and the Viceroy who danced to its tune were responsible for it. In such a situation if Lord Irwin had showed mercy to political revolutionaries who have been convicted for assassinating an English officer, it would be like giving a burning torch into the hands of the opposition leaders. Already the condition of the Labor Party is not stable. In such a situation if these conservative leaders got an alibi that the labor government grants clemency to the convicts, who had murdered an Englishman, it would be so easy to provoke public opinion against it. In order to avert this imminent crisis and to thwart the fire in the minds of conservative leaders

from flaring further, these hangings were executed.

As such this was not to satisfy the justice goddess but to please public opinion in England. If it had been the issue of personal liking or disliking of Lord Irwin, he would have within his own powers annulled the death penalty and awarded life imprisonment in its stead. The cabinet of the Labor Party in England would have supported Lord Irwin in this decision. It would have been necessary to maintain congeniality of public opinion in the context of Gandhi-Irwin pact. While leaving the country, Lord Irwin would surely have liked to earn this goodwill. But he would have been crushed between the ire of his conservative kin in England and the Indian bureaucracy imbued with the same casteist attitude. Therefore, not minding the public opinion here the government of Lord Irwin hanged Bhagat Singh and his comrades to death and that too just 2 to 4 days before the Karachi conference of the Congress. Both, the hanging of Bhagat Singh and his comrades, and its timings, were sufficient to puncture the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and to trash the efforts to bring it about. If Lord Irwin wanted to fail this pact, he would not have found better act than this one. Looking from this perspective, as Gandhiji also felt, one could say that the government committed a great blunder.

“In sum, merely not to incur the anger of the conservatives in England, they sacrificed Bhagat Singh and his comrades ignoring public opinion and not minding what would happen to the Gandhi-Irwin pact. The government must remember, howsoever it tries to cover it up or polish it; it will never be able to hide this fact.”

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To prevent suicides by farmers

Bapu Heddurshetti

It is reported that between 1995 and 2013, 2,96,438 farmers committed suicide in India. According to the National Crime Records Bureau of India, in 2014 a total of 1,31,666 persons committed suicide in India. Of them, 5650, i.e., 4.29 % were farmers. Of these farmers, 2568, i.e., 45% belonged to Maharashtra State. Of the farmers who committed suicide in 2014, 42% were marginal farmers, 22.5% were small farmers, 25% were middle and 2.3% were big farmers.

The Bureau also reported that 25.6% of farmers' suicides were due to 'bankruptcy and indebtedness'. According to Arvind Pangaria who now heads the Niti Ayog which has been established by the NDA Government in place of the Planning Commission and who conducted a survey in 2008, 20.35% of the suicides by farmers were due to 'drinking and gambling', 16.81% were due to loss of crops. 2.65% suicides were due to indebtedness and fall in agricultural prices each. The remaining 57.54% suicides were due to other reasons like discord in the family, etc. If we presume that the same trend has continued till now, then we can say that of the 5650 farmers who committed suicide in 2014, 4400 farmers did so because of drinking and gambling, 1250 due to failure of crops and fall in agricultural prices. It is significant to note that 3672 farmers who committed suicide in 2014 were marginal and small farmers.

The problem of farmers committing suicide due to drinking,

gambling and family discords, etc., is common with non-farmers committing suicides for such reasons. They cannot be termed as agriculture related suicides though persons committing suicides were farmers. But suicides due to failure of crops and fall in agricultural prices are farmer-specific suicides.

We can identify three problems here; the losses suffered by farmers because they are marginal and small farmers and their land-holdings are economically not viable; the losses due to floods and draughts and losses due to failure of crops and fall in agricultural prices in the market.

Since most of the farmers use insecticides for committing suicides, some people have suggested that the sale of the insecticides should be controlled and monitored. However, such measures cannot be permanent and effective measures to save the farmers from distress.

When India became free from the British, due to the pressures exerted by the Socialists and the progressive elements in the Congress, the land reform measures were implemented. Since the 'hunger' for land was acute in the rural areas, the Zamindari system was abolished, ownership rights were conferred on the tenants and after putting a ceiling on land holdings, surplus land was mopped up and distributed among the landless agricultural workers.

When these land reforms were implemented in Karnataka in 1971, for example, the number of land

holdings with less than two hectares of land was 2922000. This number increased to 5987000 by 2011 mainly due to land reforms legislations, i.e., the number of marginal and small farmers doubled. The average size of their land holdings also increased, but marginally, from 0.60 in 1971 to 0.81 in 2011.

According to the Department of Agriculture in Karnataka, the size of the land holding should be 2.56 hectares to be economically viable. Hence, between 1971 and 2011, the number of economically unviable land holdings increased twofold. So also the number of suicides by marginal and small farmers increased.

To alleviate the problems of the marginal and small farmers, some people have suggested providing them with improved inputs like better irrigation, better seeds, more and better fertilizers, etc. But the proper solution of the problem lies in encouraging cooperative farming. If a score or more farmers can pool their land holdings and if the Government also can provide a congenial atmosphere for cooperative farming these marginal and small farmers can get rid of the problem of unviability of the small holdings. Since land is pooled in a farming-cooperative they will get the benefit of economies of scale. While a single marginal or small farmer cannot on his own dig a bore-well or buy a tractor, a cooperative farm can easily do so. This may also to a great extent help the small farmers from overcoming the problems posed by the fall in

prices of agricultural produce.

While a single small farmer may not have the capacity to store his produce and sell it only when he gets a better price for his produce and hence has to opt for distress sale of his produce, a farming-cooperative can create such storing capacity and sustain itself when the agricultural prices fall. It is only then that a small land holding can become economically viable and prevent the losses if not earn even a small profit for the farmer. Since a farming-cooperative with large tracts of land in its possession, can go for multiple cropping so that even if the prices of one or two of its produces fall, no member will be ruined because he will be sharing the profits earned by the cooperative from other produces.

Failure of crops which accounts for 16.81% of the suicides committed by farmers happens mostly due to floods or draughts which are natural phenomena. While crop insurance can be an answer to floods, irrigation could be the answer to draughts.

The loss to farmers due to fall in agricultural prices is a man-made problem. The reason for fall in agricultural prices is over-production. If tomato or some other agricultural produce fetches a good price in any one year, all farmers

opt to grow the same produce with the result that in the next year there is over-production of the produce and the prices fall. There have been instances when the farmers have thrown away their produce on the roads as they could not get a fair price. USA dumped millions of tons of wheat into the sea so that its price does not fall in the market.

Some people have suggested solutions sans markets to this problem of fall in agricultural prices. They suggest that a floor price for agricultural produces should be fixed by law and no one should be allowed to sell his produce at a price lower than the price fixed by the statute. But then the problem of fall in agricultural prices is not a legal problem but is an economic problem and hence a legal solution to an economic problem will not, ultimately, workout.

Some have suggested the solution of the Government intervention in the market by fixing support prices when the prices fall. But then since the problem is one of over-production, this will only increase the financial burden on the Government rather than solve the problem.

The prices of agricultural produce in the markets fall when there is

more supply than the demand. The demand for agricultural produce, as compared to industrial produce, is more or less fixed or stable. Hence to prevent the fall in prices of agricultural produce the demand cannot be increased. Only supply can be regulated so as to equalize with the demand. In the first instance, the supply can be contained at the time of production itself. Since the demand is known, if the farmers can plan their supply, the fall in prices that happens due to over-production can be prevented. To achieve this agricultural production will have to be meticulously planned at the national or at least at the State level. Secondly, if the farmers can store their produce when the prices fall and wait till the prices rise they can overcome this problem of excessive supply.

If large cooperative farms are encouraged it should be possible to plan the agricultural produce. These farming cooperatives can form a federation and plan what to produce and how much to produce depending on the demand. Amul and KMF can be the models for this kind of efforts. Only such solutions can solve the problems of the farmers and prevent them from committing suicides.

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

by

Rohini Gawankar

Published by

Kamalakar Subhedar,

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Truth Behind Farmers' Suicides

Vivekanand Mathane

Suicide is the last step. A man takes that step when he finds himself lonely and helpless, who has lost his own peoples' love and who has to bear only harassment, who prays in his heart for help but finds in return neglect and reproach. When he finds all doors closed for survival, then he is forced to take the last step. These circumstances may arise due to several reasons, but at their root lies poverty, and consequent deprivations.

In India farmers' suicides have become serious and worrying issues. According to the report of National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) (2014), a total of 1,31,666 suicides took place in 2014 in India. During the last ten years 11 persons in 1 lakh committed suicide every year. Every day 361 and every hour 15 suicides are taking place.

According to the report of NCRB main reasons for suicides include family problems, illness, bankruptcy or indebtedness, failure in examination, issues related to marriage, drug addiction, love affairs, downfall in social position, poverty, unemployment, property dispute, and other reasons.

In the NCRB Report of 2014 victims of suicidal tendencies are divided, based on their educational, economic and social conditions. According to the information regarding economic condition, 91,820 (69.7%) suicide victims' annual earnings were below Rs. 1,00,000/- and 35,405 (26.9%) suicide victims' earnings were

between 1 to 5 lakhs, while 785 (0.6%) victims' families' earnings were more than Rs. 10 lakhs. Based on education, 85% victims were educated below 12th, 74% were below 10th, 53.5% were below 8th and 4.2% victims received higher education. 8.1% suicides out of total suicides in the country were committed by professionals, salaried persons, pensioners, etc. All other suicides are by farmers, agricultural laborers, house wives, students, unemployed, self-employed, daily wagers, etc.

Suicides being committed in rural as well as urban areas of India show strong relation with poverty, illiteracy and unsafe employment. This makes it clear that most of the suicides are due to reasons emerging out from poverty. This is the result of discriminatory and unjust policies. This is also the result of a social system which is built upon economic disparity.

NCRB-2014 report does not show suicides committed in rural and urban areas separately. Though it does not list separately the suicides committed in farmers' families, yet these can be guessed. According to 2011 census 68.8% population resides in rural India and most of them are dependent on agriculture and agriculture based employment. Based on this fact it can be said that 1,31,666 x 68.8% is equal to 90,586 the number of suicides are being committed in rural India and 41,080 committed in urban areas. In rural India every year 90586 people are dying, 248 dying every day and 10

every hour.

If only one man commits suicide it worries everyone, but thousands committing suicides every year does not worry the government. The government deliberately tries to hide the truth behind suicides. For this they explore new and new ways. According to NCRB report 12360 farmers have committed suicide in the year 2014. By using faulty definition of farmers it tries to show that less number of farmers commit suicide.

Indian government, through the Agriculture Ministry in a case in Supreme Court (WP (C) No.134 of 2013) says that percentage of farmers' suicide is only 8.73%. In comparison of farmers' population the suicide percentage is very low and that is why it is not a subject of worry. Answering an un-starred question No 81 in the Lok Sabha on 08.07.2014, Agriculture Minister shamelessly said that reasons behind farmers' suicides include failed love affairs and impotency. This is the anti-farmer and insensitive attitude of the policy makers.

Every year NCRB report is produced by the government of India. In this report the number of suicides reported in the FIRs in police stations, are given. But ordinary policeman and inquiry officer are not capable of doing right social analysis of reasons of a suicide. Commonly those in whose name the land, farming and debts are registered commit suicide and they are said to be suicides of farmers.

Here it would be understood that the economic condition of a farmer has influence on the condition of his whole family. Farming is the basis of life for whole family. So suicide committed by any member of the family should be considered as a farmer's suicide. Suicides in thousands of farmers' families are the result of crisis in farming sector. Analysis of suicides makes it clear that the total number of farmers' suicides is many times more than the declared number and reality of suicides has become difficult to be found.

According to 'Situation Assessment Survey of Agricultural Household 2013, out of 15.61 crore families 9.02 crores (57.8%)

are farmers' families and out of total farmers families 8.65 crores (95.90%) families earn less than one lakh (Rs 100,000/-) rupees annually. 52% farmers' families are indebted. Each family owns on an average Rs 47000/- as debt. 36% farmers have BPL cards and 5% families have Antyodaya cards. During the survey, 44% farmers' families have MNREGA job card. This survey makes it clear that the food giver of the country is living in penury. These farmers' suicides are not confined to any single state but are spread throughout the country. This situation indicates farmers' plight in India.

Poor people in cities generally come from rural areas where they

were doing farming, farm labor or farm based employment or self-employment of other kind. Most of the population migrated to cities as a result of rural distress, farming decline and destruction of village employment. And if the number of suicides in villages and of suicides of poor people in urban areas is added the number of farmers' suicides would be bigger.

It is the responsibility of the government to reveal the truth of suicides before the country. For this, it is necessary that suicides taking place in farmers' families are recorded properly.

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All-India Forum for Right to Education (AIFRTE)

National Assembly on Common School System and the Judgment of Allahabad High Court

Allahabad: 9th April 2016

Call for Participation

In August 2015, single bench of Justice Sudhir Agarwal of Allahabad High Court pronounced a judgment on Elementary Education, which is a historical landmark in judicial intervention to promote equitable quality education under direct state auspices. It represents a unique assertion of the faith in public education system in an era of Neoliberal Capitalism, which has precipitated rampant privatization of education, excessive fee-hike, siphoning of public funds to corporates through 'public private partnership' (PPP) schemes, merger and closure of Government schools, and contractualization of teaching and non-teaching cadres. Diverging sharply away from these trends

of Neoliberal political economy, Justice Agarwal directed the Government of the State of Uttar Pradesh to ensure within six months that all Government servants, public representatives and all those who derive any benefit or perquisites from state exchequer mandatorily send their children in the age group of receiving Primary Education (meaning Elementary Education here) only to the schools established and maintained by the UP Board of Basic Education. The court also directed the Government to take punitive action against those who do not comply with this order. The court hoped that when children of power-holders will be sent to study within 'Common Man's' Schools', the

decision makers will be compelled to take the interests of students of these institutions seriously. Moreover, once the standards of these schools are improved, other parents will also prefer to send their children to study there, instead of in other elite and semi-elite private schools. It will also create a social revolution when children of various backgrounds will be made to study together. The court demonstrated a genuine but increasingly rare concern for the recruitment of quality teachers in 'Common Man's Schools' in a period when the Governments have been recruiting untrained or insufficiently trained para teachers for the education of the children of masses.

The AIFRTE believes that a political campaign should be urgently mounted in favor of these directives of the court. In light of this judgment, the demand for 'Common School System' should be taken up during the next elections in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The process should begin from the National Assembly to be held in Allahabad. The AIFRTE invites activists from each district of Uttar Pradesh who on their return would constitute District Committees to carry forward the campaign. Besides this, participants from other states are invited to provide the campaign an all-India character. We would also identify like-minded persons of good repute from different spheres of social life, such as intellectuals, artists, social workers, literary personalities, trade union leaders, lawyers and judges to champion this cause across the country. Through these and other measures, we would like to build a nation-wide campaign that exposes the Neoliberal agenda of the new National Education Policy being formulated by the

Central Government led by the NDA turning over the socially equalitarian principle of 'Common School System' recommended by Kothari Commission in 1966 and accepted by the Government of India in 1968. The National Assembly would be a learning experience for all those who are concerned about public system of education, as many experts of the field and renowned speakers would address the gathering. Justice A.P. Shah, (former Chief Justice, Delhi High Court) and Shri Ashok Vajpeyi, (reputed Hindi poet, creator of Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal, and promoter of Art, Fine Arts and returnee of Sahitya Academy Award) have agreed to address this National assembly. We invite all those persons and organizations to join this historic assembly to make it a big success who champion constitutional objectives of equality, social justice and secularism against commercialization and communalization of education and all other forms of discrimination based on class, Caste, gender, disability, religion, language, region

and religion; who stand for mother-tongue situated within multilingual context as the medium of education; and who support the demand for directly and fully state funded 'Common School System' based on the concept of neighborhood schools.

Date and Time: 9th April 2016, 09:30 A.M.-06:00 P.M. followed by rally and public meeting till 07:30 P.M.

Venue: SADHANA SADAN, 1, Tashkent Road, Allahabad-211 001.

Visit our website for more information: www.aifрте.in

Contact: Dr. Neeta Chaubey drneetachaubey@gmail.com +91-9415372123; Shri Manoj Tyagi azadi.bachao.andolan@gmail.com +91-9415279612; and Prof. Mahesh Vikram mvs276@gmail.com +91-9415353120; and copy to Shri Ramesh Patnaik aifрте.secretariat@gmail.com +91-9440980396.

Letter to the Editor

For kind consideration of Naveen Tewari

Dear Editor,

Our learned friend Naveen Tewari, has said that Janata of 24th January 2016 has published articles about Rohith Vemula's Suicide which, in his opinion, are "absolutely irrational and illogical". Further, he says, "A suicide by a clinically depressive person is just an unfortunate result of depression".

I beg to differ. Shri. Tewari has not given any evidence about the depressive state of mind of Rohith. On reading his suicide note I, like so many persons from various parts of the country, felt terribly moved by the noble stirrings of that idealist and active soul. Let me tell Shri. Tewari that many of us from RSD were similarly shocked and moved, on 12th June 1950, by the suicide of great

freedom-fighter and author of 120 books, Sane Guruji. He had fought many a battle for farmers and mill-hands besides many against the British imperialists. He also used to participate in the cleanliness drives in the slum areas. He had inspired a number of young men and women to take up constructive activities in the fields of education, public health, journalism, etc. He had cherished

many high hopes for the common man of this country. However, on assuming power by our leaders, precious little was done for the betterment of the common man. Like his life, his suicide also gave inspiration to many.

Did Shri. Tewari get his facts correctly? I try to narrate them in brief-

- **A m b e d k a r S t u d e n t s Association (ASA)**, of which, Rohith was an office-bearer, had convened 'Resistance gathering against Capital Punishment' on 29th July 2015 in the premises of the Hyderabad Central University. The program went off peacefully.
- On 3rd Aug, Nandan Susheel kumar, of ABVP put in a post on his Facebook which read as follows - ASA goons are talking about hooliganism—feeling funny. So in the evening, 5-6 members of ASA, including Rohith went to the room of Susheel kumar and asked why he labeled ASA members as goons. A discussion followed. At around 11.30 p.m. Susheel kumar agreed to post an apology. All the boys came in the open space where Security guards of the University were standing. In the meanwhile Susheel kumar contacted his BJP friends and also the police on phone. While Susheel kumar was writing the apology, a police jeep arrived there. The police took Susheel kumar inside the jeep when someone from ASA group tried to drag him out. His shirt got torn and his shoulder received a few scratches. Susheel kumar's brother reached there, took him to hospital. On the

way, he lodged a complaint at Gachibawali P.S. saying that ASA members forcibly entered Susheel's room with intention to kill him.

- On 5th Aug. V.C. of the university, on the basis of the report of the security, directed Proctor of the hostels to take action. After enquiry, the Proctoral Board, recommended that 1. Susheel kumar be directed not to upload such remarks on his facebook. 2. ASA members be directed not to enter the room of any other student but lodge complaint with university authorities.
- ABVP and BJP mounted pressure on the university to mete out harsher punishment to ASA members including Rohith. However, the university had withdrawn the action taken against Rohith and others on 11th September 2015.
- But the BJP was determined to blow up the issue. On 10th Aug. 2015, Dist. BJP vice-president, Nandan Diwakar wrote to Bangaru Dattatraya, MP from Secunderabad and MoS for Labour at the Centre.. The subject is mentioned as "Anti-national activities in Hyderabad Central University premises-violent attack on Susheel kumar etc."
- On 17th Aug 2015, Bandaru Dattatraya, MoS, wrote to Smriti Irani, HRD minister, saying that "University Of Hyderabad has become a den of casteist extremist and anti-national politics.
- Shri. Tewari may kindly note that it was the BJP top brass

which described ASA activities as casteist. The reference was unmistakably pointing to the dalit-ness of Rohith.

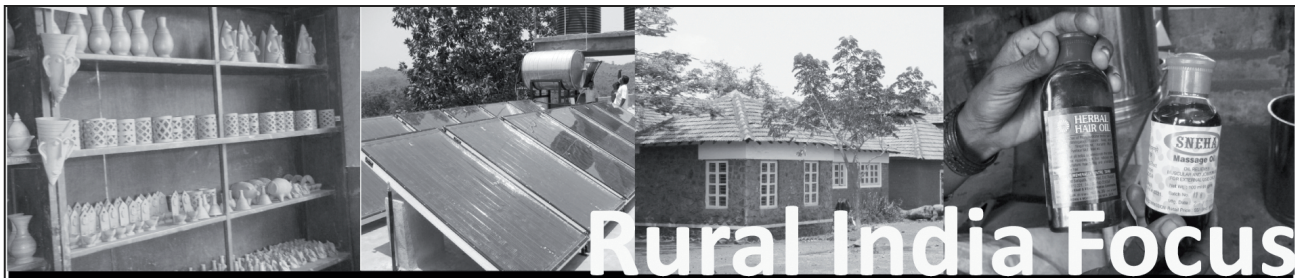
- HRD ministry officials wrote four letters to take severe action against Rohith and his friends. Because of that pressure, the University issued an order on 17-12-2015 on Rohith to vacate his room. Rohith and his friends had to sleep in the open ground before the shopping complex of the University in December when it is quite cold.
- Rohith was not paid stipend money for seven months. As he had mentioned in his suicide note he had to borrow 40,000 rupees from friends. How was he to feed himself ?
- For the benefit of Shri. Tewari it may be noted that in the classes, for roll call, separate muster is maintained for the SC/ST students. I hope Shri. Tewari knows that SC means dalits.

Well, even after following these facts carefully, if Shri. Tewari wants to continue name-calling game, who can prevent him from that pleasure?

We, the socialists, radicals and Left will continue our struggle for stopping discriminatory treatment to dalit students in matters of :

1. Separate Roll call musters,
2. Intentional delay in allocating guides for Ph.D. students,
3. Inordinate delay in payment of stipend money.

Pannalal Surana
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Rural India Focus

PRESENTING THE NATION WITH A REPLICABLE MODEL OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT



ADIVASI GIRLS HOSTEL AT TARA, PANVEL



WEEKLY EYE CAMPS AT THE YMC HOSPITAL, TARA, PANVEL



RUNS THREE HIGH SCHOOLS

YUSUF MEHERALLY CENTRE AND YOU

There are ways in which you can join the YMC movement in bringing education, healthcare, women empowerment, employment generation, relief and growth to our rural villages. Visit our Centre, volunteer your help, buy our products, become a Life Member. You could also support the cause by donating to our various initiatives.

SPONSOR AN ADIVASI GIRL'S HOSTEL STAY

It takes Rs.15,000 per year to meet the expenses for supporting a girl child's stay at the hostel in Tara, Panvel Taluka.

FINANCE A CATARACT SURGERY

10 to 15 eye operations are performed at the weekly eye camp held at the Maharashtra State Government funded hospital building. Sponsor a cataract operation for Rs. 15,000/-.

CONTRIBUTE TO THE SCHOOL CORPUS

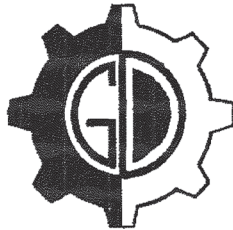
YMC runs 3 high schools - 2 Marathi, 1 Urdu medium. With only 2 of these on government aid, the Centre needs Rs.1 crore as corpus to run the 3rd and maintain, conduct extra-curricular activities in all 3 and finance its building expansion plans. Give generously.



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Mumbai 400 007

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Budget 2016–17: Achhe Din For Whom ?

Neeraj Jain



मुंबई कामगार मध्यवर्ती ग्राहक सहकारी संस्था मर्यादित
(बहुराज्य ग्राहक सहकारी संस्था)

अपना बाजार™

को-ऑप

१०६-ए, गोविंदजी केणी रोड, नायगांव, दादर (पूर्व), मुंबई - ४०० ०१४.
दुरध्वनी :- २४१९५२००, फॅक्स : २४१३३६८०/२४१५७४९७

दर्जा, गुणवत्ता आणि विश्वासाहता म्हणजेच अपना बाजार आमची ठळक वैशिष्ट्ये

- ६७ वर्षाची अभिमानास्पद ग्राहक सेवा
- भारतातील एकमेव बहुराज्य ग्राहक सहकारी संस्था
- महाराष्ट्र, गोवा व गुजरात राज्यात ग्राहक सेवा
- एकूण विक्री दालने २५
- वार्षिक उलाढाल रु. १३७ कोटी
- ३० लाख निष्ठावंत ग्राहक
- तीन वेळा जमनालाल बजाज उचित व्यवहार पुरस्कार (१९८९, २००१, २०१३)
- इकॉनॉमिक डेव्हलपमेंट फोरम तर्फे ग्लोबल अचिव्हर्स पुरस्कार फॉर बिझनेस लिडरशिप (२०१२)
- नॅशनल को-ऑपरेटिव्ह युनिअन ऑफ इंडिया तर्फे अंबाई ऑफ एक्सॅलन्स (२०१३)

आरोग्यसेवा :

- दादा सरफरे आरोग्य केंद्र व क्लिनीकल लॅबोरेटरी, नायगांव.

सामाजिक उपक्रम :

- खरेदी बचत योजनांना प्रोत्साहन
- ग्राहक जागरूकतेसाठी विविध कार्यक्रम

अपना बाजार सर्वासाठी :

- १) खरेदीवर वेळोवेळी विविध सबलती
- २) दर्जेदार वस्तू खात्रीपूर्वक मिळण्याचे ठिकाण
- ३) वेळ आणि पैसा यांची बचत
- ४) सणासुदीसाठी खास सबलत
- ५) मोफत घरपोच सेवा
- ६) भेट देण्याकरिता अपना गिफ्ट व्हाव्हर
- ७) मंगल कार्याकरिता अपना बाजार नायगांव एअर कंडिशन बँकवेट हॉल
- ८) सोईक्सो पास, तिकीट रेस्टॉरंट कुपन्स आणि बँक कार्ड्स मार्फत खरेदी

		आपले सहकारी	
अनिल गंगर	श्रीपाद फाटक	ज्ञानदेव दळवी, संतोष सरफरे नंदिनी गावडे, राजेंद्र आंग्रे	एस्.टी.काजळे
कार्याध्यक्ष	उपकार्याध्यक्ष	एक्झिक्युटिव्ह कमिटी सदस्य	मुख्य कार्यकारी अधिकारी

संचालक :-भारती शिरसाट, शिवाजी गावंड, विश्वनाथ मलुप्टे, अश्विन उपाध्याय, अंजना सावंत, नरेंद्र कदम, रमाकांत साळुंखे, बाळा राऊळ, निलेश वैद्य, नरेंद्र भुर्के, उमेश फाटक, मनिषा डुबळे, नितिन अणेराव, जगदीश नलावडे

Budget 2016–17: Achhe Din For Whom ?

Neeraj Jain

Every newspaper headline called Finance Minister Arun Jaitley's 2016–17 budget "pro-poor, pro-farmer". Intellectuals commenting on TV, or writing in newspapers, described it as a "Tax the rich to feed the poor: Robin Hood budget", as a budget "Focused on agriculture sector", as a "People-friendly budget", and so on.

Let us analyse more closely to see what it really contains.

THE GDP NUMBERS

The finance minister begins his budget speech with the claim that despite the slowdown in global growth and despite two consecutive years of monsoon shortfall, the growth of GDP has accelerated, from 5.6% in 2012–13 to 7.2% in 2014–15 and further to 7.6% in the current financial year, 2015–16. He goes on to say that the International Monetary Fund has hailed India as a 'bright spot' amidst a slowing global economy.¹

The GDP numbers are based on a new accounting system that was introduced by the new BJP Government last year. The new method of GDP instantly lifted the country's GDP growth to 7.2% in fiscal 2015 compared with 5.5% under the old series.² For the Modi Government, the higher GDP number supported its claims that as "compared to the last three years of the previous government when growth had decelerated to 6.3%",³ its economic policies had launched the economy on a high-growth trajectory, making India the world's fastest growing major economy even beating China's growth rate.

However, other economic indicators do not present the same picture of a booming economy; on the contrary, they indicate that the economy is slowing down. The mismatch between the GDP numbers and other economic indicators is so glaring that even the Mid-Year Review (MYR), released by the Finance Ministry in December 2015, conceded: “The economy is sending mixed signals with different indicators not always pointing in the same positive direction.”⁴ Establishment economists too are not convinced that the economy is booming. The Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Raghuram Rajan, in his address at the 13th convocation of Indira Gandhi Institute of Developmental Research, stated that “there are problems with the way we count GDP”.⁵ And the government’s chief economic advisor, Arvind Subramanian, has admitted that he is puzzled and mystified by the revised estimates based on a new methodology.⁶

Table 1: Indian Economy: Key Economic Indicators⁷

	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16
GDP Growth	5.6	6.6	7.2	7.6
Agricultural Growth	1.2	4.2	–0.2	1.1
Gross Fixed Capital Formation, % of GDP	33.4	31.6	30.8	29.4
Export Growth, \$, %	–1.8	4.7	–1.3	–17.6
Import Growth, \$, %	0.3	–8.3	–0.5	–15.5
Scheduled Commercial Bank Credit Growth, %	14.1	13.9	9	11.3

These other economic indicators, which question the rosy picture presented by the finance minister of India’s economy, show that:

- a) Gross fixed capital formation (that is, investment) has fallen from 33.4% in 2012–13 to 30.8% in 2014–15 and 29.4% in 2015–16.
- b) Agriculture has grown by a mere 1.1% this year, after falling by 0.2% last year. The country’s foodgrain production is stagnating at around 250 million tonnes for the past two years.

- c) Exports and imports have fallen by 17.6% and 15.5% respectively during this year.
- d) Growth in bank credit has ranged between 9% to 11% in the last two years, in contrast with an average annual growth of over 20% in the last decade. Even this lower credit growth may not indicate fresh investment. The MYR admits that much of the credits being given to industry may be to stressed sectors, raising the possibility that loans are being provided to protect their balance sheets rather than to finance new activity. The Financial Stability Report of the RBI says that proportion of bad loans of banks held by large borrowers has gone up to 87% by September 2015.⁸
- e) Other indicators also suggest that the economy may not be doing as well as that projected by the GDP growth rate indicators. The GDP data for the current financial year had estimated manufacturing sector growth during October–December at an annual 12.6%. However, the latest numbers for the index of industrial production (IIP) released early this year point to a mere 0.9% rise during this quarter.⁹

All these are certainly not signs of a booming economy!

THE GDP OBSESSION

Be that as it may, even if we take the ‘revised’ GDP growth figures conjured up by the BJP at face value that show India to be one of the world’s fastest growing economies, the truth is, today, GDP growth rates really do not indicate the health of a country’s economy. Gross Domestic Product, or GDP, measures the total market value of all the goods and services produced and sold in an economy. This means that if a certain quantity of goods are produced but not sold, and instead consumed by the producer, then they do not add to the GDP. Therefore, most of India’s small farmers, who produce for self-consumption, do not contribute to the country’s GDP. But when they are driven out of their lands, and their lands are taken over by giant

corporations to set up villas / golf courses / expressways / airports / industrial projects, this contributes to the GDP and is called development. But what about the destruction of farmers' livelihoods? That is not considered while computing GDP. To give another example, when farmers buy Monsanto's genetically modified seeds, or buy insecticides and fertilisers and engage in chemically intensive farming, the sale of these costly inputs contributes to GDP growth, even if these agricultural practices have driven lakhs of farmers into committing suicide. It is because of these problems with the concept of GDP that a country where more than three lakh farmers have committed suicide in less than two decades can claim to be one of the fastest growing economies in the world! Another limitation with the concept of GDP is that it does not take into account environmental destruction. Thus, a living forest does not contribute to GDP growth, but when its trees are cut down for timber, that contributes to growth; and then when a factory is set up in place of the forest, that contributes to still more GDP growth.

That GDP growth rate is a false measure of the wealth of nations is now admitted even by some of the world's leading economists. In a study done for French President Nicolas Sarkozy in 2009, Joseph Stiglitz and Amartya Sen called for the adoption of new tools to measure how well the economy is doing, that incorporate a broader concern for human welfare and environmental sustainability than just economic growth.¹⁰

The Indian Government is unfazed. Despite overwhelming evidence that GDP is a faulty gauge, it continues to single-mindedly focus on adopting policies to increase the GDP growth rate of the economy. Why? Read on . . .

External Situation

After singing paens to India's high growth rates, the finance minister in his budget speech next claims: "Our external situation is robust. The current account deficit has declined . . . Our foreign exchange reserves are at the highest ever level of about 350 billion US dollars."

He is manipulating facts once again. Just two figures indicate the extent of India's external accounts crisis, both of which Arun Jaitley has forgotten to mention:

- i) India's external debt has climbed to astronomical heights. It stood at \$483 billion in end-September 2015, making the country one of the world's most indebted economies. With our current account deficit negative, the country is dependent on either more borrowings, or foreign capital inflows, to repay the principal plus interest on its external debt. An interest has to be paid on borrowings and capital investment inflows result in profit outflows. It is a kind of debt trap!

- ii) Talking about foreign exchange reserves without comparing them to a country's short-term external liabilities has no meaning. That is because foreign exchange reserves do not represent foreign exchange earnings of a country, they include all the foreign capital inflows that have come into the country too. Therefore, to get an idea of the safety buffer provided by a country's foreign exchange reserves, they should be compared to the country's short-notice foreign exchange liabilities, that is, foreign capital that has come into the country that can leave very quickly. These include: (a) short-term debt (i.e., debt repayable within a year); (b) portfolio investments (i.e., FII investments in the share markets and in debt instruments), which can be withdrawn at any time; and (c) those NRI deposits which are fully repatriable at any time (Foreign Currency Non-Resident and Non-Resident External Rupee Account deposits). We have computed the country's short-term liabilities for March 2014 in a recent essay.¹¹ These calculations show that, at a time when our foreign exchange reserves were \$304 billion (in end-March 2014), our total short-term liabilities were \$415 billion. This means that if the foreign investors decide to pull out their money, our foreign exchange reserves are not sufficient to prevent the economy from once again plunging into foreign exchange bankruptcy, similar to what had happened in 1990–91.

These figures make nonsense of the claim of the finance minister that our external accounts situation is robust. On the contrary, our economy is worse off than in 1991, when we began globalisation because of our external accounts crisis—as our external debt is now nearly six times that of 1991.

India on SALE

And so, continuing with the policy of the UPA Government, the new government too is desperately trying to attract foreign investors into the country and make it easy for them to make profits. Within months of coming to power, the BJP opened up the defence sector and railways to foreign direct investment (FDI). It is bending over backwards to meet US objections to India's nuclear liability law, so that giant US corporations can set up nuclear power plants in India without having to worry about paying indemnities in case of design defects causing a nuclear accident—this basically means they are being encouraged to supply risky equipment, which is nothing but an invitation to disaster! The BJP has also got the Insurance Laws Amendment Bill passed by Parliament to increase FDI inflows into the insurance sector, yet another step towards eventually handing over control of India's insurance sector to foreign insurance corporations—corporations that the US Government itself has called “crooks, scoundrels and fast operators”. It has further loosened controls on inflows of foreign speculative capital. This is also the real reason why Prime Minister Modi has been on a world tour ever since he assumed office—to entice foreign investors to bring in their investments into the country, by promising them all kinds of incentives and concessions. This is also the real meaning of his slogan, ‘Make in India’—the Modi Government is aggressively dismantling labour laws to make it easy for foreign companies to hire workers on contract basis, at low wages, and fire them at will, so that India becomes an attractive destination for foreign corporations to set up shop in India, where they can produce goods at rock-bottom costs and earn huge profits.

Now, in this latest budget, the finance minister has announced a further relaxation of regulations to make it easier for foreign investors to enter

the country. The BJP had quietly dropped its opposition to multi-brand retail after coming to power; now, it has gone one step ahead and opened up the food retail business to FDI. Additionally, 49% foreign investment in insurance and pension sectors, and 100% FDI in asset reconstruction companies, via the automatic route, have been permitted. The budget also proposes to grant residency status to foreign investors, beyond the current practice of giving them a five-year business visa.

DEVOLUTION TO STATES

The finance minister claims that the years 2015–16 and 2016–17 have been and will be extremely challenging for government expenditure, because the implementation of the recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission has increased the share of the states in Central taxes from 32% previously to 42%. He claims that notwithstanding the steep reduction in Central share of taxes, the government managed to increase its budgeted expenditure.

The finance minister is a master manipulator. While he claims that the states are being transferred 42% of Central taxes, it is not happening in practice. That is because a significant portion of the gross Central tax revenues comes from cesses and surcharges, and these are not shared with the states. Because of this, even in the budget estimates for 2015–16, the states were to be transferred only 36.2% of the gross Central tax revenues. And in actuality, during fiscal 2015–16, while gross tax revenues of the Centre in 2015–16 RE went up by Rs 10,120 crore as compared to the budgeted estimate, this increase was primarily on account of increased income from cesses and surcharges; the taxes collected by the Centre that come under the divisible pool of Central taxes actually declined by Rs 42,000 crore in 2015–16 RE (as compared to 2015–16 BE). Because of this, while states' share in Central taxes declined in 2015–16 RE over budget estimates by Rs 17,765 crore, Centre's share has gone up by Rs 27,666 crore! And therefore, actual share of states in gross Central tax revenues in 2015–16 RE has actually come down to 34.68%, from 36.2% projected in the budget estimates!

Table 2: Share of Centre and States in Gross Tax Revenues¹² (Rs crore)

	2015–16 BE*	2015–16 RE**	2016–17
Centre's Gross Tax Revenues	1,449,490	1,459,611	1,630,888
Cesses + Surcharges + Collection charges	201,971	254,390	272,943
Divisible Pool of Central Taxes	1,247,519	1,205,221	1,357,945
States' Share of Central Taxes (42% of Divisible pool)	523,958	506,193	570,337
Centre's Net Tax Share	919,842	947,508	1,054,101
States' Share as % of Gross Tax Revenues	36.15	34.68	34.97
Cesses, Surcharges and Collection Charges as % of Gross Tax Revenues		11.1	11.9

BE : * Budget Estimate

RE : ** Revised Estimate

FISCAL DISCIPLINE FRAUD

The finance minister in his budget speech says that he is committed to fiscal prudence and consolidation. And so declares that he has retained the fiscal deficit targets for 2015–16 RE and 2016–17 at 3.9% and 3.5% respectively.

That India must bring down its fiscal deficit 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. 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 bringing down the fiscal

deficit to 3.9% in 2015–16, and seeking to lower it further to 3.5% in the coming fiscal, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley is only walking down the path set by his predecessors in the Finance Ministry.

Fiscal deficit means the government's borrowings. The government borrows when its expenditures exceed its revenues from all sources.

John Maynard Keynes, considered to be the greatest economist of the twentieth century, had demonstrated way back in the 1930s that 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. We have discussed this in detail in several of our earlier writings.¹³

India and most developing countries had followed Keynesian economic policies after winning independence from colonial rule in the years after the Second World War. Till about 1990, hardly anyone in India mentioned the term 'fiscal deficit'. Following India's foreign exchange crisis of 1990–91, one of the conditionalities imposed by the World Bank on India as a part of its Structural Adjustment Programme was that India 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. The pimps who masquerade as intellectuals have been writing lengthy articles in the media warning of impending doom unless the fiscal deficit is curtailed.

If this theory is humbug, why is the World Bank so keen that India reduce its fiscal deficit, and why is the Government of India so keen to implement this conditionality? The fact of the matter is, neither the World Bank, nor any of our finance ministers since 1991—from Manmohan Singh and P. Chidambaram to Arun Jaitley now—have been / are really interested in reducing the fiscal deficit! The only reason why they have been harping upon the theme of fiscal discipline is because it gives them an excuse to reduce government expenditures on the poor and transfer the savings to

big corporate houses!

This must sound amazing, even unbelievable, to our readers. Therefore, let us explain this in slightly greater detail. The fiscal deficit is the excess of the government's expenditures over receipts. Even a cursory look at the policies being pursued by Arun Jaitley (and our previous finance ministers) reveals that he has been doling out lakhs of crores of rupees as 'subsidies' to the rich. Had he really been concerned about the fiscal deficit, he 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, whose purpose is to make available essential welfare services like education, health, food, transport and electricity to them at affordable rates so that they can live like human beings and develop their potential, 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.

We have described the implementation of this policy in our booklet on the Union Budget 2015–16.¹⁴ A closer look at this year's union budget papers shows that the same policies have continued this year too.

TAX CONCESSIONS TO THE RICH

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 in the past year.

The 2016–17 budget documents reveal that for the year 2015–16, the Modi Government gave away Rs 551,200 crore in tax exemptions/ deductions/ incentives to the very rich. (The write-offs as mentioned in the budget are actually Rs 611,128 crore. From that, we have deducted the Rs 59,928 crore forgone on personal income tax, since this write-off benefits

a wider group of people.) These major write-offs are in corporate income tax, custom duties and excise duties. To put this amount in perspective, these tax concessions to the country's rich equal nearly one-third of the union budget outlay. Of the revenue forgone, Rs 61,126 crore is on account of custom duty exemptions on diamonds and gold alone!

Data on revenue forgone on account of tax concessions are available for the last eleven years (since 2005–06). They reveal that the tax concessions given by the BJP Government in 2015–16 are the largest ever.

Table 3: Comparison of Tax Concessions to the Rich with Other Figures

Tax Concessions to the Rich, 2015–16	Rs 5.51 lakh crore
Fiscal Deficit, 2015–16 RE	Rs 5.35 lakh crore
Size of Union Budget, 2015–16 RE	Rs 17.85 lakh crore
Tax Concessions to Rich, 2015–16, as % of Union Budget, 2015–16 RE	30.90%
Gross Tax Revenues, 2014–15 RE	Rs 14.6 lakh crore
Tax Concessions to Rich, 2015–16, as % of Gross Tax Revenues, 2015–16 RE	37.8 %

These tax concessions actually exceed our fiscal deficit for 2015–16 of Rs 5.35 lakh crore! Had Jaitley really been concerned about reducing the fiscal deficit, he could have reduced these concessions given to India's richie rich.

Interestingly, in the budget papers, the tax exemptions given to the rich have been given a new name, "Tax Incentives"!

INDIA: TAX TO GDP RATIO

It is because of these huge tax giveaways to India's uber wealthy that India's combined tax-to-GDP ratio for Centre and states put together is among the lowest in the world. The *Economic Survey 2015–16* admits that India's tax–GDP ratio, at around 16.6% of the GDP, is far below not

only the developed countries of the OECD (34.2%), but also its ‘emerging market’ peers Brazil (35.6%) and South Africa (28.8%). 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%.¹⁵

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.

BUDGET 2016–17: MORE SOPS TO THE RICH

What is the revenue forgone by the Central government on account of tax ‘incentives’ to the elites in the year 2016–17 will be known only next year from the 2017–18 budget papers.

These tax exemptions constitute only one part of the huge transfers of public money and resources being made by the government to the coffers of the rich every year. Every year, the budget announces several other sops to the country’s corporate houses, in the name of incentivising them to invest in the economy and increase GDP growth. Budget 2016–17 also does this. A few examples:

a) Legalising Plunder of Public Sector Bank Funds

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 and fast cars. The banks simply write-off their loans. According to figures released by the RBI in February 2016, public sector banks have written off bad loans totaling more than Rs 2.11 lakh crore over the 12-year period 2004–15. Of this, Rs 50,000 crore or nearly 25% of the loan write-offs have been done in the first year of the

new government, that is, during 2014–15. According to another report by the RBI, large borrowers are responsible for 87% of bad loans—most of whom must be corporate houses.¹⁶

With the government allowing corporate houses to plunder bank funds to the tune of lakhs of crores of rupees, obviously it will have to compensate the banks for this largesse—this roundabout subsidy to corporates has a fancy name called ‘recapitalisation’. This year, the government has allocated Rs 25,000 crore for bank recapitalisation.

As if this was not enough, the government is now moving to privatise public sector banks, in the name of improving their efficiency—in other words, they are to be handed over to the very same corporations who have looted them! Instead of nationalising the robber corporations, the public sector banks are being privatised. The Modi Government has endorsed the recommendations of the Nayak Committee set up by the RBI to suggest reforms in public sector banks. This committee has recommended that the government speedily dilute its stake in public sector banks and bring it down to less than 50%.¹⁷ As an important step towards this, Finance Minister Jaitley announced in his budget speech that the Banking Boards Bureau would be activated this year. This is the precursor to the setting up of a holding company to which government equity in all public sector banks will be transferred.¹⁸ He also announced that the government would consider lowering its stake in IDBI Bank to below 50% this year.

Privatisation of public sector banks is going to have absolutely catastrophic consequences for the people and the economy. The deposits mobilised by the public sector banks had crossed Rs 58 lakh crore as on March 31, 2014. Once the public sector banks are de-nationalised, there is no guarantee that their private owners will not indulge in speculative trading, resulting in a possible financial collapse sometime in the future. Or they may indulge in financial mismanagement or outright cheating and declare bankruptcy. (The Nayak Committee has in fact recommended that the

government allow speculative capitalists to invest in public sector banks.) The East Asian financial crisis of 1997 saw numerous private financial institutions going into liquidation. Some of the biggest private sector banks in the developed countries have collapsed in recent years, especially after the 2008 financial crisis—they were engaged in risky financial dealings in the stock markets with people's savings. In India, before the banks were nationalised in 1969, all banks, except the State Bank of India, were in the private sector; between 1947 and 1969, 559 banks failed, resulting in lakhs of ordinary people losing their hard-earned life savings.¹⁹ Since nationalisation, because of government control, no public sector bank in India has ever closed down. This guarantee will end, once these banks are privatised. Imagine what will happen, if say, the Bank of Maharashtra declares bankruptcy and downs its shutters all of a sudden one day!

b) Selling of the Family Silver at Throwaway Prices

The finance minister has announced a disinvestment target of Rs 56,500 crore for the year 2016–17. Of this, Rs 36,000 crore is estimated to come from minority stake sales in public sector undertakings, and the remaining Rs 20,500 crore is projected to come from strategic sale in both profit and loss-making companies (that is, wherein management control would be handed over to the private buyer).

Privatisation of public sector undertakings (PSUs) is one of the most important conditionalities of the World Bank imposed Structural Adjustment Programme on India. 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 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.

c) Allocation for Roads and Highways

The finance minister has announced an allocation of Rs 55,000 crore for construction of roads and highways in this year's budget. Obviously, these highways and roads are going to be constructed in partnership with the private sector,²⁰ in what has come to be known as Public-Private-Partnership or PPP. It should actually be called 'Partnership for Transferring Public Funds to Private Sector'. Under this concept, the private sector is invited by the government to invest in infrastructural sectors (such as roads, ports, highways and airports), and to make the investment 'viable', the government gives financial 'incentives' to the private sector, such as a subsidy of up to 40% on the investment. Even a large part of the remaining 60% that the private sector is supposed to invest is also often provided by the government through loans from public sector banks!²¹

So this basically means that the government is proposing to transfer Rs 55,000 crore to the private sector as subsidy to build roads and highways this year!

The budget also promises new initiatives to reinvigorate PPP projects in the infrastructure sector, including a bill for resolution of disputes in infrastructure-related PPP contracts, and guidelines for renegotiation of PPP concession agreements. This jargon basically implies that the government is going to give yet more concessions to the private sector in case the latter is not satisfied with the rate of return on its investment. In other words, the government is not only guaranteeing the private sector risk-free investment, it is also guaranteeing a satisfactory rate of return on its investment! And yet they call it free-market capitalism.

SHIFTING BURDEN of TAXES on POOR

There are two types of taxes, direct taxes and indirect taxes. Direct taxes are levied on incomes, such as wages, profits and property, 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. An equitable

system of taxation taxes individuals and corporations according to their ability to pay, which in practice means that in such a system, the government collects its tax revenues more from direct taxes than indirect taxes.

Across the world, in both the developed countries of the OECD, as well as most ‘emerging economies’ like South Africa and Brazil, direct tax revenue as a percentage of total revenue varies from 55% to 65% and more. But in India, for every Rs 100 collected by the government (Centre + states) as tax revenues, only around Rs 30 comes from direct taxes (and the rest, Rs 70, from indirect taxes).²²

State taxes are mainly indirect taxes. Most of the direct taxes are collected by the Centre. Since the coming to power of the BJP, the ratio of direct to indirect taxes collected by the Centre has been falling, with the result that at the all-India level, the ratio of direct to indirect taxes must have become further skewed.

Table 4: Direct and Indirect Taxes Collected by the Central Government (Rs crore)

	2014–15 (Actuals)	2015–16 BE	2015–16 RE	2016–17
Gross Tax Revenue	1,244,885	1,449,491	1,459,611	1,630,888
Direct Taxes	694,658	797,995	752,021	847,097
Indirect Taxes	545,937	647,919	703,642	779,670
Ratio of Direct Taxes to Indirect taxes	55.80 : 44.20	55.05 : 44.95	51.52 : 48.48	51.95 : 48.05

As we can see from Table 4, the 2015–16 RE show that there was a shortfall in Central government’s direct tax collections of nearly Rs 46,000 crore (as compared to 2015–16 BE). Despite that, the Centre managed to increase its gross tax revenues (2015–16 RE over 2015–16 BE) by Rs 10,120 crore. This occurred on account of indirect tax collections overshooting

budget estimates by nearly Rs 56,000 crore, mainly on account of a sharp hike in excise duties on petroleum products. Consequently, the direct to indirect tax ratio of the Centre has come down from 56:44 in 2014–15 to roughly 52:48 now.

BUDGET 2016-17: REDUCTION IN SOCIAL SECTOR SPENDING

Arun Jaitley, in his budget speech, says: “The priority of our government is clearly to provide additional resources for vulnerable sections, rural areas and social and physical infrastructure creation.” Echoing him, the media proclaimed Jaitley’s 2016–17 budget to be a pro-poor budget.

The budget numbers belie Jaitley’s claim.

Table 5: Social Sector Expenditures of Central Government (Rs crore)

	<i>2014–15 BE</i>	<i>2015–16 BE</i>	<i>2015–16 RE</i>	<i>2016–17 BE</i>
Total of Social Sector Ministries	403,914	364,101	390,838	419,725
Gross Tax Revenues	793,072	1,364,524	1,459,611	1,630,888
Social Sector Exp. as % of Gross Tax Revenues	33.6	29.6	26.8	25.7
Union Budget	1,794,892	1,777,477	1,785,391	1,978,060
Social Sector Exp. as % of Union Budget	22.5	20.5	21.9	21.2
GDP at Current Market Prices (2011–12 series)	12,488,205	13,567,192	13,567,192	15,065,010
Social Sector Exp. as % of GDP	3.23	2.68	2.88	2.79

Extra social sector spending needed to achieve ratio of 3.23 with respect to GDP			47,382	66,875
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While it is true that Jaitley has raised the government's social sector expenditures over 2015–16 RE, the fact of the matter is, Jaitley had severely cut the social sector expenditures of the government in 2015–16 over 2014–15. Therefore, to get the true picture of the BJP Government's social sector expenditures, the figures for 2016–17 BE should be compared with the figures for 2014–15 BE. As the figures given in Table 5 show, the government's social sector expenditures in 2016–17 BE exceed those in 2014–15 BE by just 3.9%. In real terms, this implies a cut of at least 13%!²³

This is borne out by other comparisons too. The government's social sector expenditures as a percentage of Centre's gross tax revenues have fallen from 33.6% in 2014–15 BE to 25.7% in 2016–17. This, despite the fact that the gross tax revenues have more than doubled over these two years. The social sector expenditures as compared to the union budget have fallen from 22.5% in 2014–15 BE to 21.2% in 2016–17 BE. And as a percentage of the GDP, they have fallen from 3.23% to 2.79%!

The last column in the above table gives the additional social sector expenditures that the government would have to make for the social sector expenditures as a percentage of the GDP to be at the same level as in 2014–15 BE (3.23%). It shows that in 2016–17 BE, it would have to be Rs 66,875 crore more.

The above figures should not come as a surprise. With low revenue collections (as exemplified by the low tax–GDP ratio), combined with the munificence of the finance minister in doling out lakhs of crores of rupees in tax concessions and subsidies to the rich / corporate houses, the only way the fiscal deficit target of 3.5% could have been met was by cutting

social sector expenditures.

Here, it would be relevant to point out that these cuts are being made in a country where as it is the public social sector expenditures 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 government’s subsidies to the poor are very high! The social sector expenditure of the Government of India (Centre and States combined) totals 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 expenditure 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 expenditure for the 21 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean has been rising and is presently 18.6% (in 2009–10) (see Chart 1).

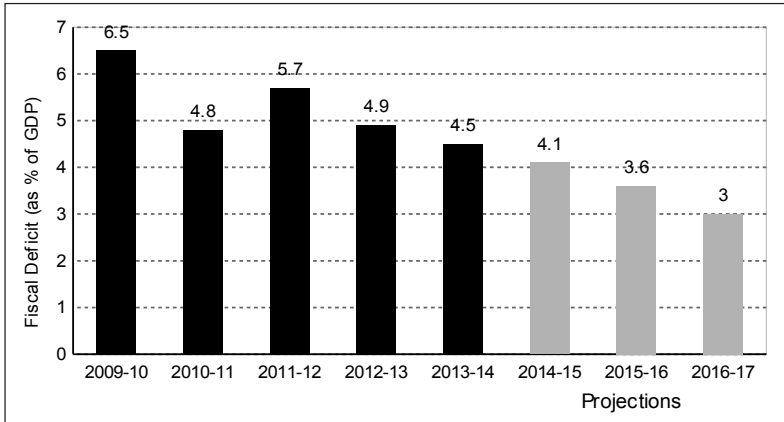


Chart 1: Public Social Sector Expenditures of Developed Countries and India, 2010²⁴ (% of GDP)

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. The ordinary people have come to accept this ballyhoo, and so do not consider government spending on social services to be their right; therefore, there are no mass protests when school / college fees go up, health care costs go through the roof, and bus fares skyrocket.

It is because of the Indian Government's very low social sector spending that the latest Human Development Report released by the UNDP ranks India near the bottom with regards to overall human development. The report placed India's Human Development Index ranking at 130 in a list of 188 countries in 2015.

SECTOR-WISE CUTS IN SOCIAL SECTOR SPENDING

SPENDING on EDUCATION

In July 1992, delivering judgement in the Mohini Jain case, the Supreme Court of India ruled that dignity of an individual cannot be assured unless it is accompanied by right to education, and that fundamental rights cannot be appreciated and fully enjoyed unless a citizen is educated. Even if we leave aside such high flown objectives as realisation of freedom and liberty, education is crucially important even for something as basic as human development.

No country in the world has developed without making provisions for providing free, compulsory, equitable and good quality elementary education for ALL its children in the initial stages of their development, and later expanded it to secondary and higher secondary education. (And they have done this entirely through public funding; the private sector will only invest for profits.) Unfortunately, India has not been able to provide even elementary education to a majority of its children seven decades after independence—nearly 9 crore of the roughly 20 crore children in the 6–14 age group have either never enrolled in school or have dropped out of school without completing even basic schooling!

Even for those going to school, the conditions in a majority of the schools are simply terrible. A majority of the primary schools in the country are single, or at best, two teacher schools! What must be the quality of education being imparted to students in schools where a single teacher is teaching two or more than two different classes in a single room! One-fifth of all elementary schools do not have functional drinking water facilities, two-fifth of all schools do not have usable toilet facilities, and around half of them are not electrified and do not have libraries.²⁵

So far as higher education is concerned, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (number of students as a percent proportion of the youth population in the age group 17–23 / 18–24) is way below the developed countries—the GER in India is only around 15, whereas for developed countries it is above 60, with several countries having a GER above 70.²⁶ Globalisation has led to the transformation of higher education into a business; a majority of the higher educational institutions in India are now in the private sector, and only those able to afford their high fees are able to access college education.

But the government is unconcerned. It is simply not interested in spending on education to improve the quality of our educational institutions and provide genuinely free, compulsory and good quality education for all children.. The education budget for 2016–17 is lower than the allocation for education in 2014–15 BE even in nominal terms!

Table 6: BJP Government's Budgetary Allocations for Education (Rs crore)

	2014–15 <i>BE</i>	2015–16 <i>RE</i>	2016–17
Department of School Education and Literacy	55,115	42,187	43,554
<i>of which:</i>			
<i>Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan</i>	28,258	22,015	22,500
<i>Mid-Day Meal Scheme</i>	13,152	9,236	9,700
Department of Higher Education	27,656	25,399	28,840
Total: Ministry of Human Resource Development	82,771	67,586	72,394
Budget Outlay	1,794,892	1,785,391	1,978,060
MHRD Exp. as % of Budget	4.61	3.79	3.66
GDP at Current Market Prices (2011–12 series)	12,488,205	13,567,192	15,065,010
MHRD Exp. as % of GDP	0.66	0.5	0.48

The Parliament passed the Right to Education Act in 2009, whose declared objective is to provide 'free and compulsory' education to all children in the age-group 6–14 years. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is the main scheme of the Central government for implementing this Act and universalising education. But the government is simply not willing to allocate funds for this scheme. The Centre has not been willing to approve the necessary funds sought by the states for implementing this Act, and even of the amount approved, it has not been willing to sanction its share. Despite the appalling state of our schools as described briefly above, the allocation for SSA this year has fallen by a whopping 20% over 2014–15 BE.²⁷

So far as higher education is concerned, a significant portion of the allocation, Rs 9,754 crore or one-third of the total allocation, is for elite institutions like the IITs and IIMs, and another Rs 6,355 crore have been

allocated for Central Universities. The University Grants Commission, that is supposed to regulate the higher educational institutions in the country and provides grants to more than 10,000 institutions, has been allocated only Rs 4,492 crore, less than half the amount allocated to it in 2015–16 RE (Rs 9,315 crore)—a clear indication that the government is pushing ahead with its agenda of privatising higher education.

SPENDING ON HEALTH

India's health system is in "crisis". It is the disease capital of the world. More than 2 lakh people in the country die of malaria every year, while TB kills 3 lakh. According to the WHO, India accounts for nearly one-fourth of the deaths in the world due to diarrhoea, more than one-third of the deaths due to leprosy and more than half of the deaths due to Japanese encephalitis. India's under-five child mortality rate is the highest in the world, with 12 lakh such deaths in 2015; a majority of these deaths are preventable. India accounts for one-fifth of the 287,000 maternal deaths in the world. India is also in the grip of an epidemic of chronic diseases, which account for more than 50% of the deaths in the country.²⁸

It is possible to address these health challenges, but that would call for strengthening 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; India allocates barely 1%; India ranks 171 out of 175 countries in public health spending.²⁹ Consequently, the public health system is in bad shape. Even by standards set by the government, there is a shortfall of about 20% in sub-centres, about 23% in primary health centres and about 32% in community health centres; and there are only an average of 1.14 district hospitals per district.³⁰ Where these health centres exist, a majority of them are deficient in infrastructure, with even doctors not available. This dismal state of public health care has forced citizens to depend upon the private sector for treatment; of the total health spending in the country, public health spending accounts for only 28%, households undertake the rest.³¹

Table 7: BJP Government's Budgetary Allocations for Health (Rs crore)

	2014–15 BE	2015–16 RE	2016–17
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare	37,966	33,832	38,207
Ministry of AYUSH	1,272	1,125	1,326
Total Exp. on Health	39,238	34,957	39,533
GDP at Current Market Prices (2011–12 series)	12,488,205	13,567,192	15,065,010
Health Exp. as % of GDP	0.31	0.26	0.26

This extreme privatisation of healthcare is having ruinous consequences. Six crore people are pushed into poverty each year due to high health costs.³² Even the finance minister admits in his budget speech: “Catastrophic health events are the single most important cause of unforeseen out-of-pocket expenditure which pushes lakhs of households below the poverty line every year. Serious illness of family members cause severe stress on the financial circumstances of poor and economically weak families, shaking the foundation of their economic security”.

Despite this acknowledgement, the finance minister has increased the budget allocation for health care by only a miniscule amount, from Rs 39,238 crore in 2014–15 BE to just Rs 39,533 crore in 2016–17 BE, which amounts to a reduction of at least 13% in real terms (taking inflation at 8% for both the years).

Even this limited expenditure being done is to promote privatisation of health care and transfer public funds to the private sector! Thus, the finance minister's solution to the health crisis gripping the country is to provide health insurance. He has announced a scheme to provide health insurance cover of Rs 1 lakh per family, with senior citizens getting a Rs 30,000 top-up. While it is not clear from the budget as to who will be the beneficiaries, there are two major problems with such a solution. Firstly, health insurance does not provide comprehensive health care, it

only covers hospitalisation expenses. Ssecondly, it is implied in this that the government is pushing people to go and get themselves admitted in private hospitals and avail of health insurance. But it is well known that private hospitals indulge in all kinds of unethical practices, from overcharging, to carrying out unnecessary tests and even unwarranted operations (like for example unwarranted hysterectomies and caesarian operations). Had the same budget allocation been used to strengthen public health care services, many more people could have benefited, and the benefits would have extended to not just free hospitalisation but free comprehensive health care.

SPENDING ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT

As per Census 2011, nearly 83 crore people in India are living in rural areas, and constitute about 69% of the total population of the country. Therefore, all-encompassing development of rural areas is crucial for development of the country.

The finance minister declares in his budget speech that one of the important pillars of his budget proposals is the rural sector, with emphasis on rural employment and infrastructure. But talk should be accompanied by budget allocation—and like all the other rhetoric in Jaitley’s budget speech, this too is empty talk. The allocation for Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) has been increased by only 4.7% over 2014–15 BE, which means a cut of around 10% in real terms!

Table 8: BJP Government’s Budgetary Allocations for Rural Development (Rs crore)

	2014–15 BE	2015–16 RE	2016–17
Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD)	83,852	79,278	87,765
<i>of which:</i>			
<i>National Rural Livelihood Mission</i>	3,859	2,672	3,000

<i>Indira Awas Yojna (now Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna)</i>	16,000	10,025	15,000
<i>Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna</i>	14,391	18,297	19,000
<i>Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme</i>	34,000	36,967	38,500
GDP at Current Market Prices (2011–12 series)	12,488,205	13,567,192	15,065,010
MoRD as % of GDP	0.67	0.58	0.58
NREGS as % of GDP	0.27	0.27	0.26
Budget Outlay	1,794,892	1,785,391	1,978,060
MoRD as % of Budget Outlay	4.67	4.44	4.44
NREGS as % of Budget Outlay	1.89	2.07	1.95

Allocation for MGNREGS

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme MGNREGA is the flagship programme of the MoRD, and so let us discuss the budget allocation for this scheme in greater detail.

The MGNREGA, for all its weaknesses, does have the potential to at least lessen the crisis gripping India's rural areas, especially for the rural poor. It guarantees a minimum of 100 days of employment in a year to every willing household. Significantly, it guarantees time bound employment, within 15 days of making such a requisition, failing which it promises an unemployment allowance.

Just last year, Prime Minister Modi had derided the MGNREGS.³³ It has now been rehabilitated to the point that Jaitley declared in his budget speech that he was making the highest ever allocation for this programme, Rs 38,500 crore.³⁴ While the Modi Government's about turn and espousal of the scheme are welcome developments, there are several problems with Jaitley's proud claim:

- i) Even in nominal terms, the allocation is below the highest ever allocation of Rs 40,100 crore in 2010–11.
- ii) In relative terms, the allocation for this year, at 0.26% of the GDP, is even less than the allocation of 0.27% of the GDP made last year, and is far below that for earlier years: it was 0.59% of the GDP in 2009–10.³⁵
- iii) Actually, for a genuine implementation of the Act, the provision made in this budget is simply too low. MNREGS is a demand-driven scheme, it guarantees 100 days of employment to all those who desire it. Ever since the scheme was rolled out ten years ago, successive governments have never allocated enough funds to make this available—the maximum employment generated under the scheme was 54 days in 2009–10. In 2015–16, it is estimated that around 50 days of employment were generated. The provision of Rs 38,500 crore made in this year's budget is not enough to provide even this low level of person-days of employment in 2016–17. To keep the MGNREGS funding at the same level as last year, an allocation of at least Rs 37,000 crore (last year's allocation) + Rs 9,000 crore (arrears of last year) + Rs 4,000 (inflation at approximately 8%) = Rs 50,000 crore was needed. The actual allocation is 23% less than this!³⁶

SPENDING ON AGRICULTURE

Budget 2016–17 has been hailed by the media as a pro-farmer budget. Jaitley in his budget speech in the Lok Sabha mentioned the word 'farmer' 32 times. He declared that the government would reorient its interventions in the farm and non-farm sectors to double the income of farmers by 2022, that is, in five years.

Two-and-a-half decades of globalisation–liberalisation–privatisation policies have pushed the country's agriculture sector into deep crisis. The sharp increase in input prices (for instance, diammonium phosphate prices have gone up from Rs 10,000 a tonne in 2010 to Rs 25,000 a

tonne in 2014³⁷); the deliberate withdrawal of the state from agriculture, whether in supply of quality inputs, or provision of credit on reasonable terms or provision of extension services; the savage attack on MSP with the government deliberately keeping MSP low, sometimes even below the cost of production; the decline in procurement by the government and closure of procurement centres that are forcing farmers to resort to distress sale; the inability of a large number of farmers to access farm loans due to their being informal tenants or sharecroppers, forcing them to borrow from moneylenders at high rates; the sharp cuts in social welfare spending of the government in the last more than two decades—all these have pushed the hardy Indian farmers to such desperation that more than 3 lakh farmers have committed suicide since the reforms began. In 2014, more than 4000 farmers committed suicide in Maharashtra alone; and in the first six months of 2015, another 2000 took their lives in the state.³⁸

If the government was at all serious about addressing this crisis, at the minimum, it should have announced significant increases in MSP, lowered input prices by increasing subsidies on fertilisers, electricity, water, etc., and raised government expenditure on agriculture substantially.

Table 9: BJP Government's Budgetary Allocations for Agriculture (Rs crore)

	2014–15 BE	2015–16 RE	2016–17
MAFW (excluding Interest Subvention)	31,063	22,958	29,485
Interest Subvention for Providing Short Term Credit to Farmers	6,000	13,000	15,000
MAFW (including Interest Subvention)	37,063	35,958	44,485
GDP at Current Market Prices (2011–12 series)	12,488,205	13,567,192	15,065,010

MAFW (including Interest Subvention) as % of GDP	0.297	0.265	0.295
Budget Outlay	1,794,892	1,777,477	1,978,060
MAFW (including Interest Subvention) as % of Budget Outlay	2.06	2.02	2.25

Budget 2016–17 addresses none of these issues. The BJP had come to power on a promise of providing farmers MSPs that would ensure them a 50% profit over cost of production. It has made a complete U-turn on this issue. There is no mention of providing farmers remunerative prices in the budget. On the contrary, in mid-2015, the government announced an increase in MSPs—but the increases were miniscule, and did not even cover the cost of production for several crops.³⁹ Instead of increasing subsidies, they are being further cut—fertiliser subsidy has been cut by Rs 3,000 crore. Even the sharp fall in international oil prices has not been passed on to farmers, due to the government increasing excise duty on diesel.⁴⁰ A special focus of the finance minister’s speech was on irrigation, with Jaitley claiming that the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana has been considerably strengthened. But despite the bombast, the actual allocation for this scheme is even less than the 2015–16 RE: it has fallen from Rs 7,590 crore in 2015–16 RE to Rs 5,767 crore in 2016–17 BE (total allocation for this scheme is subsumed under three ministries, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Water Resources, and Department of Land Resources).

The most important criterion by which the government’s sincerity towards addressing the problems faced by Indian agriculture can be judged is by examining the total allocation to agriculture. On the face of it, it appears that there is a huge increase in the budget allocation for the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers’ Welfare (MAFW). Compared to the revised estimate of Rs 22,958 crore for 2015–16, this year the budget provides for Rs 44,485 crore. But this apparently huge increase is the result of a change in classification! The budget estimate for MAFW for 2016–17 includes Rs

15,000 crore for “interest subsidy for short-term credit to farmers”. This is actually a transfer; in earlier years, this head had appeared under the Department of Financial Services under the Finance Ministry. Including this interest subvention amount in the budget of the MAFW for 2014–15, the increase in the total government spending on agriculture over 2014–15 BE is 20% in nominal terms—that works out to a miniscule increase in real terms of only around 3% (taking inflation at 8% for both the years).

But the fact that most eloquently brings out the absolute unconcern of India’s policy makers with regard to the severe crisis gripping the agricultural sector is the total government spending on agriculture as a proportion of its total expenditure / the country’s GDP. It works out to an abysmal 0.3% of the GDP, and just 2.25% of the total budget outlay—for a sector on which even today nearly 70% of the people are dependent for their livelihoods. Compare this to the tax concessions given to India’s rich, some of whom are amongst the most wealthy people in the world—they amount to 4.1% of the country’s GDP, and are equivalent to nearly one-third of the union budget!

BUDGET ALLOCATIONS for CHILDREN and NUTRITION

It has long been identified that maternal health and initial 1,000 days of a child are crucial for his/her physical and cognitive development. *The Economic Survey* also recognises that “events which occur while a child is in utero (in the womb) or very young (below the age of 2) cast a long shadow over cognitive development and health status even in adulthood.”

The recently released National Family Health Survey (NFHS)–4 data for 15 States shows that 37% of children under the age of five are stunted; 22% are wasted while 34% are under-weight.⁴¹

Despite this alarming situation, the government has actually reduced the budget for schemes targeted at improving nutrition for women and children even in nominal terms (Table 10)!

Table 10: BJP Government's Budgetary Allocations for Nutrition-Oriented Schemes (Rs crore)

	2014-15 <i>BE</i>	2015-16 <i>RE</i>	2016-17
Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS) + National Nutrition Mission (NNM)	18,691	15,584	14,863
Mid-day Meal (MDM)	13,152	9,236	9,700
Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahayog Yojana	400	234	400
National Creche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers	113	132	150
Total	32,356	25,186	25,113

Of all the schemes mentioned in the table, the most important is the ICDS scheme, implemented by the Women and Child Development Ministry. It is the world's largest programme aimed at improving child nutrition. The budget for this has been cut even in nominal terms by a whopping 20% over 2014-15 BE! Even the allocation for Mid-day Meal Scheme has been slashed by 26% over 2014-15 BE. The country's rulers are not willing to reduce the concessions given to the country's elites by a wee bit to provide a nutritious meal a day to all the country's schoolgoing children.

BUDGET ALLOCATIONS for DALITS and ADIVASIS

In response to the continuing atrocities on Dalits and Adivasis, in the 1970s, the government launched the Scheduled Caste Sub Plan (SCSP) and Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) to ensure the flow of targeted funds from the general sectors in the Central Ministries towards the development of the Dalits and Adivasis. The guidelines under these two programmes clearly state that the allocations for them as a proportion of the Plan outlay should be at least in proportion to their share in the total population. The population share for the Dalits is 16.6% and for Adivasis is 8.6%, according to the Government of India Census 2011. However, the allocations for SCSP and TSP have never reached the stipulated norm of 16% and 8% respectively.

Table 11: BJP Government's Budgetary Allocations for Dalits and Adivasis (Rs crore)

	2014-15 BE	2015-16 RE	2016-17
Scheduled Caste Sub Plan	50,548	34,675	38,833
Plan Budget	5,75,000	4,77,197	5,50,010
SCSP as % of Plan Budget	8.79	7.27	7.06
Shortage in SCSP	44,902	44,540	52,469
Tribal Sub Plan	32,387	20,963	24,005
TSP as % of Plan Budget	5.63	4.39	4.36
Shortage in TSP	17,063	20,076	23,295

Under BJP rule, the allocations for both SCSP and TSP have sharply declined even in absolute terms over 2014-15 BE. Worse, the allocations have also declined as a proportion of the Plan outlay. This is not surprising, considering how the RSS fundamentalists view the Dalits and Adivasis.

BUDGET ALLOCATIONS for WOMEN

This is also known as the gender budget Statement (GBS). It captures the quantum of budgetary resources earmarked for women by various departments and ministries.

In a country where a crime against women takes place every 90 seconds, an insensitive government has slashed the gender budget even in absolute terms by 7.5%! This, when the GBS allocation for 2016-17 appears to be exaggerated—for instance, the entire outlay for Indira Awas Yojana is included in the GBS, which is questionable since this scheme is not meant to benefit women alone.

The most important component of the gender budget is the outlay for Ministry for Women and Child Development. The allocation for this ministry has been substantially reduced over 2014-15 BE. Within this, after deducting budget for ICDS and NNM (*see Table 10*), only

Table 12: BJP Government's Budgetary Allocations for Women (Rs crore)

	2014–15 <i>BE</i>	2015–16 <i>RE</i>	2016–17
Gender Budget	98,030	81,249	90,625
Ministry of Women and Child Development	21,194	17,352	17,408
Budget Outlay	1,794,892	1,785,391	1,978,060
Gender Budget as % of Budget Outlay	5.46	4.55	4.58

Rs 2,545 crore is left for women-specific schemes! Therefore, all these schemes receive only meagre budgets. These include important schemes like like the 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Yojana' that was announced with much fanfare by Prime Minister Modi himself, the Indira Gandhi Matritva Yojana that is supposed to cover all pregnant and lactating women as mandated by the National Food Security Act, the Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (SABLA), and the Scheme for Protection and Empowerment of Women (an umbrella scheme covering 8 schemes).

MILITARY and POLICE

But the Centre continues to have enough money to spend on the military and police. Expenditures on these heads have continued to rise—the Centre's spending on military and police has risen by 15.1% over 2015–16 RE, and 19.3% over 2014–15 BE.

The official military expenditure of the Government of India is projected at Rs 3.4 lakh crore for 2016–17 (including pensions). The actual military budget, or the unofficial military budget, is more than this, as a significant part of the budgets of the Department of Atomic Energy and the Department of Space (the former is responsible for making nuclear weapons, the latter for the missile programme, but no separate provision is made for either of these two expensive programmes) too should be included while calculating the country's total military expenditure.

The Centre's total police budget is projected at Rs 70,000 crore this year. The actual expenditure in the country on the police is much more than this, as states too spend substantial sums on the police force.

Table 13: BJP Government's Budgetary Allocations for Military and Police (Rs crore)

	2014–15 BE	2015–16 RE	2016–17
Ministry of Defence	285,203	293,580	340,922
Ministry of Home Affairs: Police	59,451	63,613	70,185
Total: Defence + Police	344,654	357,193	411,107
Budget Outlay	1,794,892	1,785,391	1,978,060
Military + Police as % of Budget Outlay	19.2	20	20.8
GDP at Current Market Prices (2011–12 series)	12,488,205	13,567,192	15,065,010
Military + Police as % of GDP	2.76	2.63	2.73

Even if we consider only the Centre's official military and police budget (combined), it is just a tad below the total government expenditure on social services. And while the total social sector expenditure of the government rose by just 3.9 % over 2014–15 BE (a fall in real terms), its expenditure on military and police rose by 19.3% during this period!

CONSEQUENCES OF TWO YEARS OF BJP RULE: HUGE RISE IN WEALTH OF RICH

The above analysis makes it clear that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and the country's establishment intellectuals are lying when they claim that this year's budget is a pro-poor, pro-farmer budget. In actuality, this year's budget follows the path laid out in the previous two budgets of the government. The Modi Government continues to implement the very same policies as the previous UPA Government, whose essence is:

- transferring public money and resources to the tune of lakhs of crores of rupees to giant foreign and Indian business houses in the name of promoting GDP growth;

- 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 new government is implementing the globalisation agenda of the previous government at such an accelerated pace, it is running the economy for the benefit of the big corporate houses with such shamelessness, that it has led to a huge increase in the wealth of country's rich and super-rich. The number of dollar billionaires in the country has zoomed to a record 90, as per the latest (2015) global ranking of the uber rich by *Forbes* magazine. Their total wealth is a mind-boggling \$295 billion, or Rs 19.2 lakh crore—an amount that is equivalent to 14% of India's GDP for 2015–16! Just a year ago, this list had just 56 billionaires with a collective net worth of \$191.5 billion—in other words, the number of billionaires in the country has gone up by a whopping 60% in just a single year!⁴²

The number of high net worth individuals, defined as those with a net wealth of above \$50 million, has also been rising rapidly. According to a recent (2015) report by Credit Suisse, India now has 2,083 ultra-high-net-worth individuals, 3% more than 2014, of which 940 people own more than \$100 million each.⁴³

No wonder the rich are elated with Modi–Jaitley; 'achhe din' have truly come for them!

Despite this obscene growth in the wealth of the rich, despite the fact that the new government has launched a vicious assault on the livelihoods and basic entitlements of the common people, a very large number of common people continue to be under the illusion that the new government is indeed trying hard to usher in 'achhe din' for the ordinary people. It needs to be acknowledged: an important difference between the BJP and the previous UPA Government is, the new rulers are adroit liars and expert propagandists to boot. While implementing the very same policies as the

UPA, and that too at an accelerated rate, they have been able to cover up their anti-people agenda with such attractive slogans as ‘Development for All’, ‘Make in India’ and ‘Skill India’ that many people continue to believe that the new government is indeed trying hard to implement policies to benefit the country and the people! When the truth is that the real essence of all these slogans is a further increase in the wealth of the rich, and the further impoverishment of the people!

To CONCLUDE

This is the real agenda behind the brazen offensive launched by the BJP to divide the country along communal lines and simultaneously attack freedom of speech and dissent, fundamental rights guaranteed under the Indian Constitution: running the country solely for the rich.

With the coming to power of the BJP at the Centre, the RSS has now come out from behind the curtain. The dozens of organisations spawned by it have launched a two-pronged offensive. On the one hand they are pushing ahead their communal agenda with great speed. Cadres of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Bajrang Dal and scores of other sister-groups have intensified their intimidating campaigns like ‘Ghar Wapsi’ and ‘Love-Jihad’. They are brazenly attacking places of worship of religious minorities. They are violently imposing their vegetarian diet preference on the vast majority of the people who prefer a mixed diet of vegetables and meat, to the point that in the name of cow protection, innocent Muslims are being attacked and even killed. Hundreds of incidents of communal violence have taken place since the new government assumed power. They are insidiously attacking the very conception of India as a secular, democratic and socialist republic as visualised by our country’s founders and enshrined in the Constitution of India.

And on the other hand, they have launched a vicious offensive to attack all ideologies and progressive forces that can challenge their Brahminical ideology. The arrest of JNU Student’s Union President Kanhaiya Kumar

under false sedition charges on the basis of a doctored video is only the latest incident in a series of attacks launched by the ABVP–BJP–RSS on our campuses to impose their regressive ideology and stifle the voices of those who disagree with their politics. They are also unashamedly foisting persons with Hindutva leanings as heads of India’s leading academic institutions, even if they are ill-qualified for the post. To isolate, suppress, crush the voices of reason and rationalism, of all those who can expose their narrow and crooked espousal of Hinduism, of all those who can expose the falseness of their slogans, they have now launched a concerted attempt to label all progressive intellectuals as anti-nationals.

Why are the BJP–RSS doing all this? Are they really concerned about the Hindus? If it were indeed so, then, since the majority of the people in the country are Hindus, they wouldn’t have been implementing policies that attack the livelihoods of common people, policies that deprive the majority of children of the country of elementary education, policies that deprive common people of basic health care, policies that deprive people of even food, policies that are pushing crores of people below the poverty line, policies that are pushing thousands of farmers into committing suicide every year . . . Obviously, the worst affected due to these policies are going to be Hindus, since they are the majority community.

Are they really concerned about the nation? To give an example mentioned earlier in this essay, the BJP Government is proposing to give foreign brigands residency status. It is allowing crooks who have swindled public sector banks of thousands of crores of rupees to flee abroad. In Budget 2016-17, it has announced a scheme permitting those who have stashed away lakhs of crores of rupees abroad in illegal accounts to convert it into white money, instead of arresting them as anti-nationals. On the other hand, patriotic Indians fighting to prevent our wealth and resources from being plundered by foreign corporations are being labelled as anti-nationals—such is their definition of nationalism! We must not forget, these are the very same people who had played no role in the freedom struggle. The RSS

had critiqued the Constitution when it was drafted, lamenting that India's Constitution makers had ignored the *Manusmriti*.

The reason why the BJP–RSS are aggressively pushing forward their communal, fascist agenda is to divert the attention of the common people from their real agenda, which is to run the country for the benefit of the big foreign and Indian business houses. While the majority poor and unemployed Hindu masses are made to believe that it is the impoverished Muslim masses who are their real enemies—who are plotting to run away with Hindu girls and convert them, who are conspiring to become the majority community by producing dozens of children, whose mosques need to be destroyed today because Muslim kings destroyed Hindu temples 500 years ago—and the minorities are too terrorised to think of anything else than survival, the BJP is quietly but speedily implementing policies dictated by the World Bank that are meant to benefit the big corporations of the developed countries. While we, the common people, are busy labelling each other as anti-nationals, the country's rich are laughing all the way to the bank . . .

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